

The cover is made of dark brown, textured leather. It features a large, intricate, embossed circular design in the center, consisting of swirling, flame-like or leaf-like patterns. The title 'THE Candlekeep COMPENDIUM' is embossed in a stylized, gothic font. 'THE' is in small caps, 'Candlekeep' is in a large, flowing script, and 'COMPENDIUM' is in small caps with a horizontal line through it, flanked by small decorative flourishes. The volume number 'VOLUME VII' is embossed at the bottom center. The cover is decorated with metal hardware: on the left, a vertical strip of metal with four circular studs; on the right, two circular metal studs, each containing a glowing orange-red gemstone. The overall aesthetic is that of a fantasy or medieval setting.

THE
Candlekeep
COMPENDIUM

VOLUME VII

Volume VII

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EDITORIAL



elcome to the seventh volume of the Candlekeep Compendium. A collection of the finest Realmslore selected from the shelves of Candlekeep and delivered to us from our wandering scribes, forever seeking to further our knowledge of the Realms.

Again, our dedicated scribes bring regular and much-loved articles which have become familiar with our readers. The Hammer's Stroke continues it's investigations on the various types of dwarven heroes. Laborers of Toril and Untold Stories continue to unearth the mundane, bizarre and intriguing elements of the world in which we live, and our faithful Rikos Dughol enlightens us this time on Phorvar's Gap in the Journals from an Apprentice Scribe.

Just when ye thought ye knew all there was to know about Shaundakul, we continue with the second part of this indepth study of the deity. We also return to the Mysteries of the Creator Races, this time delving into the secrets of a very interesting race - the Aearee. Speaking of mysteries and secrets, we uncover another Lord of Waterdeep, much to my pleasure.

Last, but by no means least, we have two new scribes joining us in this volume, with new columns to entice all Realmslore scholars. The first such article, entitled Towns of the Dragon Coast, takes a first stop at Ilipur, for an extensive study of this interesting settlement. A little more dangerously, we take an indepth study of a race of the underdark called Deep Gnolls (for one name of which they're known by).

I certainly hope ye enjoy these latest articles and enjoy our new columns to the Compendium. I'll leave ye to peruse the writings herein, and hope they bring ye many hours of enjoyment.

- Alaundo of Candlekeep

THE HAMMER'S STROKE

part VII

By Kevin Liss



adventurers in the Realms are given many choices in the nature of their development. Dwarves are given many options, particularly with Prestige Classes. Some are of obvious dwarven design, such as the Hammer of Moradin or the Runecaster. Other Prestige Classes, from various sourcebooks, may also be appropriate for dwarves. To take a break from examining the daily activities of dwarven life presented in previous volumes of the *Candlekeep Compendium*, we will explore the Realms-specific Prestige Classes that the common dwarf may adopt while earning their place in the ranks of heroes – or villains. Not every Prestige Class will be discussed, but the dwarven-specific ones and those of notable interest will be covered.

This article continues from *The Candlekeep Compendium* Volume VI.

Giant-killer

Dwarves and giant-killers are a natural pairing of heredity and vicinity. The dwarven affinity for rocky environments, coupled with their natural enmity for most giants, makes the giant-killer an ideal prestige class for some dwarves. In the Silver Marches and the North, dwarven halls and citadels usually contain a few seasoned giant-killers, to keep the lands surrounding the strongholds free of potential giant problems. Other communities will train and keep giant-killers based on their need.

Dwarven giant-killers are traditionally home-based heroes of the Stout Folk. Their halls are their bases, and the reason for their need. Recent giant-killers are more proactive, seeking to conquer and reclaim territory claimed by some giant clan or another. Revenge for those lost drives some giant-killers, but most use their abilities to benefit any community of dwarves that may be nearby.

Most dwarven giant-killers are bred for the job. Unlike many of their brethren, they are trained for this one purpose. This allows for a quick advancement into the ranks of giant-killers, by meeting the requirements earlier, rather than having to advance levels to qualify. This means that many giant-killer dwarves can, and often do, begin their training as fighters first. Part of this is because of the low numbers of rangers or barbarians in dwarven society, although another contributing factor is that most successful giant-killers are often tougher, specifically-trained fighters. This does not preclude other classes from attaining the honor of becoming a giant-killer; it is just the typical progression for dwarves.



Hordebreaker

Hordes of swarming humanoids spell doom for those unfortunate enough to be caught before them. To counter the advancing horde and fight the onslaught of destructive creatures, many races train and keep hordebreakers at hand. Dwarves are one of the races that successfully utilize the hordebreaker as a first-line defense.

Guerilla groups of dwarven hordebreaker warriors whittle away at the mass of creatures rampaging through their lands. Columns of dwarves bolster their defenses with strategically placed hordebreaker units, to break the advancing waves of enemies. Strategic use of the hordebreakers can allow a community a fighting chance in the face of seemingly impossible odds.

Hordebreaker dwarves are most often fighters. Their training bolsters their ability to withstand the humanoid hordes, while maintaining typical dwarven fighting techniques. Heavily armored warriors wait

for the fight to come to them, allowing their training and discipline to bolster their effectiveness against greater odds. Some dwarven rangers and barbarians take the fight to the horde with guerilla attacks and ambushes, to weaken and dishearten a horde even before they meet the main force of the dwarves. They do this by focusing on small groups of stragglers, or through strategic use of the terrain. Small groups of hordebreakers damage the front lines of a horde before a strategic withdrawal to another ambush site, always taking advantage of traditional dwarven strengths. If pressed, small numbers of dwarven hordebreakers can successfully defend key areas of a dwarven hall against more numerous groups.

Innovative hordes can overcome the advantages of dwarven hordebreakers through the use of elite units or special champions. Unfortunately, many horde leaders find that it is often impossible to use these special forces before serious damage is done to their followers.

To be continued...



LABORERS OF TORIL

part V

By Scott Kujawa

First Reader, here is the fifth scroll of the project that you asked me to scribe for the records of Candlekeep.

As I said in my other scrolls, some of this lore might or might not be true, and I had to distill the details, lest they fill a whole tome. Besides, some of the information given to me was to be kept secret, and I gave my word as a follower of the Binder. As usual, I'm tracking down other folk who are willing to let me record what they do to make coin and survive.

Scribe Lythrina Surstyn of Candlekeep

* * * *

Nennira (True Neutral, Female Rock Gnome, Expert 4/Cleric 6, Gond)

Growing up among the humans of Lantan, Nennira was always interested in devices and puzzles. When she had learned enough, she left Lantan, settling in the Adventurers Quarter of Waterdeep. With the help of some wealthy sponsors, she opened a shop where she makes and sells children's toys. She makes balls of curved wood, hammer-peg games, building blocks, spinning tops, gliders, bows and arrows, and other puzzle-like toys. The upper floor of her shop is her home; it contains a bath, kitchen, and sleeping chamber. Another room has been set aside for use as a workshop and shrine to Gond.

Ardyn "the Pretty" (Chaotic Good, Male Calishite Human, Expert 6, Lliira and Waukeen)

This wealthy Calishite sends his fleshpaints to the western parts of Faerûn through the market and port of Sheirtalar, in Lapaliiya. Due to the demands of his business, Ardyn recently took on another apprentice. He wouldn't discuss his apprentices with me; all I could learn is that both of them are female humans of Tashalan blood. They help him

make his cosmetics, and fill the orders that are going to be shipped to other major ports.

A follower of Lliira and Waukeen, Ardyn dresses in well-made red and orange clothing. A gold belt, showing his dedication to the coin goddess, is wrapped around his waist. Ardyn is short for a Calishite, and many believe that he is really a woman, since he is effeminate and possesses feminine facial and body features. His light brown hair is long, almost past his buttocks, helping further his feminine image.

Ynzaneth (Neutral Good, Male Lizardman, Expert 1, Savras)

This lizard man is an apprentice maker of the numerology tiles and talis cards that are made in Tashelar. Erldian, an older human male, raised Ynzaneth, and now serves as his mentor. Erldian raised Ynzaneth from an egg, so the lizard man isn't like the others of his race. Erldian and Ynzareth care deeply for each other, acting as father and son. Since Erldian is a follower of Savras, he has taught Ynzaneth the faith of the divination deity. The two of them worship together in a shrine in their home.

Althyril (Lawful Good, Female Lightfoot Halfling, Expert 5, Cyrrollalee and Yondalla)

This smaller-than-average halfling lives in Luiren, where she helps craft the bows, arrows, slings, and sling stones that the halflings of that nation use. Many of the warsling snipers of Luiren have used her weapons and ammunition over the years, or so she tells me. She has a separate shop, next to her home, where she spends the majority of her time. The exception is when she is being cooked for and waited on by Elble and Mylober, her two lightfoot halfling consorts. Since I couldn't meet Mylober, I was told that he spends most of his days patrolling and protecting Luiren.

Chynna (Neutral Good, Female Damaran Human, Commoner 3/Favored Soul 1, Lathander)

Since leaving Phlan during the Time of Troubles, Chynna has resided in the temple of Lathander in Shadowdale. She looks like a typical Damaran, save for her long, golden-red hair, a legacy of Lathander's touch. The clergy allow her to stay in the temple because she spends her time making candles for the church and for the people of the Dale. She tells me that most of the clergy don't realize that she has a deeper connection to the Morninglord; he has granted her some divine powers and spells, because she is strong in her faith and prayers.

Kalg (Lawful Neutral, Male Shield Dwarf, Expert 8, Dumathoin)

Most of the time, Kalg can be found mining in the dwarven quarter of Mirabar. However, when I sat down and talked with him, he told me that he also has the skills of a gemcutter and jeweler. When he is drinking at some of the dwarven taverns, he is accompanied by Irnene, his female shield dwarven companion.

Raurus (Neutral Good, Male Chondathan Human, Commoner 1, Lathander)

Raurus is a young man living in Deadsnows, working as a rothé and cattle herder. He's recently become very busy, due to the influx of people seeking the gold discovered in the

Nether Mountains. When he isn't spending his days watching over the cattle, he can be found with the clergy of Lathander. He is deeply interested in the Morninglord, and someday might join the faithful as a divine follower.

The youngest member of a family of six, Raurus was the only one to survive a raid by a band of Prince Urgeth's orcs. (See *Silver Marches*, the "Blood and Gold" adventure.)

Hitsuo (Male Shou Human, Expert 12, Celestial Bureaucracy)

Hitsuo is one of the builders of spelljamming dragon ships in the city of Chunming, in Shou Lung. Ever since he managed, as a youth, to sneak onto one of the dragonships, he has been interested in the ships that sail off of the planet and through the Sea of Night. Hitsuo spent some time as a sailor on a few different spelljammers, before learning that he had the skills to actually build the ships. Now he enjoys his time in Chunming, and the government of Shou Lung pays for his home and his work. He looks like a typical Shou, but is heavily scarred from having fought in many battles.

Ilonoztli (Lawful Neutral, Female Maztican Human, Commoner 4, Plutoq)

Ilonoztli is a basket-weaver with light reddish-brown skin, living in a hut near New Waterdeep. She uses the different woods of her land to make baskets of various sizes. She has slowly been learning to weave baskets from imported woods from the distant trees of Faerûn, but for now, she mostly stays with what she knows best. When she manages to collect enough turquoise, she makes the stones into pieces of jewelry, or pieces that are used for body modification.

Hakeel (Chaotic Neutral, Male Zakharan Human, Expert 3, Haku and Selan)

Hakeel spends most of his time in the Bazaar of Huzuz, dancing for coins and wealth. His tall but thin body is cloaked with the sand of this desert nation. Hakeel has learned a type of dance that looks like a sandstorm; the sand whirls around him and radiates outward

as he moves. His long dark hair seems to float about him as he dances; otherwise, it covers his back and reaches his knees. Covering his body is a robe of light brown cloth, enchanted to keep the heat away from his body, but light enough to not restrict his dancing.

Many know Hakeel as a lover of men and women. He is known to be skilled in giving massages, and many seek him for his knowledge in various relaxation techniques.

FOLK OF FAERUN

Shaundakul, part 11

By Doug Raas

* * * *

I have come to realize that in every walk of life, from the commoner to nobility, we are judged not only by our actions and inactions, but also by the friends we keep and the enemies we make. The gods themselves are no different. Some are loved by most, and some are feared by most. Some are called on by nearly everyone, on a near-daily basis, while others are only in the background of our thoughts. Some are well-known, while others are more of a mystery. I wonder, is it the nature of the gods to be more like the mortals who worship them – or more like mortals to take after the divine they worship?

From the journals of Dathal Rhain
20 Hammer, Year of Wild Magic



odly ambitions and plans may seem complicated, at times. Unknown thoughts of the divine may confuse mortals; but some aspects of the divine thoughts are largely known, from watching their actions and the actions of their faithful over the years. Like mortals, gods develop friendships, and loves, as well as enemies and hatreds.

Shaundakul has many friends in the Faerûnian pantheon, but few strong relationships. He has few enemies, although those that he has are more than enough for a god in his position. His relationships with the other members of the pantheon may change in the future; several of Shaundakul's portfolios overlap those of other deities, creating potential conflict.

The following passages attempt to distill the most important of these associations, and explain the 'how' and 'why' of their relationship. The interactions of Shaundakul's clergy with the clergy of these various faiths are also explored.

The Gentle Flutter of Friendship

Akadi: Though Akadi and Shaundakul share ties to the wind and air, it may be surprising that there is no direct conflict between them. Their relationship can best be described as cordial and friendly. While Akadi deals mainly with the air itself, and creatures of the air, Shaundakul is more concerned with how air relates to travel (particularly by sea), and its effects on land-based caravans. As one of the elemental gods, Akadi is somewhat aloof from the affairs of mortals and other deities.

Shaundakul and Akadi became acquainted not long after Shaundakul's arrival on Faerûn. There may have initially been some tension, but it was quickly realized that while Shaundakul was associated with the air, it was more of a means to an end, not the source of his veneration. On the rare occasions that priests of these two faiths meet, they are almost always neutral to each other. Assistance is often granted when asked for, and certainly no ill will lies between them.

Gwaeron Windstrom: Gwaeron is very closely associated with rangers, and the areas of the North. He and Shaundakul have

a friendly relationship, as priests of both deities traverse long-forgotten trails, though for different purposes. Gwaeron serves Mielikki, and like her, is allied with Shaundakul. However, the two deities seldom come into contact with each other, despite both being venerated more in the North than elsewhere. Priests of both deities are friendly with each other, and will aid each other when possible.

Lurue: It may seem that Lurue, as a servant of Mielikki, would be a friend of Shaundakul's by association. However, Lurue and her followers are sometimes taken with wanderlust, and it is this random exploration that interests Shaundakul, as it is much like the Windride itself.

Lurue is also said by some to be the daughter of Selûne, and that further validates their friendship. These two deities rarely interact, and as both have small followings, their priests seldom encounter each other. When this does happen, it is always peaceful and friendly.

Mielikki: Mielikki, another deity venerated with some degree of exclusivity in the North, is quite friendly with Shaundakul. Mielikki may be one of the few deities who was constantly aware of Shaundakul's presence in the Realms, even during the lowest points of his worship.

Both of them dwelled on Faerûn before the Time of Troubles, and were less directly affected when the other gods were thrown down.

Mielikki has observed the troubles Shaundakul has faced due to the scheming of Beshaba. This, coupled with Beshaba's use of antlers as her symbol, has increased Mielikki's dislike of the Maid of Misfortune, and brought her and Shaundakul closer. While their friendship is true, and more than the cordial relationship held between Shaundakul and Akadi, it is not romantic in any way. Both deities have their own ongoing issues, which some would say are greater than they can reasonably handle. Both deities are therefore somewhat hesitant to involve themselves too closely, for fear of raising the ire of each other's enemies,

bringing more hardship for themselves and their followers. Neither deity, however, would refuse to aid the other if asked, nor would their respective priests.

Mystra: Mystra, as goddess of magic, has many allies and enemies amongst the gods. Recently, Shaundakul's acquisition of the portfolio of *portals* has caused the two deities to become even closer. Some were very surprised at the fact that Shaundakul gained this portfolio, which seems to be a distinct subset of magic that would normally be the province of Mystra. Some sages speculate that Mystra herself did not necessarily plan this, but that she was not opposed to the change. Since it helped spread magical influence further afield than it had been, Mystra saw this as strengthening the durability of magic in general.

The two deities are now in a working relationship, and Mystra seems pleased with how Shaundakul has handled the portfolio. Due to both deities' opposition to Shar, it seems likely that they will be working closely together in the future.

Priests of both deities are friendly with each other, and are willing to assist each other as necessary. While not as friendly as relations are with Tymora, they are quite strong, and only likely to strengthen over time.

Nobanion: Due to the relationship both have with Mielikki, the association between Nobanion and Shaundakul is similar to being "a friend of a friend". The two deities' relations are cordial, but neutral. Aid will be given and expected between their priests, although in either case, it would be noted that compensation, or the offering of assistance, is generally expected in return. The two deities are nearly at moral odds in their outlook, though both share a respect of things natural. It is likely that if relations between either deity and Mielikki ever became strained, the relationship between Nobanion and Shaundakul would probably dissolve completely. If this were to happen, there would be little change, as their portfolios, as well as their general spheres of influence across Faerûn, have little overlap.

Selûne: Selûne and Shaundakul have a relationship much like siblings might have. They respect each other, but still have minor disagreements from time to time. The greatest shared element of their relationship is their mutual opposition of Shar. Shar, who continually attempts to undermine the aspects of moonlight for her own dark purposes, also comes at odds with Shaundakul for his continued exploration, and the spreading of the knowledge of his discoveries.

Selûne and Shaundakul's priests are friendly towards one another, and often offer help in their mutual travels. The two deities both have a fondness for wandering and joyful exploration. On more than a few occasions, Selûne has joined either Shaundakul himself, or one of his priests during the Windride, enjoying the winds and the breezes, and the opportunity to share the wonder of random wandering.

Priests of Selûne are aware of the tenets of Shaundakul's faith, and are always somewhat more observant right around the Windride, as priests of Shaundakul may become disoriented after their journey, or even be in some danger from hostile forces. Because of this attentiveness, Shaundakul is thankful -- and his priests are encouraged to offer assistance and help priests of Selûne in thanks for this attentiveness.

Shevarash: An unlikely alliance -- more of an understanding -- exists between these two gods. Shaundakul is not closely affiliated with any of the Seldarine, but he is not opposed to working with them when the need arises. The mutual assistance these two gods enjoy is one primarily spurred by the desire of both to reclaim Myth Drannor. Relations between the clergy of both gods are neutral, but lately, somewhat strained, as rumors have begun to spread of Shevarash's involvement with Shar, one of Shaundakul's enemies. The priests of Shaundakul are more and more wary among followers of Shevarash, though the priests of Shevarash don't seem to notice this caution. Perhaps the fact that neither deity has a large following helps in this. If Myth Drannor was ever either totally lost, or successfully reclaimed, then the relations between these gods would be strained even

further, towards indifference, or possibly even more open disinterest or distrust, especially if Shevarash's association with Shar continues.

Tymora: Tymora is probably the closest deific ally Shaundakul has at the moment. Many years ago, the two deities were romantically involved, but this was not a long-lived affair. Their relationship has been a long one; Shaundakul knew Tyche before the Dawn Cataclysm.

Historically, Tymora has been a favorite of adventurers, giving them that "lucky edge" that they need to survive. Lately, Shaundakul has begun attracting some of these same adventurers, who venerate him for his exploration aspect. Being that the two deities are so close, Tymora is not concerned with this minor encroaching of some of her followers. Most of the adventuring priests of Tymora are still in place; this minor shift mainly affects the lay-worshippers, looking for guidance in their explorations. Priests of both Tymora and Shaundakul are both on very friendly terms, and it is not unknown for them to work together as long as their respective aims are being met. Aid is generally given without question in either direction, with little expectation of returned favors, or compensation. Simply knowing that the same aid would be given in return is enough.

Waukeen: Relations between Shaundakul and Waukeen have been interesting, to say the least. Before the Time of Troubles, there were few interactions between the two deities. Traders venerated both deities; Waukeen for their mercantile interests, and Shaundakul for the transportation of mercantile goods. During the Time of Troubles, an unfortunate series of events led to Waukeen's imprisonment in the Abyss by Graz'zt. During this time, and for over a decade afterward, Waukeen's portfolio was held in trust by Lliira. However, many priests of Waukeen did not convert to Lliira, but rather to Shaundakul. He also saw an upswing in veneration from caravaneers, who had to choose between Lliira working in Waukeen's stead, or Shaundakul.

After Waukeen's recent rescue, nearly all of her priests and lay-worshippers that had converted Lliira in the interim returned to Waukeen. (*Chroniclers Note: While exact numbers would be impossible to determine, it seems that upwards of 95% returned to Waukeen from Lliira. – D.R.*) However, a smaller percentage of those who had moved to Shaundakul returned to Waukeen. (*Chroniclers Note: At best guess, only about 75% of those who sought solace with Shaundakul have returned to Waukeen. – D.R.*)

At the present time, both deities are on good terms, if a little cautious. Waukeen is certainly thankful for Shaundakul and Lliira looking after her followers while she was imprisoned, but is somewhat disappointed at the loss of some of her followers. Shaundakul's and Waukeen's portfolios complement each other well; because of this, many people often venerate both deities.

During the Time of Troubles, many of Waukeen's temples were either left unused or converted for use by priests of Lliira, especially in areas where there was no pre-existing temple to Lliira. However, in two instances, temples of Waukeen were instead converted for use by the faithful of Shaundakul. One was the Tower of Gold in Iriaebor, and the other was the Temple of the Lady of Coins in Phent.

The Blowing Fury of Opposition

Beshaba: Beshaba and Shaundakul have been at odds with each other for nearly as long as Beshaba has been in existence. Tymora's early dalliance with Shaundakul, as well as his spurning of her own advances, vexed Beshaba to no end. To this day, she continues to meddle in his affairs. This continued opposition is part of why Tymora and Shaundakul remain close.

One of the most severe aspects of this is that Shaundakul's name has been misused by Beshaba in the desert of Anauroch, causing the Bedine to become not only wary, but openly hostile to those they see as worshipping a cruel, evil deity. Shaundakul has recently started a campaign to try to clear his name among the Bedine. This effort is likely to be met with opposition from Beshaba, who undoubtedly will consider it another opportunity to play with him, causing as much misfortune in the process as possible.

Priests of Beshaba generally will try to harass and attack priests of Shaundakul when they meet. Priests of Shaundakul will return this open hostility when needed, but will tend to observe more if they themselves have gone undetected.

Shar: Shar is a deity of darkness and loss. Shaundakul and Shar oppose each other due to her love of secrecy and his desire to reveal what is hidden and newly discovered. Historically, neither deity has been particularly hostile to the other, but they have reasons to be at odds. Shar is opposed to Selûne, and more recently, Mystra, both of whom are allies of Shaundakul. Shaundakul's recent acquisition of *portals* as a portfolio also has brought the attention of Shar. Shaundakul now works more closely with Mystra, and thus has come more to the forefront of Shar's observations.

Priests of Shar generally try and observe priests of Shaundakul to determine what they are up to before taking any overt actions. More often than not, the priests of Shar do not reveal themselves in these situations. If an encounter occurs, however, open hostility is almost certain.

UNTOLD STORIES

Collection VII

By Chris Jameson (Adventures I – VI)
& Scott Kujawa (Adventure VII - XII)

Being a collection of adventure hooks and starting tales for use in the *Forgotten Realms*

Adventure Hook I

Thelseus Gandivver's greatest joke has outlived the mage by several centuries.

Thelseus Gandivver was a powerful half-elven mage who dwelt in Myth Drannor at the time of its fall. A quiet but friendly man, Thelseus was well-known for his eccentric and joking nature. He often fashioned quirky and unusual magical items, either on a whim or for commission.

One of his closest friends was a fellow wizard named Sanger Telmiri. Sanger was a wizard of moderate skill. His true passion lay not in magic, but in artwork. He was a talented sculptor, producing many statues and friezes, some of which survive in Myth Drannor to this very day. Sanger is considered by many scholars to have been an influence on Cledwyll, since both artists had a decided preference for sculptures of attractive women, often scantily clad and quite curvaceous.

One of Sanger's favorite sculptures was a statuette he called *The Sorceress Triumphant*. Carved from a pale blue stone, the statuette depicts a buxom half-elven spellcaster, holding a scepter above her head with both hands. The expression on her upturned face is one of exultation and joy. Many small pouches dangle from the belt encircling her slender waist. Her clothing is tattered, apparently damaged in a spell-duel, though it would have been rather revealing even if it had remained intact. The beautiful half-elf's hair is thick and curly, and hangs down nearly to her knees.

As a joke, Thelseus cast a unique spell on the statuette. Knowing that Sanger was very fond of the statuette and liked to keep it near him, Thelseus cast a spell on it that would make it slip out of Sanger's hands, float several feet away, and then slowly settle to the ground. As soon as Sanger touched the statuette again, it would slip out of his grasp, repeating the process.

Both wizards were very amused by the prank. Before the magic could be reversed, however, Myth Drannor came under attack from the Army of Darkness. The wizards dismissed the prank as unimportant, instead marshalling their power to aid in the City of Song's defense.

Sanger was slain in the early days of the Weeping War. Thelseus, on the other hand, was one of the last of the defenders to leave the city. He eventually settled in Silverymoon, spending the rest of his days using his magic to amuse himself and others.

The Sorceress Triumphant remained intact in the ruins of Sanger's home in Myth Drannor. After centuries of exposure to the slowly warping fields of magic within the mythal, Thelseus's spell became twisted, producing a wholly different effect that couldn't be experienced within the mythal.

Last year, a group of Cormyrian adventurers found the statuette. They carried it back to Suzail with them, where, after a few months, the warped enchantment on the statuette became apparent. The altered magic did not manifest immediately; had that happened, *The Sorceress Triumphant* would likely be lost in the wilderness.

The enchantments on the statuette now cause it to randomly *teleport* itself to a new location, once a day. *The Sorceress Triumphant* sometimes travels just a few feet, other times it *teleports* itself a mile or more away. Perhaps because of some lingering effect of Thelseus's original spell, the statuette seems to confine itself to city limits and easily found locations.

More than one noble collector wants the statuette, since artwork by Sanger Telmiri is only slightly more common than that of his successor, Cledwyll. The PCs are hired to find *The Sorceress Triumphant*, so that it can become the centerpiece of a nobleman's collection.

Adventure Hook II

Dark eyes are watching Jalyk Bluefeather.

A young tiefling with intense, glowing green eyes, Jalyk Bluefeather presented himself to the temple of Torm two years ago, hoping to enter the service of the True as a paladin. Though some within the church were wary of Jalyk's obviously infernal heritage, they could find no fault with the hopeful young man. He passed every test that could be given, and succeeded at every challenge set before him. His dedication and sense of duty was such that Jalyk was an inspiration to his fellow aspirants.

Just three months ago, Jalyk was accepted into Torm's service. His glowing eyes now shining with zeal, Jalyk immediately volunteered for whatever mission his superiors wanted him to take. To further accentuate his devotion to duty, the tiefling was temporarily assigned to the city watch.

His time among the watch was well-spent. He dedicated himself to being as useful as possible, so much so that the watch commander asked Jalyk if he wanted to join the watch on a permanent basis. Jalyk declined, but he continued to offer exemplary service to the city.

However, another member of the church, Nalgrym of Scornubel, has noticed that Jalyk is often watched by shadowy figures.

Nalgrym was a thief before entering Torm's service, so he is often used by his superiors to secretly observe prospective or new church members. The former thief has noted that at least one cloaked figure can usually be found trailing Jalyk; sometimes the tiefling is followed by as many as three other individuals. Worse still, one of the skulkers, Connel Shatterhand, is known to be a devout follower of Bane.

Jalyk is being sent out of town on a mission, and the church elders fear that his shadowy watchers may attempt to capture the young paladin for some nefarious purpose. They want the PCs to follow Jalyk on his mission, and to ensure that he is allowed to carry out his assigned tasks.

Adventure Hook III

Rune Copperbold has been betrayed.

Tamarune "Rune" Copperbold is a rock gnome with an unusual profession: he specializes in the capture and delivery of live exotic animals. A skilled sorcerer, Rune has spent years hunting monsters, and is something of an expert on many kinds of animals. He often boasts that he can capture any beast found on Faerûn, and more than a few from other locales. He does, however, refuse to hunt dragons, citing a promise he made to one such creature in the Great Dale.

Rune is usually selective about his clientele, but a recent run of bad luck has left him nearly destitute. Otherwise, he would have refused the commission offered to him by the wizard Carlyn Talpok. Rune suspected that Carlyn was secretly a Red Wizard, but he had no way of knowing for certain. Nearly broke and needing the money badly, Rune had no choice but to accept Carlyn's commission.

About a week ago, Rune returned to Saerloon, with his prey securely imprisoned in a magical cage. He delivered the fearsome beast to Carlyn, accepted his money, and made plans to leave Saerloon behind. He secreted the larger portion of his payment in a hidden cache, then made preparations for a journey to Waterdeep. Before he could leave the city, he was beset by a well-armed group

of thieves. The thugs severely beat Rune, burying him under trash in an alley and leaving him to die.

It was only through the use of some contingency magic that Rune didn't die from his grievous wounds. His preservative magics healed him enough to get to the Tower of Mysteries, where a prior arrangement with the priests of Mystra paid for him to be restored to full health.

Days later, Carlyn Talpok disappeared from the city. The beast he'd hired Rune to capture was set loose, now magically enhanced. Among the creature's other new-found abilities, it now has the ability to *teleport* itself out of danger, and it seems more intelligent than before. The beast has adopted a new hunting pattern: it silently stalks its victims before ferociously attacking. By the time aid can be summoned, the victims are dead and the creature has *teleported* itself back to its hiding place.

Feeling partially responsible for what happened, and wanting to preserve his reputation, Rune hires the PCs to help him slay the beast. Depending on how generous the DM is, the city guard and/or wealthy patrons may also offer a reward for the death of the monster. The exact nature and abilities of the monster are left for the DM to determine, as best fits the campaign.

For further developments, Rune's run of bad luck could have been caused by Carlyn Talpok, in order to get the gnome desperate enough to accept any source of income. Additionally, the creature could have been released to either aid or hinder the members of the Sembian cell of the Cult of the Dragon.

Adventure Hook IV

Laneera Saldonnan has an unexpected guest at her party.

In preparation for a grand ball she's holding in her manor, Laneera paid handsomely for the importation of many exotic plants. Wanting to impress her guests by showing off her wealth, Laneera purchased plants from as far away as Zakhara and Kara-Tur. She

hired some of Waterdeep's best gardeners to properly arrange the flora, and to care for it until her party was held. Special planters and trellises were placed all throughout her estate, though the majority of them can be found in her ballroom.

What no one has yet realized is that one of the plants was the chosen abode of a mischievous fae. Upset at the disturbance of its home, the fae has been wandering throughout the manor, causing all sorts of minor mischief. Laneera and her servants know something is amiss, but thus far, the tricks have been limited to strange sounds and small items disappearing or turning up in odd places. Laneera has the servants paying particular care to their surroundings, returning items to their proper place as soon as they are moved. Laneera wants nothing to interfere with her gala event.

When the party begins, the PCs are among the guests. Perhaps they are notable enough to receive a direct invitation, or perhaps they are accompanying an invited guest, who is taking the PCs along for his or her own reasons.

However the PCs get into the party, they are there when the fae starts playing pranks on a grander scale. Rather than minor effects, the fae begins playing highly visible tricks. The wives of noblemen find their hairstyles changing into often comical arrangements, and their carefully applied cosmetics changing colors. Wealthy men are shocked to see their clothing changing styles and colors. Jewelry is magically being swapped among various people almost as fast as they can see, causing no end of commotion as family heirlooms suddenly appear in the hands of strangers. At one end of the room, powdered confections suddenly soar into the air, flying into the faces of surprised party-goers.

Trying in vain to regain control of her party, a disheveled Laneera literally bumps into one of the PCs. Recognizing them as adventurers, she offers a large reward if they can capture the mayhem-causing fae. This task is made more difficult by the fact that the trickster is invisible and able to use *dimension doors* to quickly move from place to place.

Adventure Hook V

The Dolhanna family is not excited about their next party.

Nearly a century ago, Athis Dolhanna returned home, after a decade of adventuring. The third son of Miskalar "Old Miskal" Dolhanna, Athis had left the family estates after realizing his older brothers would inherit most of the family fortunes. Rather than be forced to live on their largesse, Athis took his late uncle's magical sword and set out on his own, hoping to win his own fortune.

Athis forged his own adventuring company, the Company of the Green Dagger. He and his companions, all minor noblemen, wandered across the North, before journeying to Raven's Bluff. They spent nearly a year there before resuming their aimless travels, eventually finding themselves in Calimport. In their wake, the members of the Green Dagger left empty dungeons, scoured ruins, and scores of smitten young ladies.

Though Athis refused to speak of it, some doom befell the Company in Calimport. The surviving members scattered, each taking his share of their treasure and returning home. In addition to gold, gems, and various magical items, Athis brought home an enchanted tapestry he'd found in the Border Kingdoms.

The tapestry was magnificent, woven of a magical thread unlike any that had been seen before. It was also very large – fully ten feet high and twenty-five feet long. The tapestry's most extraordinary feature, though, was what it depicted. Instead of something mundane, like the static display of a battle or hunting scene, the tapestry depicted life-size figures, richly clothed and elegantly appointed, gracefully dancing to the sounds of unseen musicians. The people in the tapestry actually moved, swirling and flowing through the steps of their dance. The figures in the forefront would glide across the length of the tapestry, slipping out of view as other dancers replaced them. Though the minstrels could not be seen, their music rang out softly but clearly, audible to all near the tapestry.

The magic of the tapestry wasn't limited to a single ball. At random intervals, the scenery would shift, showing another grand chamber, with other partygoers gracefully moving to the music of a different set of musicians. The people in the tapestry were always human, though their styles of dress varied greatly. Some were obviously from far-away lands such as Kara-Tur, while others appeared in local but archaic clothing. An oddity of the tapestry's magic was that the dancers were always unknown to the viewers.

The Dolhannas immediately hung the incredible tapestry in their own ballroom, where it became the centerpiece of many grand events. Word of the tapestry spread, and the Dolhannas rose in social prominence because of it. The tapestry soon came to be called *The Ever-shifting Dancers*, and its fame made it one of the family's most valued possessions.

Now, however, it has the family worried. For the first time, familiar faces were seen in the tapestry – faces of local nobles, all of whom are invited to a party scheduled to happen next week. As the surprised family stared at the familiar ballroom, they were horrified to see an unidentified couple suddenly turn, daggers raised, and plunge the blades into the backs of a nearby nobleman and his wife. Both crumpled to the ground as the mysterious assassins fled into the shocked crowd.

As horrifying as this scene was, it was worse when the blood of the slain nobles began dripping out of the tapestry.

The Dolhannas hire the PCs to investigate this strange occurrence. The PCs are expected to determine who the assassins are and capture them before the scene in the tapestry comes to pass. The Dolhannas will pay handsomely for this, but they expect the utmost of discretion from the PCs.

Adventure Hook VI

Talserin is not alone in his body.

Talserin, a Waterdhavian rogue, has spent most of his life living on the streets. He can't remember having a family, and he's not even sure if he was born in Waterdeep or elsewhere. Quite dexterous from an early age, Talserin was guided into thievery by older rogues who wished to capitalize on his childhood innocence. As he became older, he went through a succession of partners, each time selecting someone he could count on for mutual protection, if nothing else. When he reached adulthood, Talserin became a lone operator, one of many trying to get by in the City of Splendors.

As a thief, Talserin has been luckier than most. He found a forgotten basement under a Trades Ward shop, which he now uses as a home and base of operations. His looks are plain and nondescript, and his build unremarkable – essential qualities for a pickpocket to possess. Talserin has also been fortunate to avoid the Watch for most of his career; he regularly changes his haunts and tactics to avoid becoming predictable and noticeable. He has, in short, managed to maintain a nearly-comfortable lifestyle without interference or help from others.

It isn't the best life, but Talserin is satisfied with it.

Recently, though, something happened to Talserin, something that has taken much of his former satisfaction away from him. While picking the pockets of sailors in the Dock Ward, he found an unusual amulet with an unknown sigil engraved on its round face. Something about the silver amulet made the young thief uncomfortable, and he resolved to pass it to a fence as soon as possible.

However, none of his usual fences were interested in the amulet – something about it disquieted them as much as it did him. Talserin didn't want to keep the amulet, but he wasn't willing to part with it for free, either. He took the amulet back to his basement home, intending to try fencing it again in a month or two.

A few nights later, the dreams began. Talserin could never remember them when he woke up, but the dreams left him feeling more uncomfortable than before. Talserin began to think he might have to simply toss the amulet into the harbor to be rid of it.

He never got the chance. He woke unexpectedly in the middle of the night, drawn from sleep by some unheard call. Still groggy and not fully awake, Talserin stumbled over to the shelf where the amulet lay. Before he was aware of what he was doing, he slipped the chain over his head. A foreign presence entered into Talserin's consciousness, waking him more effectively than a Watch whistle could have.

The other presence – another thief, calling himself Greykin – did not dominate Talserin's body, as he had initially feared. Nor did Greykin force Talserin to do or say anything he didn't wish. Instead of the helpless possession spoken of in bard's tales, Talserin found he now had a constant companion, speaking quietly into his mind. It was almost as if an invisible person was constantly looking over his shoulder and whispering into his ear.

Greykin had been a half-drow thief, living and dying some twenty years before Talserin's birth. He and his companions had raided a wizard's tower, not realizing its owner, Saegan Swiftrune, had recently become a lich. By chance, they broke into the tower while the lich was away, escaping with much of his treasure before the lich returned to his lair.

The lich's vengeance was terrible. He hunted down and slew the companions one by one, until only Greykin was left. Swiftrune captured Greykin, cursing him to never rest until each item stolen from the lich was returned.

Greykin was successful in reclaiming most of the treasure. The only item remaining was a staff the lich had created, a personalized device he called, naturally, *Saegan's Staff*. Greykin believes the staff was carried down into Undermountain, but he was killed trying to find it. He found his consciousness bound to the amulet; he has since led several

people into Halaster's Halls in the hopes of finding the staff, and his rest. None have succeeded.

Enchantments on the amulet always returned it to the surface, though sometimes far from Waterdeep. Once worn, the amulet can not be removed, nor can its wearer be free of Greykin's voice. Greykin hates what has been done to him, but he can't break the enchantment.

Talserin has spent his entire life (or nearly all of it) in Waterdeep. He affects a worldly and jaded manner, but he is realistic enough to know that he's not strong enough to venture into Halaster's Halls on his own. He also knows that there is no conceivable way he could challenge a lich, so he has no choice but to help Greykin seek out the staff. He hires the PCs to accompany him into Undermountain, help him find the staff, and then accompany him to Saegan Swiftrune's tower, where both he and Greykin can be freed.

Adventure Hook VII

The dryad Ishenarauni desperately wants to have dryad offspring. She's mated with several males of various races, but every time she gives birth, her child is another satyr. Anyone that could help her give birth to dryads will be rewarded as the DM sees fit. The ten or so males that Ishenarauni has mated with in the past have, except for one or two of them, returned to their homes after she was done with them.

Adventure Hook VIII

Noallerva, a lillend servant of Selûne, has disappeared. The moon deity has sent dreams to her faithful, instructing them to find Noallerva, or to determine what happened to her. All that is known about the disappearance is that Noallerva was guarding the Infinite Staircase. As the lillend stopped on a grey-white landing, something opened a red-gold door and pulled her through it. In the dreams Selûne sent to her faithful, all they can see of the attacker is a pair of green

clawed hands and a humanoid body, enfolded by reptilian wings.

Adventure Hook IX

Before being ripped apart by the pack, someone summoned between ten and twenty howlers in the middle of Zhentil Keep. Before the howlers could be killed or rounded up, they escaped the city. Now there are reports that they have been terrorizing the settlements along the northern part of the Moonsea. The Council of Phlan is offering a reward to anyone that can show proof that these chaotic and evil creatures have been killed or sent back to the plane that they were summoned from.

Adventure Hook X

Farmer Omossar has found two fairly large brown eggs partially buried in his field, and he is looking for anyone who can tell him what kind of creature laid the eggs. He doesn't know it, but the eggs are the offspring of a two mated bulettes. The beasts have since moved on, driven away by some Underdark race: drow, dwarves, or whatever the DM wants to use.

Adventure Hook XI

Hemrira was once a female human, but she angered a passing wizard, who transformed her into a pony. She's since come to enjoy being a pony. However, the wizard's spell left her able to talk, and this causes many of the people that she meets to look at her in surprise or shock. Currently, she is stabled in a small stable in Shadowdale. She is seeking anyone that won't make her self-conscious by staring at her, and who would be willing to feed her and take care of her. Hemrira is very familiar the area around the Dales, because she was a guard on many of the caravans that moved through the Dales.

Adventure Hook XII

Ztethnos, an apprentice wizard, has been ordered by his master to find a shocker lizard, and to gather a bit of that lizard's lightning to use in a *wand of lightning*. The

apprentice has been seen around the settlement trying to find anyone that will help him find one or more of these creatures. He is willing to supply, as a reward, an arcane potion or two of the DM's choice.

MYSTERIES OF THE CREATOR RACES

The Aearee

By Gray Richardson

When the green wyrm Elaacriminalicros savaged the Star Mounts colony, he slaughtered my entire clan. Since that terrible day, I have devoted my life to preserving the lore of my great race. I have traveled to the far jungles of Anchorome to learn the songs of the western flocks, and I have journeyed east to Shou Lung to brave the lair of an ancient kenku lich. I have descended into the Underdark to uncover the secrets of the dire cobbies, and I have sailed the Sea of Night on a spelljammer ship to hear sagas from the beaks of Coliar windcallers.

I am Wuoress Aartenoo, the last aarakocra of the Ephru'cayre aerie, and this is the song of my people.

* * * *



In the Days of Thunder, Faerûn shook from the workings of the Creator Races. Fearsome serpent men, the sly and subtle fey, zealous amphibian folk, and the sky-soaring Aearee; each in turn made their mark on the face of the One Land.

The Aearee, which simply meant “the people” in our language, would spread to the far corners of Faerûn, and beyond. We were not, however, a monolithic race; neither form nor philosophy united us. The Aearee were loosely divided into three major flocks.

The Aearee-Krocaa, followers of the All-Father Krocaa, tended toward feathers of scarlet, rose, plum and peach – all the glorious colors of the dawn. They established the grand aerie of Viakoo on Mount Havraquoar, which became the capital of their great nation. The Aearee-Krocaa occupied the western lands of Faerûn. Mount Havraquar itself stood far west of the where the Sword Coast ends today. That mountain, and much of the former lands of the Aearee-Krocaa, was destroyed many centuries later when over-proud elves sundered the One Land in a High Magic cataclysm during the time of the First Flowering.

In the north of Faerûn lived the People of the Day, sometimes called the Aearee-Syran.

Their plumage ranged from light brown to gold to tan and white. A strong and majestic folk, their features were reminiscent of eagles and hawks. They enjoyed the special favor of Krocaa’s daughter, Syranita, who they praised as their patron. They nested in all the forests of the north, but made their capital at the aerie of Phwiukree, in the peaks of the Star Mounts.

The People of the Dusk, called by some the Aearee-Quor, flocked to the south and the east of Faerûn. They bore the features of crows and jays. Their feathers were brown and grey and every shade of black – all the somber colors of twilight. Some few possessed hackles of iridescent feathers that shimmered with the hues of an aurora against an arctic sky. The Aearee-Quor’s patron was Quorlinn, whose wits and cunning preserved their flocks through the worst times of the Batrachi domination and inspired in their hearts a fierce pride and determined self-reliance. Spreading out from the Shara rookery in the Orsraun Mountains, they grew into a loose affiliation of floating city-states that would eventually span the breadth of the continent.

While the major flocks had their favored patrons, the Aearee were anything but monotheistic. Their pantheon included a multitude of gods, all but forgotten today.

Krocaa the All-Father, god of creation, intelligence, and invention, ruled the pantheon. His daughter, Syranita, radiant goddess of the sky, whose sharp eyes watched over and protected all, would surpass him in later centuries, growing more prominent in Faerûn as the Aearee-Krocaa explored and settled further and further to the west.

Sneaky Quorlinn was ever-shunned by Krocaa for past treachery. Myths told of how Quorlinn would bring his father trophies from his exploits, jewels and shiny treasures he had won by his wits, to garner Krocaa's favor. But despite his many efforts, at the end of every tale he was always rebuffed, never managing to regain his father's goodwill.

Phraarkiloorm, god of death and predation, had his place in the divine flock. His adherents included the canniest of hunters and the fierce Raptor Knights. In the years after the Long Night, his followers would hunt the surviving Batrachi to near extinction, raining death from the sky in retribution for past cruelties.

The divine flock also included Remnis of the eagles and Lady Fileet, beast lord of birds. Akadi, goddess of Elemental Air, was known, as was K'ooriall of the Winds (who is sometimes confused with Koriel of the Kirin), along with a multitude of demi-gods and hero gods, and all the myriad brood of Krocaa.

Before the Days of Thunder, primitive Aearee nested in all the forests and high places throughout Faerûn. They subsisted in small family groups and coveys. In the absence of agriculture, it was impossible for them to congregate in any kind of larger society, as the fruits of the land could not sustain sizable flocks. Forced to vigorously defend expansive swaths of territory just to hunt and gather sufficient food to power their flight and high metabolism, the first avian folk were territorial, fiercely devoted to family and clan, and hostile to other tribes and outsiders.

Ironically, only through enslavement by successive Sarrukh and Batrachi empires did

the Aearee form a sense of racial identity and solidarity. Beneath the yoke of cold-blooded overseers, the Aearee learned the techniques of agriculture that would allow them to feed large flocks. With the cunning of Quorlinn, the Aearee filched the secrets of writing and magic from the slave lords. And with the patience and watchfulness of Syranita, they attended their oppressors, sowing in their hearts the seeds of civilization that would blossom after a storm of falling stars freed them from slavery.

In the wake of Tearfall – the blazing storm of stars that scoured the Batrachi overlords from the face of Faerûn – the avians rose against their former masters. The few remaining Ramenite Thearchs were hurled into the bellies of their iron-mawed toad altars, to burn amidst the ashes of untold Aearee victims, sacrificed over centuries to the hunger of a rapacious god.

But the falling stars took their toll on more than the Batrachi. Chauntea ached from her fiery wounds. Wracked by tremors, she strove to scrub the black-burnt scars from her soil with floods and storms. The world fell into a deep quiescence under a blanket of snow and ice and a dark, dark brume that hid the sun for many years. The newly-freed avians endured the earthquakes and horrid storms. The seven-fold winter that followed Tearfall nearly finished them off, but Krocaa provided.

The Aearee-Krocaa sung powerful spell mantles around their aeries and sacred forests. These mantles, with the grace of Krocaa, shielded them from the harsher depredations of the Long Night. In the Star Mounts, Phwiukree spellsingers called forth towering crystal spires from the peaks of the central mountains, whose exquisite magics could control the very weather above the High Forest.

In the south, the wily people of Quorlinn taught themselves to burrow and delve in the earth. At first they merely nested in warm volcanic caves and vents in the Orsraun Mountains, called by them the Shara. Shafts into the Underdark below gave access to limited food, such as bats, rodents, insects and edible fungi. Though meager, it was

sufficient sustenance to outlast the snows above.

Over time, they excavated fastholds in the deeper Underdark, larger rookeries where bigger clans could dwell, and where their hatcheries were safe from predators. Certain chambers maintained a constant temperature ideal for incubating Aearee eggs, which freed the parents to hunt and scavenge full-time. The Shara rookeries flourished through the Long Night, though some few communities perished when ruinous aftershocks collapsed their doubtful redoubts.

These burrowers learned the song of stone and soil. They taught themselves to mine and smelt and work metals. They became deft smiths and alchemists, developing talents unequaled among the other Aearee.

On the surface, the Krocaan druids of the western Aearee wove runes of warmth and light from the very branches and roots of living trees. Judicious use of perpetual daylight and warming spells saved countless woodlands as tireless ranger-priests of Syranita went out among the wealds of the One Land to preserve the fragile green things from frost and lack of sun.

In the north, the Aearee-Syran came into conflict with the Winter Queen of the Uldra fey over their efforts to warm the land. Frost giants from the Kingdom of Ottar joined with the Uldra, and a great war erupted throughout the High Forest as tribes of sprites and other fey folk were drawn into the conflagration on both sides. The battles raged for many years, but, in the end, the Armies of Ice were driven back to the Spine of the World, defeated as much by the returning sun as the tactics of the Aearee forces.

Skilled and gracious priests of Syranita from the aerie of Phwiukree negotiated a treaty with the OverKing of the High Forest sprites. Together they planted an arakhor sapling, Mornungongbarae, a celestial tree-spirit of divine lineage – said to be descended from Emmantiensien himself. In the shadow of the Star Mounts, deep within the Unicorn Run, the little sapling grew to tower above the High Forest, guarding the pledge of

friendship between the two races, a peace that would last nearly a thousand years.

When the ice and snow had finally melted, the Aearee set to work reviving and repairing the dormant forests. As Chauntea began to wake from her tortured slumber, the druids tended to the ailing trees. They nursed the plant life as best they could, and planted new seedlings where huge swaths of woodlands had succumbed.

In the open fields, they tilled the soil, practicing skills learned under slavers' whips, to feed their own beaks and the bellies of a starving people. They planted grains and berries, tubers and fruits. They corralled wild beasts and fowl into herds and flocks, becoming shepherds and ranchers.

Farms grew into villages, always built in wooded or high places. They were ever fearful of the wild beasts and monsters that roamed the One Land, including thunder lizards in those days – and a smaller, yet more ferocious breed of colorful lizards that had sprung up everywhere in the years since Tearfall. The Aearee preferred elevated dwellings, high off the ground, safe in the cradling limbs of trees, and in the crags of sheer cliffs.

The Sharan Aearee maintained their warm stone rookeries, but as the sun returned, they moved upwards again to settle amid the peaks and precipices of the Shara Mountains. From there they descended into the fertile, protected valley where Turmish lies today. They grew crops there and fished the waters of the new-born sea.

In Viakoo, to the west, the Krocaan runeweavers progressed in their discipline of plaiting tree boughs and roots into intricate, living glyphs, until they had lifted whole trees into the sky. Soon, the Aearee-Krocaa were raising small forests into the air, and the sky-folk made their homes there, in vast aeries that floated among the clouds.

The Netherese thought they were so clever when they raised their mighty cities in flight. But the dragons flew such lofty lairs in far more ancient times, as did the giants before

them, who taught them the secret. Yet the Aearee were the first to perfect the art.

The southern Aearee lacked the devotion of their western cousins to foster the skill of crafting runes, which is, at its heart, an exercise in divine power. But they were very canny in the Art.

The arcanists of Shara developed feats of arcane magic never rivaled by the flocks of the north and west. They opened *portals* to the elemental planes and forged compacts with the djinn. Under genie tutelage, the Sharans bound powerful elemental spirits to small timber structures, raising them aloft. Linking these vessels together with chain and rope and wood, the Aearee-Quor built their own floating rookeries in which to dwell. In less than a century the Aearee of Shara had gone from burrowing in the ground to soaring above the clouds, a triumph that swelled their breasts with pride.

As the arcanists grew ever-more proficient in their Art, they learned to forego the binding of elementals in favor of crafting rudimentary spelljamming helms, an innovation that spread to the west, as the Aearee-Krocaa would come to build several of their smaller cities using this technique. The Sharan rookeries grew bigger and bigger. In later centuries the Sharans discovered the secret of crafting a *mythallar*; finally their rookeries could rival the cloud-forests of their northern and western cousins.

The rookery of Aeng-Shara, which sailed above the western Shaar, was the first of these – and no other ever matched its glory. To craft the city, the roots of a great weir tree were braided around the mystic artifact. Only the Sharan arcanists knew the secret of protecting the tree from the impossible forces that would slay any living thing that touched the surface of a *mythallar*. Over time, the *mythallar* nourished the tree, fattened its boughs, extending it outwards and upwards into an arboreal colossus, truly cyclopean in magnitude.

Additional trees (among them zalantars, oaks, cypress, duskwood, and phandars) were tethered to the central weir by ropes and netting, and by interweaving their

branches. The rookery was spun outwards in spiral fashion until it had grown many bowshots in diameter. At its most populous, the rookery supported nearly fifty-thousand people.

The sky-realms of the Aearee could grow only limited food – fruiting trees, vines and small roosts of pigeons, quail and partridge. But the demands of a large population required much greater nourishment than could be grown in the clouds. Supplies of food had to be brought up continuously from the fields and farms below. The aeries above Viakoo and Phwiukree employed soarwhales, cloud rays, carts drawn by teams of giant eagles, and great flying arks to haul goods from the surface, while the Sharan rookeries bred titanic rocs to lift supplies up from the valley below.

As the flying cities proliferated, they spread outward from their home-nests. Each new aerie spaced itself far from the next, claiming a wide expanse of land beneath in fief. Every floating metropolis depended on a sizable territory of farms and holdings below it. Each territory, including the city and the lands beneath it, operated as an independent canton, governing themselves as they saw best. They maintained friendly ties with each other, and stronger ties still to their home-nests at Viakoo, Phwiukree and Shara.

The Aearee of Viakoo spread westward to lands now long vanished beneath the waves. They settled also to their east, occupying the skies above what is now the Western Heartlands, farming the green fields below. They founded a traditional, terrestrial aerie in the Cloud Peaks, called Diennkae, which was lost in a calamitous war with a colony of cloud giants from Uvar Kongerike. This song is still sung today in Anchorome as the *Dirge of Diennkae*.

The Aearee of Phwiukree spread their floating colonies across the north and east into the green plains of Anauroch, and farther east along the shores of the Star-Carved Sea to roost above the forests of Cormanthor, Lethyr and the Yuir.

The Aearee of Shara first founded the rookery of Ephwee-Shara above the

Gulthmere Forest, the rookery of Reeori-Shara above the Shining Plains, and from there they spread west as far as the lands that comprise modern Amn and the Wealdath. They traveled east, through the lands of the Old Empires – long before there were any Empires there – as far as the Raurin plains, and south across the whole of the Shaar, to the shores of the Great Sea.

In the Shaar, the rookery of Kookriu-Shara came into conflict with the gnolls of Uragnarash, a militant kingdom of slavers. Highly organized and aggressive, the gnolls held tribes of plains-fey, humans and even hill giants under their lash. The gnolls used these slaves to help conquer more territory and support an expansionist regime.

The warriors of Uragnarash raided constantly into the farms and holdings that supported Kookriu-Shara. Thinking to quash a minor annoyance, their Raptor Knights assaulted the seat of power of Uragnarash. Flying over on their rocs, they blasted fireballs and lightning down at the gnoll king and his army. The gnolls responded by shooting the rocs from the sky with great ballistae. The vengeful gnolls then burned the farms and fields of Kookriu-Shara, setting the Shaar ablaze.

The stunned Kookriu matriarchs became enraged. Singing the ancient battle calls, they entreated the aid of neighboring rookeries, Awookreet-Shara and Oweeo. Together they sought to prosecute a war of extermination against Uragnarash.

But the triune matriarchs underestimated the resourceful gnolls. Gnoll shamans prayed to Yeenoghu, who loosed a school of terlen from the nether planes. From the backs of flying sharks, the gnoll cavalry swarmed the Aearee. The shark-riders carried arrows tipped with dung and pitch, which they set alight and fired upon the rookeries. Their voracious mounts tore through skeins of defenders, devouring knight after knight right out of the air. Before the day was done, the gnolls prevailed, and all three rookeries crashed in cinders to the ground.

Rookeries across the Shaar were horrified. They summoned djinn and efreet to harrow

the gnolls with whirlwinds and fires. The shamans of Yeenoghu summoned marrashi – spirits of pestilence from the Barrens of Doom and Despair – to blight Aearee crops and spread a wasting plague among the avians.

The Aearee-Quor were decimated. With their farmlands ruined and little workforce remaining to farm them, the Aearee set upon humans and fey tribes to the north of the Shaar in order to plunder their crops and enslave a replacement workforce to feed the hungry rookeries. Thus began a never-ending cycle of conquest, as the southern rookeries exhausted the resources of each successive region, and moved further and further north.

Riding in great howdahs atop the backs of colossal battle rocs, the raptor legions hurled spells and bolts down on their woeful victims. They girded these living dreadnoughts in mithral barding, sacrificing maneuverability for impregnability, until their alchemists discovered the secret of sheening the rocs' feathers in adamantine, a technique that made them nigh impervious to arrows and missile-fire.

Arcanists of less militant rookeries never ceased their studies into the summoning arts. Having mastered the inner planes, they gazed beyond the Astral to explore the outer planes. They learned to summon such outsiders as celestials and fiends. Above the shores of the Great Sea, in the remote rookery of Okwalok-Shara, a young summoner named Sieska Waewielonn stumbled upon a mysterious name in her researches into a plane that was, as yet, unknown to her. Uttering that name released a vile power that would change the fate of the Aearee forever... *Pazrael*.

He appeared to her as the handsomest of Aearee with six-wings. He promised to show her awesome secrets and wonders. He claimed to be a god. *Pazrael*... a sweet-sounding name for a demonic lord of ultimate corruption.

With a sonorous song, he seduced the curious mage, promising gifts and powers

untold if she would only pledge her soul to him. And he delivered.

Soon, Sieska was the archmage of her rookery, and a skilled seductress herself. Pazrael channeled her hunger for knowledge into a hunger for power, investing her as the herald of his growing faith. All the Aearee of Okwalok-Shara, to a one, joined their song with hers and pledged their souls to Pazrael. Okwalok-Shara became a terror in the sky.

Pazrael taught the arcanists how to summon magical servants called vrocks. With the aid of demon legions, Okwalok-Shara conquered far-flung lands. Soon they brought all neighboring rookeries under Sieska's iron wing. Transferring her capital to the grand rookery of Aeng-Shara, the scion of Pazrael rapidly expanded her empire, usurping control of all the lands from Raurin back to the home-nest of Shara in the Orsraun Mountains.

The Aearee-Quor abandoned the faith of Quorlinn to worship at the talons of Pazrael. Those few faithful who refused to convert were tied to stones and flung from the edges. The hearts of the Aearee-Quor became as dark as their feathers, and the People of the Dusk became the People of the Night.

One lone city maintained its allegiance to Quorlinn and escaped to the east. The rookery of Tiennkoo-Shara fled to the farthest peaks of Kara-Tur, where their descendants yet thrive today as the crow-headed race known as Tengu. The Tengu are the only branch of the Aearee-Quor who never lost their wings.

The sweet promises of Pazrael came at a terrible cost for the rest of the Aearee-Quor; Pazrael never gives any gift but for the price of the thing you hold most dear. Pazrael took from them the power of flight. The Aearee of Shara never again rode the winds, except by dint of spell or steed.

Having brought the entirety of the Sharan rookeries under the shadow of her dread wing, Sieska turned her gaze to the north, upon the cantons of the Aearee-Krocaa and the Aearee-Syran. The Weave erupted in

pyrotechnic splendor as the three great magical nations went to war.

The Krocaa aeries of the Western Heartlands were first to fall. As the rookery of Aeng-Shara loomed over the horizon, vrocks and Aearee joined together in the Dance of Ruin, capering and whirling in fiendish frenzy about the battlements. Crackling bolts of eldritch power arced across the firmament to char the trees of the flying forests.

Sharan invaders launched from the ramparts. Arrayed in battle formations, their dark chevrons sliced the skies like daggers. Battle-rocs eclipsed the sun as they plunged down upon the aerial groves.

Defenders rose from the canopies on the backs of soarwhales and in the boughs of great winged treants. Splinters and feathers, blood and sap rained from the clouds as the forces clashed in the air.

Wielding their many branches like a windmill of cudgels, the treants hurtled at the battle-rocs, crashing down on them in piques of arboreal fury. The elephantine timbers of their legs, like enormous battering rams, shattered bones and beaks, as the wooden warriors pounced upon the colossal birds. Powerful roots drove beneath feathers and skin to grasp unshakeable purchase. The weight of them pressed the rocs from the sky. A whirlwind of blows bashed open roc skulls, flung the howdahs from their backs – along with the invaders inside – and ripped the feathers from their flesh.

The rocs bucked and twisted in the air. Arching their heads round, sharp beaks sought vulnerable eyes and tore green leaves from treant wings. Mighty talons rent bark from flesh, broke limbs, and pierced vital organs. Locked in deadly embrace, both rocs and treants plummeted to the earth below.

The Aearee-Krocaa fought valiantly, yet in vain. The conjurers of Aeng-Shara could summon near limitless vrocks from the Abyss, while the defending forces dwindled as the battle wore on. After the aeries of Seearoi and Quaefeng fell to Sieska, the

surviving Krocaan aeries fled west, retreating to Viakoo.

The shadow of Aeng-Shara fell upon the High Forest as the Sharan juggernaut floated relentlessly northward to engage the Aearee-Syran at Phwiukree. Honoring ancient treaties, the sprites came to aid their avian allies against the aggressors. But Sieska's arcanists slaughtered the fey with fireballs, thunderbolts, and necromantic miasmas that drew the lifeforce from their tiny frames.

In the initial volleys of the assault on Phwiukree, the peerless arcanists of Aeng-Shara easily broke through the spell mantles that protected the aerie. Magical energies coursed down upon the mountain peaks, shattering the crystal spires of the Aearee-Syran.

Down below, the arakhor Mornungongbarae, who had guarded the High Forest for nearly a thousand years, drew strength and nourishment from the soil of Chauntea for the unimaginable feat he was about to undertake. Mystical roots tapped the Weave itself for raw magical power. Pulling it into himself, he powered a miraculous transformation. Silverfire coursed through his xylem and phloem. Expanding his tissues, he multiplied himself in size, growing in scant instants a thousand wing-spans into the sky. Towering over the forest, the largest being ever to grace the face of Toril, his massive roots buckling the earth below as he tried to steady himself, Mornungongbarae poised to strike against Sieska's terrible city.

His timbers cracked and splintered as he struggled to maintain the magic that sustained him. Like a flower bending to face the sun, Mornungongbarae now leaned toward the Sharan rookery. All the branches of his fantastic frame entwined themselves around Sieska's citadel, canting it at a violent angle. Many hundreds of invaders fell from the walls as Mornungongbarae cemented his hold.

Then, as magic failed him, the timber of his immense trunk shattered with a clap of thunder. The elder tree fell, crashing down upon the slopes of the Star Mounts, his great weight wrenching Aeng-Shara from its lofty

heights. His tragic sacrifice is still sung by treant skalds today, in a saga called *The Lament of Mornungongbarae*.

The rookery smashed into the mountain face, disintegrating into a cloud of debris. The *mythallar* cracked open and evaporated in a gout of mystic flame. The Sharan tyrant was dead.

The aerie of Phwiukree was demolished, but the war with Shara was ended. The eastern aeries of the Aearee-Syran survived, enduring an uneasy détente with the Sharan empire to the south. But the peace would last only a few years before a new foe revealed itself.

Aearee hunters and soldiers were called increasingly to defend farms and settlements from encroaching dragons. The little lizards that hatched in the wake of Tearfall had grown into mighty wyrms. Over centuries, the dragons had increased their size manyfold, and their numbers by multitudes. They hid within caverns and swamps, in desert sands and mountain crags. Biding their time, they gathered their strength, watching the skies until the day they would challenge the Aearee for dominion of Faerûn.

On that fateful day, some thousand years after they fell from the sky as eggs, dragons across Faerûn swarmed together in the first Flight of Dragons. They assailed the avians in the air, on the land and beneath the ground. They burned the cities from the skies. They snatched the Aearee from the air, swallowing them in mid-flight. They fell upon the homesteads of Viakoo and Shara, ravaging the aeries, destroying them utterly.

The wyrm Nagamat rampaged through the Underdark below the Orsraun Mountains, consuming the Sharans and burning their ancestral hatcheries. Nagamat took all of Shara as his lair, and finding many wonders there, used Aearee magic to help found the first dragon kingdom. Sharan survivors escaped deeper into the Underdark, where the feral and twisted descendants of the Aearee-Quor became the dire corbies.

The survivors of Viakoo fled west across the ocean to the land called Anchorome. Five of

their cities, all crafted from spelljamming helms, fled to the stars. Rulungwar, Donnakee, Phra'iskree, Oolatiel, and an unnamed fifth one, lost during the exodus, crossed the Sea of Night to the world of Coliar. These aeries float there still, among Coliar's manifold moons. Descendants of the Aearee-Krocaa are known today as the aarakocra.

Some few repentant Aearee-Quor begged Quorlinn for his mercy, and he led them to Kara-Tur to find refuge with their long lost cousins of Tiennkoo-Shara. Descendants of these people call themselves kenku, a name which some scholars believe derives from *Kanee-Tiennkoo*, which means "little brothers of Tiennkoo" while other sages think it merely a linguistic variant of the name Tiennkoo itself. Both peoples, the tengu and the kenku, thrive to this day in Kara-Tur. Over the centuries, many kenku have emigrated back to Faerûn and have a notable presence in the Unapproachable East.

In the Year of the Eagle's Flight, 418 DR, a colony of my forebears, aarakocra from Maztica, flew from the lands beyond the Trackless Sea to resettle our ancestral aeries in Faerûn. They founded the Six Aeries in the Star Mounts, where our people lived peacefully, until the hated wyrm Elaacrimalicros rekindled ancient rivalries. Awaking from his hibernation, the green dragon savaged five of the Six Aeries, slaying nearly all of my people, leaving few to tell our tale.

But the world must know our story. The glory of the Aearee will be sung again, carried on the tongues of man. I am Wuoress Aartenoo, the last aarakocra of the aerie of Ephru'cayre. Go forth and spread our song.

TOWNS OF THE DRAGON COAST

The Town of Ilipur

By Jorkens

Any traveller in the lands of the Sea of Fallen Stars will quickly hear of the dark reputation earned by the Dragon Coast, the westernmost part of the inland sea. Even the lowliest of thieves, beggars, and whores will say that life in this area is harder and deadlier than theirs will ever be.

This is, of course, not entirely true. As with many bard's tales, the stories have grown. Voices of wonder have added to the tales, with further embellishment added by the general need for people to find the Hells around the corner to lighten their own lives. Still, few would disagree that the city-states and towns of this area are among Faerûn's hotbeds of intrigue. Much of this stems from the independent nature of its residents, and from the region's central placement on many trade routes.

The Dragon Coast is a patchwork of cultures, power groups, and races, with a history that far predates the modern lands of Cormyr and Sembia. Some of the cities, like Westgate, Teziir, and Elversult, are powerful enough to secure the region's independence from nations such as Cormyr and Turmish – no matter how much the rulers of these lands rage at the thousands of smugglers and pirates they claim infest the region. There are also several smaller towns and hamlets in the region, existing in a ballet of intrigue and trying to survive among their stronger neighbours. One of these towns is Ilipur.

* * *

Ilipur



rchitecture and general impression: Ilipur is the westernmost harbour town on the Lake of Dragons. The coast in this area is dominated by large sandbanks, mixed with the

rocky mouths of many shallow springs. The town itself has a good harbour, though its waters are shallow. At the docks, the water is barely deep enough to cover the head of a tall human male, so larger ships have to anchor about fifty yards out into the bay. Barges provided by the town transport goods to and from the ships in the harbour. The harbour itself is shielded from the east winds by the Egnarshill ridge, which forms a half-moon around the docks.

Most of Ilipur's homes and businesses stand on Egnarshill. The wealthiest homes are near the top of the hill, with homes and buildings

becoming less expensive closer to the base of the hill. The cheapest structures are the warehouses, located near the docks.

Homes in Ilipur are built from a mix of stone and timber, with poorer houses utilizing more wood. The streets are not cobbled, but the steeper parts of the slope are inlaid with roughly cut stone steps. The hill is steep enough that most garbage runs down the slope; only near the docks does one risk wading through offal and mud.

As Ilipur is a place of transit more than trade, it lacks a large central market. Most traders and craftsmen sell directly from their warehouses or workshops. Some merchants have booths by the docks, but as people prefer to avoid this area, these merchants are few and desperate. The town is rather small, so finding a particular destination usually takes little time.

There are few noteworthy buildings in Ilipur. On the eastern point of Egnarshill stands The

Eye of Lathander, an old lighthouse that only sees use during storms, when it is manned by the nearest member of the harbour guard. A small, little-known temple of Istishia stands near the docks. It is a recent addition, having been converted from an abandoned sail maker's shop two summers ago. The old fortress of Regnuir guards the top of Egnarshill. Little more than an expanded guard tower, Reguir serves as the town council's meeting place.

Population: Ilipur has about 2500 permanent residents, mostly human. At any given time, Ilipur has a similar number of visitors, usually merchants and sailors.

Ruler: Hudrain Omailn, High Representative of the Council

Who really rules: Ilipur is officially run by a town council, but in reality, the town is fully dependent on the goodwill of Elversult. The traders of Ilipur can run the town as a self-governed vassal, but they know fully well that the real decisions are made by whoever holds the lordship of Elversult in the larger cases, and the smuggler bands in the smaller.

Politics: Ilipur is a politician's nightmare. From its earliest days, the town has balanced on a dagger's edge, struggling to survive as an independent settlement. Time has made it impossible to remain completely independent, and the lords of Elversult have by now made Ilipur a vassal in all but name. High Representative Hudrain and his predecessors have constantly tested the patience of the larger city, but with the increasing intrigues, the mood of the town is growing ever tenser. Last year, Elversult sent a clear message stating that if the council did not cooperate, Elversian trading interests may have to transfer over to the town of Pros.

As the Sembian cell of the Cult of the Dragon gains in power in the Dragonmere's southern coast, the town council has found itself forced to choose between two evils, the supremacy of Elversult or the sinister mages and swordsmen of the Cult.

Products: Ilipur produces little beyond fish, tools and crafts; most of its agricultural products come from the regions near Elversult. Ilipur's economy is dominated by facilitating trade to and from other regions, and by supplying and maintaining ships. Additionally, Ilipur can be said to be the greatest exporter of waterborne smugglers on this side of the Sea of Fallen Stars.

Imports: Most of the goods passing through Ilipur are destined for the western markets. Timber and coal from Cormyr are common, as are cotton fabrics and grain from Sembia. Old trade agreements prevent Ilipur from taking part in the eastern trade of Westgate and the weapons trade of Pros.

Defences: The law of Ilipur is enforced by Dockmaster Hillashan Saltcloak and his ten deputies. If any significant danger were to threaten the town, Elversult would mobilise to defend it. Elversult is also responsible for guarding the road and backcountry between the two urban areas, using a company of one hundred Westar mercenary outriders to perform this duty. The mercenaries are capable of quick mobilization, and are prepared to defend Ilipur at short notice.

Wizards and Mages: Rughill Jandoril and Betrad Winding are lesser ship's mages, usually employed by craftsmen and dockworkers. Amaela Shidrillia, an apprentice of Usreena Juepara, is deeply involved in Ilipur's smuggling trade. Some of her activities are for her own benefit, and some are by the command of her mistress.

Various organizations and groups have agents in Ilipur, but these keep as low a profile as possible; spellcasters working for these groups do the same.

Temples: Ilipur is home to a small temple of Istishia, and a small chapel to Mask can be found near the docks. Both are manned by a priest and a handful of faithful. Lathander, UMBERLEE and Tymora also have shrines, but any priests trying to man these on a permanent basis mysteriously disappear. Services at these shrines are only held when a wandering priest comes through town.

Thieves and other lawless elements: Throughout the lands of the Dragon Coast, it is common knowledge that most inhabitants of Ilipur are connected with the smugglers in one way or another. Anyone with the gold to spare can import or export anyone or anything via the harbour. Because of this, many of the region's politically active individuals and groups have at least one agent stationed in the town.

The local smugglers are a loose group of independent businessmen that have always stood together against threats to their way of life, especially foreign darkcloaks or envoys of the surrounding lands. Smuggling is a family tradition in this area, and most families have generations of experience. It is common for thrill-seeking younger folk to travel with smugglers for a handful of trips, before going on to other kinds of work. In Ilipur, there is no shame associated the smuggling business.

Recently, the conflict in the criminal underworld has intensified. Sembian Cult of the Dragon members, under Dhartot Obrams, have begun infiltrating the town in increasing numbers, and are trying to monopolize the smuggling business. This has led to knifings and violence between the Cult and the local smugglers, who have united against the outside pressure.

Notable traders and craftsmen: Ilipur is more a receiver of goods destined for other markets than a manufacturer of its own goods. This keeps the number of artisans and craftsmen relatively small, save for carpenters, sail makers, and others involved in ship maintenance. Most of the city's exports are salted meat and leather from the cattle areas west of Elversult. This is mainly handled by the representatives of the Circlemoon trading company, and the locals have little or no contact with this trade.

Caravans and transportation of goods from Ilipur are handled by the Illmarinni caravan company. Their local representative, Huldric Szhaer, lives in a modest villa by Egnarshill, on the west side of the bay.

The carpenters and woodworkers are organized under Himrail Silvertree and his

family. There are seven master carpenters and three master woodworkers, each with two to four apprentices.

Most of Ilipur's sail makers are in Hamranilla Shaertas's extended family, consisting of her four men and twelve children.

The blacksmiths are not organized, and there is sharp competition among them. The Snarmall brothers and Vewallir Duhill are commonly seen as the leaders among them. Of all the smiths in the town, the only one with the skill to work with steel or weapons is Driwalntir Cuirna of Turmish.

Equipment and goods: The town commonly handles travellers starting their westward journey to Elversult, Priapurl or Proskur. Horses, camp equipment, and food are easily found, if somewhat overpriced. More specialized goods that the locals can not manufacture must be acquired elsewhere.

The most prosperous industry in Ilipur is the black market. Herbs, poisons, drugs, stolen magic and fenced goods are readily available. Even if the sought goods are not easy to obtain, it is relatively easy to find someone that can – for a price, of course – procure the item in question. It should be noted that little is secret in Ilipur, so those who desire discretion should be extremely careful, or should take their business elsewhere.

Attitude towards adventurers, wanderers and such: Everybody is welcomed in Ilipur, as long as they quickly leave for other lands and other troubles. The town is used to being a trading centre, but it is still a small town, and the locals are suspicious of the unknown people that decide to make their little corner of the world a permanent base. This has made the town somewhat divided between the native-born and the newcomers, who are, in the eyes of the natives, all spies planning to intrude on their business and way of life. The representatives of Elversult learned long ago that the best way of handling the town was to let the natives do more or less as they please, and take their own steps against problematic agents from other lands.

For the traveller passing through, Ilipur has many amenities. At the waterfront, you can find a dozen taverns and drinking establishments of varying quality. These range from dives to restaurants that will make a Selgauntan trader nod in acknowledgement. Among the best taverns are The Merman-hook and The Garden of Semphar. The worst taverns include The Gauntlet and Gull-tears Brew. Further into town, there are several taverns in the winding streets, but these mainly cater to the locals, and travellers are not welcomed.

The town has only one brothel of note, The Happy Illithid. Run by Agmarata Rubyheart, it is clean, professional and simple. Most of the other ladies and gentlemen of the night work out of private apartments and peddle their business on the street outside.

Ilipur offers several choices to travellers seeking a place to sleep. Druighar Goldcoam, a dwarf of the Southlands, rents bunks in old warehouses by the docks. Here a traveller can securely store their belongings, but little else is offered, except for a dry place to sleep. The place is mostly used by sailors and poor wanderers; if one wants to bring a companion to this establishment, the price doubles, no matter how short their stay. Other prominent inns include The Elven Kiss and The Dragon's Eye. Both are of fair-to-moderate quality, and can be found just outside of the town. On the top of Egnarshill stands Etara-tower, an expensive and comfortable inn that caters to the choosiest and most well-off travellers.

Most people that know Ilipur choose to use one of the two inns lying on the outskirts of town. These inns have quite reasonable prices and services, and are often used by the caravan crews. Both are excellent spots for catching up on rumors.

Other notable people: IIsjarun Milliric is a representative of the Circlemoon trading company, and Elversult's most important agent in town. If the western city were to intervene in Ilipur's affairs, it would be at IIsjarun's wish.

Cattarillasa, a sailor from the other side of the Sea of Fallen Stars, is most well known

for his elaborate facial tattoos. He is an unofficial representative of the pirates who prey on the Dragonmere's trade.

Chuldran Browless, a highway robber, has lately found his work becoming increasingly difficult, because of the influx of foreign agents that take very badly to him disrupting their transports.

Mirialia Wavescream, a travelling Umberlant, visits the city every season to collect the offerings left at the sea goddess's shrine.

Nidraia Shaelvir, an older half-elf, is rumoured to be the area's greatest expert on the sea life of the Dragon Coast.

Sahiruil Quezarnsmile, a moustachioed smuggler, specialises in getting goods into the heavily guarded ports of Cormyr. It is rumoured that he also helps transport people out of the country.

Ombraduda Boumland, the region's premium horse trader, is an elderly lady of Turmish heritage. It is said that she has a great love for horses and none for men. She is an old acquaintance of the Lady Bloodsword of the Mindulgulph mercenary company, and few people dare to anger her these days.

Local customs, history and myths: Ilipur started out as a guard post for the Proscurii chief Mailliphir Falcon, who later founded the town. About four centuries before the raising of the Standing Stone, Mailliphir built a stone tower to guard the eastern borders of his land against pirates and the refugees starting to trickle out of Netheril.

In time, the Tethyrian people lost control over the western coast of the Dragon Sea to the better organized Netherese, and the old tribal lands were split up into city-states and clan holdings. The end came with the Shoon emperor's forays in the third and fourth centuries after the founding of the Dales. The last chief of the Scornubii fell in the three-day battle against the Valasharian legions of Ashar Tornam in the Year of the Drawstring (333 DR). Only the interference of King Azoun I of Cormyr, in the Year of the Whipped Cur (336DR), kept the lands from

being placed under the banner of the Shoonites.

The tower of Regnuir was abandoned, with no local groups willing to maintain a garrison there. The few fishermen that lived in the area soon moved into the bay under the tower, as the old building was easily defended against bandits and monsters. The tower of Regnuir proved its worth in the Year of the Eversharp Axe (481DR). That year, the pirate Guzdraeil allied with the remainders of Myntharan of Westgate's mercenaries, themselves recently crushed by the Winter Sphinx Lyonarth. Despite their combined strength, the tower withstood their assaults. The tower was tested again when the giant Smuldar of the Flaming Cloak terrorized the area between the Year of the Sad Refrain (733 DR) and the Year of the Netherese Lai (740 DR).

By this time, many fishermen of the north coast had started seeing the advantages of the port. After these followed small trading cogs from Marsembler and the growing city of Suzail. Many saw this as a chance to bypass the stranglehold Westgate held on trade at the time.

The old Scornubii had mostly settled inland, concentrating on livestock and farming. The settlement that would become known as Ilipur was left in peace by its neighbours. This allowed the town to evolve into its current role as a trading harbour.

Modern folk of Ilipur are mostly of a mix of Netherese and Chondathan blood. Some of the more haughty families, such as the Ilvirins, the owners of The Dragon's Eye, claim to be the descendants of the old Proscurii or Netherese nobles. Among most people, it is more common to look down on the inlanders of Tethyrian descent, something that has increased as Elversult's influence has grown. Some of the older traditions, such as the yarthing players and dancers that are used on days of celebrations, continue to be popular.

Another local tradition is a celebration on the fourth day of Mirtul, honouring Hugrain Wineleafshill, a Cormyrian mercenary that died trying to drive off Smuldar of the

Flaming Cloak. The histories say, incorrectly, that Smuldar was killed on the slopes of Egnarshill, but in reality no one knows what happened to the wounded giant after the fight with Hugrain. Though the holiday is officially celebrated to honour the mercenary, in truth, the festivities have little to do with him – it is more of an excuse for joyful merrymaking.

The town of Ilipur also has numerous myths and stories about sunken ships and the treasures of long-ago pirates. Several of the inhabitants earn extra coin by selling "treasure maps" to travellers. This has been going on for so long that "Ilipur maps" has become an expression throughout the Dragon Coast for dubious rumours and stories. As none of the locals bear these legends much faith, it is possible that one or more of these may be correct and may lead to unknown treasures.

The one story that the locals consider reliable is the one about Smuldar burying his treasure somewhere nearby before his battle with Hugrain. As no one has found it, yet, they seldom mention this story to strangers.

Ilipur's reputation for half-truths and lies is well known throughout the lands of the Dragon Coast. The maps are not alone to blame for this, as many newcomers spread any number of false stories in an attempt to confuse their rivals. This has almost become an art form; tall tales and invented stories have become a local hobby and sport in the taverns. Some of the sharper minds of the town have warned against this practice, as it could lead to an increase of interest in the town by halflings from the Sunset Vale. Is the town of Ilipur really large enough to bear the invasion of a hundred hin storytellers?

Hooks and Rumours

The giant Smuldar of the Flaming Cloak is said to have come from the now mostly forgotten fire giant kingdom north of the Snakewood, where he was the last son of the last keeper of the standing stones. It is thought by some that the wounded giant tried to get home after his fight with Hugrain, but died on the way. If this rumour is true,

the giant's treasure might hold hints to the secrets of the ancient kingdom.

It is believed that Dhartot Obrams has been trying to contact his masters in Sembia with requests for aid against their enemies in the town. Informants among the followers of the Scaly Way have said that all magical means of communications are being blocked by some unknown source, and that Dhartot has decided to risk a written message. Many people would pay well to get their hands on this document, both to get information on the Cult and to find out about Dhartot's Sembian master. Ilipurian locals are interested in stopping the document, to keep reinforcements from the Cult from coming to town.

There is trouble brewing in the town's very limited upper class. The Lady Mimbriia Ilvirin's daughter Thamaia has decided that she wants a traditional Tethyrian wedding. This proposal that has enraged her future mother-in-law, Jashiel Omailn, who considers these traditions barbaric and lewd. Lady Jashiel has, without her husband's knowledge, started investigating the traditions of the Tethyrians, hoping to find proof of her claims. She will pay willingly for any evidence of these people's unseemly ways. Both Zhentarim and Cult of Dragon members are using this as an opportunity to spread some mayhem, feeding her with false horror stories. These stories may also leak into the town at large.

News has recently spread that a shipment of maxoris, a spice growing only in the southern Storm Horns, has turned out to be infested with raw mordayn powder. Already, there have been three deaths in Urmlaspyr. It is commonly believed that someone is trying to weaken the smugglers' credibility. Agents of Cormyr have been suspected, but mordayn is

of southern make and quite expensive, therefore not the logical method of poisoning the shipment.

The smuggler delivering the maxoris, one Amcarin Plowgrass, is well respected as smugglers go. He claims that the shipment was bought from the same sources he has used for years. There may be an answer to the mystery somewhere in the foothills of the Storm Horns; several lone travellers and at least one small caravan have disappeared, with some signs indicating giants. Some of the more superstitious old seadogs of the docks have claimed that it is probably the ghost of Smuldar of the Flaming Cloak, coming back to haunt them.

Several exiled Cormyrian nobles have been seen recently, and at least four of them have been granted entrance to the council meetings in Regnuir castle. Some rumours talk of large smuggling operations being planned; others talk of the council being bribed by the exiles, who plan to take over the town.

The aarakocra of the Storm Horns have recently been attacked by a group of unknown mages. A kenku scout named Chrra-chee, a sometime resident of Ilipur, led the mages to the aarakocran nesting areas. The raiders escaped with eight eggs from the birdmen's nests, and were seen fleeing in the direction of Ilipur. An envoy of the aarakocra arrived in town about a week ago, and made it clear that his people hold the town collectively responsible for the theft. If the eggs are not returned within two months, the aarakocra will volunteer their services to the Cormyrian navy. With a group of aerial scouts, the illegal activities of the town will be nearly impossible.

UNVEILING WATERDEEP'S HIDDEN LORDS

Part 111

By Chris Jameson

Of all the forms of government found in the Realms, perhaps none is as intriguing as Waterdeep's unique system. With the exception of a brief and tumultuous period, the City of Splendors has been ruled by a hidden council of Lords for over three centuries. With one exception, Waterdeep's Lords have ruled fairly and justly, putting the needs and concerns of the city ahead of their own desires.

Another of the unique qualities of the Lords is that they have been drawn from all walks of life. Wizards, nobles, merchants and common laborers have all served as Lords. Lordship is not restricted by race; though most Lords have been human, there have also been elven, half-elven, and halfling Lords.

The citizens of Waterdeep believe they are ruled by sixteen Lords. However, the number was secretly increased to twenty in 1364, after an ex-Harper caused considerable turmoil within the city. *City of Splendors: Waterdeep* (pages 52-55) lists the following individuals as Lords: Open Lord Piergeiron the Paladinson, Brian the Swordmaster, Caladorn Cassalanter, Durnan the Wanderer, Mirt the Moneylender, Larissa Neathal, Khelben "Blackstaff" Arunsun, Nymara "Kitten" Scheiron, Sammareza Sulphontis, Texter, Kyriani Agrivar, Brianne Byndraeth, and Nindil Jalbuck. Ed Greenwood's short story "A Slow Day in Skullport", found in *Realms of the Underdark*, listed Mirt's lady Asper as another Lord of Waterdeep. *The Siege*, the second book of the Return of the Archwizards trilogy, named another Lord, Deliah the White.

With fifteen of the twenty Lords named, Dungeon Masters are free to create their own Lords, filling their own needs. Here is one possible Lord DMs can use. Following the tradition of past Waterdhavian supplements, only a minimal stat block is given.

Taethen Caliel

Taethen Caliel/Elios Bivaehl

Male Chondathan Human, Warrior 12

History:



he boy who would grow up to be Taethen Caliel was born under a different name, more than thirty summers ago. Elios Bivaehl was born to Algren Bivaehl, a prominent Mistran merchant, and Sadeira Winsal, a half-elven ranger. Born into a moderately wealthy home in the peaceful town of Ashabenford, Elios's early life was happy and free from worry.

A bright and cheerful lad, Elios was also gifted with loving, generous parents, who saw to it that he received a good education. Though he had several mentors, instructing him in a variety of fields, his favorite teacher was a retired ranger named Valan Serra. A skilled woodsman and a devout follower of Mielikki, Valan had also taught Elios's mother Sadeira her woodsmore. Elios readily learned skills valuable to surviving in the forest, but he never developed the ranger's affinity for animals, as both Valan and Sadeira had hoped he would. He was comfortable spending time amongst the trees, and his ability as an archer was discovered at an early age, but the ranger's calling eluded him.

Not only did he develop a remarkable degree of skill with the bow and arrow, he also showed promise as a bowyer and fletcher. Elios knew that his training would prove useful when he grew up. Though he was torn between being a professional bowyer or joining the famed Riders of Mistedale, he knew he could succeed at either one.

Sadeira only wanted her son to be happy. She didn't care which path he chose, so long as he was happy walking it. Algren felt much the same way, though he did try to push his son into the more sedentary profession. Algren had taken over the business from his father, and it was his desire to pass it on to Elios.

Another of Elios's primary interests was listening to tales of heroism and valor. Whether from books, passing bards, or his own imagination, Elios could easily lose himself in epic tales of battle between good and evil. Though his elven blood was not apparent, he was particularly interested in tales of elves and the wonders they had fashioned. Sadeira had learned many of these stories in her own youth, and greatly enjoyed indulging her son's interest in his elvish heritage.

Midway through his teenage years, Elios's world turned upside-down. Sadeira died suddenly, sent to Kelemvor's halls by heartstop. She had seemed hale and hearty that morning, but that afternoon, she unexpectedly lapsed into unconsciousness. By the time a cleric had been summoned, Algren was a widower and Elios had lost his mother.

As hard as his mother's death hit Elios, in some ways, it hit Algren even harder. When he lost his wife, something inside Algren died with her. Once affable, jovial and generous, Algren became sullen, withdrawn, and miserly. Money, and its acquisition, became more important to him than anything else, including Elios.

Algren's new-found greed was not going to be sated living in Mistedale. He decided to leave Mistedale and return to his birthplace, Hillsfar. It was a grimmer and less-friendly place, but Algren knew firsthand the money

he could make there. Ignoring his son's protests, Algren packed up their belongings, dismissed the servants and mentors, and took his son to Hillsfar.

Elios was miserable in the City of Trade. He still lived in a comfortable home, but Algren was no longer willing to indulge in such "pointless" things as hiring bards for their tales, or buying books of elvish lore. The xenophobic nature of Hillsfar's residents felt oppressive to Elios. Though he knew his elvish blood wasn't apparent, he still worried about its discovery, and he sorely missed learning about elvish lore. His hopes of becoming a bowyer or a Rider of Mistedale were also dashed; Algren had decided that his son would follow in his footsteps, regardless of any wishes to the contrary.

For young Elios, the next several years seemed to pass interminably. He was assuming more and more responsibility for his father's business, and the constant demands of the work took much of his free time. What little spare time he had he spent practicing his archery. He had little time to cultivate friendships, and his life before coming to Hillsfar left him feeling like an outsider in his new home. Living in a cold home, in an unfriendly city, Elios began feeling a growing desire to set off on his own, and leave the entire Moonsea behind him.

Despite his desire to leave Hillsfar, Elios wasn't really planning to leave any time soon. He had vague plans to do so, but he also realized that he was inexperienced, and he wasn't sure if he should return to Mistedale or go someplace new. He wanted to leave, but he wasn't sure where to go, how to get there, or how to stay alive while en route. Elios was miserable, but he also knew he was relatively safe.

Things might have continued this way for several more years, had the Company of the Crimson Dagger not entered Hillsfar. Consisting of five humans and an elf, the Company was en route to Cormanthor when they stopped in Hillsfar to gather provisions and information. Knowing of Hillsfar's dark reputation for racism, the adventurers wisely kept a low profile. They weren't careful enough, however, for Algren's eyes were

sharp enough to recognize that the cloaked female was an elf. He quickly reported their presence to the Red Plumes, and the adventurers were arrested.

When he learned of his father's actions, Elios was furious. He knew that his father would have once been willing and eager to help people of any race. Now that darkness had claimed Algren, he was willing to sell out people to whom his son felt a sort of kinship. All of his doubts and indecision vanished in an instant, as Elios resolved to help the adventurers escape.

Acting quickly, he raided his father's coffers for money. He bribed several guards into looking the other way as he helped the adventurers escape. Though at least one guard had planned to betray Elios, the young man had been careful to spread around enough gold to ensure that other guards would stay bought. Escaping into the city with the Company, Elios led them to one of his father's warehouses, where he helped them hide.

Leaving the warehouse, Elios returned home. He confronted his father, accusing Algren of betraying Sadeira's memory. Elios told his father about helping the adventurers escape, and readily admitted to stealing the elder merchant's money to do it. As Elios spoke, his own anger showing forth, Algren became enraged at his son's actions.

The two came to blows. Father and son fought each other, greed and rage battling youthful ideals and years of resentment. Though young and fit, Elios found that his father was larger and stronger. The younger man had to admit defeat, fleeing his father's home, bruised and battered from their confrontation.

Recognizing his sacrifice, the Company of the Crimson Dagger took Elios with them when they left the city the next day. Posing as mercenary guards, they were able to leave the City of Trade behind, and head for friendlier areas beyond the reach of Zhents and Red Plumes. The Company made for Shadowdale, intending to winter there before braving the deep forests of Cormanthor.

The party's cleric, the moon elf Shaliri Araveyn, healed Elios's physical wounds. But Corellon's grace wasn't enough to heal Elios's emotional wounds. Touched by what he had done and what he had gone through, Shaliri found herself drawn to the young man. Taking it upon herself to help Elios cope with his feelings, the priestess became Elios's constant companion. She rode beside him as they traveled, and when the group made camp, the two often engaged in conversations long into the night.

During one such conversation, Elios bitterly complained that his father's actions had made him ashamed of his own name. After a moment's consideration, Shaliri suggested that maybe Elios should take a new name. Choosing a different name, she reasoned, would not only distance Elios from his father, it would also reflect that he'd left his old life behind, and started a new one.

Elios thought long and hard about this. While he agreed that a different name was a good idea, choosing the ideal name was an entirely different matter. After several days of contemplation, he had chosen his new name: Taethen Caliel. It was not a random name; though Elios had been born after the elflord's death, his mother Sadeira had told Elios many tales about her father. By choosing his grandfather's name, the young man honored his past, his mother, and his elven heritage. Elios Bivaehl, son of Algren Bivaehl the merchant, was no more. Now Taethen Caliel, descendent of a noble elf, walked in his place.

By the time the Company of the Crimson Dagger reached Shadowdale, it came as no surprise to the other adventurers that Shaliri and the newly-named Taethen had become lovers. As Auril's cloak settled across the Dales, the young lovers were inseparable. The two spent a considerable amount of time in their room at the Old Skull Inn, but also frequented several of the area's other quiet spots, particularly Watcher's Knoll and the area around the Millpond.

Shaliri was not the only member of the Crimson Dagger to take an interest in the group's newest member. The Company was led by Gonril Eseldin, a paladin of Tyr hailing

from Suzail. As did the other members of the Crimson Dagger, Gonril took a liking to Taethen. While the paladin was impressed by Taethen's skill with the bow, he was aghast at how unskilled the young man was in basic swordplay. Whenever Gonril could pry Taethen away from Shaliri, he took the young man to a secluded area, where the two could practice their bladework.

Though not as interested in swordplay as he was in archery, Taethen still proved to be an able student. His skills were no match for Gonril's, but he learned enough to be able to fight effectively with swords or daggers. Gonril was pleased with the young man's improvement.

When spring reclaimed the land, the Company of the Crimson Dagger left Shadowdale, entering the woods of Cormanthor. For the next several months, the group explored the area around the fallen City of Song, occasionally entering Myth Drannor itself. The group found considerable amounts of gold and magic, but their stated goal – finding the armor of Candos Eseldin, a paladin and ancestor of Gonril, who had fallen during the city's final days – eluded them.

Spring gave way to summer. Summer drew to a close, and the colors of autumn began appearing in the trees. The Company was preparing to return to Shadowdale for another winter when they met an unexpected ally. A group of elven adventurers, entering Myth Drannor to search for lost elven artifacts, had fallen prey to the fiends that stalked the city. The only survivor was Eryllia Tassaniel, a moon elf wizard. Fleeing the city, Eryllia stumbled into the Company's camp by sheer chance.

A more startling coincidence was the fact that Eryllia and Shaliri were childhood friends. The two had grown up together on Evermeet, and their families were closely allied with each other. Despite the circumstances, Eryllia and Shaliri were overjoyed at their reunion.

The group returned to Shadowdale to spend the winter. Eryllia and Shaliri renewed their friendship, and the wizard became a constant

companion to both Shaliri and Taethen. She became a welcome part of Shaliri and Taethen's relationship, much to the latter's surprise and pleasure. With the exception of Eryllia's addition, the winter passed much as the one before had.

When spring returned, the Company of the Crimson Dagger once more returned to Cormanthor. Again they spent several months exploring the area and seeking Candos Eseldin's armor. As summer waned, they began to speak of abandoning the quest as a lost cause – too much time had passed to easily find a specific defender's remains. As Eleasias passed, the group decided to forego their quest and return to Shadowdale early. However, the group would never reach Cormanthor's edge.

Tymora's favor abandoned the Company: they were ambushed by fiends from Myth Drannor. A running battle ensued, with the Company turned away from the safety of Shadowdale and sent deeper into the woods. A single, powerful fiend stalked the party for days, allowing them little chance for rest as they fought to survive. One by one, the members of the Company of the Crimson Dagger fell, until only the three newest members were left: Taethen, Shaliri, and Eryllia.

Tymora's favor then returned to the trio. They stumbled through an ancient *portal*, and found themselves somewhere in Cormanthor's western reaches. They were free from pursuit, but lost deep within the forest. With winter approaching, their options were few.

An abandoned elven dwelling, formed within the trunk of a living tree, proved to be their salvation. The three lovers took shelter in the magically-formed rooms, calling it "the Forgotten Home." Though not large, it was spacious enough for the trio to live comfortably, and it was concealed so well that non-elven passers-by could pass within feet of the tree and not realize it was inhabited. A nearby swiftly flowing stream provided their water, and Taethen's woodlore enabled him to hunt for food. Between Taethen's skills, Eryllia's arcane magic, and Shaliri's clerical magic, the three

were able to spend a peaceful winter under Cormanthor's boughs.

Springtime was nearing when the visions began. Shaliri had the first vision, dreaming of a single white staff, glowing in the darkness. After several days, Eryllia and Taethen began having similar visions. Comparing the details of their visions, the three discovered that they had all seen the same thing. When Corellon's symbol began appearing in the visions the trio shared, it became obvious they had been chosen to find the mysterious staff.

As the snow melted and songbirds returned to the trees, the visions became more detailed. The dreams revealed various details, like the altar the staff rested upon, the beljurils set into the walls, and the shadowy presence of the staff's baelnorn guardian. Despite the increasing details and frequency of the visions, it was not clear where the staff could be found.

Corellon's next manifestation came in the form of three crescent-shaped stones, pointing in a straight line along a northeast-southwest axis. Reasoning that the lost staff would be deeper in Cormanthor, the elves and human set off on Corellon's quest. Guided by the occasional appearance of the crescent-shaped stones, their path led them across the River Ashaba, past the Vale of Lost Voices, and into the heart of the Elven Court.

They almost met disaster in the Elven Court. A group of Auzkovyn drow captured the trio, leading them back to their temporary camp. The drow intended to keep the elven women for breeding purposes, and chose to torture Taethen for sport. Their quest would have been over, had a group of gnolls not found the drow camp. As the two groups fought each other, Taethen, Shaliri, and Eryllia managed to escape. Once they were away from the drow camp, Shaliri used her healing magic on Taethen. Though healed of his wounds, some magical effect kept the curative magic from fully repairing the damage to Taethen's throat. His once-deep voice became scratchy and rough; Taethen has since learned to compensate by speaking softly and infrequently.

Free of the drow and once more on their quest, it wasn't long before the trio found the ruins of an elven tower. Gray-green stones lay tumbled about a small clearing, while walls barely three feet high hinted at the structure that once stood taller than the trees. Tiny runes, still sharp and clear despite centuries of weathering, decorated many of the fallen stones. Other stones were carved with a pattern of ivory leaves surrounding a crescent moon. Clearly, the tower had once been a magnificent structure.

It took nearly a week of searching to find their way into the below-ground levels of the tower, still intact despite the destruction of the tower above. As they explored the tunnels, a bewildering variety of fearsome beasts rose up to challenge them. Each time, a brilliant white light would shine forth from Shaliri's holy symbol, and the guardian would fade into mist.

Despite the easily-vanquished challenges, it still took nearly three days for the group to find their way to the heart of the underground complex. There stood the final guardian – the baelnorn they'd seen in their visions.

"It is time," the ancient elven guardian said. "It is the will of the Coronal of Arvandor that *Athaeryndil*, the Whitestaff, be returned to the mortal realms."

With that statement, the undead elf bowed and faded from sight, leaving unguarded the chamber beyond. Stepping into the room, the trio at last saw the room that had been in their dreams.

It was a simple domed chamber, barely twenty feet wide. The walls were covered with a glossy black material, as dark as a moonless night. Precious gems studded the walls, each one marking the place of a star in the sky above. Twinkling beljurils represented the stars and constellations precious to the elves, silently drawing attention to themselves while still enhancing the simple beauty of the room.

The altar was a simple affair. Three feet wide by four feet long, it was carved from a single block of marble. The holy symbols of the

deities of the Seldarine were engraved into sides of the altar, each given just a hint of color to make them more visible. Freshly picked wildflowers, incongruous so deep underground, were scattered across the top of the altar.

Laying atop the altar was the white staff from their visions. It too was simple, yet elegantly beautiful. Fashioned from an unknown type of wood, it was a pale white color, with hints of gold and green appearing and disappearing in the light. The wood was smooth to the touch, but irregularly shaped, like the bough of a tree. The butt of the staff was capped with silver, gleaming and untarnished. At the top of the staff, the wood cradled a smooth green gemstone; it appeared as if the wood had grown around the gem as it rested atop the bough. Just below the stone, a ring of golden runes encircled the staff.

Only Eryllia recognized the staff. In her studies of magical artifacts, she had focused on items of elven make that had been lost to time. *Athaeryndil* was one of the greatest of these; legend said that the Whitestaff was one of the few remaining items that had accompanied the elves in their flight from Faerie. Whether or not the legends were true, it was known that *Athaeryndil* aided in the casting of High Magic, and was a valuable aid to the spellcasting of any mage. *Athaeryndil* had last been seen in the Elven Court, nearly two centuries before the Dales Compact and the raising of the Standing Stone.

After some discussion, the lovers agreed that the Whitestaff needed to be returned to the elven people. Using magic to cloak *Athaeryndil's* appearance and magical aura, the three began the long journey to Waterdeep. Their passage was swift and unhindered; it seemed the favor of the Seldarine was still upon them. Two months after finding the Whitestaff, the trio entered Waterdeep.

Eryllia's father, Lord Paerdryn Tassaniel, was a frequent visitor to the City of Splendors. He had several friends and agents in Waterdeep, and a considerable amount of his family's fortune came from shipping goods between

Waterdeep and Evermeet. It took little effort for Eryllia to arrange passage to the Green Isle on one of her father's ships, though the elven crew was leery about bringing a human to their homeland. She convinced the captain and crew that Taethen would be welcomed on Evermeet, and the next day, the *Dancing Hart* set sail, taking the elven women and their lover home.

Neither Eryllia nor Shaliri had sent word to Evermeet of their journey, nor had they spoken to anyone about having reclaimed *Athaeryndil* from the ruins beneath the Elven Court. Yet word of their passage had somehow preceded them. When the *Dancing Hart* came within sight of Leuthilspar, the ship's passengers and crew were astounded to see a large crowd awaiting their arrival. Even more amazing, Queen Amlaruil herself stood at the forefront of the crowd.

As the trio disembarked from the ship, the illusions that had masked *Athaeryndil's* appearance fell away. Surrounded by a glowing nimbus of energy, the Whitestaff gently slipped out of Eryllia's hands and floated into Queen Amlaruil's waiting hands.

"As was foretold, *Athaeryndil* has returned to Evermeet!" Amlaruil proclaimed to the watching crowd. "These three, Eryllia Tassaniel, Shaliri Araveyn, and Taethen Caliel were guided to its hidden location by Corellon Larethian himself! The baelnorn Vaenamir bowed to these three before at last answering Arvador's call, for he knew the Whitestaff would finally return to Evermeet.

"It is with great joy that we welcome Eryllia and Shaliri to their home. And it is with open arms that we greet Taethen Caliel, and name him Sha'Quessir for his efforts in behalf of the People."

The crowd cheered in excitement. Taethen was nearly overwhelmed at the enthusiastic approval of the Queen's words. During the journey, he'd worried about the reception that a human would receive on Evermeet; now he found himself surrounded by friendly smiles and heartfelt greetings.

The celebration lasted for days. After its conclusion, Eryllia and Shaliri spent weeks

showing Taethen around the island. With its flowing crystal buildings and deep forests, the beauty of the island captivated the young man. Friendly faces greeted him everywhere; no matter where he went, it seemed everyone already knew of his part in finding the Whitestaff. He was also free to indulge in his fascination with elven history and heritage; several scholars took it upon themselves to make sure Taethen was well-educated about elven accomplishments.

The three might have remained on Evermeet indefinitely; they were all happy there, and had little need to return to Faerûn. But then Queen Amlaruil sent for them.

All three were welcome to stay on the island as long as they wished, she explained. However, she had need of trustworthy agents on the mainland. They could return to the island at any time, but they could also further serve the needs of the People by returning to the mainland and aiding the elves that had not answered the call to Retreat. After some discussion, the three agreed to return to Waterdeep, where they would settle. From the City of Splendors, they would aid those traveling to and from Evermeet, as well as serve as contacts for Amlaruil's other agents.

The three returned to Waterdeep, where they used funds provided by Queen Amlaruil to buy a home on Delzorin Street in the North Ward. It is their intention, as time and money allow, to buy several nearby buildings, combining them into a villa surrounded by trees.

Since arriving in Waterdeep, all three have become heavily involved in elven affairs. In addition to aiding Amlaruil's agents, each has found their own ways to involve themselves with Waterdeep's elven populace. Shaliri serves at the Elven Pantheon temple, seeing to the spiritual needs of Waterdeep's elves. Eryllia serves as a sage and spellcaster for hire for elves; she also keeps a sharp eye out for any elven items that are now in human hands. Taethen helps Eryllia with the latter task; he also acts as a guide in the city and nearby areas, helping elves travel to places they need to reach. All three have become

well-known to the city's elves, and to those who observe elven affairs.

When Danilo Thann resigned his position as a Lord of Waterdeep, he requested that he be replaced with someone who would champion the needs of the People in Waterdeep. When Kyriani Agrivar was granted a Lordship, it was expected that she would be a suitable candidate for this purpose. She did try, but she was not, by nature, well-suited to the task. Further, her heritage as a half-elf was frequently held against her by some elves. Rather than fight a losing battle, Kyri nominated for Lordship someone she'd already recommended many elves contact for aid: Taethen Caliel. As an agent of Queen Amlaruil and an Elf-Friend with many connections among Waterdeep's elves, Kyri thought him a much more suitable choice. The other Lords agreed, and Taethen assumed the Lordship formerly held by Deliah the White.

Current Status

Taethen is something of a loner among the Lords. While he respects and gets along with all of the Lords, Kyriani is the only one to whom he feels any real connection. If he is undecided on an issue, he tends to defer first to Kyri and then to Piergeiron, whom he greatly respects. Taethen does have the best interests of the city at heart, but focuses the greater amount of his energies towards issues that concern or benefit elves.

Taethen's fellow Lords respect him, though some have been known to become exasperated at his focus on elves. Taethen's ability to take the long view is particularly appreciated, as is his ability to resolve large issues by applying careful pressure in just one or two small areas. Both of these traits come from his archer training and from the tales he learned as a child, but they continue to serve him well.

Though it took him some time to earn it, Taethen has a considerable amount of influence among Waterdeep's elves. His status as an agent of Queen Amlaruil created some of the influence, but the greater part of his influence was earned when he was

instrumental in thwarting the Sunfall Conspiracy, a plot that would have slain many elves and brought ruin to the rest.

Appearance and Personality

Little about Taethen's appearance is remarkable. He is of medium height, with a slender yet muscular build. His eyes are brown, and his hair, which he keeps trimmed short, is very dark. Taethen's jaw is heavy and prominent, and regardless of the time of day, his face is usually darkened by the shadow of a beard.

Taethen's preferred attire is the loose-fitting garb of a woodsman. He favors shades of brown and green, though he is occasionally seen wearing gray or soft blue clothing. Regardless of what other colors he is wearing, Taethen always wears a bit of blue, though it may not be obvious. He does this to honor his mother, whose favorite color was blue. He also wears a ring of silver and moonstone, an item his mother passed down to him from the original Taethen Caliel.

The damage done to Taethen's throat in the Elven Court has left him soft-spoken. He speaks little, preferring to use as few words as possible. Taethen does not rush into any

situation if he can avoid it; he will instead stay back and try to fully examine the situation before acting. He is also quite observant, noticing the small details that most others miss. His observational abilities, coupled with his tendency to analyze the situation before acting, are what enable him to resolve large issues with little force. As Valan Serra often told him, "One individual arrow can stop an army, if the right target is selected."

Though Taethen knows his mission in Waterdeep is important, he still finds the hustle and frantic pace of city life to be uncomfortable. About every other month, he tries to get out of the city for at least a week. The grove that Taethen, Eryllia, and Shaliri intend to grow should help with this, but in the meantime, he has to find freedom beyond the city walls.

Taethen enjoys music, and has been a patron of many bards since coming to the City of Splendors. He also loves to read, and will read just about anything he can find, from dusty histories of far away lands to the most lurid chapbooks published every week in Waterdeep. Eryllia and Shaliri often tease him about his reading habits, even as they buy more books for him.

Author's Note: Taethen Caliel was born about three and a half years ago, while I was unemployed. A friend suddenly decided that he needed to make sure his Star Wars Galaxies character was still around, despite the fact that he didn't have an internet connection. He brought his computer to my apartment, then left it for several months. During that time, I played the game an hour or two each day. I eventually grew bored with it, and stopped playing when I found a job. But I liked the idea of my character, and decided to make a D&D version. Taethen's skill in archery came from my SWG character's tendency to take careful, long shots against enemies, rather than entering melee.

Eryllia was originally intended to be the Lord of Waterdeep who concerned herself with elves. I decided early on, purely because it felt right, that she and Shaliri were lovers. However, I later decided I didn't want a full-blooded elf as Lord in a city of primarily humans. Not having anything to do with Taethen, I decided to use him in this capacity – thus I added the elven blood and the connection with Shaliri and Eryllia (which also kept them in the picture). Athaeryndil was dreamed up simply to give Taethen a way to become an Elf-Friend.

The Hillsfar angle came from Mysteries of the Moonsea; reading the description of the city gave me the last thing I needed to make Taethen's story work.

The reason for his name change was because the original SWG name was simply too ridiculous to work in the Realms. I originally intended to use it as an assumed name, but decided to toss it aside in favor of something more Realms-ish and elven-sounding.

DEEP GNOLLS

part 1

By Danyel Woods

A treatise on the nature and society of this sub-race of gnolls, also known as 'Reavers' or hahlorkh, who dwell in the Underdark; compiled by Susprina Arkhenneld of Shadowdale, sorceress and apprentice of Elminster, from various sources.

* * * *



Most esteemed Vangerdahast of Cormyr, Royal Magician to his Majesty Azoun Obarskyr IV, I offer you greetings and blessings in the names of my teacher Elminster of Shadowdale and of Mystra, the goddess we three all serve. I fear my hand is more accustomed to writing in my own language than in Chondathan, but 'tis I who holds the greater share of the lore which was requested of my teacher, and thus 'tis I who must impart it.

As you may be aware, these 'deep gnolls' first openly revealed themselves to human eyes in the Year of the Harp, when a small war-group in the pay of Zhentil Keep fell upon a company of Red Plumes during the first skirmishes of the civil war in Yûlash, slaying many of Maalthiir's men and putting the rest to flight. At first, they were dismissed as creatures of the Lower Realms, fiends summoned by the magics of Zhentarim wizards. However, certain members of my race and faith who had come to the surface long before then knew of them well – having passed through their city, Godsvault, en route to the surface – and they were much alarmed to hear of them appearing aboveground in such fashion. Realising their need for more recent knowledge of the breed and their doings, they sought my cooperation in seeking it.

Matron Phyrdril Deghym'lyl, of the surface enclave known as Sreen'aur, chose a small band of her retainers to enter the Underdark and visit the *hahlorkh* city in the guise of traders from Dusklyngh, to learn all they could of the deep gnolls' current situation and plans. However, while the party included

the warriors and priestesses necessary for such a deception, they could not spare a mage of our race with sufficient Art for such an arduous and hazardous journey through the Underdark, and thus I was asked to join them, also in the distasteful guise of a priestess of the Spider Goddess – thus gaining that much more access to the city than their previous experiences with drow would permit a 'mere male'. Almost every aspect and incident of our journey to, within, and from Godsvault was recorded in the expedition journal, which makes for intriguing reading in its own right and offers much insight into the city's culture; however, while it is available to you should you request it, that document is rather too bulky to travel conveniently and insufficiently organised for our immediate purpose.

What follows is my report on Godsvault and the deep gnolls who live therein, as I delivered it to Matron Phyrdril herself upon my return (and duplicated to Elminster soon thereafter), based mainly on what we learned during that expedition but supplemented by historical research, careful use of divination magic, and information willfully given to us by a deep gnoll exile-by-choice who fled the city with us and sought shelter at Sreen'aur. As I could not be sure of the true extent of the Matron's previous knowledge of the matter, I found myself compelled to include some rather basic facts to establish a proper structure; of you, as of the Matron, I pray forgiveness for any perceived slight to your intellect, for none was intended. (Unfortunately, I am soon to depart on another journey of great import and cannot include all of the unearthed lore at this time; however, the remainder will follow before the end of the season.)

Candour compels me to admit that I hold grave concerns for the residents of this region should the 'Reavers' plans come to fruition on their own terms. Within the society created for them by the Spider Goddess, the vast majority of my own people in the Realms Below are vicious, powerful, treacherous and cruel, but the *hahlorkh* also possess those qualities – and another besides, one which may spell the downfall of those who stand in their way, the drow most of all:

Unity of purpose.

Not the unity of *community*, as found on the surface, but a 'destiny' to conquer and dominate all within their reach – and the willingness to work *together* to obtain that end.

If they ever seize the magical riches they crave from within the ruins of Myth Drannor, I gravely fear what could result....

Arkheneld appended certain sections of this text with 'D&D terms' before passing it on to Dangerdahast in the Year of the Shield, Highness – this seems to be an eccentricity of Elminster's which she inherited under his tutelage, born of his habit of correcting the falsehoods perpetuated by that strutting, self-important peddler of incomplete or inaccurate lore, Volothamp Geddarm. I have also taken the liberty of contacting Arkheneld to seek additions to this treatise in light of events which have occurred since it was first written, including recent upheavals in the godly realms.

(Highness, I've no wish to add to the burdens of your Regency, but I must say that I share Arkheneld's concerns. Cormyr is in no state to withstand these *hahlorkh* should they send a full assault force into the daylight realms, much less any such force which might come with the support of surface-gnoll tribes under their rule; even such an emergence within this decade could well finish the task started by the Devil Dragon's armies and the ne'er-sufficiently-accursed ghazneths, and with Evereska barely freed of the thornbacks, our list of allies grows ever thinner. With your indulgence, I intend to contact certain of the watchword bands

currently under charter to the Crown, with such discretion as I may muster, and encourage them to do what they can to sow confusion and hardship amongst these deep gnolls and their works. Granted even a small portion of Tymora's favour, this should buy us sufficient time to brace the realm to withstand such an event if it should occur.

– Caladnei, Royal Magician, 17 Alluriak, 1348CR

To Begin

The residents of Faerûn's surface are far from unacquainted with gnolls. Bestial and savage, these humanoids are individually even more dangerous and resilient than orcs, but their lower birth-rates generally limit their numbers and preclude the formation of hordes to match the orcish hosts which are so grave a threat to civilised folk. Nor are they possessed of any especial mental or mystical prowess; even the slightly more sophisticated flinds are rarely able to enforce any sort of fighting discipline upon a tribe – the lack of which often results in disaster during conflict with more cohesive races like humans or elves. Few gnolls have the patience or temperament to wield arcane magic, and the gnolls' worship of the balor Yeenoghu, rather than any of the true gods of Faerûn, means that they are often devoid of significant divine magics.

However, in recent years, the residents of the Dalelands, Cormanthor, the Moonsea and the Vast have identified a new breed of gnolls, dwellers in the Underdark who have interbred with devils during their sojourn in the depths and have now begun filtering back towards the surface, scouting Cormanthor and Myth Drannor for reasons of their own. Even more physically potent than their surface cousins, especially with their fiendish blood offering them a disturbing resilience against most mundane weapons, these beasts – termed 'deep gnolls' by sages, though folk who have seen their handiwork or its aftermath prefer to call them 'Reavers' or *hahlorkh* – are rather similar to flinds to the casual glance, being slightly shorter and stockier than 'normal' gnolls. However, their

fiendish heritage can be discerned by the attentive observer, who can see that their eyes are a bright, glowing red rather than the normal gnollish yellow-green, and that they have small horns jutting from the backs of their skulls, just behind their ears. (Incidentally, certain evidence I have uncovered suggests that these deep gnolls are almost as fecund as orcs, and they appear to breed true even with 'normal' gnolls or flinds.)

History

After the slaying of the nycaloth Aulmpiter during the mutually-devastating final battles of the fall of Myth Drannor, the Army of Darkness lost most of what little cohesion remained to it. Its lower ranks fell back into their foregoing state as a collection of rival, often warring bands of humanoids. Amongst these were the Fleshraker March of gnolls. With their tribal males being primarily of the slightly smaller yet cannier flind breed (it seems they had slain or driven off most of the 'lesser' gnoll males), the Fleshraker March was unusual for their high degree of individual combat skill, tactical cunning and collective discipline (both by the standards of 'normal' gnolls and by those of the Army of Darkness as a whole), even after being merged with the remnants of Wolmuc's March after the Battle of Wyvern's Crest. However, after the Army's dissolution this very quality became more bane than boon: they had caused more than their share of damage during the campaign, and were almost immediately targeted for vengeance by the remaining *Akh'Velahrn*. Fleeing to the south-east of the devastated elven capital, their original strength constantly dwindling under the attentions of pursuing skirmishers (both parties of *Akh'Velahrn* and independents such as centaur tribes), with no supernatural support left to them, Semberholme's Moonshadows preventing any escape to the south-west, a reinforced company of Captain Selorn's vaunted Lost Trench Legion bearing down on them from the northeast, and the fortified elven settlement of Faelorin (Tangled Trees) directly in their path, the Fleshrakers were forced into a fateful decision: turn at bay to fight – or take their chances in a deep cave

system they'd found during their flight. Markedly unwilling to die simply for the sake of dying, they saw it as no choice at all, and fled into the gloom. Themselves reluctant to waste time and valuable lives in besieging the 'defenders' or the confusion and carnage of a prolonged fight in such a cave-system – they still had many other splinters of the Army to deal with – the pursuing *Akh'Velahrn* simply collapsed much of the cave behind the gnolls with magic and turned their attentions to more immediate problems, considering the Fleshraker March 'neutralised'. After all, without provisions, water or air, they were certainly doomed.

It would seem that little could have been further from the truth. Much like the Skullbiter orcs in the North almost two millennia before (who became the forebears of the orogs that have become ever more troublesome to surface-dwellers in the centuries since the fall of Eaerlann, if I am informed correctly), the Fleshrakers had found a passage into the Underdark and kept going, hoping to evade any pursuit and eventually find their way to the surface once more. They were both more and less fortunate than the Skullbiters, finding themselves under the sway of a powerful creature that could protect them from some of the most dangerous denizens of the Underdark – but that could also dominate their destiny.

That 'protector' was a horned devil named Jyalkaath, who had escaped from the drow city of Maerimydra and a wizard therein whose compulsions of servitude were slightly (and rather fatally) less comprehensive than he had imagined. However, the drow did exact a certain manner of retribution for the 'betrayal': having slain the wizard in an Underdark cavern far from Maerimydra itself, Jyalkaath found that he could not pass outside its thresholds, as the mage had coupled his own contingency magics to the horned devil's *collar of material entrapment* and the cavern's *faerzress* to create a network of interlocking wards which prevented Jyalkaath from leaving by any means, mundane or magical. These magics also prohibited Jyalkaath from using his powers to bring more fiends to him, save for erinyes, who were already free to come and

go from the Material Plane as they pleased, and answered his calls only as a matter of whim. Thusly frustrated in his grand plans for domination, Jyalkaath was beside himself with rage for some time. Several decades passed, with the increasingly foul-tempered cornugon stalking the cavern and butchering anything which entered to vent his ire, his monotonous routine of patrol and slaughter interrupted only by occasional visits from this or that erinyes, passing on the latest 'fun' that he was missing in the outside world.

As it happened, one of these periodic visitors was an erinyes named Valyethra, who actually harboured some twisted form of affection for the trapped cornugon. She told him of the 'grand' campaign by the yugoloths in the Realms Above which had brought down one of Faerûn's shining lights of civilisation. She also brought him some other news: the former bands of the Army of Darkness had scattered to the winds, making them perfect recruitment material for anyone with imperial leanings of their own... and one band in particular was headed towards Jyalkaath's cavern.

When the Fleshrakers arrived, Jyalkaath and Valyethra were waiting for them, along with more than a dozen other erinyes and barbazus. Valyethra had recruited and convinced to assist her and Jyalkaath in their new endeavour. Casually butchering the gnolls' leaders and any who tried fighting or running, they informed the humanoids that they now had new masters – and that those masters had very specific plans for them. With no means of offering effective resistance, the Fleshrakers gave themselves over to the devils' control.

What followed was a combination of high-intensity social engineering and a selective inter-breeding programme (in many ways a programme strikingly similar to that which would be instituted by the tanar'ri of Hellgate Keep to produce the tanarukks, some two centuries later). Using the bearded devils as prison-guards to enforce their dictates, Jyalkaath, Valyethra and the other four erinyes recruited for this project began selectively mating with those of the flinds and gnolls they deemed worthy... albeit occasionally at cross-purposes: Jyalkaath

chose the females he considered the most likely to yield strong, large, ferocious children, while Valyethra and the erinyes selected for intelligence and trainability as well as physical power. The erinyes' thorough-going employment of fertility enchantments on all involved (and Jyalkaath's vast appetite) saw to it that each pregnancy produced at least two viable progeny (it seems that the average was actually four). Once the first generation of half-erinyes had been born, all of Valyethra's fellows declared their part in the project complete (having only participated as a favour to Valyethra herself) and gratefully took their leave to seek their usual sport with rather more sophisticated breeds of mortals (as these are more receptive to their usual methods of corruption). Valyethra remained to oversee the programme, providing continued fertility charms when necessary, weeding out undesirable bloodlines, and occasionally venturing to the surface to acquire fresh 'breeding stock' (later trading with the drow of Dusklyngh and the newly-founded Zhentarim for flinds 'acquired' from the tunnels under Ghaethluntar to rejuvenate the population). The cavern itself was made habitable by its fronting onto a sliver of the Reachmere at one end (which was filled with edible fish and plants, though its other inhabitants proved troublesome for a time) and the introduction and farming of deep rothé and various edible Underdark fungi (and later surface crops), tended by 'labour-grade' gnolls unsuitable for inclusion in the breeding programme or the civilisation now burgeoning within the cavern. Other 'labour-grade' specimens (and kobold slaves overseen thereby) were set to work locating deposits of valuable materials, mining them, and smithing or smelting them for use or trade; while the gnolls lacked the natural flair for such work that the kobolds possessed, they learned quickly (with the 'incentive' of close supervision by the fiends), especially with the input of a number of more knowledgeable individuals whom Valyethra had seduced and/or charmed into assisting her, including several duergar and orog leaders and smiths.

Outlook

Deep gnolls believe that there are only two kinds of being in the world: predators and prey (also defined as 'the enslavers and the enslaved' or, most often, 'eaters and eaten'). Centuries of deliberate efforts to 'civilise' them have blunted their savagery, and taught them the value of a methodical approach to problems and teamwork in the face of threats, but Reavers are well aware that they are stronger, tougher, and rather smarter than 'normal' gnolls. Indeed, the Living Ancestors have raised them to believe that these traits make them fit to rule over all gnolls – that they have been chosen, bred and shepherded by the Living Ancestors *specifically* so they can take such rulership, and thusly conquer much of the surface world, slaying and/or devouring any who stand in their path; such is their *ability*, their *right*, and indeed their *destiny*. They still hold smouldering hatreds for the surface-dwellers who drove them underground (Cormanthor's elves in particular) and ache for the chance to start settling old scores with them. They remain the brutal, sadistic carnivores they always were, but now they are brutes with a *purpose* and the wit to pursue it in an organised fashion – which has always been the most dangerous kind.

However, while direct conflict with enemies remains the most prestigious of all occupations amongst the deep gnolls, careful encouragement by Valyethra has seen to it that they recognise the contributions of all those who provide the means of armed conquest – the miners and smiths who forge weapons, the merchants and tradesmen who supply the warrior's other gear and necessities of life, those who grow their food, and those who teach them from birth how to survive and thrive in the Underdark and how to fight *cleverly* (rather than simply bravely) when the need arises.

Very few deep gnolls take up the adventurer's path. Those who do have usually been identified by their Clan (or the Ancestors themselves) as 'destined for great things', such as fighting their way into leadership of a tribe of surface-gnolls, or have been exiled from the city for some offence or another, or have escaped from the

slavery which is commonplace punishment for an offence. The 'chosen' Reavers are encouraged to seek their fortunes on the surface, where they can spread their bloodlines and their message of 'strength through unity' to *all* surface gnolls and thus further the Ancestors' agenda. Outcast deep gnolls are often escaped criminals or slaves seeking nothing more than a new 'pack' with which to hunt and preserve their own existence; it matters little to them who they fall in with, so long as they can obtain shelter, food, and occasionally wealth. Many outcasts are apostates who follow deities other than the Living Ancestors, usually Malar the Beastlord.

The rare female Reaver adventurer is typically a runaway, fleeing from actual slavery or the social conditioning she perceives as such, conditioning which demands that fertile females be mothers and house-mistresses rather than seeking a destiny of their own making. (Of course, a goodly few females who 'run away' are actually clerical emissaries of the Living Ancestors, seeking to spread the word of the Ancestors and/or infuse surface-gnoll communities with deep gnoll bloodlines, building power-blocs on the surface as preparation for the deep gnolls' 'inevitable' return to the surface as its new masters.)

Deep Gnoll Characters

The Living Ancestors and their unforgiving environment have well acquainted deep gnolls with violence and an appreciation of when it is needful. Early attempts by the drow of Maerimydra to conquer 'the interloping humanoids' encouraged them to maintain their martial traditions, and indeed the Living Ancestors have encouraged them to institute formal military training practices. However, an appreciation for the power of their environment and how it can influence the outcome of a skirmish also stayed with them. Fighters and rangers are by far the most common classes found in deep gnoll society, with rogues only a little behind them (while the Reavers revel in a good fight, they also recognise how much easier victory can be if a key enemy like a wizard suddenly grows a dagger-hilt between their shoulder-

blades). Clerics are very nearly as prominent; whether they draw their powers from the Living Ancestors or (more rarely) something above them, their mystical contributions to military success can be invaluable, and their degree of influence on deep gnoll society as a whole is quite undeniable. (Significantly, many deep gnoll clerics are female, as directly devoting herself to the Living Ancestors is a socially acceptable way for a female to further herself; more to the point, clerics have the favour of the Living Ancestors, and thus cannot be coerced to 'follow the Ancestors' Will' as they are already *instruments* of that will.) Wizardly arcane magic requires a degree of patience and fascination with esoterica that few Reavers possess; however, despite their shortage of personal charm, the amount of fiendish blood in deep gnollish veins often allows them to become formidable sorcerers.

[Note: if *Complete Arcane* is in use in a given campaign, the ease with which deep gnolls may seek direct pacts with the Living Ancestors means that the path of the warlock is also a common choice for aspiring arcanists, being that it offers great raw power without requiring massive 'front-end investment' of time and effort; the Living Ancestors have no real objections, since each such pact means one more soul assuredly consigned to Baator rather than another afterlife.]

The rise of literacy amongst the deep gnolls has led to the slow decline of oral histories and their keepers, but bards can still be found here and there in the Reaver community, often as courtly entertainers for nobles or as temple archivists. Paladins are unheard-of, for while their strict code of ethics might fit well with the society's structure and emphasis on (firm) punishment for crimes, their altruistic *moral* code is virtually incomprehensible within the context of deep gnoll society; more to the point, deep gnoll religions could never support paladins, and apostasy is punishable by exile or death. (Blackguards are the closest equivalent a paladin could have in deep gnoll culture, and indeed they are fairly common amongst the martial arm of the Reaver clergy.) Barbarians are almost invariably

exiles who have 'gone berserker' during their time in the Underdark, as their anti-authoritarian leanings are anathema to deep gnoll society. The emotional detachment which is essential to the druidic way is not especially common amongst deep gnolls, though druids *can* be found here and there – especially amongst the farming Clans (whose profession and social status enforce a certain equanimity) and 'heretical' followers of Malar. Similarly, the monk's way of mastering oneself and eschewing temporal power and all its trappings and tools is not in keeping with typical Reaver modes of thought, yet a few can be found here and there; indeed, there are small orders attached to both of the faiths of the Living Ancestors as temple guardians (and occasionally enforcers) and to the city's small Shar-worshipping assassin-cult, and others can be found as personal bodyguards to powerful Clan leaders.

Common multi-class combinations include fighter/cleric, fighter/rogue, and ranger/sorcerer (or ranger/warlock if the campaign uses *Complete Arcane*).

Favoured class: Fighter.

Prestige classes: Blackguard, Cavelord, Shadowdancer, Wild Scout.

Deep Gnoll Society

Centuries of sustained social engineering and concentrated effort by the Living Ancestors have instilled at least the basics of civilised conduct into the deep gnolls – granted, it's no more than a veneer at points, but some.

Almost every acknowledged deep gnoll citizen is a member of a Clan, all said Clans drawing their 'authority' from the length of their existence (the most highly-regarded date back to soon after the foundation of the cavern-city of Godsvault) and their power from their control of vital industries (and the resulting wealth) and their military might. The five oldest Clans, those which have controlled the city's major industries from its foundation and are thus strongest and wealthiest, hold seats on the city's Advisory Council, which controls the city's day-to-day administration and formulates and implements policy within the (usually broad)

guidelines set by the Living Ancestors. There are two other seats on the Council, held by the designated representatives of the Living Ancestors (or in rare cases, the Ancestors themselves), and any directive from the holders of either or both of those two seats overrides any policy that the five Clan heads seek to implement; even if all five deep gnoll Councilors act in perfect unanimity, a single word from either of the Ancestors (or their surrogates) can veto them.

Control of the population by the clergy of the Living Ancestors is undeniable, yet nowhere near as pernicious or nihilistic as that found in the cities of Lolthian drow. The Ancestors imposed a strict legal system and formal code of conduct for their subjects, complete with stern and often excessive punishment for breaches, and it is enforced by the clergy (who oversee all major decisions made within the cavern-city and, through their military arm, act as police, judiciary and punitive service). Concepts like 'prisoner's rights' or 'innocent until proven guilty' have never occurred to the deep gnolls: intrusive divination magics (even telepathic mind-probes) are used in interrogations and trials to get at the 'truth' of the matter (which is often whatever the clergy and/or the accuser want it to be), and punishments for even the most minor infringements are extremely harsh – murder and apostasy are punishable by death (usually by torture) or exile, theft by maiming and/or a period of slavery at hard labour (often in the Arena), and so forth; the concept of formal imprisonment is considered the barbaric eccentricity of outsiders. Slavery is permitted, but only of lesser races or those who have been convicted of crimes. Clans are permitted to maintain their own militaries for peace-enforcement within their demesnes and defence of those lands against interlopers (especially if those lands include mines or other valuable economic sites), but may not exceed a total strength of two reinforced Squadrons (twelve Parties, or three hundred individuals), including officers but not counting 'irregular assets' like arcanists; Clans and their militaries do not have any legal power to investigate infractions. There can be no direct act of internecine strife – open or covert – by one Clan against another, on penalty of the utter destruction

of *both* by the ruling Council and/or the city's overall military; individuals with grievances that can only be settled by blood must settle them in a formalised one-on-one duel in the Challenge Arena (which is also used for fights between slaves or groups thereof as mass entertainment). All other military-minded individuals, regardless of their Clan allegiance before enlistment, must join the City March (military) in the service of the Living Ancestors; in doing so, they set aside their previous loyalties and swear themselves to the service of the Ancestors and, through them, of the city as a whole.

Above all, Reavers revere (or at least respect) the sheer power to enforce one's will. Be it by sword, spell, or (less often) money and/or influence, to destroy another or to force them to accede to your will (within the laws laid down by the Living Ancestors) is an admirable act. Mercy is at best an act of contempt, at worst folly; after all, others would gladly abuse *you* if you were in *their* power, so why not treat them in kind – unless they're not worth the effort? Those above in the social structure must be obeyed, or you will suffer the consequences; those below must be warded, for it is through them that your own dictates are enforced and your position secured, but they can never be allowed to forget that they *serve*.

It should be noted that while there is a moderate *cultural* (and, to a lesser degree, a *religious*) bias that 'encourages' female deep gnolls to remain home to tend their cubs and run their households while their males are out doing 'real work', there is no strictly *legal* barrier – so long as the female in question is barren (not especially uncommon given the city's *faerzress*, despite all that Valyethra's enchantments might do to the contrary). Nonetheless, females who *are* fertile but refuse to buckle under to the 'children-kitchen-church' mentality often flee the city to seek their own fortunes; those caught are often stripped of their rights as deep gnoll citizens (such as those may be) and consigned to slavery. A very common poetic twist to this 'justice' is making the offending female a concubine to a powerful male to bear his cubs and obey his every command (on pain of punishment with silvered blades or enchanted whips).

While the deep gnoll diet has evolved to include some fruits, grains and vegetables – and they have a pronounced taste for the potent apple ciders and brandies and shatteringly-strong potato-spirits produced by the orchards and potato-fields and breweries of Godsvault's farming district – deep gnolls remain carnivores by preference, and they are less than fussy about what meat they eat. Indeed, when a Reaver dies, it is funerary custom that the decedent lie in state for a day in his home (for military deep gnolls, usually on the parade ground; clerics are shown in their temples), then be consumed by his fellows, thus sharing his power amongst them. The heart is held to contain the deceased's spirit, and only the strongest individual amongst the mourners has the power to 'overwhelm' that spirit and take its power into himself (not a few feuds have been started in arguments and/or brawls about who amongst the mourners is strong enough to take this 'honoured portion').

Language and Literacy

While based on the original grammar and structure of the surface-gnoll language, the Reaver dialect is rather more evolved and mature; being that the original gnollish lexicon didn't support the more sophisticated concepts and nuances necessary for a structured society like that of the deep gnolls, many of the necessary terms are borrowed from the culture's other dominant language, Infernal.

Gnollish written language consisted of little more than crude pictograms before the Fleshrakers' descent into the Underdark, and despite some rigorous efforts to adapt it to their new circumstances, it simply proved inadequate to the task of representing the new dialect and died out within five generations; all 'properly educated' deep gnoll characters (all characters other than those who start their careers as barbarians) are literate in Infernal, but written gnoll is a language used in Godsvault only by the city's rare scholars.

Abilities and Racial Features

Deep gnolls all possess the following racial abilities.

- ⇒ Strength +4, Constitution +2, Charisma -2. Deep gnolls are incredibly strong and highly resilient, but their short tempers make them less than ideal spokespeople.
- ⇒ Medium size. While they tend towards the slightly stockier frames of their predominantly flind forebears, deep gnolls often stand more than seven feet tall and weigh over three hundred pounds. (Deep gnolls use the age and size tables for orog orcs – found on pg.71, *Races of Faerûn*.)
- ⇒ A deep gnoll's base land speed is 30 feet.
- ⇒ Darkvision up to 60 feet; low-light vision.
- ⇒ Cold resistance 5, fire resistance 5.
- ⇒ Damage reduction 5/magic, silver or good.
- ⇒ Spell resistance 12 + class level.
- ⇒ +2 natural armour bonus.
- ⇒ Proficient with longsword and longbow; weapon familiarity with the spiked chain, allowing deep gnoll characters to treat it as a martial weapon. (These are all weapons favoured by the Living Ancestors, and thus by the Reaver culture as a whole. The once-prized flind-bar is now a curiosity weapon rather than a common one and deep gnoll characters treat it as the Exotic weapon it is – its weapon familiarity has been replaced by that with the spiked chain.)
- ⇒ Outsider Hit Dice: A deep gnoll has 3d8 racial Hit Dice from his devilish heritage. A Reaver character receives maximum hit points for his first Hit Die, and rolls his other outsider Hit Dice normally. He rolls all Hit Dice from class levels and does *not* automatically get maximum hit points on his first class level Hit Die. A deep gnoll's racial Hit Dice also provide a +3 base attack bonus and saving throws of Fort +3, Ref +3, and Will +3. Deep gnolls with character levels add their base attack bonus and save bonuses to their racial attack bonus and saves.
- ⇒ Outsider Skills: A deep gnoll's outsider levels give him skill points equal to (8 + Int modifier) x 6. Class skills are Hide, Intimidate, Listen, Move Silently, Spot and Survival. The character may also choose *one* of the following as a class skill

for these Hit Dice, reflecting an apprenticeship served before he became an adventurer: Craft (armour-smithing), Craft (bow-making), Craft (weapon-smithing), or Profession (miner). A deep gnoll does *not* get the x4 multiplier for skill points acquired from his first class level.

- ⇒ Outsider Feats: A deep gnoll's outsider levels give him two feats. Most choose Alertness and Power Attack.
- ⇒ Gnoll blood. Despite his devilish heritage, for all special abilities and effects, a deep gnoll is still basically a gnoll. Thus deep gnolls can use or create gnoll weapons and magic items with racially specific gnoll powers as if they were ordinary gnolls.
- ⇒ Outsider: deep gnolls are native outsiders.
- ⇒ Automatic Languages: Infernal, Gnoll, home region. Bonus Languages: by region.
- ⇒ Favored Class: Fighter.
- ⇒ Level adjustment: +2. Due to his racial Hit Dice, plus his spell resistance, energy resistances, damage reduction, natural

armour and advantageous ability score modifiers, a deep gnoll has an effective character level of 5 plus his class levels. Thus, a 2nd-level deep gnoll fighter would have an ECL of 7.

Unfortunately, esteemed brother-in-Art, time and circumstance dictate that this is where I must leave off this report and dispatch it to you. However, the rest will be in your hands within the season, including details of the deep gnolls' tastes in the Art, their religion and deities (including their Living Ancestors, whom I had the dubious pleasure of *meeting* during my time in Godsvault!), their preference in terms of arms and other equipment, and some sundry matters which might prove useful.

Yours by song and sword,

Susprina Arkhenneld of Shadowdale

JOURNAL OF AN APPRENTICE SCRIBE

Phorvar's Gap

By J P Hazelhoff

Well met, fellow scribes and learned scholars!

Allow me to introduce myself. I am Rikos Dughol, late of Saradush, in Tethyr. I have been traveling across Faerûn, at least across the regions known as the Western Heartlands and the North, as an apprentice scribe with my master Brin Orgul.

During my travels, I have kept a journal of the places I have visited and things I have seen. As I retrieve and edit these journal entries while staying in Candlekeep, I will make them available for all to read. My journal might resemble the works of Volothamp Geddarm, whose writings I came across during my studies, but are by no means copies of his excellent work, which has served as a wonderful source of inspiration.

Most of the journal has been written during those moments when I did not have to perform some tasks for my master, or when I wasn't occupied with the physical part of traveling. Because of this, the entries in the journal may sometimes seem disjointed. Also, the entries might not be published in chronological order; the pages were scattered during an unfortunate incident with an overeager air mephit.

I hope that for the places I've visited, the journals will provide you as much insight as Volothamp's journals provided me.

*Till swords meet,
Rikos Dughol of Saradush*

* * * *

Journal of an apprentice scribe by Rikos Dughol of Saradush

8th Hammer 1371, Year of the Unstrung Harp



ales of grand adventure, rampaging monsters, and damsels in distress – these are the focus of the fireside stories told by bands of roaming sellswords and wizards-for-hire. Well, they always leave out the boring parts, the cold and wet parts, and the stormy and rainy parts of their “grand adventures”. Adventurers never speak of how mundane or dreary it can be to trek across the Sword

Coast and the Western Heartlands.

Master Orgul left Nashkel on the 1st of Hammer, bringing me along to carry his papers, books and supplies, as well as to look after Marea, Master Orgul's mule. Why he so urgently needed to travel through the midst of Auril's reign only he and the gods know – he won't tell me.

It's not that I'm unfamiliar with winter, snow and sleet, but winters in the mountains back home seem mild compared to the driving winds, stinging rains and the pervasive cold temperatures that seem to hold more

moisture in the air than they should here in the wide open between Nashkel and Berdusk. Greenfields¹, they name it, is probably aptly named when it is summer, but the pleasantness the name invokes is far removed in winter.

So here I am, huddled deep into my cloak – scant comfort! – trying to pen my thoughts. Time enough for that; outside the wind is howling and driving the sleet almost horizontally through the air. We'll be stuck here until the storm subsides and travel is possible again – probably when spring arrives. Why couldn't we have stayed comfortably in Nashkel and waited for warmer weather to travel?

We are in a fly-speck of a town, a tiny hamlet called Phorvar's Gap². A place so small that I would be surprised if anyone would even think about placing it on a map, in the middle of the nowhere between the Nashkel, the Wood of Sharp Teeth on the west and Berdusk and the Troll Mountains in the east³. The place is located at the end of a gorge, in a wide, bowl-shaped valley. I assume the name is derived from the gap in the land: a scar across the terrain as if the ground was hewn open by the blade of a deity.

Master Orgul arranged for us to stay with a farmer and his family. Our beds are in the stable; smelly, but warm because of the livestock huddled together. Farmer Ashwin Bhaerwood and his wife Talessyr make a friendly enough couple – a tiny light of good fortune along this dreadful journey – and

¹ *Though the area initially appears flat, the Greenfields is a vast land of gently rolling hills with gorges, sinkholes and other features breaking up the gentleness at irregular intervals. Some of these provide access the area of the Underdark known as the Netherese Caverns.*

² *The original idea for Phorvar's Gap is from Steven E Schend and was posted on the Candlekeep forum.*

³ *Phorvar's Gap is a tiny hamlet in the midst of the Greenfields, more than a day's ride east of the Uldoon Trail and nearly a full day south of Greenest.*

they have welcomed us in their homestead.

The Bhaerwoods have been in Phorvar's Gap for several generations. According to Ashwin's grandfather, their ancestors arrived somewhere from long-fallen lands to the northeast⁴. They originally settled a little closer to the end of the gorge, slightly east of the current hamlet. The village was originally called Morlang's Mill, after one of its first settlers. The settlers chose this spot to settle down and rebuild their lives because of the shelter of the gorge, the spring, the abundant grasslands, and several nearby fishing ponds.

Farmer Bhaerwood's storytelling was briefly interrupted when a neighbor, Tragyl, and his family came in for dinner. With so many bodies in the cramped homestead, and the heat from Goodwife Talessyr's cooking, I was finally able to crawl out of my cloak as the temperature in the house became comfortably warm.

I had expected simple fare: potatoes, cabbage, or carrots, and chicken or pork, but the meal served would not have been misplaced on a nobleman's table: roasted pheasant, quail eggs, wild mushrooms and some leek-like vegetable. Laughing at my surprise and probably wide eyes, "Old Darith" – uncle to both Tragyl and Talessyr – explained that ground birds like quail, pheasant, and suthrill varieties are plentiful in the grasslands and small copses of trees, and the moist, sheltered environment of the gorge allows for abundant mushroom growth. His son, Fronn, spends much time hunting birds and searching for mushrooms.

With dinner almost over, farmer Bhaerwood continued his tale of the history of Phorvar's Gap, with the occasional interruption from Tragyl. According to both, no one is sure how long ago, but local legend states that a war was fought in the area, between soldiers and wizards fleeing the fall of the Shoon Imperium and the people of Morlang's Mill. The fighting led to the destruction of the old village.

⁴ *Some claim that the original settlers came from Ebenfar; others believe it to be Andlath.*

All that remained was the village square and a few buildings surrounding it⁵. These buildings were in surprisingly good shape, given the destruction wrought around them. The surviving settlers rebuilt their hamlet downstream from the ruins of Morlang's Mill, using the rubble from the ruins to build houses, barns and the like. Even the surviving buildings were torn down, so that today, only the old village square remains as a visual reminder of what once was Morlang's Mill.

The village square and the remaining rubble have been left alone, as the ruins are haunted. Learned folks and the like came to investigate the haunting, but left without solving the mystery or removing the haunting. In the center of the square stands a now-dry fountain with the remains of a statue of a human female. According to Goodman Darith, the statue in question would have been a sculpture of Chauntea.

Legend has it that although the Great Mother could not directly fight the wizards and the soldiers of the hated Shoon Imperium, she resisted and fought through subtle means, allowing the locals to persevere in the end. She blessed the waters flowing out of the gorge; as a result, the clay harvested from the banks of the small river has special properties.

I had not noticed before, but when I looked again at the earthenware plates and mugs, I realized that all were decorated with motifs that befit the Grain Goddess. And as Goodwife Talessyr told me, the pottery is in demand in the lands to the south – my homeland and Calimshan – because it has a slight tendency to keep water and liquids cooler than the surrounding temperatures, moreso than standard clay workings.

I look beside me and pick up the rose-decorated mug she gave me as a gift. Taking

a sip, the water is cool and pleasant, but with weather like this outside, all water is bound to be cold. Master Orgul stirs in the hay above, already asleep. I'll do the same, plenty of time to add more to the journal tomorrow...

9th Hammer 1371, Year of the Unstrung Harp

Howling winds, stinging rain, freezing temperatures... Nothing changed from yesterday when I woke up this morning. Even with the warmth of the animals below our pallets, the straw and the thick woolen blanket were been barely enough to keep me warm during the night. Despite that, I wish the night had been longer; now I face the prospect of spending another day in this forlorn place. I'll see if I can get breakfast and some warm milk.

I had to run back through this gods-cursed weather to retrieve my journal. The house is warmer than the stable, and Goodwife Talessyr is baking some sort of mushroom pie. The reason I braved the weather for my journal was the promise of another tale told by Old Darith.

Legend of the Dark Ones

Long ago, there existed a group of powerful wizards, whose realms floated across the lands. The wizards subjugated everyone and everything that fell beneath their shadow. Some of that realm – slaves, commoners and even some of the ruling classes – fled the tyranny of wizards and sorcerers. Those refugees came to what is now the Greenfields.

Afraid that their former masters would spy them from the skies and once more subjugate the refugees to sorcerous tyranny, the fleeing people sought their peace in the lightless lands of the caverns below.

Those who fled numbered chiefly among them humans and gnomes, and these took with them their religions and beliefs. Over time, the religious leaders formed the backbone of the underground culture.

⁵ *Phorvar's Gap is the location for George Krashos adaptation of "The Ruined Village Square", originally an Adventure Locale written by Robert Wiese for the Wizard of the Coast's Forgotten Realms website:*

(<http://www.wizards.com/default.asp?x=dn/d/al/20050223a>).

However, due to either spies of the tyrants or traitors within their ranks, soon the powers of the arcane rose to prominence once more, slowly and with subterfuge this time. Rather than vying with the clerical powers over who would rule the realms below, these traitors infiltrated the churches.

In those lightless days below, the followers of the Lady of Loss held sway among the populace, as did a now forgotten goddess: Leira. Under the influence of the traitors, the powers of the divine were more and more bent to the dark and shadowy arts, illusions, and hidden secrets. These became the mantras of the dwellers below.

Delving ever deeper, the dwellers below went too deep and uncovered something very dark and sinister. They did not realize this, as this new evil subtly wove its way into the minds and hearts of the populace. Gradually this evil changed the people, becoming one with their magics, their faiths, and their entire beings, transforming them into "Dark Ones".

Often the Dark Ones are referred to as creatures of faerie tales, of imagination run wild. But why, then, do trolls, bugbears, and even the faeries the critics ascribe the tales to have the same legends and nightmarish stories of the "Dark Ones"?

Waylaying the innocent in the darkness of the night or during the darkest of overcast skies, and taking their victims to their Underdark realm...

* * *

When Master Orgul and I retreated for the night, we discussed Old Darith's tale. My master suspects that the refugees in the story are in fact Netherese, a conclusion easily reached based on the description of floating realms. Master Orgul also recalled a series of underground caverns in this area known as "The Netherese Caverns". In addition, a fact even known to me is that the Netherese held gnomes as slaves and servants, making the combination of these races in the tale plausible.

CREDITS

Volume VII of the *Candlekeep Compendium* contains the work of many people, who have put much time and effort into penning these articles of lore. Many thanks to all who contributed and helped on this project.

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We hope you have enjoyed this volume of Realmslore. Any feedback is greatly appreciated. Please email us at compendium@candlekeep.com or visit the Candlekeep forum at <http://forum.candlekeep.com>

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Volume VIII

The *Candlekeep Compendium* is a quarterly publication. Keep an eye out for *The Candlekeep Compendium Volume VIII*, containing new Realmslore and further installments of regular articles penned by our master scribes.