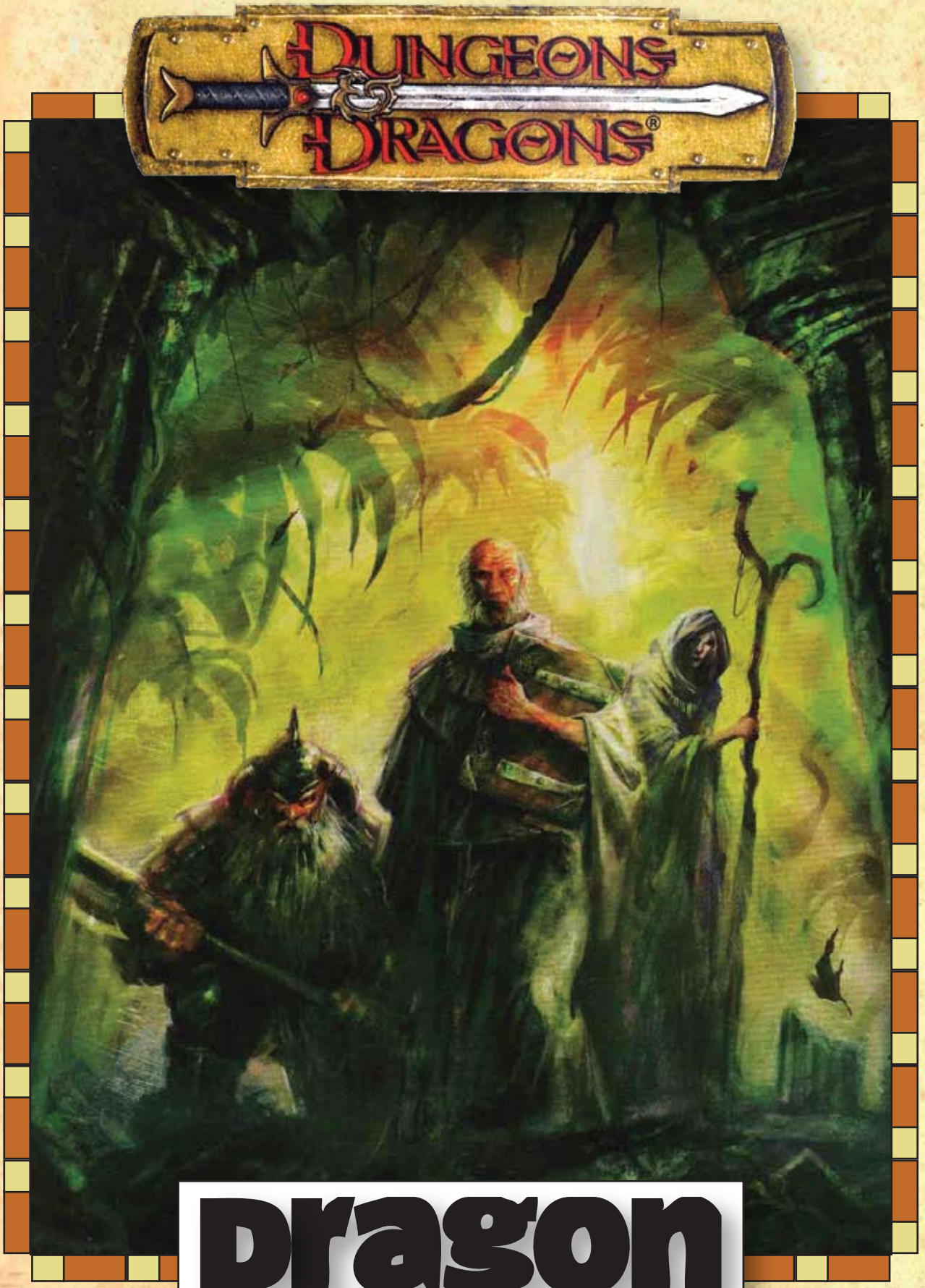


Dragon

Forgotten Realms Compendium

v1.0 Dragon Magazine Issues #274-354

Polyhedron 144

Now being mailed to RPGA members!

October's *Polyhedron* marks a new editorial and design direction for the official magazine of the RPGA Network. With a new global focus and dedication to covering all types of games, *Polyhedron* #144 introduces RPGA members to new features, including game reviews, scenario previews, RPGA Network news, and more.

November

Star Wars: Roleplaying Game	
SW Sourcebook	$34.95
Pool of Radiance	
FR Adventure	$17.95
Forge of Fury	
D&D Adventure	$9.95
Living Greyhawk Gazetteer	
RPGA Campaign	$26.95
Shadow's Witness	
FR Novel	$6.99
Pool of Radiance	
FR Novel	$6.99
Draconian Measures	
DL Novel	$7.99

December

Hero Builder's Guidebook	
D&D Accessory	$16.95
Diablerie	
D&D Accessory	$19.95
Naboo	
SW Accessory	$19.95
City of Ravens	
FR Novel	$6.99
The Thieves' Guild	
DL Novel	$6.99

countdown to the forgotten realms

With a new edition of the world's most beloved roleplaying game now on the streets, it only makes sense to follow up with a new edition of that game's most popular campaign setting. Since its release in 1987, Ed Greenwood's Forgotten Realms setting has been home to more D&D campaigns than any other shared world. With a dizzying number of computer games, novels, game supplements, and free-form chat games throughout the Internet, virtually everyone has paid a visit to Faerûn.

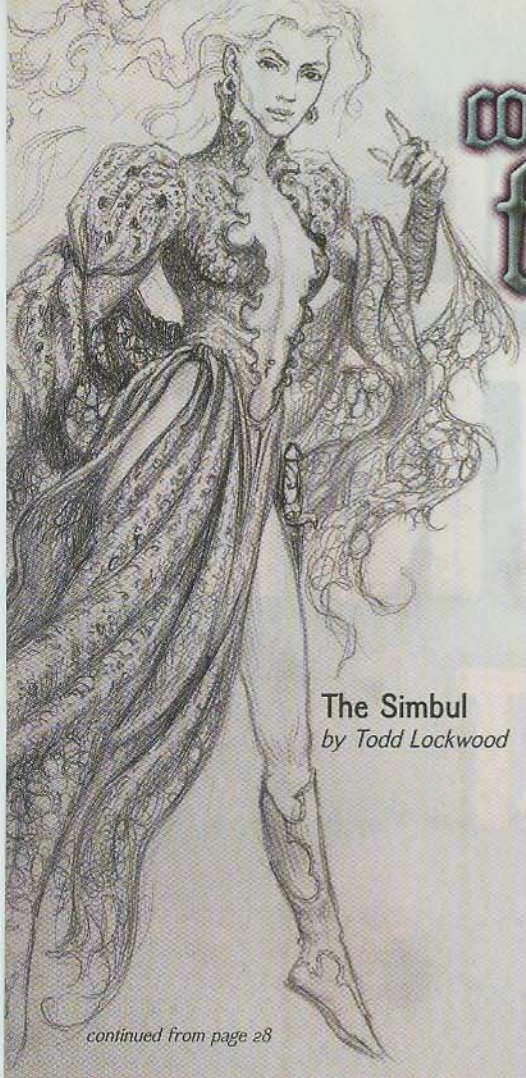
Too Much of a Good Thing

With twelve busy years worth of adventures, stories, and campaign expansions—not to mention magazine articles—the Realms is deep and rich, a place where you can find almost any environment you desire. That depth can seem intimidating, especially to new players and those who discovered the setting after it had accumulated enough source material to fill a library. To overcome that obstacle, Anthony Valterra, the Associate Business Manager for Tabletop Roleplaying Games, explains that the new edition provides "a single sourcebook for ongoing players to use and a single entry point for those people who are new to the Realms."

Fzoul
by Todd Lockwood

continued on page 30

countdown to the forgotten realms



The Simbul
by Todd Lockwood

continued from page 28

The Times, They Are A-Changing

Unlike "static" settings, which don't change from one year to the next, the Realms is constantly transforming. Among other developments, Game Designer Sean K Reynolds reports, "Drow are appearing in large numbers in the forests of the Realms. Mulhorand has invaded Unther. The Red Wizards have abandoned martial conquest and become manufacturers of magic items. All of these things deserve to be explained in one sourcebook, so people new to the Realms aren't lost in all the history."

While the new book pays special attention to the most popular regions of Faerûn, the North and the Heartlands, Sean assures Realms fans that there's more to the new edition. "This is the most comprehensive look at the people and lands of Faerûn that we have ever done." If you want to be a Red Wizard of Thay, there are rules for it. If you want to be one of the Witches of Rashemon, you got it.

New Rules

Sometimes, the Forgotten Realms has introduced magical elements for which the rules were never designed. Its characters, especially those from the novels, had abilities that weren't easy to duplicate with the old rules.

"Many things in the Realms pushed the envelope of 2nd Edition AD&D," says Julia Martin, Senior Editor in Roleplaying R&D. "The new D&D game makes it easy to accomplish almost all the things that 2nd Edition used to have problems with mechanically." With the new D&D rules, she says, "We can both balance things and 'go for it' with magic and characters."

What does that mean for your Realms characters? "The new version spends much more space on how to make your characters Realms characters," says Julia. New prestige classes and regional feats (detailed in an upcoming issue) let you customize your character based on geographical origin and even subrace.

Facelift

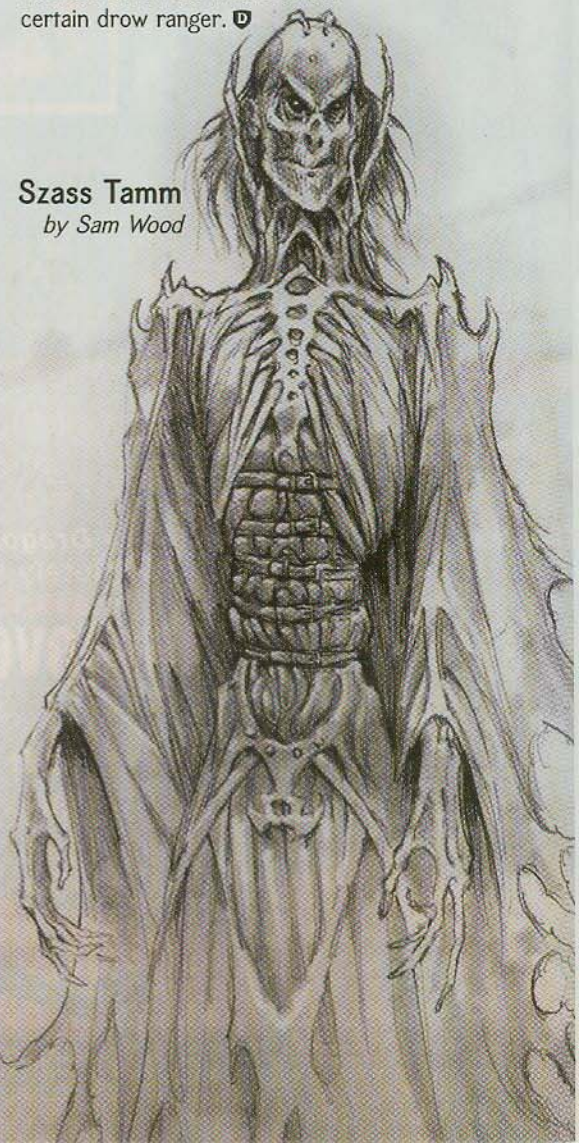
The look of D&D changed dramatically this year, and the Realms will get its makeover too. However, it won't be quite as drastic. "With the Realms characters," says Artist Todd Lockwood, "we wanted to find a more classic look. [It'll be] less grungy and hard-edged than the core D&D concept work, because these are all well established, high-level characters." That means you can expect a new look for Elminster, but the Mohawk is right out.

Synchronize Your Watches

If, like most gamers, you start a new campaign every 18 months or so, here's a golden opportunity to start fresh. Even if you've been playing in the Realms for years and plan to stay there, it's a great time to reinvigorate your campaign. "The new edition of the Realms gives us the opportunity to update all of Faerûn to one year," says Julia. This way, those who've played the Realms for only ten days will have the same understanding of the campaign as those who've known it for ten years.

Over the next five months, we'll take a look at the elements that make the Realms special, including its most famous (and infamous) characters, its organizations, countries, gods, and the new rules that come with the new setting. Keep your eyes on this article, and you'll be the first to know what's changing and why. You'll be privy to the insights of the designers, editors, and artists, and, as always, you'll have a chance to send in your questions and feedback for all to read and attack ... er, address in polite discourse.

Join us next month as we revisit the heroes and villains of the new Forgotten Realms setting, from the scheming Manshoon to the indomitable Steel Regent of Cormyr ... and maybe we'll call on an old wizard and a certain drow ranger. D



Szass Tamm
by Sam Wood

countdown to the forgotten realms

Heroes & villains

Elminster who?
In the new edition, you're *the hero.*

The world's most popular D&D campaign gets more than a facelift next June. The overhaul begins with a new set of character creation rules, an emphasis on adventure, and a new attitude about who's important in the Realms.

"I want the spotlight to be clearly on player characters," says Creative Director Richard Baker. He's keenly aware of the criticism that luminaries such as Elminster and Drizzt have sometimes cast long shadows over PCs. Part of the solution is to emphasize villains, whom you're likely to fight, over the local queen, wizard, or guildmaster, whom you might never meet. This focus on villains includes a stronger emphasis on adventures and locations. The new campaign includes a big adventure as well as tough encounter areas, like a Red Wizard enclave and a dracolich's lair.

New Realms source material will include less backstory and more adventure. Things will get hotter, too, as the conflict between the heroes and villains becomes much more urgent than before.

How can you get ready for that conflict? Why, with the new rules for Realms subraces and prestige classes (see sidebars), not to mention regional feats—which are available to characters depending on their geographic origin. These additions won't make your characters more powerful than those you created with the *Player's Handbook*, but they give you a lot more choices, letting you create your character exactly the way you always envisioned. D

The Elves of Faerûn

The moon (silver) elves are similar to the basic elves of the D&D game, but they aren't the only choice for player characters. While the new rules are still in editing, here are the basic differences as they stand now:

Sun (gold) elves	-2 STR -2 CON	+2 DEX +2 INT
Wood (copper) elves	+2 STR -2 CON -2 CHA	+2 DEX -2 INT
Wild elves	+2 DEX	-2 INT
Drow (dark) ♂	+2 DEX -2 CON	+2 INT -2 CHA
Drow (dark) ♀	+2 DEX -2 CON	+2 INT +2 CHA

Realms Prestige Classes

The new Realms campaign includes fifteen new prestige classes, some of them new versions of familiar kits, classes, or organizations:

- Archmage
- Champion
- Devotee
- Disciple
- Giant-Killer
- Harper
- Hathran (Witch of Rashemen)
- Hierophant
- Purple Dragon Officer
- Red Wizard
- Runecaster
- Seeker
- Shadow Adept
- Shadow Thief
- Spellfilcher

"If you seek combat, come to me!"

SAM WOOD

Zhentil Keep has a new champion, Scyllua.

The new Realms are all about your heroes facing smart, powerful villains. Here's a sneak peek at one of the most dangerous:

Scyllua Darkhope (LE human female Pal5/Rgr4/Blk6)

Scyllua is a holy warrior, albeit one devoted to an evil god. Her fanatical devotion to her beliefs lends her a presence that only the most foolish would challenge. She is not concerned with mundane worldly cares; her eyes are on a greater prize: the dominion of her god. A small, slight woman, she is nevertheless a terrifying warrior, capable of leaving multiple opponents dead or in horrible pain without so much as a look back at them as she rides away.

She usually wears plate armor, often spattered with the blood of her enemies. Her preferred weapon is a bastard sword, which she wields to devastating effect.

Seemingly, the only creature she cares about is her mount, a white nightmare with eyes and hooves of blue fire.

countdown to the forgotten realms

The forgotten realms rules

Even if you don't play in the Forgotten Realms setting—even if you don't *intend* to play there—you won't want to miss the new rules presented with the new version of the most popular D&D world. It features four new monsters, over a dozen new subraces, more than fifty new feats, dozens of new spells and magic items, and—best of all—about four dozen new clerical domains.

If that's not enough, the new hardcover also gives you the first taste of what it means to exceed 20th level in a single class. (More rules for high level play will come in a future product.)

With all these rules expansions, the new Forgotten Realms setting is as much a rules companion as a campaign world. Here's a sneak preview of a few of those new rules.

Regional Feats

Depending on where your character grew up, she has access to new feats that other characters can't normally choose. You take a regional feat just like any other feat. It won't make you more powerful than those who don't, but it does make you more distinctly Cormyrian, Waterdhavian, or Amnish.

A character from Aglarond, for instance, can choose from the Discipline, Luck of Heroes, and Treetopper feats in addition to those available to all characters. One from Sembia, on the other hand, could pick from Education, Mercantile Background, Silver Palm, or Twin Sword.

What do all these feats do? Check out the sidebar for some tantalizing hints.

NEW FEATS

Discipline	Bonuses to Will saving throws and Concentration checks
Education	Bonuses to all Knowledge skills
Luck of Heroes	Bonuses to all saving throws
Mercantile Background	Bonuses to Appraise, Craft, and Profession
Silver Palm	Bonuses on Appraise and Bluff
Treetopper	Bonus to Climb checks, and you retain Dex bonus to AC when climbing
Twin Sword	AC bonus when fighting with two weapons

HIGH-LEVEL ADVANTAGES

The rules for playing characters over 20th level won't appear until after the Forgotten Realms campaign setting, so how could the designers present such powerful characters as the Simbul of Aglarond or Elminster of Shadowdale? They'd have to peer into the future, wouldn't they?

Well, that's what they did.

With the help of the core rules team, the Forgotten Realms designers gleaned just enough information to give the most powerful characters in Faerûn their rightful abilities. What they can have, you can have.

Instead of the usual array of advantages characters receive upon gaining a level, those who rise above 20th level can pick an Epic Level Ability (ELB). Those can range from a +1 Ability increase to a +1 Higher-Level Spell, giving a character a 10th-level (or higher) spell slot that can be especially useful for wizards who enjoy metamagic feats.

These ELBs are still under vigorous development, so that's all we dare tell you this month.

WHAT ELSE?

In the months ahead, we'll look more closely at the gods (and clerical domains) of the Forgotten Realms setting, as well as the rules for characters of levels 21 and above. Can't wait to see more? Join us again in 30 days, as we take a look at the nations of Faerûn, as well as the movers, the shakers, and the dead.

THE DWARVES OF FAERÛN

Like the elves, dwarves and gnomes come in more than one flavor in the Forgotten Realms setting. Here are some (but definitely not all) of their special abilities and ability score adjustments. As always, these rules might change slightly before the book emerges from editing.

Shield Dwarf
As *Player's Handbook* dwarf

Gold Dwarf
+2 CON, -2 DEX, +1 attack bonus against aberrations (instead of orcs and goblinoids)

Gray Dwarf*
+2 CON, -4 CHA, Darkvision 120 feet, +4 Move Silently bonus, +1 racial bonus to Listen and Spot checks, spell-like abilities

Rock Gnomes
As *Player's Handbook* gnome

Deep Gnomes*
-2 STR, +2 DEX, +2 WIS, -4 CHA, Darkvision 120 feet, spell-like abilities, stonecunning, racial bonuses to saving throws and Hide checks, spell resistance

*Gray dwarves and deep gnomes are "Powerful Races," meaning they use a slower experience table than other player characters. Guess where you can find that table.

For more information on the new Forgotten Realms campaign setting, check out the Wizards of the Coast website: http://www.wizards.com/ForgottenRealms/Welcome.asp

countdown to the forgotten realms

Realms of the Realms

When the Forgotten Realms setting was first unleashed way back in 1987, the game year was 1357 Dale reckoning. With the launch of the new, 3rd-Edition-compatible setting in June, the calendar moves forward to 1372. That advance in time heralds more than a few changes in the world's most popular Dungeons & Dragons campaign.

What you won't see with those changes is another Realms-shattering event on the scale of the Time of Troubles, which sent DMs scrambling to rebuild their campaigns for 2nd Edition. Instead, the kingdoms and city-states of the Realms have evolved naturally both to take advantage of the cool new rules and to provide more opportunities for conflict and adventure.

THE RED WIZARDS OF THAY

Once these crimson-cloaked minions of Szass Tam spread discord and misery all across the Moonsea nations and as far west as the Sword Coast. Now they collect your hard-earned gold as the magic merchants of Faerûn. Their change in strategy is proving wildly profitable, as rulers in nations like Westgate and Sembia are granting the Red Wizards Enclaves in their cities. Within the walls of these areas, the Red Wizards enjoy the protection of their own laws and customs. Those who venture into these enclaves with enough money can emerge with the finest in potions, wands, and other magic items. Thus, while the Red Wizards still aren't nice guys, you're now more likely to argue over the price of a *bag of holding* than trade *fireballs* . . . at least while you're in their shops.

THE SILVER MARCHES

Silverymoon, Everlund, Sundabar, Mithral Hall and other strongholds formed an alliance in recent years. Their combined territories are now known as the Silver Marches, a bastion against the cruel tribes and oppressive cults of the savage frontier. Beset on all sides by enemies, including the sinister Arcane Brotherhood in Luskan, this fledgling kingdom must fight for survival at every turn. Their most dangerous opponent might be King Obould, an orc barbarian who just might have the power and presence to lead the orcs from the Spine of the World and obliterate the upstarts.

THE SIMBUL OF AGLAROND

One of the best known and most powerful spellcasters in Faerûn is the Queen of Aglarond, known to friends and foes alike as the Simbul. For years she has been the primary defensive force that stands between the Red Wizards and her people. While that hasn't changed—except that the Red Wizards seem more bent on commerce than conquest—what has changed is that the Simbul is no longer a powerful wizard. Instead, in keeping with the new arcane magic rules in 3rd Edition, the Simbul is a powerful sorcerer. What changed her? Why nothing; she's always been a sorcerer. You just weren't looking closely enough before.

MULHORAND INVADES UNTHER

One of the biggest ongoing changes in Faerûn is the conquest of Unther by its neighbor, Mulhorand. Both nations had the distinction of being ruled by living gods. Since the death of Gilgeam, the god-king of Unther, there's been nothing to stop Horus-Re from sending his warriors across the border. The fallout from this bloody war is sure to affect the western nations politically and economically, but what a glorious place for opportunistic adventurers to forge their reputations!

ANAUROCH

Those who've delved beneath the burning sands of the Anauroch desert know that one of the most wicked and powerful races in Faerûn dwell there. The phaerimm are back with a vengeance, at least until an ancient power returns in the form of a mysterious and mobile city. What happens next is still top secret, but suffice to say the heroes of Faerûn will have a whole new reason to fear the great desert.

THOSE NAUGHTY ZHENTARIM

Lest those industrious Red Wizards steal all the credit for badness throughout the Realms, the Zhentarim are back with a vengeance, and they're licking their lips as they look south at the Dalelands from their reunified holdings in Mulmaster and Zhentil Keep. Their imperial ambitions have Hillsfar calling for aid from the rich coffers of Sembian merchants, who might be willing to send just enough of their treasure north to aid in Hillsfar's defense, knowing they'd be next in line for conquest. What none of the Zhentarim's likely targets yet know is the cause for their renewed fervor . . . which must remain a secret until the campaign setting arrives in June.

NEXT MONTH

Join us in the February issue for another look at the gods of the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting. No, there aren't plans for another picnic on Faerûn, but now they arm their clerics with a powerful battery of new spells and domains, not to mention special powers. D

For more information on the new FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign setting, check out the Wizards of the Coast website: **http://www.wizards.com/ForgottenRealms/Welcome.asp**

countdown to the forgotten realms

deities & demigods

Of all the D&D campaigns ever published, the Forgotten Realms wins the prize for the most varied and detailed deities and rules for clerics. In the previous edition, the *Faiths & Avatars* and *Powers & Pantheons* books were a big hit among fans who wanted to make the most of their clerics with new spells, powers, and specialty priest options.

In addition to a detailed cosmology and descriptions of about thirty-five gods, the new setting presents rules for playing clerics of more than 100 deities of all alignments and powers. In the Deities Quick Reference, you can find each god's name, power level, favored weapon, alignment, portfolio, and—most importantly—domains.

The new setting adds thirty-three new domains to the twenty-two from the *Player's Handbook*, along with exclusive new domain spells. With its release, you can choose from the new domains: Cavern, Charm, Craft, Darkness, Drow, Dwarf, Elf, Family, Fate, Gnome, Halfling, Hatred, Illusion, Mentalism, Metal, Moon, Nobility, Ocean, Orc, Planning, Portal, Renewal, Retribution, Rune, Scalykind, Slime, Spell, Spider, Storms, Suffering, Time, Trade, and Tyranny.

What changes can you expect from the new version of the gods in the Forgotten Realms campaign? Very few, since they worked so well in the previous edition. Still, some have changed slightly over the years. Cyric, the god of murder and deceit, is "no longer barking mad," according to Creative Director Rich Baker. That doesn't mean he's any more pleasant, but he's settled down since losing some of his portfolio to Kelemvor, the Lord of the Dead.

The biggest deity development involves Iyachtu Xvim, the demigod offspring of the dead god Bane. All Rich will let us say this early is that "Xvim finally achieves his rightful place." The details are sure to give you the shivers when all is finally revealed in June.

Join us next month for a look at the secret societies of Faerûn, including the Harpers, the Zhentarim, and everything in between.

A CELESTIAL SAMPLER

To whet your appetite, here's a taste of the 100+ deities listed by name, portfolio, rank, alignment, favored weapon, and symbol—one for each alignment.

DEITIES QUICK REFERENCE

Name	Domains	Power	Alignment	Favored Weapon	Symbol	Portfolio
Auril	Air, Evil, Storm, Water	L	NE	"Icemaiden's Caress" (battleaxe)	White snowflake on gray diamond with white border	Cold, winter
Azuth	Magic, Knowledge, Law, Illusion, Spell	L	LN	"The Old Staff" (quarterstaff)	Human left hand pointing upward outlined in blue fire	Wizards, mages, spellcasters in general
Mystra	Good, Magic, Knowledge, Illusion, Rune, Spell	G	NG	Seven whirling stars (shuriken)	Circle of seven blue-white stars with red mist flowing from the center	Magic, spells, the Weave
Cyric	Chaos, Destruction, Evil, Trickery, Illusion	G	CE	"Razor's Edge" (longsword)	White jawless skull on black or purple sunburst	Murder, lies, intrigue, deception, illusion
Finder Wyvernspur	Chaos, Charm, Scalykind, Renewal	D	CN	"Sword of Songs" (bastard sword)	White harp on gray circle	Cycle of life, transformation of art, saurials
Loviatar	Suffering, Law, Evil, Strength, Fire, Retribution	L	LE	"Painbringer" (scourge)	Nine-tailed barbed scourge	Pain, hurt, agony, torment, suffering, torture
Oghma	Knowledge, Luck, Travel, Trickery, Charm	G	N	"Mortal Strike" (longsword)	Blank scroll	Knowledge, invention, inspiration, bards
Selûne	Travel, Chaos, Good, Moon, Protection	I	CG	"The Wand of Four Moons" (heavy mace)	Pair of female eyes surrounded by seven silver stars	Moon, stars, navigation, prophesy, questors, seekers, good and neutral lycanthropes
Torm	Law, Good, Healing, Protection, Strength	L	LG	"Duty's Bond" (greatsword)	Right-hand gauntlet held upright with palm forward	Duty, loyalty, obedience, paladins

THE UNPALADIN

Among the new prestige classes is one for holy warriors. Think of them as paladins without the pesky alignment restriction. Here's a sneak peek at the class:

DIVINE CHAMPION

Even the most pacifistic deities need servants who can defend their worshippers and advance their interests. Divine champions are mighty warriors who dedicate themselves to their deity's cause, defending holy ground, destroying enemies of the church, and slaying mythical beasts and clerics of opposed faiths. For deities who do not count paladins among their followers, divine champions fill the role of the church-sponsored warrior.

Most divine champions come from a combat or military background. Barbarians, fighters, monks, paladins, and rangers are the most common divine champions, but some of the more militant clerics and druids decide to become divine champions. Bards, rogues, sorcerers, and wizards rarely become divine champions unless they are particularly devout and skilled in warfare.

REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a divine champion (DCh) of a particular deity, a character must fulfill all the following criteria:

Base Attack Bonus: +7

Feats: Weapon Focus in the deity's favored weapon.

Skills: Knowledge (religion) 3 ranks

Patron: A divine champion must have a patron deity, and it must be the deity of whom she is a champion.

Alignment: Same as deity's alignment.

CLASS SKILLS

The divine champion's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Handle Animal (Cha), Jump (Str), Knowledge (religion) (Int), Ride (Dex), Spot (Wis), and Swim (Str). See Chapter 4: Skills in the *Player's Handbook* for skill descriptions.

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

CLASS FEATURES

All the following are class features of the divine champion prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A divine champion is proficient with all simple and martial weapons, light armor, medium armor, and shields.

Sacred Defenses: Add this value to the divine champion's saving throws against divine spells, as well as the spell-like and supernatural abilities of outsiders.

Lay on Hands: As a defender of the faith, a divine champion may lay on hands to heal himself or another creature following the same patron as himself. The ability works like a paladin's ability to lay on hands, except the divine champion may heal 1 hit point of damage per divine champion level plus her Charisma bonus. If the divine champion is a paladin, he can combine this healing with his paladin class' lay on hands ability.

Smite Infidel: Once per day the divine champion may attempt to smite a creature with a different patron (or no patron at all) with one normal melee attack. He adds his Charisma modifier (if positive) to the attack roll and deals 1 extra point of damage per divine champion level. If the divine champion accidentally smites someone of the same patron, the smite has no effect but is still used up for that day. If the divine champion is also a paladin, he may use the smite evil ability separately or combine it with smite infidel into a single strike if the target is evil and of a different faith.

Fighter Feat: The divine champion may choose any one feat (except Weapon Specialization) from the fighter class bonus feat list on page 37 of the *Player's Handbook* or any feat with the [Fighter] designator in Chapter 4: Characters from this book.

Divine Wrath: The divine champion channels a portion of his patron's power into wrath, giving him +3 to hit, damage, and saving throws for a number of rounds equal to his Charisma modifier. During this time, the divine champion also has damage reduction 5/—. This is a supernatural ability that can be used once per day, invoked as a free action.

DIVINE CHAMPION — HIT DIE 10

Class Level	Base Attack	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+1	+2	+2	+0	Lay on Hands
2nd	+2	+3	+3	+0	Fighter Feat, Sacred Defenses +1
3rd	+3	+3	+3	+1	Smite Infidel
4th	+4	+4	+4	+1	Fighter Feat, Sacred Defenses +2
5th	+5	+4	+4	+1	Divine Wrath

CONVERTING THE HEATHEN

If you've already picked a god from the *Player's Handbook*, converting your cleric to the Forgotten Realms campaign is easy—just cross-reference the following chart:

Player's Handbook deity	Forgotten Realms deity
Boccob	Azuth, Mystra, Savras, Velsharoon
Corellon Larethian	No change
Ehlonna	Mielikki
Erythnul	Cyric, Garagos, Malar
Fharlanghn	Selûne, Shaundakul
Garl Glittergold	No change
Gruumsh	No change
Heironeous	Torm, Tyr
Hextor	Loviatar, Xvim
Kord	Lathander, Tempus, Uthgar
Moradin	No change
Nerull	Cyric, Malar, Talona
Obad-Hai	Silvanus
Olidammara	Oghma, Sune, Tymora
Pelor	Ilmater, Lathander, Torm
St. Cuthbert	Helm, Hoar, Tyr
Vecna	Shar, Velsharoon
Wee Jas	Azuth, Kelemvor
Yondalla	No change needed

For more information on the new Forgotten Realms campaign setting, check out the Wizards of the Coast website: www.wizards.com/ForgottenRealms/Welcome.asp

countdown to the forgotten realms

ORGANIZATIONS OF FAERÛN

Delving into long forgotten dungeons and mounting hunts for ravaging dragons might be the typical adventures for your group, but everyone likes a little intrigue now and then. That's where the hundreds of secret societies, cults, and guilds of Faerûn come into play. From noble orders of paladins to scheming cabals of wizards, there's a group for every sort of character. While a book detailing even more of these groups is in the works, the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting* gets you started with a selection of the most interesting organizations of Faerûn.

Mad, Bad, and Dangerous to Know

Most secret organizations are secret for a good reason: they're up to no good. The ***Cult of the Dragon***, for instance, is devoted to creating and serving dracoliches. If they seem a bit too, well, insane, consider the classically evil ***Red Wizards of Thay***, who want to conquer the world not for some moldy old dragons but for themselves.

Some organizations have set their sights a bit lower. ***The Zhentarim***, also known as the Black Network, want to rule only the land from the Moonsea to the Sword Coast. They aren't a secret society in the usual sense, since they've operated openly for years. Since their operating methods include banditry, arson, and murder, they aren't exactly a proper nation, either.

Bands of cutthroats and robbers are among the most common of secret societies. The ***Fire Knives*** were once a band of assassins from Cormyr. These days they call Westgate their home, living there with the consent of that city's powerful assassin's guild, the Night Masks. Fortunately for everyone else, the Fire Knives reserve their hatred for the Obarskyrs, who rule Cormyr.

A far more peculiar thieves' guild resides deep below Waterdeep, the City of Splendors. There a beholder named ***The Xanathar*** commands eleven undead beholder lieutenants, each in charge of one of the Guild's businesses. Beneath the eye tyrant masters are elite troops (of at least 4th level), as well as powerful wizards, clerics, and fighters who lead their own teams to do the Guild's dirty work.

We Happy Few

Not all secret societies are evil. Outnumbered by their wicked counterparts, some heroes have to remain hidden from the villains they oppose. From the shadows, they help less subtle heroes oppose the wicked and tyrannical, but when the time for action arrives, they must be ready to step into the light.

Enter the ***Harpers***, the most notorious band of meddling heroes in all of Faerûn. Often disorganized and sometimes scorned by their fellow heroes, Those Who Harp take it upon themselves not only to defy organizations like the Cult of the Dragon, the Iron Throne, the Red Wizards, and the Zhentarim but also to pass along the lessons of history to young adventurers who would otherwise make the same mistakes as their forebears.

The ***Lord's Alliance*** is a much more organized bastion of good. It consists mainly of the rulers of Waterdeep, Silverymoon, Neverwinter, and other northern cities. While they still have their differences, they band together when some force threatens them all. Better still, they aren't above hiring adventurers, usually to oppose the Black Network, which they usually agree is the principle threat to their well-being.

What part these organizations will play in your organization is a secret only your DM can reveal. While you quiver in anticipation, join us next month for a look at the most popular element of the Forgotten Realms campaign: magic!

FAERÛN'S ORGANIZATIONS

The *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting* provides a chapter on a baker's dozen of Faerûn's most interesting organizations.

NAME	WHO ARE THEY?	WHAT DO THEY WANT?
Cult of the Dragon	Crazy dracolich worshippers	To create and serve dracoliches
Emerald Enclave	Preservationist druids on the island of Ilighôn	To preserve nature
Fire Knives	Cormyrian assassins in exile	To kill the Obarskyrs
Harpers	Sneaky do-gooders	To smash evil and brag about it
Iron Throne	Power-hungry merchants	To own everything
Lords' Alliance	Defenders of northern cities	To thwart evil forces in the north
Malaugryms	Immortal shapeshifters	To invade Faerûn, take all the magic
People of the Black Blood	Vicious lycanthropes	To hunt, kill, and eat you
Red Wizards	Wizards bent on world domination	To . . . rule . . . the . . . WORLD!
The Seven Sisters	Spellcasting Chosen of Mystra	To aid all good people
Shades	Ancient spellcasters	No one knows
The Xanathar's Guild	Beholder-run thieves and slavers	To rob and enslave for profit
Zhentarim	The classic evil tyrants	To rule from the Moonsea to the Sword Coast

For more information on the new FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign setting, check out the Wizards of the Coast website: http://www.wizards.com/ForgottenRealms

countdown to the forgotten Realms

MAGIC of FAERÛN

If there's one thing for which the FORGOTTEN REALMS is known, it's magic. This is the world that introduced spellfire, wild magic, and the Weave, after all. With the new edition arriving in June, the land of Faerûn will once again redefine magic in the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game.

THE SOURCE OF MAGIC

The conduit between spellcasters and raw magic is the goddess Mystra. Her "body" is a force known as the **Weave**, and it is through this medium that both the **Art** (arcane magic) and **Power** (divine magic) are manifested from the essence of raw magic. Spellcasters know the secrets of making the threads of the weave twist and reshape to their will. When those threads are torn or frayed, **wild magic** is the result. Spellcasters daring to employ their Art or Power within such damaged areas of the Weave can never be certain of the result. In some places, the Weave is torn completely away, leaving a **dead magic** zone, in which no magic can function.

The raw energy of the Weave is known as **spellfire**. Mystra grants its use in two forms: the revitalizing **silver fire** wielded by her Chosen, and the pure spellfire mastered by only a handful of mortals in each generation.

SECRET LORE

Magic remains mysterious in the FORGOTTEN REALMS, and few know about the **Shadow Weave**, those negative spaces between the threads of Mystra's Weave. Shadow Weave spellcasters can perform magic normally in a dead or wild magic zone, but they lose their ability to affect the natural Weave as they gain power.

High elven magic was created before the Weave took on its present form, and its practitioners exceeded the powers of contemporary spellcasters. Dwarves and giants created **rune magic** for use with divine spells. The witches of Rashemen and the Red Wizards of Thay use a form of cooperative magic involving multiple casters in **circle magic**.

Faerûn is a big place, and Toril is bigger still. Fortunately, previous cultures have left plenty of **portals** throughout the land. Portals are basically permanent teleportation sites, though the secrets of their operation are crucial to those who would depend on their use. To someone without the right key, a portal might be just a big rock in the middle of a field.

SPELLS AND MORE

From *Aganazzar's scorcher* to *waterspout*, the FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign setting adds more than three dozen spells to the D&D game. In addition, the book includes new rules on spellbook and scroll creation. If that's not enough to satisfy your craving for all things magical, then wait another month or two for *Magic of Faerûn*, which provides even more magical goodness for wielders of the Art and the Power in the FORGOTTEN REALMS.

The new setting is only two months away! Join us next month for a quick tour of the new face of Faerûn, then return in June for the 25th Anniversary issue of *DRAGON Magazine* and not one but two new monthly FORGOTTEN REALMS features.

Here's one of the many new spells from the upcoming FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign setting:

EAGLE'S SPLENDOR

Transmutation

Level:	Brd 2, Hrp 2 Sor/Wiz 2 Trade 3
Components:	V, S, M/DF
Casting Time:	1 action
Range:	Touch
Target:	Creature touched
Duration:	1 hour/level
Saving Throw:	None
Spell Resistance:	Yes

The transmuted creature becomes more poised, articulate, and personally forceful. The spell grants an enhancement bonus to Charisma of 1d4+1 points, adding the usual benefits to Charisma-based skills. Sorcerers and bards who receive *eagle's splendor* do not gain extra spells, but the save DCs for their spells increase.

Arcane Material Component:
A drop of honey or henna.

For more information on the new FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign setting, check out the Wizards of the Coast website: http://www.wizards.com/ForgottenRealms

countdown to the

FORGOTTEN REALMS

TEN REASONS

You'll Love the Book—Even if You Hate the Realms

If you've never played in the FORGOTTEN REALMS before, or if you're one of those Faerûn-haters who writes "Elminster Sux!" on message boards, then this preview is for you.

For fans of the setting, we know you'll have it in your hot little hands the day it comes out (about a week after this issue hits he stands). The things you loved about earlier editions are still there, but the new version offers far more rules information along with a new focus on the real heroes of Faerûn: your characters.

The new edition of the world's most popular D&D setting has something for everyone who plays the game, even if you'd love nothing more than a half hour alone in a room with Elminster and a hot poker. In many ways, the *FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting* is as useful to a GREYHAWK fan or a DM who has spent five years developing her own campaign as it is for a die-hard fan of the collected works of R.A. Salvatore. The book could almost be called a "D&D Rules Companion," with the added bonus of more than 100 pages of great campaign locations. Even when the book turns to Faerûn-specific information, there are rules galore, just waiting for an industrious DM to mine them for her own setting.

After a brief introduction that's perfect for those who've never adventured in Faerûn, the book offers nine chapters of meaty content.

Characters

For those who play in other campaigns, this section is one of the ripest for plunder. After an introduction with tips on converting existing characters to the Forgotten Realms campaign, this chapter offers rules on playing gold dwarves, gray dwarves, shield dwarves, drow, sun elves, wild elves, wood elves, deep gnomes, rock gnomes, ghostwise halflings, strongheart halflings, aasimar, genasi, and tieflings—all in addition to the classic D&D races from the *Players Handbook*, some with minor rules changes.

This chapter also provides a huge chart of information for characters based on the region in which they were raised. All characters gain a regional language, eligibility for regional feats, and equipment peculiar to their area. Even if you don't play in the FORGOTTEN REALMS, this chart is a great resource: change the names, and you have a customized list for your own campaign.

Magic

The addition of sorcerers to the new campaign comes naturally, without a cataclysm like the Time of Troubles. Seems like those guys have been here all the time, but boy do they make a lot of sense considering the flavor of the various regions in Faerûn.

What's great about this chapter, aside from the obvious benefit of new spells, is the way various forms of unusual magic are detailed and explained. Spellfire, wild magic,

NEW ITEM: BLADE BOOT

Custom-fitted to the wearer's own boots, this device consists of a sturdy sole assembly concealing a spring-loaded dagger. The buyer can simply add one blade to either of his boots at the given cost, or buy a matched set for double the given cost.

The wearer's movement is not impaired when the blades are retracted. With one or more blades extended, the wearer cannot run or charge. A monk using the blade attacks as if unarmed. The Weapon Finesse feat can be applied to blade boots.

Note: A character wearing blade boots gains a +4 circumstance bonus on Escape Artist checks made to escape from rope bonds.

It takes a character trained in both Craft (cobbling) and Craft (weaponsmithing) to make blade boots. The Craft DC is 20 to refit an existing boot with a blade, or 15 to make a new pair. Refitting a boot takes about a day of work, if the blade and materials are on hand, or a week if they must be fashioned from scratch. Making a new pair of blade boots requires about a week.

shadow-weave magic, portals . . . it's all part of the FORGOTTEN REALMS, and it's all easy to add to your own campaign.

Life in Faerûn

This 20-page chapter is a godsend for method actors and DMs who love to make their campaigns rich with detail. It covers such topics as Time and Seasons, Lore of the Land, Home and Hearth, Coin and Commerce, Magic in Society, and Craft and Engineering. One of the coolest rules additions comes from this chapter in the form of more than twenty-five new pieces of equipment, a sample of which you can enjoy in the sidebar.

Geography

This huge section (over 100 pages) takes you from the Heartlands to the jungles of Chult to the Island Kingdoms to the Moonsea. Exotic lands like Zakhara and Kara Tur are mentioned, but the focus is on central Faerûn, where most players adventure and most of the FORGOTTEN REALMS novels take place. Some of these locations are new even to fans of earlier editions of the FORGOTTEN REALMS, and the cities have more detail than ever before—perfect for those DMs who want to swipe just a few of their favorite locations to place in a home campaign. For instance, here's just the stat block for the Silver Marches entry:

Capital: Silverymoon
Population: 1,090,800 (humans 40%, dwarves 20%, elves 20%, half-elves 10%, halflings 5%, gnomes 2%, half-orcs 2%)
Government: Confederation of lords headed by Alustriel of Silverymoon
Religions: Corellon Larethian, Helm, Lathander, Mielikki, Moradin, Mystra, Oghma, Selûne, Sune, Tymora
Imports: Armor, books, manufactured goods, pottery, spices, wine
Exports: Dwarven and elven craftwork, furs, heroes, precious metals
Alignment: LG, NG, CG

Deities

This chapter describes the faiths of thirty deities, plenty to get you started in a world rich with worship and divine magic. For information on the clerics of these and other faiths, keep an eye on the "Faiths of Faerûn" series in this humble periodical.

The deities chapter also includes a cosmology of Toril and guidelines for worship in the FORGOTTEN REALMS, including a nod toward the Outer Planes (which are explored in more detail in the upcoming *MANUAL OF THE PLANES*).

The most exciting element of this chapter is the return of a god once thought destroyed during the Time of Troubles, a Realms-shattering event that bridged the gap between 1st and 2nd Edition. Remember Bane, the original Dark Overlord who menaced Toril for ages before he met his end in the Time of Troubles? Turns out he saw it coming and prepared his half-demon son to contain his essence until he could return to his rightful place. That's right, boys and girls, Bane is back, and he's in a nasty mood.

History

Okay, so here's a chapter that's useful mainly to those who really will play in the FORGOTTEN REALMS. Of course, that's most of you, so what's the problem? For neophytes to Faerûn, this short chapter (7 pages) provides the perfect primer to understanding the important events that have shaped the world. For those who crave even more detail on what is arguably the most comprehensively detailed campaign world, the Wizards of the Coast website offers a dizzying array of free and inexpensive downloads of previously published products, and most of the information in them is eminently suitable for a 3rd Edition campaign.

Organizations

This chapter is just awesome for DMs who want a set of continuing villains (or allies) with which to harry their players. From the Cult of the Dragon to the Zhentarim, these secret societies and alliances are an integral part of the FORGOTTEN REALMS but have no problem standing on their own for other settings. The way we see it, no campaign should be without the Red Wizards of Thay or the People of the Black Blood, anyway.

Running the Realms

You'd think a chapter with this title would be interesting only to those actually playing in the setting, but with rules for nineteen more PC races, monsters with levels, overland travel, scrolls, gems, and characters above 20th level, it's a great resource for any DM. At a lean 13 pages, this chapter is a concentrated treasure for anyone.

Monsters

For everyone who's been waiting for some of the seemingly overlooked monsters, here are the death tyrant, dracolich, kir-lanan gargoyle, rothé, shade, and six exotic animals, including everyone's favorite flying kitty, the tressym.

Adventures

Two short adventures give fledgling DMs and veterans alike a quick way to get the players started. One deals with a Red Wizard enclave and is perfect for 1st- and 2nd-level characters. The other is a daunting dragon hunt that only characters of 16th level or higher should even consider.

Check out the new book for yourself, and then decide whether to run a full-blown campaign in Faerûn or simply adopt your favorite new rules into your own campaign, be it GREYHAWK, DRAGONLANCE, RAVENLOFT, or a world of your own design. Either way, the new *FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting* provides an unforgettable resource for any gamer.

WHAT'S INSIDE

Here are a few numbers to consider when debating whether you want a copy of the new *FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting*—even if you don't plan to play in Faerûn.

Player character race variants	18
New feats	50
Monsters	6
Religions/gods	120
Organizations	12
Sidebars	49
Adventures	2
Tables	39
Maps	12
Clerical domains	33
New types of magic	7
Spells	38
No. of 650MB -CDs required to hold the files	15
Pages	320
Words	300,000+
Final file size, with art	10 GB

FORGOTTEN REALMS®

CRÍMMOR

city of caravans

BY ED GREENWOOD
ILLUSTRATED BY VINCENT DUTRAIT

THE CROSSROADS OF
AMN
BROUGHT TO LIFE FOR
YOUR CAMPAIGN

"Crimmor, City of Caravans, what shall I say of thee?

"The life-blood of half Faerûn streams through thy streets, by coin and creaking wagon-wheel. Here Amn works for its glittering gold, and by such striving half the Sword Coast North is fed, and fine-work of a thousand-thousand hands sets forth to remote stead and backland croft.

"Crimmor, where barge, drover, and wagon are lords, work never ceases, and folk can sleep through din worthy of a siege.

"Crimmor, the beating heart of the haughty Merchants' Domain, bones beneath the striding skin of gold. No man is truly a caravan master, who has not passed through Crimmor."

Mandivvur Taeruld, Sage of Amn,
Tales of a City Unsleeping [1342 DR]

Crimmor is one of the most bustling places any Faerûnian will ever see. All night long, in all but the worst weather, lanterns blaze in the arches of its open gates and glimmer above the Alandor docks, so work can continue. Wagons creak and rumble along the streets day and night, and the air is filled with the crack of whips, the shouts of drovers, the bellows of oxen, and the jingling of harnesses.

The stink of ox dung hangs strong over the city and clings—thanks to the river-damp—to all clothes hung to dry unless they are draped in the scent-mist wardrobe chambers of the wealthy or of the most expensive launderers.

When the winds blow from the east (a thankfully rare occurrence), the reek from Upriver (the bankside tanneries, paddocks, and slaughterhouses) is chokingly thick. The rest of the time, a thin haze of hoof-flung dust hangs over the city, and the smells of laboring draft-beasts are strong and ever present.

Except to the west, where the estates of the wealthy sprawl along the River Road for half a day's ride, and due east where the tanneries, warehouses, and carriage-sheds line the Lake Way halfway to Amnwater, Crimmor is surrounded by caravan-yards.

Land spanning the flight of a ballista-bolt (fired from the great but seldom-used engines of war atop the gray granite city wall towers) out from the walls is kept clear of encampment and building by decree of the mayor. This "Keepclear" is used by Crimmans for moots, walks, and sward-feasts.[1]

A few trees[2] on either side of the Orc Road mark the limit of the Keepclear; beyond is a great expanse of paddocks where arriving caravans camp and departing caravans muster.

By law, only oxen or mules "badged"[3] by a citizen of Crimmor are allowed to haul any wagon or cart into the city or along any Crimman street. Such teams are hired dozens of times daily to go out, hitch onto a wagon from an arriving caravan and bring it in to the city. Small local-delivery drovers take their mule-carts out, too, and "cry carry" (call for business) to fetch less-than-a-wagonload cargoes (strongchests, crates, kegs, and coffers) from caravan wagons to city addresses. Crimman ox-teams make frequent runs from the docks right across the city and out to paddocks, transferring bargeloads to waiting wagons (or to bankside warehouses upriver, to await carriage later).

By law, all shore-docks for barges must be located within the Crimmor Shore (the stretch of bank enclosed by the city walls), to prevent barges from being run ashore anywhere up and down the Alandor to evade inspection and fees. As a result, the city is always choked with traffic, which is why the major streets bear bright gold wheel-plaques warning folk that wagons have right of way.

Crimmans seem used to the smells and the constant noisy bustle. Visitors often find sleep comes hard for their first tenday or so. Most find it far more pleasant out in the paddocks, even with all the lowing and neighing.

Greed keeps the streets busy at night, but such "moon work" is made possible because Crimmans and visitors alike feel safe: the Crimmor Guard is vigilant and mounts numerous patrols against gangs, thuggery in the shadows, and brawls. Everyone knows that "No thief thrives in Crimmor."

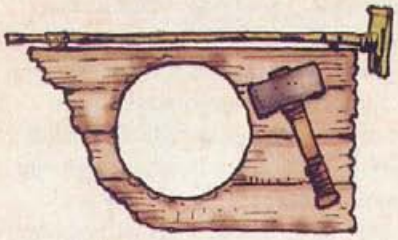
Crimmans are quite proud of that last belief, and it's largely true: the Shadow Thieves maintain a self-enforced no-theft policy within

1. A "sward-feast" is literally "a meal on the grass," or what we might call a picnic. Crimmans who can spare the time to get away for such meals enjoy them from dawn to dusk, sprawling on cloaks and blankets to enjoy flasks of wine and simple meals. Laborers might dine on wheels of strong onion-and-parsley cheese, "throus" (th-ROO-ss)—the local name for leeks—smoked meats and Alandor drusk (a large, sluggish, flavorful catfishlike bottom-feeder), and spiced handloaves of bread. Wealthier folk might eat just about anything: "sizzle-skewers" of seven quail marinated in spiced wine are the current favorite.
2. Well climbed by local children, these are duskwoods (with a scattering of felsul) protected from the axe by decree. Only bold local lovers dare to meet in the trees after dusk these days, as some caravan-riders think it good sport to play pranks on paramours. The Orc Road runs south to Purskul.
3. Owned by a tax-paying citizen and bearing a large numbered brass badge stamped with the wagon-on-barge symbol of Crimmor and graven with the owner's name to prove it. Citizens' riding-horses and coach-horses can also traverse the city streets, if they bear similar badges. Both sorts of badges are issued by the Thaeldorn. They're easily counterfeited, but no one does so, because the Shadow Thieves have let it be known that every false badge is worth one finger—severed from the user.

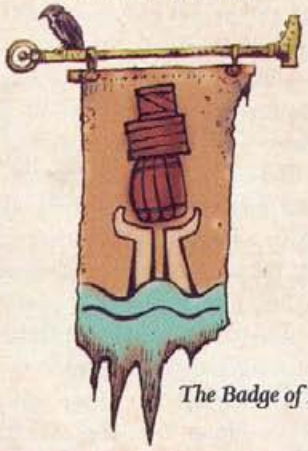
The Badge of Crimmor

The Badge of Smiths

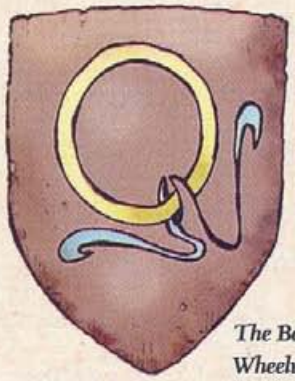
The Badge of Leatherers



The Badge of Wagonmakers



The Badge of Dockhands



The Badge of Wheelwrights

Crimmor's walls.[4] However, Crimmans know to "guard your glint," showing as little of valuable wares as possible to public gaze—because Shadow Thief spies are everywhere in the city, identifying what's being shipped where so choice items can be stolen on the way from Crimmor to elsewhere.

What Meets the Eye

Crimmor is a city of stone—dirty stone. Road-dirt coats the lowest story of its tall, narrow stone buildings (built touching each other, with many small balconies jutting out over streets, well above the height of the tallest loaded wagons), the cobbled streets are well-worn with wagon-ruts, and not a hand-span of land is "wasted" on gardens, parks, or greenery (the saying "No tree grows in Crimmor" is both old and apt).

Most buildings rise four to six stories tall, above a single level of low-ceilinged cellar, broken up by massive stone supports. They have ornately-carved stone fronts (adorned with gargoyles and fanciful "ardragons"),[5] tall and narrow windows (typically as wide as four mens' palms across) with vertically overlapping sliding panes of blown, bubble-studded Amn glass (most houses have

Crimmor

Crimmor (Large City): Conventional; AL N; 75,000 gp limit (increased due to abundant business and trade); Assets 75,000,000 gp; Population 20,000; Mixed (human 78%, halflings 13%, half-orcs 8%, half-elves 1%).

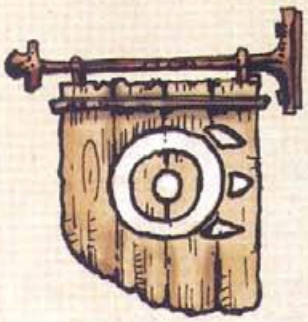
Authority Figures: Corlyn Braen, mayor of Crimmor (NG male human ranger 4); Lady Lamia Crytrapper, mistress of the Crytrapper family (NG human female ranger 6); Mikaal Krimmevol, local head of the Krimmevol family (NG male fighter 4); Lady Zharnn Ophal, the Dragon Lady, matron of the Ophal family (CE female human rogue 7); Branwyn Vaupel, youngest High Sword of the Crimman Guard (LG female human fighter 5).

Important Characters: Lydan Prowl, detective within the Crimman Guard (NG male halfling ranger 2/rogue 2); Yugo Reft, boss of the Dockhands (LE half-orc fighter 6); Madame Alistimra Tamm, proprietor of the Pearl (N female human rogue 4/sorcerer 2); Tehrinna the Towering, owner of Tymoran Trails (NG female human fighter 5); Jalantha Truard, hostess, informant, and connoisseur of Crimman society (CN female half-elf rogue 2); Zan Zoldaftel, leader of the Wheelwrights (LG human male fighter 2/expert 6).

In Times Past

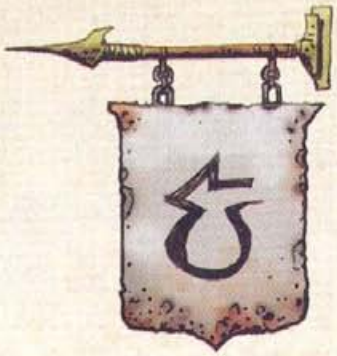
Crimmor was first detailed in the 1997 second-edition boxed set *Lands of Intrigue*, written by Steven E. Schend. The text of that out-of-print product can be downloaded for free from the "Downloads" section of Wizards of the Coast's DUNGEONS & DRAGONS website (**wizards.com/dnd**). This article augments the information given therein rather than replacing it.

4. This prohibition on thieving extends to Crimmor's barge docks, all Upriver warehouses owned by Crimmans, and all the Westward estates of wealthy Crimmans. The Shadow Thieves actually hunt and attack those intruding on the Crytrapper lands. The origins of the no-theft policy lie in a promise made by the Guild Master of Thieves to the Crytrappers decades ago, in return for the Crytrappers providing alibis and hiding stolen goods that enabled the Master and four senior Thieves to retain their lives when ostensibly "caught in crimson" (or caught red-handed). The Shadow Thieves even act against visiting thieves and Crimman amateurs; as a result, only small snatch-and-grab opportunistic thefts of individual, portable items occur—and thieves are often exposed if they try to sell their ill-gotten gains inside Crimmor.



Wagons Have Right of Way

Loading/Unloading In Progress



Sale Inside This Shop

Remembrance Feast Inside

Common Crimman Names

The naming conventions of Crimmor are indicative of those used throughout Northern Amn. Examples of some of the most common of these names follow.

Surnames	Male Given Names	Female Given Names
Alduth	Balcovan	Araumma
Chanthrai	Buld	Belaerra
Darneth	Corl	Cormildra (Corra)
Hallowfar	Corwar	Delfae
Hezmur	Feldyn	Faelra
Istur	Gors	Isruldra (Ismae, Ruldra)
Nellard	Harando	Jaumithra (Jitha)
Orsil	Jarsen	Meirivele
Pendrake	Malvan	Murarra (Mura)
Qorst	Moruld	Nuele
Rithtyn	Revril	Phintra
Sunder	Tace	Sarasra
Telstune	Terivar	Umae
Velauntur	Yundren (Yund)	Vauve

"window-poles" ending in hooks for sliding panes up and down), and steeply-pitched tile roofs with corner downspouts.

Amn gets a lot of rain in short but fierce downpours that tend to happen twice or thrice almost every morning. There are narrow but deep center-street channels (gutters) for carrying rainwater down to the Alandor, but most storms overburden them, sluicing dung off the cobbles and making necessary the "big step up" front stone threshold of most Crimman buildings.

Cold, clinging river-mists (sometimes thick enough to be called fogs) develop in wee morning hours and drift through the northernmost streets until banished by the sun. On overcast mornings the mists linger.

A visitor looking across Crimmor sees a lot of tall, narrow, side-walls-touching gray buildings, stained brown to just above the height of a tall man, with ornate carvings around arrow slit windows.[6] Tile roofs of dark brown, green, or blue rise past gables to wedge or "ax-blade" roof peaks, creating a skyline of blades dominated by the upthrusting spires of The Pearl (an exclusive short-stay inn, formerly the Mother of Pearl Boarding House) and the Thaeldorn (the huge, many-turreted house of governance).

Most buildings in Crimmor are in good repair because the gaudy dress so essential to social status in Athkatla here takes second place to having fine coaches, walking-sticks, homes, luggage, and tools in the best of shape. Nothing impresses a Crimman so much as a "proper earner" (which means *very* nice) tool or implement.

Conversely, although "proper" buildings should be solidly built of stone and in good repair, overly gaudy ornate balcony railings and statuary are regarded as frippery promoted by those with "too little coin to buy their own confidence." The three local "grand families" (the Ophals, Krimmevols, and Crytrappers) are exceptions to this, of course—but they exhibit *their* good taste by hiding ornate architectural splendors away behind elegant stone walls and coach-sized, coin-shaped gates.

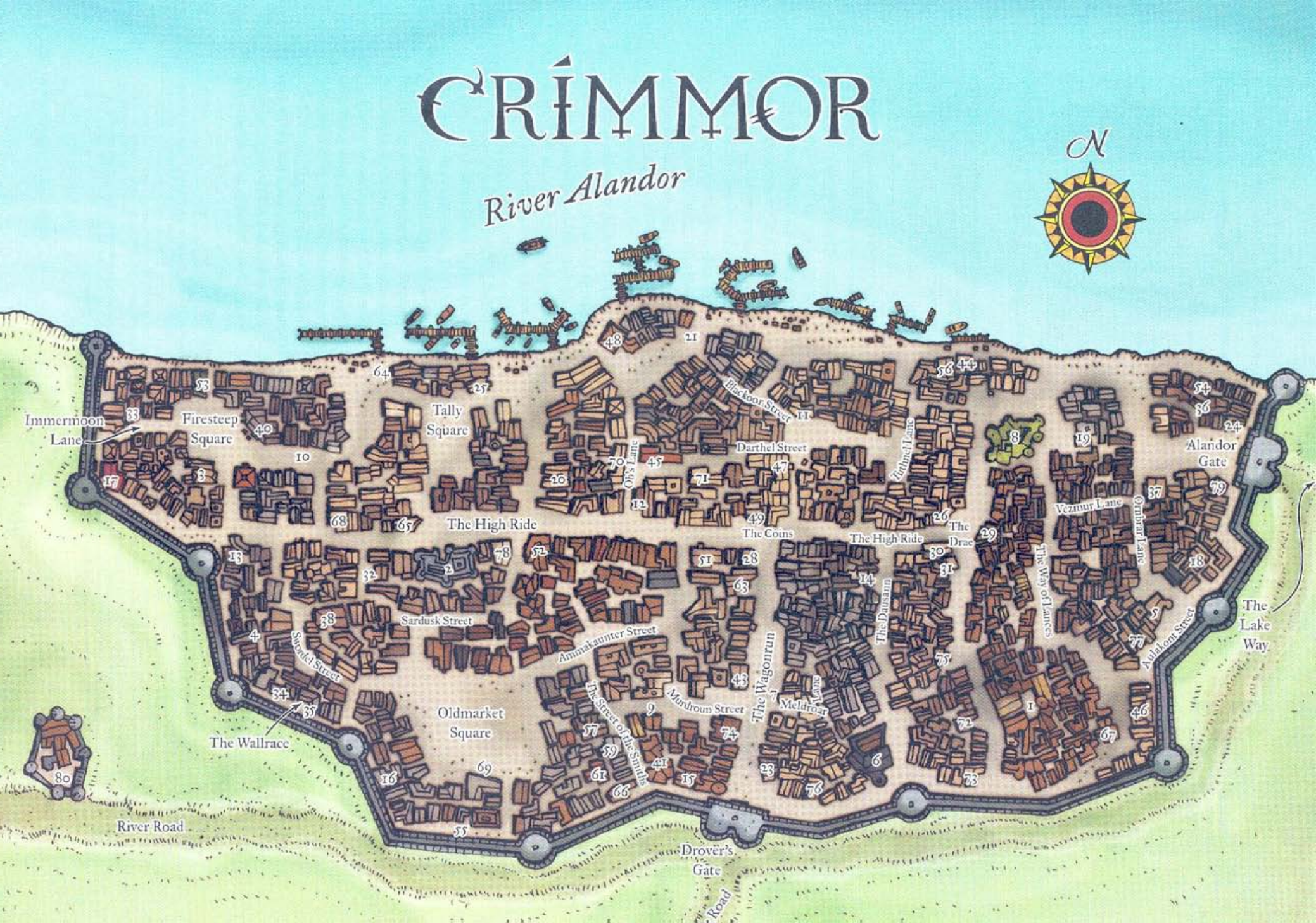
The Streets

Crimmor can comfortably house 75,000 folk and—with a bit of crowding—find room for 100,000; in winter, it's usually home to just over 20,000. Its two major streets are The High Ride (known to locals simply as "the High"), that aside from a swing to the riverbank just west of the Alandor Gate (the Eastern city gate), runs due east-west through the heart of the city; and the Wagonrun ("the Run"), which runs north-south from the High to

5. These massive stone support pillars are necessary because Crimmor is built on hardened river ooze over uneven bedrock—thankfully without any known springs of water inside its walls—and many buildings are in a constant slow state of settling in one direction or another, developing alarming leans fought against by hammering in props and shoring up sinking supports. "Ardragons" are mythical carved stone scaled mock-dragons that sprout any number of heads, clawed limbs, tails, and reptilian wings, their bodies and tails being sculpted impossibly thin and long to curl around windows and other wall features. Some of them have served as handy climbing-aids, but the slings of the Guard largely keep them from being dove-roosts.

6. The term "arrowslit" is considered insulting in Crimmor; outlanders are advised that the current term of admiration for architecture or garments is "djauncesome, really *djauncesome*!" (Pronounce this "Duh-JOHN-sss," with a long "sss" and a very short, indrawn "duh.") Crimman windows are properly called "exalted" rather than "narrow."

Crimman buildings are called town houses if used as the residence of one individual or family or grand houses if especially large and luxurious of architecture. Grander walled compounds (usually enclosing a tall domicile, a stables, and perhaps a separate guesthouse or personal warehouse) are referred to as manors. (In this part of Amn, a villa is considered a passé, overly-fanciful name for a country house—*never* a city home.) The vast majority of buildings in the city have a ground-floor shop (perhaps with a separate shop in the cellar or offices on the floor above) and apartments above. These are known as rises, with a "coinrise" being entirely rented out to businesses (if anyone dwells there, up in the attic, it's the owner or a doorwarden—door-guard and caretaker—for the building), and a "chamber-rise" being entirely rented out, either room by room or suite by suite, as private dwellings.


CRIMMOR
River Alandor
N
Immermoon Lane
Firesteep Square
Tally Square
Blackoor Street
Darthel Street
Darthel Lane
Alandor Gate
Vezmur Lane
Ormbar Lane
The High Ride
The Coins
The High Ride
The Drae
The Way of Lances
The Lake Way
Sardusk Street
Ammakaunter Street
Swordel Street
The Dausam
Audalont Street
Oldmarket Square
The Wallrace
Mushroom Street
The Wagonrun
Meldroar Lane
The Street of the Smiths
River Road
Drover's Gate

CITY OF CRIMMOR MAP KEY

1. The Thaeldorn (court, civic building, mayor's residence)
2. The Pearl (luxury inn)
3. Tymoran Trails (inn)
4. Sorntalar's Rest (inn)
5. Chauntea's Cradle (temple)
6. The Theater of Joy (shared temple of Lliira, Milil, and Sune)
7. Allfaiths Altarhall (many-faiths shared shrine)
8. Crystalgates Manor (Krimmevol family mansion)
9. Durndraaven Manor (Ophal family mansion)
10. Gaskrel's (boarding house)
11. Ivyposts (boarding house)
12. Redbanners House (boarding house)
13. Brightshields (boarding house)
14. Alessan House (boarding house)
15. Suldrakh's (boarding house)
16. Moongables (boarding house)
17. Delthorn's Haven (boarding house)
18. Melpurth House (boarding house)
19. The Emir's Court (tavern: excellent, expensive)
20. Drovers' Drink (tavern: fair, moderately priced)
21. Ralory's Redtarge (tavern: poor, cheap)
22. The Bright Fish (tavern: good, expensive)
23. Athtel's (tavern: good, moderately priced)
24. The Burning Wagon (tavern: fair, cheap)
25. Darsil's Casks (tavern: poor, cheap)
26. Braezel's (club: fair, moderately priced)
27. The Dancing Drover (club: fair, moderately priced)
28. Harnsar's Board (club: good, expensive)
29. The Old Wheel (club: good, expensive)
30. Salamantha's Sundown (club: excellent, expensive)
31. The Zultail (club: good, expensive)
32. The Pearl Stables
33. The Trails Stables
34. The Sorntalar Stables
35. Safehaven Stables
36. Aszrim's Stables
37. Maunk's Safe Carriagehouse
38. The Caravan Roof (Coach, Cart, and Wagon Storage), sharing premises with Thulmar's Coach Rentals & Repairs
39. Delnur's Matchless Cart Rentals & Repairs
40. Zoldaftel Wagons
41. Rolling Wheel Wagons
42. Hemmishield Carts & Carriages
43. Nelvor's Wagons
44. Eskel's Barges and Wagons
45. Thelgorn's Cages, Tents, & Carts
46. Longbow Wagons
47. Quarren's Wagons
48. Felnar's Faithful Beasts (horses, oxen, draft animals bought & sold)
49. Xornavar's Armory (new and used weapons and gear)
50. Clawthorn's Curios (creature parts, trophies, and distillates)
51. The Blushing Rose Decorators (paints, trim, furnishings; statuary copied)
52. Thulvan Importing (huge selection: Tethyrian crockery, Calishite brass)
53. Maukbarl's Brewcasks (brewery)
54. Crimmorquaff House (brewery)
55. Julkin's Barrels (cider house)
56. Kelvaert's Anvil (smithy: hasps, hinges, house fittings, locks and bolts)
57. Undarr's Troughs, Spouts, Funnels, & Pipes (smithy)
58. Zorn Selvyn, Finesmith (wire, fine-work, tools, rings and fine fastenings)
59. Melgor Darsander, Locks, Strong-boxes, & Armor (smithy)
60. Orntalar Chainworks (smithy)
61. Darvo the Dwarf (smithy: repairs and swift-work)
62 Engelstarn & Storm (smithy: ornate scrollwork, castings, inlays and plating)
63. Handurzunn House (shop: fruit, roots, and vegetables)
64. Gelkurt's Fresh & Finest (fishmonger and Alandor eel-pie bakery)
65. Farhorizons House (herbs and spices shop)
66. Imaego Invarr (butcher, smokehouse)
67. Zornflames Bakery
68. Maerlee's Window (bake shop)
69. Haelvan Hardroll Cheeseworks
70. Ivnarr Barrelworks (cooper)
71. Bustran Telbanner, Caravan Carpenter (strongchests, caskets, carry-coffers, and custom-built crates)
72. Vauve's Fine Scrolltubes, Coffers, and Jewelboxes (shop)
73. Belnar's Bootery (shop: boots, shoes, leatherwork)
74. Tethchaith's Saddles & Harness
75. Roldskull's Tomes, Maps & Folios
76. Paeraetor Luteworks & Trumpets (musical instrument shop)
77. Yauncel Darth, Lore & Sagecraft
78. Woazgoaz the Weaver (shop)
79. Sangalorr Fine Flowers (shop: live plants of all sorts, scents, perfumes)
80. Crytrapper Hall (Crytrapper family mansion)
81. Crytrapper Hill (The Hillwarrens)
82. Silent Hill (burial crypts)

Drovers' Gate (where the Orc Road begins) at about Crimmor's midpoint.

Crimmor is divided into three wards by these streets: everything north of the High is River Ward, everything west of the Run is Wheel Ward, and everything east of the Run is Purse Ward. The busiest street-moot in Crimmor is the Coins, where the High and the Run meet, but the most interesting moot is The Drae, just west of the High's riverbank swing, where the street known as the Dausann ("DAW-sah-nnn") splits off south (and loops around westward, just inside the city wall, to rejoin the High some way to the west). The Drae is where folk go to be seen entering the most elegant clubs.

Drudgebucket Matters

Strong, fast-flowing springs of drinkable water arise on Crytrapper Hill, immediately west of the city; they were why Crimmor was founded on this site in 163 DR. Drinking their waters is (falsely) believed to cure plague, and they flow to the nearest city wall-tower through a midair pipe between hill and turret. From there, it's piped along the walls and thence across the city. Almost all buildings tap the flow with spigots, handpumps, and cisterns.

Any visitor foolish enough to drink from the Alandor can expect to be violently ill for a day or so (locals are more used to it), and

"highnoses" (snooty folk) can buy "clearwater" in ornate stoppered flagons (6 sp for about a gallon) brought in from the crystal-clear waters of Weeping Princess Pool, a fancifully-named rainwater pool four hills southwest of the city.

Waste—from broken items to rotting food and chamberpot-waste—is collected from dawn to dusk by slowly, continuously moving drudgebucket wagons, whose drovers blow double-note fluted pipes at each door to signal their arrival; inhabitants hasten out and dump for a copper coin per bucket (any container one person can carry to the wagon unaided). The wagons run south down the Orc Road to pits three hills away from Crimmor.

Rats and mice are everywhere in Crimmor (where dogs and cats are banned, except as caged food cargoes just moving through) and are cheerfully slain with slung stones, poison, and drowning-traps whenever seen.

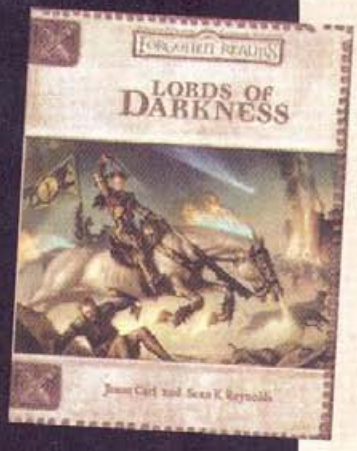
A number of tightly-sealed warehouses around the city are granaries maintained by the Thaeldorn as food supplies against siege, famine, plague, or severe winter "snowbound" times, and there are also secret (that is, unofficial but whispered about across the city) granary caverns under Crytrapper Hill. These Hillwarrens are guarded and used by the Shadow Thieves to hide contraband, supplies, wounded, or on-the-run members; in return, they don't steal in Crimmor. The entrances to the Hillwarrens are truly secret, but thought to include Crytrapper Hall and various city buildings (via long tunnels).

Folk who die in Crimmor are washed, shaved (and the hair sold for use in wigs and as stuffing), and loaded on a corpses-only drudge-wagon to be taken a long way east of the city, to a place where clerics burn them. Only the wealthiest are buried in crypts inside Silent Hill (southwest of the city, just beyond the Keepclear). In either case, funeral services are day long, casual come-and-go remembrance feasts held in the homes of the dead.

The Shadow Thieves

As much a part of Amnian life as commerce, the powerful thieves and assassins guild known as the Shadow Thieves comprise an institution nearly as respected as the ruling Council of Six. Originating from distant Waterdeep, the guild's power in that metropolis was shattered amid blood and deception in 1298 DR, culminating in the organization's banishment. Moving their operations to Athkatla, the Shadow Thieves diversified their illicit aims, divided their structure into one of numerous interlocking guilds, and swiftly dominated illegal activity in Amn.

Today, the Shadow Thieves control the majority of criminal operations along the Sword Coast, maintaining their greatest base of power within Amn. From their hidden headquarters in Athkatla, the group's leaders, the Shadow Council, covetously guard the organization's secrets, making the exact numbers of guild members, locations of safe houses, and potential targets impossible to know. The multifaceted organization of the Shadow Thieves also makes it so that should one sect be rooted out, the guild's enemies reveal little of the group's other operations. Such is the extreme secrecy of the organization that the most powerful member of the Shadow Council, Rhinnom Dannihyr, also sits upon Amn's ruling body, the Council of Six.



While the Shadow Thieves' goals encompass all illicit dealings—aimed at bringing its members far greater wealth and power—the guild also holds a deep grudge against Waterdeep and its lords, swearing to someday return to the city from which it was banished.

The Shadow Thieves guild is thoroughly detailed in *Lords of Darkness*.

sights and shopping

Shops typically open from "mist-clear" (a short time after dawn) to dusk, and are shuttered the rest of the time (although they might receive deliveries and re-stock at all hours). Items are tagged with prices (switching tags avails no one as there are no laws requiring items to be sold for the tagged price), and shopkeepers have many young assistants to hover over customers. Most people ask upon entry to signal urgency for an item; if they smile and wave, they want to browse until they signal an assistant. All shops wrap purchases unless otherwise arranged.

It's been said one can buy anything in Crimmor—or have anything expertly copied, repaired, or altered. Every shop is busy, but the mayor has decreed that no one should be able to outbid other customers for swifter service (driving the practice into secrecy and higher prices, rather than entirely eliminating it). Most shops are cluttered, noisy, and busy; customers who break wares must buy them, and haggling must be swift or the keeper will end it with a chop of the hand and an, "*Enough*, lowcoin!"

There are five Crimman guilds: the Dockhands, the Leatherers, the Wagonmakers, the Smiths, and the Wheelwrights (who also represent most of the Drovers after the three grand families, fearing stiff fee increases, persuaded the mayor to not allow drovers to found their own guild). Rather than having guildmasters—susceptible

to being bought by the grand families—they elect small, short-term ruling councils.

The province of each guild currently stands as follows: the Dockhands control all loading and unloading on the docks (working with barge and wagon crews). The Leatherers are dominated by very good harness-makers, saddlers, and bootmakers (Crimman boots are hobnailed and durable, yet stylish). The Wagonmakers (dominated by the famous Zan Zoldaftel)[7] lubricate the flow of business throughout the city and beyond. The Smiths specialize in wagon fittings, but also in chain (fine to massive), fastenings (screw, hook-and-eye, bolts, and so on) the usual hinges, locks and lockplates, and—surprisingly—wire. Finally, the Wheelwrights, due to their needs for particular woods cut just so, dominate carpenters, and—through their drover members—woodcutters who bring firewood to Crimmor from the foothills of the Cloud Peaks.[8]

Crimmans are hard workers, eager investors (willing to take chances, but shrewd), and innovators. As the saying goes, "A lazy Crimman is a sick Crimman."

Inns

Crimmor has merely three inns, but many rooming-houses. Inns offer full meals, laundry and bathing services, larger rooms, and much higher prices than rooming-houses. Merchants staying in a Spartan rooming-house can rent stabling and carriage-storage at an inn (most inns own several stables and carriage-sheds, with their own staff and guards, located streets away from the inn proper).

The Pearl

This rebuilt former grand family palace that was for years an increasingly infamous seedy rooming-house, is the tallest building in the city, its spectacular spires and curving upswept roofs impressive landmarks. It offers the most luxurious visitors' accommodations in Crimmor.[9]

Sorntalar's Rest

As its name implies, this small backstreet establishment offers quiet. Rooms are hung with tapestries, halls are carpeted, walls are thick and noisy guests are often asked to leave. Owner Aumra Sorntalar is a no-nonsense, bustling little woman who leads gangs of staffers to deal swiftly with problems, clean up messes, and see to the comfort of guests. A stern finger-tapping of her deep purple lips to signal quiet is her constant habit.

7. Zan Zoldaftel is a LG human male fighter 2/expert 6 who allegedly makes the best wagons and carts one can buy anywhere. They're distinguished by a magical "ZZ" mark cast by his daughter Rhieldra (LG human female Sorcerer 2; unmarried, she lives with her widowed father and serves briskly and efficiently as his business manager). His ex-apprentices, now friendly competitors ("Old Zan" is well-liked and respected), form the bulk of the guild, making Crimman wagons justly famous.
8. Where Faerûn's first-ever tree farms are being established, with deliberate replantings of ash and oak (for wagon wheels and frames), duskwood (for building), and in swampy ground, fast-growing silverbark (for firewood, after a season of drying).
9. The Pearl also offers most attentive service, featuring (as the saying goes) "hot and cold-running servants" of the utmost discretion. All Pearl staff are literate, immaculately uniformed, long-serving, and loyal. A stay at the Pearl, in a suite and with all costs included (meals, drinks, stabling, the works) typically costs 12 gp per person (cheapest rooms are 10 gp/night). Many merchants stay at the Pearl for just their first night in Crimmor to bathe, launder, and gorge themselves.

Tymoran Trails

This large inn offers guests a rustic tavern-taproom-like drinking lounge on the ground floor. It's noisy, crowded, and popular at all hours, so the three floors of rooms above are recommended only to the hard-of-hearing. Many fun-loving local women come to the Trails for companionship, as do "ladies of coin" looking for business from visiting merchants, so the noise often spreads to the rooms. Staff guards patrol against lawless rowdiness. The Trails is owned by the striking Tehrinna the Towering.[10]

Rooming Houses

Crimmor holds dozens of rooming houses that offer fresh-made beds, chamberpots, water-basins, and taps in otherwise Spartan private rooms, with doorguards but no meals or other services, for 6 sp per night up to 1 gp per night in the high summer season. They are all much the same, aside from one or two disguised brothels that offer room visits from "house girls" (negotiated fees extra). A few are quiet, private places, but most are large, bustling, and close to taverns and major moots. "Quiet" houses include Gaskrel's on Immermoon Lane and Ivyposts on Blackoor Street. "Big" houses include Redbanners House and Brightshields on The High, and Alessan House on The Dausann.

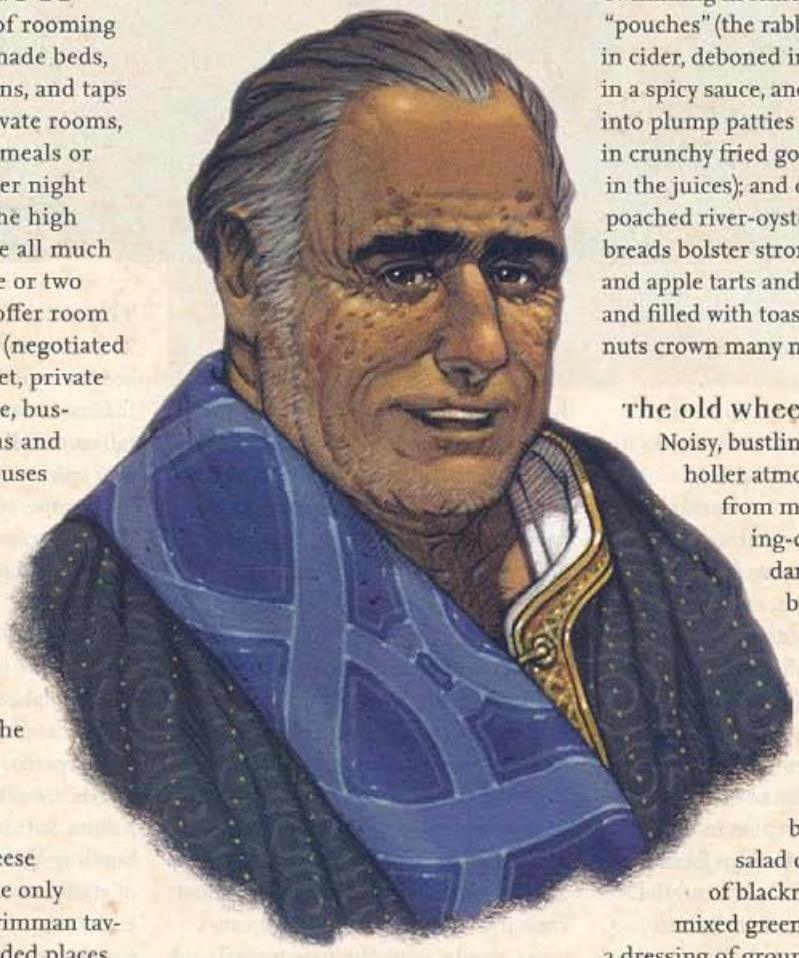
Taverns

Smoked oysters, fried cheese breads, and pickles are the only food to be had at most Crimman taverns—noisy, smoky, crowded places that concentrate on pouring as much cider and ale down patrons' throats as possible.

The Drover's Drink is a cozy, rundown, bare-wood but well-lit fixture where brawling is discouraged. Ralory's Redtarge, nigh the docks, is the place to pick fights and break bones. The Bright Fish is where younglings go to eye each other, giggle, and show off to the accompaniment of the latest wild minstrelry, outrageously bawdy songs, and declaimed poems.

Clubs

Most of these large, cavernous places were created by joining the upstairs floors of several adjacent buildings to create a sprawling maze of dimly-lit dining-halls, dance-floors, and private booths. Beautiful hostesses serve drinks (and often more!) in the curtained-off booths, but the dining halls are where many Crimmans eat their main meal of the day, come to talk (gossip and sideline business), and to hire (adventurers, guards, new shop staff, and "go look see" and delivery lads). Drinks and food are always more expensive at clubs than at inns or taverns.



Mayor Corlyn Braen

Local hostess Jalantha Truard offers some brief club reviews:

Harnsar's Board

Hearty false "welcoming homestead" decor: all warm smells, candlewheels overhead, cozy nooks, and rough floorboards. Obliging but sometimes bewildered service to a patronage largely of outlanders and old folk. Wonderful, oft messy food such as pan-roasted, peppered sweetbreads swimming in lemon sauce; rabbit "pouches" (the rabbit is marinated in cider, deboned into shards, stewed in a spicy sauce, and then tucked into plump patties and drenched in crunchy fried goat cheese to seal in the juices); and creamy, foamy poached river-oyster soup. Spiced breads bolster strong-cheese platters, and apple tarts and pears scooped out and filled with toasted, candied walnuts crown many meals.

The Old Wheel

Noisy, bustling, dance-and-holler atmosphere distracts from many small dining-chambers apt to be dark and forgotten by servers. Greens-platters (salads) a specialty: diced fresh apples cascade like gemstones over a warm long-bean-and-radish salad cloaked in a crust of blackrind cheese; cold mixed greens are drenched in a dressing of groundspears (asparagus) juice in which mint and prawns have been stewed; soft-boiled quail eggs adorn a bed of parsley and fried ground-moss. Main dishes are a justly famous roast rothé, served standing

10. This 7-foot-tall, red-haired NG human female fighter 5 is a wealthy former adventurer of forceful character, good humor, and striking looks, who for years has been the lover of Mikaal Krimmevol, best friend of the current mayor (and local leader of the grand Krimmevol family, whose sprawling Crimman mansion occupies an entire block of the city).

thick and smoky in a puddle of wine gravies and drippings; rich, buttery smoked Athkatlan harpfish coated in crushed black peppercorns and sweet treebark syrup; and superb slabs of venison glistening dark under drizzles of honey-ginger. Bowls of sugared berries and pears poached in sweet liqueurs finish most meals.

salamantha's sundown

Highnosed (haughty), all draperies, hushed tones, the latest luxurious Athkatlan fashions, and coldly polite service. Large, quiet, and respectable, with fast and numerous "blackjerkins" (brawl-quelling security staff).

A large wine cellar bolsters meager servings of superb grilled grouse marinated in rosemary, sage, and cinammon; mustardy Alandor crayfish; and the ever-popular seared boar chops. Successful retired Crimmans come here to moan about the old days.

The zultail

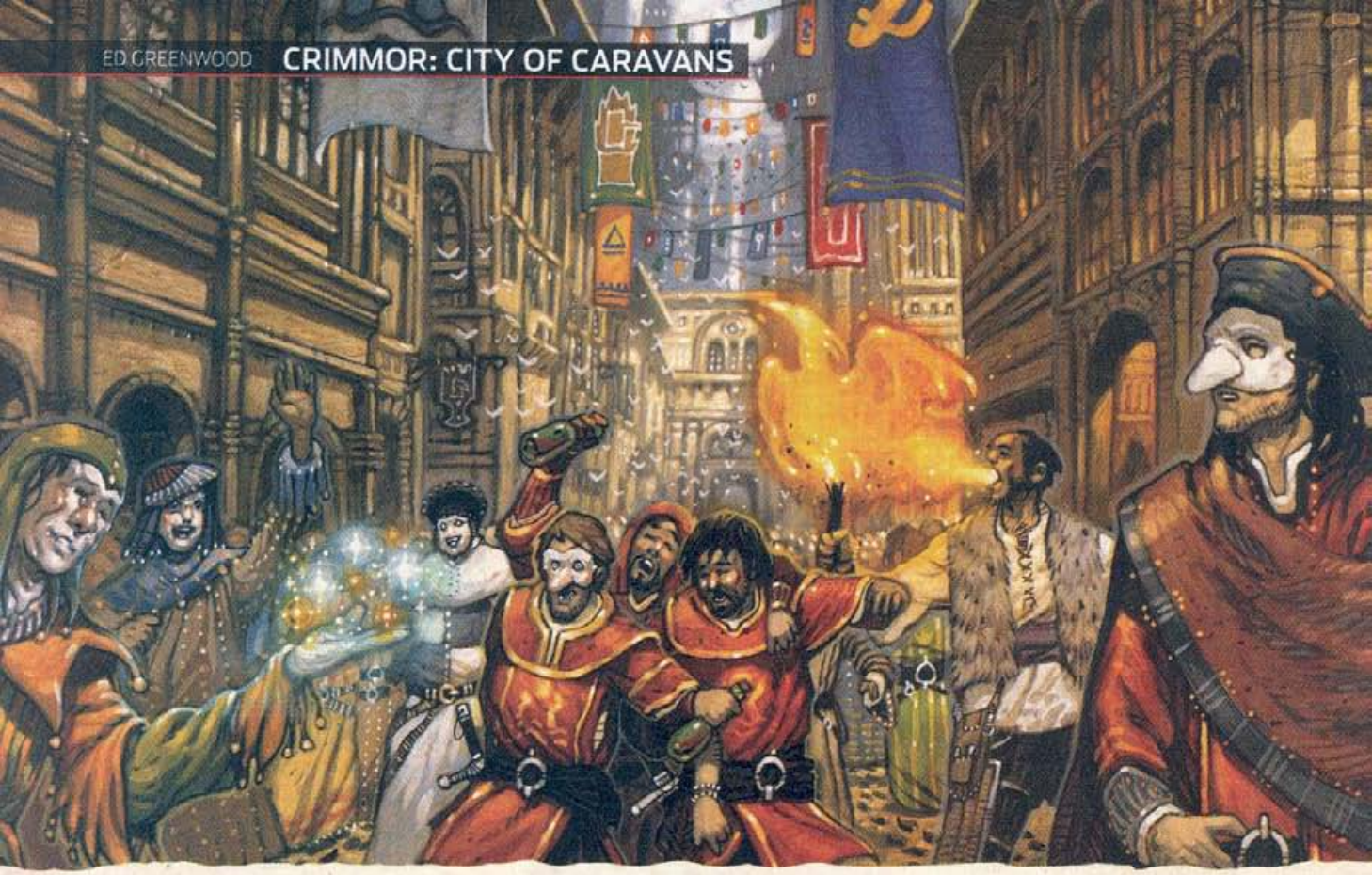
Named for a mythical sly and mysterious wizard from the East, who in local tales settled in Crimmor centuries ago and played tricks on children, this newest of city clubs affects a sensual "dance, purr, and find a booth" air. The 'Tail is warm and *very* dimly lit with ruby-red candle-lanterns. Discreet, gliding staff keep close eye on the fun and are swift to refresh empty flagons. Food is too often drowned in sticky-sweet shoodra sauce (a caramel-hued sugary concoction made from cooked-to-jelly oranges, mangoes, and pears) and crowned with too many cherries and berries, but standouts include velvety braised clam and mushrooms; lamb glazed in mustard-sugar and served on a bed of chicken liver stew; and hand-sized softbread rolls into which diced fried onions have been baked.

The Hand of Justice

Four factors keep Crimmor fairly safe and law-abiding: the vigilance of citizens (no Amnian wants wealth stolen from him), the covert interventions of the Shadow Thieves, the rough enthusiasm of the Bargemen of Crimmor (who constantly patrol the River Road, the river itself, and the docks and wear tabards emblazoned with the wagon-on-barge symbol of Crimmor), and the dozen-strong and numerous street patrols of the Crimmor Guard (who wear chainmail under their tabards, bear longswords and daggers, and sling stones with practiced accuracy).[11]

The Thaeldorn (a term that means both "palace of the mayor" and the officials who work in it) pride themselves on swift justice, which means apprehended persons are brought before a suzier (SOO-zeer) or magistrate—often the mayor himself on the same day they're dragged to a "lockup"

11. All members of the Crimmor Guard wear red tabards emblazoned in gold with the wagon-on-barge of Crimmor while on duty. They also all wear gauntlets, helms, and thigh-high boots fitted with pouches filled with leather thongs, leg-hobbles (of stiff leather), and collar-and-leashes (all used for trussing and then controlling prisoners). They are of four ranks: guardsword, helm (patrol leader), resker (jailer and helm commander), and high sword (four high swords report directly to the mayor and serve as Guard trainers and militia commanders). Look for red "teardrops of blood" above tabard city badges to learn the rank: guardswords have none, helms have one, reskers have two, and high swords bear three.



(there are ground-floor holding cells in every wall-tower, and a long-term-incarceration dungeon under the Thaeldorn; all trials are held in courtrooms in the Thaeldorn), or before highsun the next day, if "taken" during the night. The suzier may remand a prisoner into custody for up to three days if evidence—usually witnesses—must be found, but most cases are decided on the spot.

There are no juries in Crimmor. All trials must be public, and accused persons can speak freely (although rude tirades never help one's cause). The two oldest suziers are known to have little patience with the insolent and the sly-tongued, but the mayor and the four younger suziers are often swayed by "fair pleading."

It's been said with some truth that "Crimmor's laws are whatever the mayor[12] says they are, and he speaks differently when the accused is wealthy than he does when a prisoner has few coins," but justice in Crimmor is based on the Code of Crimmor (simplified within the Sentences and Crimes sidebars).

Inability to pay fines or damages is mitigated by seizure of property and then enforced hard labor until work value satisfies court debt. Citizens are defined as persons who are recorded as owning land, paying rent, or residing in Crimmor for at least a season.

Wheelmoot

Once a year, when ice and snow make the overland roads impassable for draft beasts and wagons (and human-pulled sledges must be used for laborious short trips), and caravans stop running, the mayor declares the Crimman festival of Wheelmoot. Its dating varies with seasonal conditions, but its duration is always four days and four nights. All shops close except those selling food and drink (although there's no strict law against closure), everyone locks away valuables and breakables and dons masks and fanciful (or even outrageous) costumes, and drunken revelry and public dalliance becomes the order of the day. Most folk take to the streets for the entire festival, sleeping around street bonfires on cloaks provided by the mayor, and public debauchery is expected, tolerated, and even celebrated (sentences are relaxed or dismissed altogether for some crimes committed during Wheelmoot). However, lawlessness does *not* prevail: the Bargemen, Guard, and Shadow Thieves all patrol with extreme vigilance and full musterings during the festivities. The mayor sponsors large street feasts (with drink) every evening, and most clubs do ceaseless, roaring trade.

The Lost Lady

Crimmor has a famous haunting: the Lost Lady, a long-ago noblewoman of Tethyr named Esmaelae (EZZ-may-lay) whose true love, Roloran (RAUL-oh-ran) fled from her during a quarrel bearing her necklace of eyeball-sized sapphires, hid from the Guard in a secret passage, and died shut up there,

12. The mayor, officially Alandor-Lord and Thaele of Crimmon, is currently Corlyn (Corl) Braen, a fair-minded, pleasant, and well-meaning NG human male ranger 4. Burly, brown-haired, and swift to smile, he truly wants to better the lot of all Crimmans.

sentences

A Death (on the spot)
B Death (upon conviction)
C Exile or Ban Against Future Entry
D Branding
E Enforced Hard Labor (river dredging, street repairs, city wall repairs)
F Imprisonment (Thaeldorn dungeon)
G Imprisonment (manual work)[13]
H Fine (payable to Thaeldorn)
I Damages (payable to injured party or victim's kin)
J Edict Against Convicted[14]
K Flogging[15]

crimes

- Aiding An Attack Upon Crimmor (knowingly providing information or assistance to outlander parties desiring to damage or steal city property, poison any food or water in Crimmor, or attack, kidnap, mutilate, or maim any citizen of Crimmor): I and E then H and C
- Arson: B or E then C
- Assault Upon a Citizen Resulting in Injury: I and E or K
- Assault Upon an Outlander Resulting In Injury: I and/or G or H
- Attacking Crimmor (poisoning food or water, casting spells so as to cause building collapses or effects reasonably expected to cause multiple deaths, damage to city gates): B or E then C
- Bribery (includes Attempted Bribery): G, H (usually double bribe amount), and J
- Dealing in Stolen Goods: H and I (value of stolen goods, in both cases)
- Defacing or Forging a Public Notice: G and H
- Defiling Holy Places or Temple Theft: I, E, and J, often followed by C
- Forgery of Documents or Counterfeiting Currency: D, H and I
- Fraud: D, H, and I
- Hampering Justice: H and E[16]
- Harmful Public Spellcasting: H and I, then G (tenday maximum); if convicted is a visitor, also then C (one full year)[17]
- Harmful Spellcasting Upon Any Bargeman, Member of the Guard, the Mayor, or any Thaeldorn Official (except with permission of a higher-ranking official): A
- Impersonating any Official or Cleric: H then C
- Intimidation (includes Blackmail): H and I (double amounts demanded or taken) then K
- Murder: B or K and C (if judged unintentional)[18]
- Obstruction (parking a wagon or conveyance against any doorway or across any alley or route, so that it can't easily be traversed): H and J then F (one full day and night) if city gate or plaqued route was blocked
- Rape: I then K, D, and F
- Sedition (speaking against the rule of Amn or Crimmor, and the behaviour of specific officials): F (half a day, or overnight if trial held in the evening) plus H (25 gp set amount)
- Spellcasting in Court (harmful or otherwise, except by permission of Mayor or presiding Suzier): H and K then F (a tenday), plus I if applicable
- Theft: H and I (double value of stolen goods, in both cases) then K
- Tomb Robbing: D, H, and I
- Vandalism: H and I then K
- Violation of Any Edict: G and H (plus new trial if violation involves new offenses against Code)

Forgery/Counterfeiting

Fraud

Rape

Tomb Robbing

13. Unlike hard labor, manual work means no leg-shackles for prisoners, and lighter tasks such as replacing wall-mortar, mending the roofs or chimneys of private citizens for free, clearing winter snow or ice, and emptying chamberpots.
14. An edict is a public Mayor's decree, posted at all city gates and on the doors of the Thaeldorn (and read aloud when they are first posted) forbidding a convicted individual from doing something (usually repeating the crime, but sometimes continuing in their current line of business).
15. Floggings are always with a drover's whip on the convicted's back, in public. The convicted is always stripped to the waist and wrist-manacled to restraints. Floggings are often hosted by taverns as entertainment, and a Guard patrol is always present, charged to prevent public mistreatment of the prisoner.
16. Examples of "Hampering Justice" include refusing to testify, hiding from the Guard, preventing Guard members from entry or from chasing someone or seizing something, resisting arrest, and attacking any Guard member.
17. The crime of "Harmful Public Spellcasting" includes the unleashing of magic items. It's applied to all magic use that causes damage to persons or property, or through fear or removal of support (such as a chain bearing a sign or the bridge under a mule's hooves) causes an immediate accident (a spooked horse runs down a street, spilling its wagon or damaging wares, and perhaps runs into or tramples something or someone) or suicide (of a person who, say, believes themselves afflicted with something they can't undo, or a painful and inescapable condition). If all the magic does is reveal or cause a subject to reveal his own wrongdoing, a charge is usually brought but no conviction ensues.
18. Killings done in attempts to prevent any crime in the Code receive lesser sentences (typically H, or none at all). Bargemen and Crimmor Guard members never receive sentences higher than H, whether or not on-duty when the slaying occurred.

The Lost Lady

Lady Zarnn Ophal

unable to get out. His bones and the gems have never been found, but her restless spirit persists as a floating, incorporeal, faintly-glowing face that whispers in the ears of persons she finds alone by night, bidding them "find Roloran" or "find my bluestones."

Esmaelae has the ability to enter into and "ride" beings (any intelligent creature of either gender) who are willing, or whom she "overcomes" (DC 20 Will Save to avoid; DC 24 if target drowsy or DC 30 if target asleep), forcing them to search Crimmor for Roloran.

She knows he's "shut away somewhere," and will compel her "steed" to keep moving and looking (steeds can otherwise speak and act freely, for example donning clothes or wielding items). Esmaelae's face will be faintly visible, superimposed over the features of the person she's riding. Magic, lots of loud people, or a successful Will save (one attempt every hour) usually causes her to "melt away" from ridden beings, leaving them their own masters again.

There's no known way to slay Esmaelae, she means no particular harm to those she whispers to or "rides" (although fearful victims have been slain or injured fleeing or doing wild things to try to be rid of her), and some Crimmans welcome her "aboard" in hopes she'll lead them to some treasure they can benefit from. All Crimmans know about the Lost Lady, and persons being ridden by her are generally tolerated or even followed and watched for sport.

current clack

Crimmor is abuzz right now with the news that something like a flying eel that can apparently breathe air and water (and can travel the water pipes) has been stalking and slaying Thaeldorn officials. There are rumors that this is a creature unleashed by the icy-tempered Lady Ophal, a longtime foe of the current mayor often known as the Dragon Lady. Some whispers hint that she intends to slay Mayor Braen and every last city clerk, replacing them with courtiers and bureaucrats from Athkatla loyal to her. There are rumors that the Dragon Lady is opposed in this by the Shadow Thieves—but other rumors insist she's reached an agreement with them, that they're working with her, and that Lady Crytrapper has been warned not to help her cousin the mayor in any way.[19]

In recent years, several Red Wizards of Thay were found dead in the streets, publicly murdered, with "Thayans Stay Out" cut into the bodies. The Shadow Thieves were widely credited with these killings, but the grisly crimes did not deter Thayans from covertly entering the city and trying to trade, often through agents. Now, rings and potions of dark magic are said to be increasing in availability and are finding many buyers among ambitious Crimmans. Are these items safe to use, or can the Thayans control the unwitting purchasers through them? Are the Red Wizards assembling an unwitting army and preparing to strike against the mayor or take over the Thaeldorn? Wild rumors are flying!

19. Lady Zharnn Ophal is a CE human female rogue 7 fiercely dedicated to getting her own way in matters large and small. The Ophals control most of the trade in spices passing through Crimmor. Lady Lamia Crytrapper is a NG human female ranger 6.

Impiltur

"With great sacrifice, we defeated the fiends that brought ruin to our cities and callously hunted and slew our people for sport. As one, we emerged triumphant from those terrible times and sang songs of praise to the Triad. Yet our kingdom continues to suffer from the fear of the shadow and the silent whisperer in the dark. Our fears paralyze us as a nation and we struggle through a miasma of inertia and doubt, searching for self belief. I say that the time comes when we will banish the darkness from our hearts and make Impiltur great once again. I say that the time comes for our land to be forgotten no longer."

–Alither "Surequill" Ementharn of Lyrabar, Impiltur: Land of Shadowed Hearts
Year of the Rogue Dragons, 1373 DR

Sages and loremasters throughout the FORGOTTEN REALMS often refer to the land of Impiltur as the "Forgotten Kingdom." Older than Cormyr but little known west of the Dalelands, this insular kingdom all but withdrew from the affairs of the East, as it dealt with political turmoil and the depredations of fiends, plagues, and monstrous humanoids. Seemingly a strong, stable realm, Impiltur never truly recovered from the terrible time of the Fiend Wars several centuries ago, and the suspicion and age-old fears wrought by that tumultuous event linger as its legacy. Sinister fiend cults, evidence of demonic possessions, and rumors of otherworldly subversion bedevil Impiltur, making it a kingdom that has in more recent times removed itself almost totally from the political landscape of the Inner Sea. The realm has been hesitant to place its trust in others, pursuing a policy of isolationism for the better part of eight decades. History has shown the people of this land that the clasped hand of a generous friend can all too often become the clutching talon of a grinning fiend.

Despite these attitudes, the people of Impiltur work to build a society in accordance with the faith and tenets of the Triad—the religions of Tyr, Torm, and Ilmater, which play a preeminent role within the kingdom. Impiltur and its people undertake acts of charity, believe in self-sacrifice, and champion justice and the furtherance of the common good. Impiltur retains a sense of the "frontier spirit" that drove its genesis as a nation over the many centuries, although this leads many observers to view it as less sophisticated than the jaded societies of Sembia, the rugged cities of the Moonsea, and the exotic lands of

The Forgotten Kingdom

by George Krashos
illustrated by Cyril Van Der Haegen
Cartography by Rob Lazzaretti

the Vilhon Reach. Those with dreams and ambition, however, judge it a land where fame and fortune can still be found at the tip of one's sword and where deeds of chivalry still combat the fiends of a tumultuous past.

The Lay of the Land

Cartographers usually roughly divide the land of Impiltur into three main regions, beginning with the lands south of the Earthfast Mountains stretching from the Gray Forest to Sarshel, known to all as the Easting Coast. Bordered by the Earthspur Mountains and the confluence of rivers and waterways that flow into the Easting Reach lies the region known as the Uplands. As one travels north along the Herald's Road and crosses at the Narrows between Bluefang Water and the Old Water, they come to the third and final region of Impiltur, known as the Farwater. This territory can be described as Impiltur's true frontier. The lands north and west of the fortress-town of Ilmwatch are for the most part wild and lawless, dotted with trading towns, caravan rests, and other small, fortified inns and way stops that survive thanks to the trade with Damara and lands farther north.

Information on Impiltur

Players and DMs who have an interest in reading further on the realm of Impiltur can consult the FORGOTTEN REALMS *Campaign Setting*, *Races of Faerûn*, *Unapproachable East*, *Champions of Ruin*, and *Champions of Valor*.

The Easting Coast

The Easting Coast holds the oldest settlements of Impiltur. Of these, the cities of Lyrabar and Hlammach dominate the landscape. Lyrabar, the capital of Impiltur and the kingdom's major population center, was built atop an abandoned dwarven delve by Impil Mirandor, a refugee from the lands of fallen Jhaamdath. Originally known as Impil's Tor, the steadily growing Lyrabar benefited from trade with the elves of the Gray Forest and the dwarves of Earthfast in its early days. The city boasts Impiltur's largest and most magnificent buildings, in the forms of the golden-domed Royal Palace and the Tower Pureheart, demesne of the Lords of Imphras II, the ruling council of Impiltur.

The Easting Coast is fertile and green, benefiting from the many streams and creeks that run down the southern slopes of the Earthfast Mountains and flow into the Inner Sea. Many small settlements and hamlets dot the region. It boasts a sizable halfling population in the villages of Klandle, Mistrenpost, and Ondle's Spur, all located within a day's ride of each other, west of Hlammach. The lands between Lyrabar and Dilpur devote themselves in the main to agriculture, with fruit orchards, small-scale cereal crops, and root vegetable plots predominating. In fact, Impiltur is famous for its blackbeet, garsar, and spear tubers and

exports significant volumes of such vegetables to the Moonsea cities and Sembia. Game and other edible fauna congregate in numbers across the lands of the Easting Coast, especially on the fringes of the Gray Forest and in the foothills of the Earthfasts where good numbers of red-striped deer and mountain goats gather.

Aside from agriculture, the lands of the Easting Coast also benefit from the large number of trade caravans that travel to and from the mines of the Earthfast Mountains to the north. The mountains contain lodes of iron, silver, and a rare metal—found only in small deposits—which the miners dub "whitesteel" (akin to a metal Elminster observes is named "tungsten" on other worlds).

Part of the Easting Coast, which borders the Inner Sea up and around into the Easting Reach itself, is dotted with small fishing villages with names such as Red Bluffs and Thelnarm. These fishing communities use small coast-runners to net the large schools of arnhake, whitetail, and bolroth that teem in the waters close to shore.

The only other settlement of note in the region is the city of Filur, known to all as the Royal City. When Imphras the Great reestablished the realm in 1097 DR, he raised a tower in this small town and declared it his seat of rule so as to avoid any disharmony or jealousy between the former independent city-states of the Easting Coast. Filur was sacked in the Prince's Revolt of 1295 DR, so King Rilimbrar named Lyrabar as his capital and seat of rule upon resuming the throne. Regarded as something of a backwater since its demotion, the Lords of Imphras II and the Queen-Regent Sambryl continue to use Filur for their summer retreats.

The Uplands

The sparsely populated Uplands of Impiltur stretch from the coast of the Easting Reach west and north to the Earthspur Mountains and the border with Damara. The two great fortresses of Ithfell and Mal dominate the region, and a small cluster of homes, businesses, and trading posts cluster around them. Ostensibly part of the Easting Coast lands, the city of Sarshel on the Easting Reach acts as a trade hub for the Uplands, as well as a point of transport and market center for its products. As a result, most of the settlers residing in the region recognize Sarshel as the "capital" of the Uplands.

Aside from the major settlements, the Uplands contains the small city of Outentown, located at the crossroads where the Herald's Road meets the Prince's Road, and some two-score farming communities known as thaedar. Once common in the lands of the northeastern Inner Sea, thaedar are organizations created by several farms for common defense, transportation of goods to market, and a pool of labor for harvest time. They range in size from the equivalent of a thorp up to a small village. The most well-known and prosperous of these communities, the Red Ram, Silver Plough, and Three Horns thaedar, focus their efforts on agriculture and herding. They command competitive prices for their goods and wield power and

Coinage in Impiltur

During the Kingless Years, when Old Impiltur fragmented into individual city-states, the cities of Lyrabar, Hlammach, Dilpur and Sarshel all minted their own coins. The current Heltharn dynasty initially relied on the currency minted by the various city-states during this time (and such coinage is still accepted as legal tender throughout the realm), but during his reign, King Lashilmbrar introduced new standardized coinage. The reverse side bears the crossed sword and wand symbol of the kingdom and the obverse side features the visage of a previous monarch, as detailed below. The coin rims also bear the name "Imphras" etched deeply into them.

Worth	Monarch	Coin Name	Slang
1 cp	Imphras II	Sardil	King's thumb
1 sp	Ilmara	Halanth	Shining lady
1 gp	Imbrar	Balan	Lost lucky
1 pp	Imphras I	Torntar	Founder

influence in the region much like Goldenfields near far-off Waterdeep. Thaedar throughout the Uplands usually maintain their own security against bandits and other marauders, although occasionally they commission hireswords and adventuring bands for particular tasks or needs.

Other smaller settlements in the Uplands include the two mining hubs of Laviguer and Vordric Dun, which compete with each other for the natural resources of the Earthspur Mountains. These settlements are rough and wild, notwithstanding the fact they sprawl within the shadow of the great Tower Ithfell. Hard men and women dominate the mining trade and the Lords of Imphras II and the Warsword of Impiltur police them and the towns, cracking down on unlawful behavior and often declaring them under "daggerbond," a type of martial law that forbids wearing weapons openly in the towns proper. The authorities grant the hard-drinking and even harder-working miners some leeway, however, for their unstinting toil delivers much wealth into the coffers of the realm in faraway Lyrabar.

The town of Songhal, west of Sarshel, and various monasteries and abbeys dedicated to the Triad, including the Grimjaws Seminary (Tyr), the Towers of Lamentation (Ilmater), and the Hall of Loyalty (Torm), can also be found in the Uplands. Sages consider Songhal something of a center of learning, for it houses one of the largest and most prominent churches of Oghma in Faerûn, known as the House of Many Tomes. In the last year, the town achieved even greater prominence due to the naming of a new High Herald of the Realms, the first such post in the Inner Sea lands since the founding of the Heralds in the Year of the Watching Helm (992 DR). The High Herald Silver Stag, a former scribe and loremaster of Tsurlagol by the name of Ilvarthaele Everstone (LN female Damaran human bard 7/loremaster 4), established her office at the Stormspire, in Songhal's central district in the waning days of the Year of Rogue Dragons (1373 DR). The other High Heralds tasked her with the maintenance and administration of heraldry in the lands east of the Sea of Fallen Stars, as well as providing support to the heraldic structure already in place in Impiltur, Thesk, Damara, and other independent cities of the region.

The Farwater

Named for its location beyond the swirling eddies of the Great Imphras River, the Farwater boasts only one settlement of size and significance: the fortress-city of Ilmwatch. This city provides protection to the many trade caravans that take the Merchant's Run to Damara and escorts those traveling south into Impiltur as far as the Narrows, where

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the Herald's Road crosses Bluefang Water. At least one-third of the kingdom's standing military, the Warsword of Impiltur, can be found in and around Ilmwatch, protecting the realm from foes who make their homes in the Rawlinswood and Giantspire Mountains.

Aside from Ilmwatch, the only settlement of size and significance in the Farwater is Bay Town, located on the shores of Bluefang Water. Unlike the other towns in Impiltur, Bay Town houses a plethora of thieves, smugglers, and pirates. How and why the Lords of Imphras II tolerate such a settlement in the kingdom baffles most observers, but in truth the lords realize that rogues form a part of every society, no matter the strictures or laws put into place to curtail their behavior. The Lords of Imphras II police Bay Town by means of many covert agents, and its two major thieves' guilds, the Silent Poniards and the Red Masks, house agents loyal to Queen-Regent Sambryl. Bay Town also serves the authorities as a useful source of information regarding shady dealings and cult activities throughout the kingdom, due to its role as a contact point for the underbelly of Impilturan society.

The regard of the Lords of Imphras II falls only lightly upon the settlements north of Ilmwatch. The Council concedes that they fall more into the sphere of influence of resurgent Damara and, from a military point of view, prefer Ilmwatch as their first line of defense rather than the scattered trading towns of Cairnpur, Maracrath, and others further north.

Uncivilized and majestic, the Farwater boasts territory ripe for farming and settlement. The close proximity of the Giantspire Mountains and the ever-present threat of the hobgoblins, however, coupled with the recent corruption of the Rawlinswood by the Rotting Man (see page 82 of *Unapproachable East*). Many settlers hire adventurers to safeguard and protect their fledgling settlements or to hunt out and slay the lurking dangers that abound.

Sites and Landmarks

Impiltur contains several sites and landmarks of significance, from the great Crowned King mountain-top carving near the Fortress of Mal to the majestic grove of ancient weirwood trees known as Alithyn's Copse in the Gray Forest. Adventurers should pay heed to the locations detailed below.

The Barrowlands

Located several miles north of Sarshel, the Barrowlands are a remnant of the dark realm of Narfell and feature scores of earthen mounds devoid of any plant life save for the small, black-leafed shrubs known locally as widow's tears. The local populace shuns the area, for the feared balor Ndulu appeared in the Barrowlands when he returned to wreak his vengeance on Impiltur

in the Year of the Moaning Gorge (786 DR). Since that time, stories have circulated that the warrens beneath the Barrowlands house a cabal of Narfelli demonbinders who escaped the Great Conflagration and embraced lichdom. Supposedly, they seek to lay waste to the land with an army of fiends and reestablish their ancient homeland.

Over the years, many adventuring bands who entered the earthen mounds of the Barrowlands failed to return. The adventurer Yargildas, prior to his untimely demise in the Year of the Worm (1356 DR), reported that the Barrowlands contains a series of interconnected, underground chambers, many featuring a permanent darkness effect that rendered most mundane light sources ineffective. He reported no obvious signs of the presence of fiends or undead but noted the existence of what he described as "rune circles" which he postulated operated as a sort of portal system and provided access to hitherto undetected chambers, isolated from the others.

The Citadel of Conjurers

This dark and forbidding tower of black stone lies at the foothills of the Earthfast Mountains at the mouth of the Moaning Gorge, a place known for the peculiar sound the rushing wind makes when it blows through it. Constructed during the waning years of the empire of Narfell as a last bastion against the forces of Raumathar, it served as a site for summoning all manners of fiends to bolster the battle-strength of Narfell in the final days before the cataclysm known as the Great Conflagration ruined that tainted nation. The great demon prince Eltab first trod the soil of Faerûn at this site.

Sages believe many demonbinders of Narfell fled here after the fall of that realm and that the last Nentyarch of Narfell, Rheligaun "the Horned," retreated here as well, although his final fate remains a mystery. Many believe the Narfelli who fled here were hunted down and slain by vengeful Raumathari battlemages who sealed off sections of the tower and the labyrinth of chambers and catacombs beneath it. Over the many years since the fall of Narfell, some of Impiltur's greatest heroes—including King Sarshel "the True" and his great-grandson King Nord—walked its gloomy halls and returned to tell the tale, confirming that entry to this citadel is not prohibited or prevented.

All sages agree that the citadel is a site of great evil (a Class 5 evil node—see *Champions of Ruin*), while those with knowledge of matters infernal talk of phenomena such as demon cysts and postulate on the many fiends that must lie there still, trapped until freed or bound to service. Other loremasters talk of the artifacts of Narfell that rest within the dark depths of the tower, taken there by fleeing mages of that empire and awaiting discovery. The rulers of Impiltur actively dissuade adventurers from approaching the Citadel of Conjurers, fearing the release of some powerful fiend or host of fiends due to their blundering. Powerful magic in the form of a mighty spellward rings the citadel, preventing

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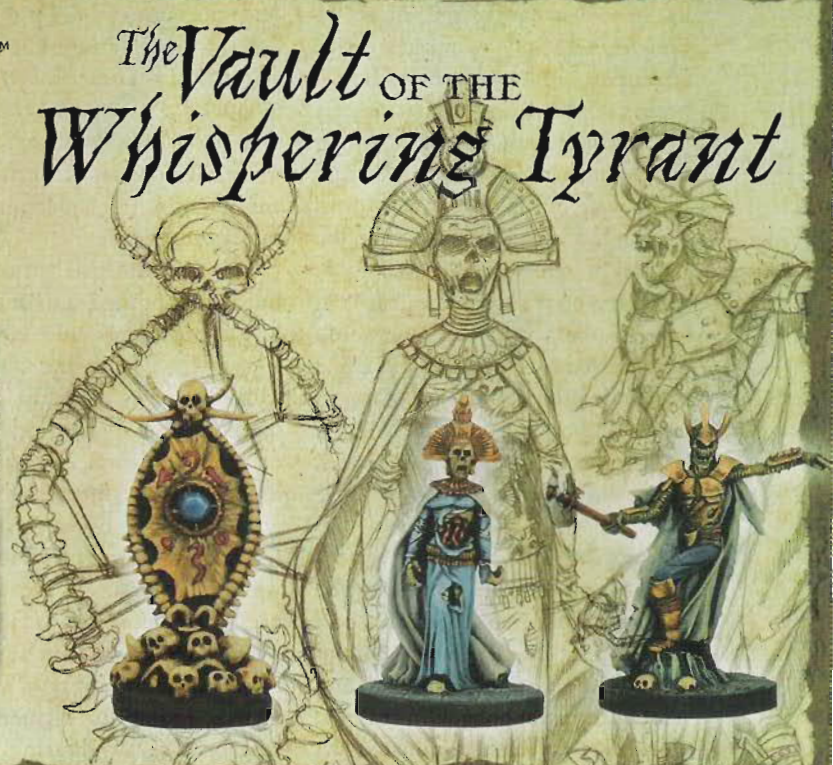

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the physical escape of creatures from the Lower Planes, but its efficacy is routinely weakened and diminished by the evil nature of the Citadel of Conjurer's environs. As added security, an outpost of the Warsword of Impiltur lies atop a hill overlooking the citadel and the entrance to the Moaning Gorge. Small groups can easily bypass it with one of the many other tracks leading to the citadel. In practice, the military presence concerns itself more with keeping creatures in rather than keeping them out. The Warsword's presence has become all the more vital in past months with the rise of fearful rumors hinting of the demon Eltab's return to the region (see page 130 of *Champions of Ruin*).

Dargrath's Caverns

Located more than a week's ride southwest of Tower Ithfell, this cave network in the Earthspur Mountains is the last recognizable remnant of the great hobgoblin realm of Haekrukkha, which dominated the Uplands of modern Impiltur in the time following the spread of the Great Glacier and the forced migration of many creatures and races southward. The hobgoblins of Haekrukkha were led by a great warlord known as the Dargrath, or "Great Slayer" in their tongue, and he enjoyed the support of a powerful cabal of shamans who wove vile sorceries to bring power and might to the hobgoblin warrior caste of that realm.

Following the final battles that saw the demise of the realm of Haekrukkha, the Dargrath and his shaman supporters fled to the cavern network that bears his name. A cave-in of their own making sealed them off from the surface lands. No one today knows of their fate, but miners of Impiltur broke through into Dargrath's Caverns several years ago while following rich seams of silver ore. They discovered ancient altars, weird pictographs, and at least one intact skeleton hinting at illithid activity, prompting further exploration by such adventuring bands as the Knights of the Elder Flame and the all-woman, Loviatar-worshiping, Spiked Sisterhood. Neither party has returned. Adventurers have yet to reveal what lies in the depths of Dargrath's Caverns, but sages speculate on the possibility that the Dargrath and his followers live on, their longevity tied to evil rituals, or that illithids have enslaved them and wait to unleash them on the unsuspecting lands above.

The Hill of Tombs

This rocky, isolated prominence studded with granite outcroppings is covered with yellow-leafed fuldar bushes for much of the year. Called "Thatchskull" by local farmers, the Hill of Tombs holds strategic importance in the lands of the Easting Coast and features the remnants of several watch towers and hill forts dating back to more warlike times. Aside from these ruins, a few of which date back to an age when the moon elves of Larlotha held sway in the region, the Hill of Tombs is best known for its use as a burial site by

the kings of early Impiltur. Beginning with the death of King Tharaun I in the Year of the Wild Roses (269 DR), the southern side of this peak saw the construction of the first of a dozen hidden tombs that over the following two-and-a-half centuries would house the remains of the last monarchs of the ruling Mirandor Dynasty, Impiltur's first.

These resting places are thought to have all been pillaged long ago, although rumors persist that at least one tomb, that of King Meldath the Magnificent, remains undiscovered and inviolate to the present day. Tales recount that King Meldath, a mighty warrior and conqueror of nearby lands, had rich treasures buried with him, including the royal regalia of the vassal city-states of Proeskampalar and Chessagol, and the "Shining Destrier," a magic warhorse of solid gold created by artisans of Myth Drannor. Tales of vile undead and ghostly hauntings deter most treasure hunters from exploring the Hill of Tombs and its environs. In truth, a secret temple to the gnome deity Baravar Cloakshadow, known as the Vault of Seven Mysteries, is located in the hill's heart, and its clergy use their mastery of illusions to scare off the inquisitive and the overly bold.

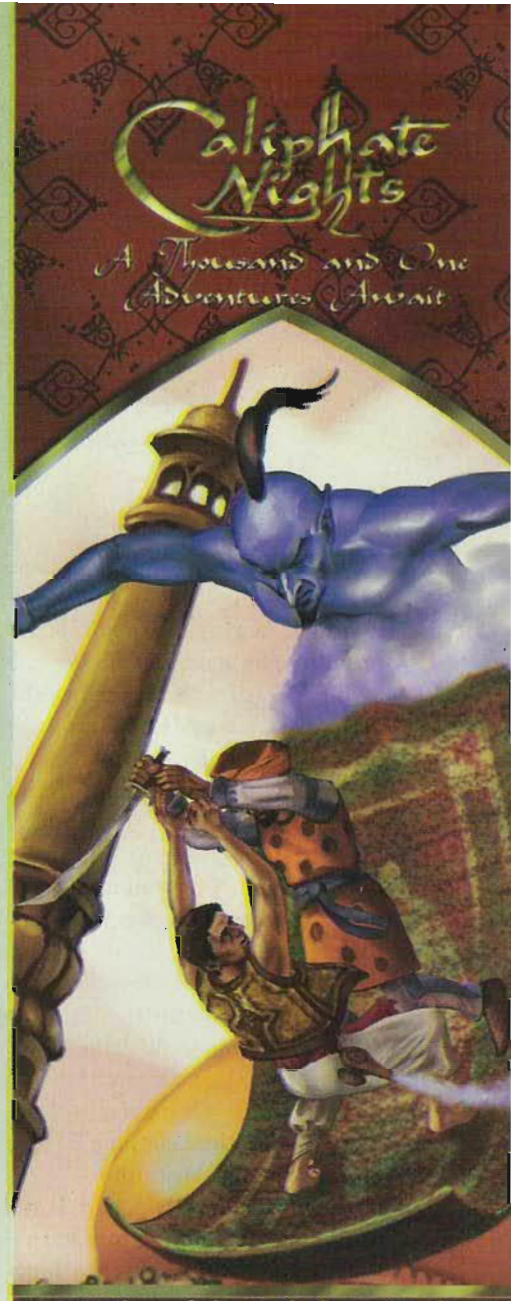
The Shimmerglade

This rocky basin surrounded by a copse of stunted and frost-rimed pine trees stands near the banks of the Icehilt River, in the far northern reaches of the realm. The Shimmerglade marks the site of a titanic magical battle fought many years ago between Elminster of Shadowdale and some half-dozen malaugrym led by Ultharos. The shapeshifters sought to lure Elminster to this remote location to trap and slay him. For their audacity, they met their doom here. A consequence of this failed ambush, which devastated much of the surrounding wilderness, brought forth many small, drifting patches of wild magic and established a larger, fixed area of dead magic centered on the spot where Elminster reduced Ultharos to a blood spatter. Strange magical effects plague the area, while warped and twisted creatures of all types congregate at the site. The wandering patches of wild magic cause a rippling effect in the air which the naked eye occasionally observes and which gives the Shimmerglade its name.

Nouméa Drathchuld, the former Magister of Mystra, placed a warning rune at the site several winters ago, which appears before any creature with higher-than-animal intelligence that approaches within a half-mile of the Shimmerglade. The rune of the Magister, a "hook" of seven stars, appears in mid-air as a tracery of silver and speaks in a pleasant but firm tone, warning creatures by saying "Be wary of perils ahead and do not trust overly in the power of the Art." Despite this caution, adventurers continue to brave the dangers of the Shimmerglade. Rumors state the malaugrym hid a cache of magic there ere their destruction. Some sages and loremasters maintain that these rumors speak truly and the legendary *Artstave of Alithar*, the greatest crafting of one of the foremost archwizards of Netheril, lies hidden somewhere in the Shimmerglade, waiting for some brave soul to claim it.

People & Society

Since its founding in the Year of Splendor (–72 DR), Impiltur has been ruled by a hereditary monarchy, save during the handful of years when the Fiend Wars raged and during the Kingless Years following the demise of the Elethlim Dynasty. The Heltharn Dynasty, the current ruling family, is the fourth in Impiltur's history. The dynasty has worn the Crown of Narfell since the Year of the Dawndance (1097 DR) and the accession of King Imphras the Great. The Queen-Regent Sambryl (CG female Damaran human aristocrat 5/wizard 4) wields authority in the realm under the aegis of the Lords of Imphras II, a council of advisers created by her father, King Rilimbrar. Despite her



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The Triadic Knight

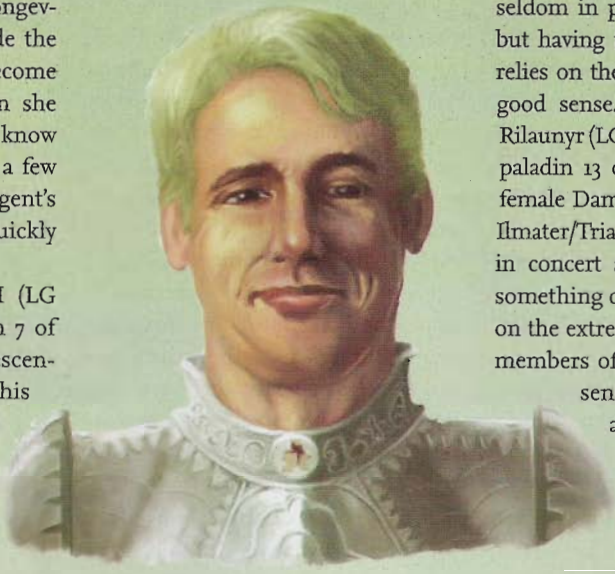
Closely associated with the realm of Impiltur, the Triadic knight prestige class can be found in *Champions of Valor*. Individuals without access to this sourcebook can substitute the justiciar of Tyr or divine champion prestige classes located in the *Player's Guide to Faerûn*.

advancing years, Sambryl retains her vitality through use of longevity magic, causing many outside the realm to question what will become of the Heltharn Dynasty when she dies. What few outside Impiltur know (and within the kingdom only a few more), is that the Queen-Regent's tenure on the Golden Throne quickly draws to an end.

The young King Imbrar II (LG male Damaran human paladin 7 of Ilmater/Triadic knight 1), descendant of Imphras II through his son Velimbrar and the rightful king of Impiltur, shall claim the throne on his sixteenth birthday in the waning days of the Year of the Lightning Storms (1374 DR). His authority extends to dissolving the Lords of Imphras II, allowing him to rule unfettered by dynastic machinations, hidebound tradition, and the strictures of the past. Many modern scholars and thinkers believe Imbrar's accession will invigorate the realm and that the focus of the realm will turn outward as it wakes from somnolence. A few even believe that Impiltur will once again achieve a pre-eminent position in the doings of the East, which it once enjoyed around the time of the raising of the Standing Stone.

For now, the kingdom remains under the hand of the Lords of Imphras II, known also as the Council of Lords. Originally made up of twelve paladin descendants of Imphras II through his fourth and sixth sons, the council was invested with authority by the ailing Rilimbrar to prevent the acquisition of power by his nephew and son-in-law, the conniving and detested Crown Prince Imphras IV. Five new appointments to the council due to death from old age or misadventure have occurred since this decree. Seven out of the original twelve children of the Dowager Aunts remain on the council.

Of the current Lords of Imphras II, the leaders are the Lords Limbrar (LG male Damaran human paladin 12 of Ilmater/monk 5), Helimbraun



King Imbrar II

(LG male half-elf cleric 5/paladin 11 of Torm) and Oriseus (LG male Damaran human cleric 6/paladin 8 of Helm). Their voices speak out most often in council, and they often decide among themselves what is "best for the realm" on any particular issue. Lately, Lord Helimbraun has become almost puritanical in his zeal to "root out evil" in the kingdom, urging less tolerance from the council in matters of lax morality and when dealing with questionable attitudes and occurrences. Lord Limbrar opposes Helimbraun's newfound zeal, pointing to a looming breakdown in their formerly strong triumvirate. Of the younger members of the council, Lords Silaunbrar (LG male half-elf paladin 14 of Torm), Engarth (LG male Damaran human ranger 2/paladin 9 of Torm/ Triadic knight 7), and Delimbrar (LG male Damaran human paladin 7 of Tyr/Triadic knight 5) are considered the "next generation" among the lords as they curry favor with young King Imbrar II, playing a role in his upbringing and nurturing as a paladin. The older lords Soargilm (LG male Damaran human cleric 9/paladin 7 of Ilmater) and Rilimbraun (LG male Damaran human paladin 10 of Tyr/monk 6) long ago adopted the role of sagely advisers to the Queen-Regent, speaking seldom in public or even in council, but having the ear of Sambryl—who relies on their wisdom and abundant good sense. The two female Lords, Rilaunyr (LG female Damaran human paladin 13 of Sune) and Idriane (LG female Damaran human paladin 7 of Ilmater/Triadic knight 4), usually act in concert and consider themselves something of a moderating influence on the extremes of some of the other members of council. They urge consensus and cooperation in all matters pertaining to the safety and welfare of Impiltur

The remaining Lords Simgar (LG male half-elf paladin 10 of Tyr/Triadic knight 7) and Haelimbrar (LG male Damaran human ranger 3/paladin 4 of Torm/Triadic knight 7; see page 126 of *Champions of Valor*) are the wily, battle-hardened veterans of Impiltur and the realm's first choice in any military endeavor of note. They care little for diplomacy, statecraft, or the court and spend most of their time leading the Warsword of Impiltur in military exercises or mounting demon and orc-scouring expeditions into the nearby mountains and forests. Effectively distancing himself from his advisory role on the council, Lord Simgar spends more and more time away from Impiltur's civilized regions, relishing the martial role he has wholeheartedly embraced. A recent foray into the Giantspire Mountains produced a report on the safety of the kingdom's northern borders with all the weight of his authority, despite rumors of

Regional Feat

The *Player's Guide to Faerûn* provides various regional feats for players wishing to create a character originating from the land of Impiltur. Detailed below is an alternative regional feat characters may take with the permission of the DM.

Pureheart [Regional]

Your land has battled creatures from the Lower Planes for generations. Your people have been blessed by the gods and you are better able to resist the overtures and attacks of fiends.

Prerequisite: Human (Damara, Impiltur, Vaasa).

Benefit: You receive a +4 bonus on all saving throws to resist the attacks, spells, and special abilities of evil outsiders.

Special: You may select this feat only as a 1st-level character. You may only have one regional feat.

another hobgoblin horde forming there in secret, led by a mysterious "dark knight" of fearsome and menacing power (see page 139 of *Champions of Ruin*).

After the Queen-Regent and the Lords of Imphras II, the nobility of Impiltur wields a modicum of power. Since the reestablishment of the realm, the nobility of Impiltur has comprised only a relatively small but influential section of Impilturian society. This social strata numbers some two-dozen houses, mixing "old blood" families—those nobles tracing their bloodlines to the days of the realm's founding—with more recently ennobled clans. The burgeoning middle class supersedes the nobility in terms of wealth and business interests in modern Impiltur, yet the nobility still retains a certain status in the realm the middle class only aspires to and often attempts to marry into.

Of the older noble families, the Forgecrowns and the Relindars are the strongest and most influential in the realm. Controlling extensive property holdings in Lyrabar and Hlammach, as do most old blood families, they also own country estates bordering the Gray Forest. Their leading spokesperson is Lord Eldrar Forgecrown (CG male Damaran human aristocrat 5/fighter 4), a sprightly, canny graybeard who benefits from unfettered access to the

Lord Helimbraun

Queen-Regent and usually provides a rather different perspective on matters of policy than the Council of Lords. The newer noble families, such as the Starsunders, Wellhavens, and Dintersans, that rose to prominence after the Kingless Years, have eclipsed most of the old blood families and concentrate their businesses in the cities of Dilpur and Sarshel, with larger property holdings in the Uplands of the realm.

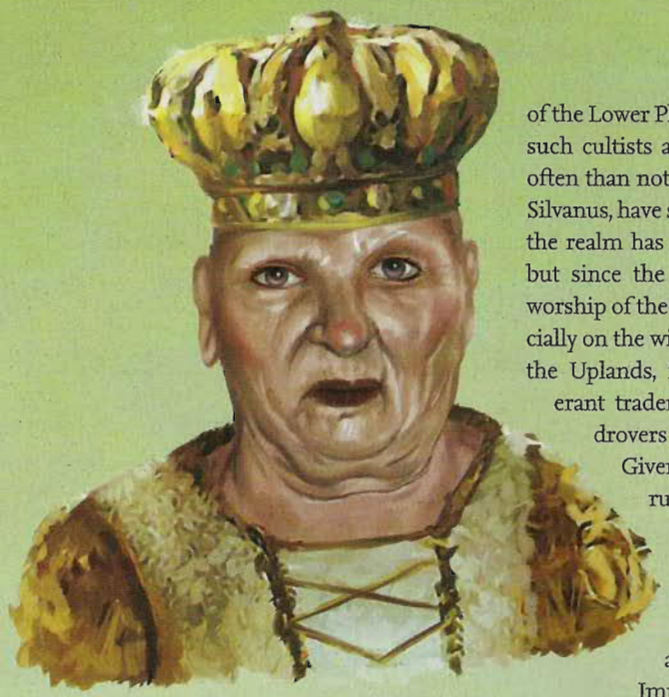
As with most goodly realms, the common folk of Impiltur form the general backbone of life and society in the kingdom. Impilturan commoners are known for their self-reliance, martial aptitude, and piousness. A prosperous middle merchant class buttresses a large and increasingly prominent farmer class, as agriculture and animal husbandry prove more and more lucrative.

Urban Impiltur shines as an example of how benevolent rule, coupled with a religious focus toward combating poverty and disease, makes a difference in the life of the common people. No city or town in Impiltur save for the shantytown of Bay Town, contains anything that observers would describe as a slum or beggars' quarter. The efforts of the priests of Ilmater to alleviate the suffering of the urban poor has seen a general trend toward better health and increased wealth for the lower classes and a realization from the upper classes that with their wealth and power comes significant responsibility to those less fortunate.

In addition to the more mundane activities of farming, laboring, and herding, the common folk of Impiltur, have always readily acted as a source of manpower for martial activities in and around the lands of the Inner Sea. Along with Chessenta and some of the lands of the Vilhon Reach, Impiltur has historically furnished well-trained fighting men for "just and noble causes that pay well," as the mercenary leader Helingar "Threeswords" Lornim once commented. Since the Kingless Years, the authorities regulate mercenary companies in Impiltur, requiring them to obtain royal assent in the form of a Lord's Charter and a binding oath of service to the throne and realm when called upon.

Religion

While Impiltur is noted for its worship of the Triad and commitment to the tenets of the faiths of Ilmater, Torm,



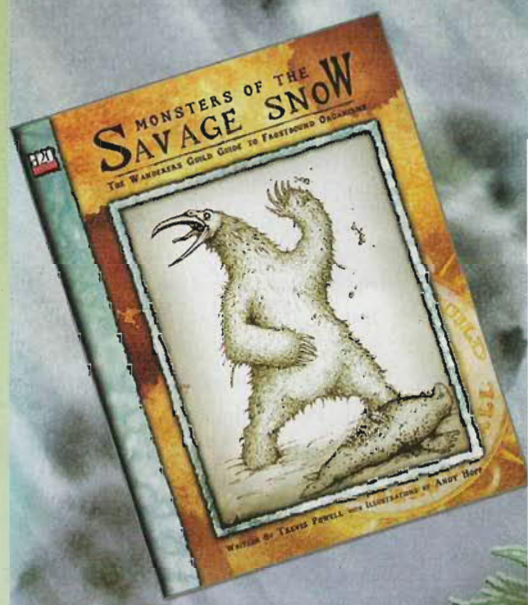
Queen-Regent Sambryl

and Tyr, the nation as a whole exhibits a liberal and open attitude to the worship of nonevil deities. The Triadic religions place an emphasis on the power of faith and the expectation of sacrifice or service when called upon. No group of faithful better embody these tenants than the Knights of Imphras II (see page 88 of *Champions of Valor*), a group of holy warriors devoted to their deities and the crown of Impiltur. The veneration of saints and holy martyrs of the church constitutes a cornerstone of worship in Impiltur and the region generally. Other faiths, such as those of Chauntea, Tymora, Selûne, and Waukeen enjoy significant followings in Impiltur. The martial nature of the realm sees the faith of Tempus receive more than just lip service. The establishment of open, organized temples and shrines for darker powers such as Bane and Cyric is illegal, although the actual worship of such deities is tolerated to some extent. Most Banites and Cyricists who flaunt their religion in public are subject to close scrutiny from the authorities, and many therefore keep their faiths and places of worship secret. Similarly, the myriad fiend cults that worship the demon lords and princes of the Lower Planes are forbidden, and such cultists are slain on sight more often than not. Nature deities, such as Silvanus, have seen their faiths wane as the realm has become more civilized, but since the Time of Troubles the worship of the deity Shandaukal, especially on the windswept open plains of the Uplands, flourishes among itinerant traders, caravan guards, and drovers of all types.

Given its long history, many ruined temples and shrines of dead or forgotten deities litter the landscape of Impiltur. The curious and the sagely flock to Impiltur annually to study the influx of Jhaamdathi refugees who came to this region before the erection of the Standing Stone. They seek to uncover the secrets and mysteries of this fabled realm of the Cradlelands and gain everlasting scholarly fame.

As well as temples to fallen deities, the discovery of vile altars and sacrificial pits dedicated to demonic powers occurs with frightening regularity. Only recently, authorities discovered a cult to the demon prince Orcus operating in the village of Borgar's Mill, located on the banks of the Great Imphras River north of Bay Town. This fell legacy of the lost realm of Narfell still evokes a sense of rabid fear in the average Impilturan, and many outlying regions of the kingdom practice a measure of rough justice against perceived fiend worshipers or other tainted individuals. Despite the efforts of the authorities, "witch" burnings still take place in the Uplands on an infrequent basis and many individuals suffering from mental illness or exhibiting anything considered "strange behavior" are hunted down and slain by mobs of fear-driven commonfolk. Attempts to curtail such behavior meet with constant failure, given the entrenched and deep-rooted fears and prejudices of the population.

Heavy Monsters, with a chance of snow.



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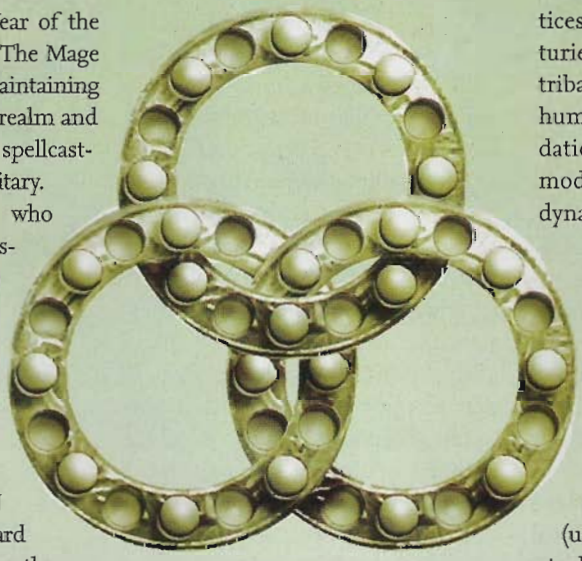
Magic

In Impiltur, the use of magic is commonplace. Many mages call Impiltur home, and the authorities see no need to regulate their activities. Impiltur boasts a Mage Royal, currently the wizard Selarbrin (LG male Damaran human wizard 18/archmage 2), a direct descendant of the famed archmage Velgarbrin of Baldur's Gate, one of the heroes of Imphras the Great's defeat of the hobgoblin horde. In fact, the post of Mage Royal has developed into something of a family affair in Impiltur, for Velgarbrin's descendants have held this office since the Year of the Gleaming Crown (1097 DR). The Mage Royal is responsible for maintaining the magical defenses of the realm and oversees the Warwands, the spellcasting branch of Impiltur's military.

Some famous wizards who call Impiltur home are Arasmas "the Cowled" (CG male Damaran human wizard 14), the powerful evoker Shoval of the Many Thunders (CN male Damaran human evoker 16), and the mysterious archmage and scholar Orauzalar (N male Mulan human wizard 15/loremaster 3)—regarded as the foremost authority on the history of Impiltur and said by many to covertly oppose the feared Red Wizards of Thay. Orauzalar often criticizes the Lords of Imphras II over the establishment of Thayan Enclaves in the cities of Lyrabar, Dilpur, and Ilmwatch in recent years, believing with some justification that the council conceded to the wishes of the merchant class and lined its members' coin purses all in one action.

In addition to solitary wizards of power, Impiltur also contains two wizard schools of note. The better known of these, called the Towers of the Wind, is located in Lyrabar. By the standards of other lands, folk describe this wizard school as small, although its head teacher and founder, Broargar "Windcloak" Iringil (LN male Damaran human wizard 12), would in his pride probably disagree. It trains wizards for service on merchant ships making the dangerous run to Sembia and up to the Moonsea that often fall prey to the pirates of the Inner Sea. Most merchant ship captains don't want to fight the pirates, they just want to avoid them or outrun them, so a windmage often proves very useful. A few of the merchant groups in Impiltur (such as the Five Sails, Brass Coffers, and Moonchasers) sponsor the school and require many of the school's graduates to serve them for



Symbol of the Council of Lords

a year following their "graduation" as a type of indentured servitude. Commonly, the wizards receive good pay and experience for their labors and so do not consider the period of service an imposition.

In the last year, the wizard Pelathyon Hawkryn (N human Damaran male wizard 11) has opened a new wizard school in Hlammach, teaching a group of select pupils and focusing on the mysteries and possibilities inherent in the connections between the Art and gemstones, specifically moonstones. Some cynical observers state that because Pelathyon's family owns rich moonstone mines in the Earthspur Mountains, he simply seeks to use his school to enrich his family further. Others state that his research resounds with the favor of Mystra herself and that Moonstone Manse will in time become a center for innovative wizardry in the Easting Reach lands.

Law and Order

Impiltur operates a system of laws known as the "King's Code" which dates back to the time of King Bellodar III, who reigned from 642 DR to 673 DR. This monarch, known as the Sage King, set down the first unified and coherent body of law for the realm, drawing upon the customs and practices that had developed over centuries, beginning with the ancient tribal laws of the original Narfelli humans. Today, it remains the foundation of Impiltur's system of laws, modified by successive kings and dynasties of the realm.

Law and order throughout the realm is maintained by the various Royal Constables located in every settlement of small town size or larger. These Royal Constables hear and try minor matters and levy punishments such as fines, confiscation of property, or public censure (usually by placing an offender in stocks in the local marketplace). The Lords of Imphras II deal directly with more serious matters such as crimes of violence, arson, and kidnapping in the legal forums known as Lord's Courts. Such forums feature members of the Council of Lords, who sit in judgment on matters heard on a bimonthly basis in the major cities of the kingdom. In practice, however, the Lords of Imphras II delegate this responsibility to the local Heralds, whose roles also include administrative work and tax and revenue collection. Only the most serious crimes, or those that require the special intervention of a member of the Lords of Imphras II, merit a hearing before a member of the Council of Lords.

Punishments for serious crimes include exile, hard labor at the prison mines of Vordric Dun, incarceration

at Graycliffs (the prison island off the coast of Hlammach) and detention for periods of less than three years at any of the Royal Gaols located near Lyrabar, Dilpur, and Ilmwatch. Capital punishment exists in Impiltur but is reserved for the crimes of willful murder, treason, and a rather unique wrong named in the Code as "consorting with fiends." Legal scholars of the realm believe this punishment would extend to wizards who summon creatures from the Lower Planes, even for the purposes of study or to gather information, but Impiltur's legal history is yet to decide on such a ma tter. Wizards who summon fiends with any regularity carefully conceal such activities from the authorities.

The Lure of Adventure

Adventurers do not rest idly in the realm of Impiltur. What follows are some local events that DMs might incorporate into their campaigns.

The adventure "Man Forever," recently presented in *Dungeon* #137, also takes place in the realm of Impiltur.

- The adventurers of the Brightshield Company have fled east into the Rawlinswood from the city of Ilmwatch after a swords-out confrontation with the Warswords of Impiltur. Rumor has it that the Brightshields recovered an ancient blade of the realm in their recent foray into the Giantspires and refused to part with it. The sage Galathril has stated that from descriptions given by patrons of the Silverjack Inn, the blade is none other than the legendary Bornath, "the Banesteel," one of the lost trove of swords known to most scholars as "Soargar's Legacy."
- The senior Warwand Ilbrar has been found slain in his tower in Hlammach, his headless body torn and mutilated by the claws of some fearsome beast. Ilbrar was known to have been working on a powerful spellward he called the "Fiendmantle," building upon the work and teachings of the legendary archmage Soargar of Lyrabar. The library located within his residence was totally empty. Following the discovery of his body, authorities posted a reward for any information that leads them to his murderers, while privately voicing concerns that the Cult of Eltab (see *Champions of Ruin*) rises once again.
- The mad blue dragon of the Bluefang Water has struck again, sinking a flathull coaster en route to the city of Sarshel. The leader of the consortium, the gruff Faerdrin "the Stonehound" Talathril, has offered a sizable reward for the head of this young wyrm and the recovery of his cargo, believed to now lie at the bottom of Bluefang Water. Faerdrin's representative can be contacted at the Sleeping Siren festhall in Bay Town.

History of Impiltur

The history of modern Impiltur is reckoned to begin with the events of the Fiend Wars and the subsequent Triad Crusade which wrested the realm back from the clutches of the Scaled Horde. Since that time, Impiltur's influence in the lands of the Easting Reach has waxed and waned, culminating in its current insularity and political somnolence due to dynastic difficulties. A brief historical timeline of the realm of Impiltur from this pivotal point in its longer history follows.

Date (DR)	Events
–160	*Year of the Stone Giant* Eltab first summoned at the Citadel of Conjurers.
726	*Year of the Dowager Lady* Impiltur is overrun by the Scaled Horde, an army of demons, from the western fringes of the Rawlinswood and Forest of Lethyr. King Forvar II of Impiltur is slain in the fighting, bringing an end to the Durlarven dynasty of Old Impiltur.
729	*Year of the Twisted Horn* The Triad Crusade: An army dedicated to Tyr, Torm, and Ilmater led by the paladin Sarshel Elethlim travels by sea to ravaged Impiltur and brings the Scaled Horde to battle.
731	*Year of Visions* The paladin army of Sarshel Elethlim defeats the last demon army, led by the balor Ndulu, at the Citadel of Conjurers, bringing the Fiend Wars and the Triad Crusade to an end.
732	*Year of the Proud Father* Sarshel is crowned king of Impiltur and establishes the Elethlim dynasty.
786	*Year of the Moaning Gorge* The three Paladin Princes of Impiltur defeat the returned balor Ndulu and an army of fiends at the Citadel of Conjurers, at the cost of the lives of Crown Prince Essys and Prince Araln. Nord, the youngest of the three, is named Crown Prince and heir to the throne.
788	*Year of the True Believer* Nord is crowned king of Impiltur and begins a campaign to ferret out and hunt down all fiends and fiend-worshipers throughout the kingdom. This campaign lasts for the better part of two decades and is known as the "Harrowing of Nord."

850 *Year of the Empty Throne*
King Beldred of Impiltur leads "the Scouring," a year-long campaign into the western parts of the Rawlinswood that slays and drives forth pockets of demons that survived the Fiend Wars, the Battle of Moaning Gorge, and the Harrowing of his grandfather.

893 *Year of the Raised Sword*
An army of Nar horsemen led by the chieftain Galush attacks north-eastern Impiltur but is defeated at the battle of Twelvepikes on the banks of the Soleine River by an army led by Duke Lantigar Deepstar.

924 *Year of the Cracked Turtle*
Plague causes the death of King Peverel of Old Impiltur and his two male heirs. His sole remaining issue, the Princess Aliia, is deemed too young to rule by the senior nobles at court and a new king is sought by way of royal marriage.

926 *Year of the Fearless Peasant*
Princess Aliia of Old Impiltur dies at sea while en-route to wed her betrothed, Prince Rhiigard of Cormyr, bringing the Elethlim dynasty to an end. Impiltur fractures into a seething cauldron of rival city-states as powerful nobles attempt to gain the vacant throne. Beginning of the Kingless Years.

1038 *Year of Spreading Spring*
The retreat of the Great Glacier leaves the lands of Narfell, Vaasa, and Damara fully free of ice. Large-scale immigration begins to these lands.

1095 *Year of the Dawndance*
The war-captain Imphras Heltharn of Lyrabar unites the city-states of the Easting Reach and leads them to victory over a hobgoblin horde from the Giantspire Mountains.

1097 *Year of the Gleaming Crown*
Imphras the Great is crowned king of refounded Impiltur and establishes the Heltharn dynasty. End of the Kingless Years.

1110 *Year of the Bloody Fields*
Thay marches on Phent, but the combined forces of Impiltur and Thesk, led by King Imphras the Great, defeat the Red Wizards' army.

1127 *Year of the Luminar Procession*
King Imbrar of Impiltur leads an army into the Giantspire Mountains to eradicate the hobgoblin menace. His warriors are murdered and the succubus Soneillon corrupts the king into a death knight. Imbrar's sister Ilmara is crowned queen.

1167 *Year of the Parchment Heretical*
Queen Ilmara of Impiltur marries Rilaun of Sarshel, a young warrior half her age.

1169 *Year of the Earth Shaking*
Imphras II is declared king of Impiltur at birth in accordance with the law, and his father Rilaun takes up arms to seize the throne. He is defeated and Ilmara rules as Queen-Regent until Imphras II attains sixteen years of age.

1185 *Year of the Immoral Imp*
Queen-Regent Ilmara relinquishes the rule of Impiltur to her son, King Imphras II.

1204 *Year of the Private Tears*
King Imphras II begins to exhibit the first signs of madness.

1208 *Year of the Gamine*
Crown Prince Talryn of Lyrabar, heir to the throne of Impiltur, attempts to have his ill father declared unfit to rule and have himself crowned king. His conniving younger brother Lashilmbrar and other

unscrupulous nobles at court succeed in forcing Talryn to flee into exile and thwart his efforts. He takes refuge with the pirates of the Inner Sea.

1212 *Year of Ocean's Wrath*
Talryn returns to Impiltur upon hearing of the death of his father, Imphras II. The News of king's death is a ruse engineered by Prince Lashilmbrar, who succeeds Talryn as Crown Prince when his brother is executed for treason.

1225 *Year of the Winged Worm*
The death of Imphras II sees Lashilmbrar crowned king of Impiltur.

1253 *Year of Beckoning Death*
Impiltur suffers the effects of the devastating Great Plague of the Inner Sea.

1294 *Year of the Deep Moon*
A bandit raid on the king's summer residence sees the death of King Lashilmbrar and Crown Prince Imphras III. This attack is engineered by the ambitious Prince Thaum of Telflamm, son of Kuskur, and nephew to the dead king. Lashilmbrar's second son, fourteen-year-old Rilimbrar, is crowned king of Impiltur with his uncle Kuskur as Prince-Regent.

1295 *Year of the Ormserpent*
Prince Thaum of Telflamm raises a mercenary army and sails across the Easting Reach, sacking Sarshel and then marching inland to seize Filur and the throne of Impiltur. Prince-Regent Kuskur and young King Rilimbrar are forced to flee to Aglarond for sanctuary after their army is defeated west of Dilpur at the Battle of Five Heads.

1296 *Year of the Black Hound*
Queen Ilione of Aglarond intercedes on King Rilimbrar's behalf and sends the Simbul, her heir and apprentice, to slay Thaum with magic. Rilimbrar is restored to the throne despite attempts by treacherous nobles to have Thaum's son Imphras (the future Crown Prince Imphras IV) crowned king in Rilimbrar's stead. Imphras is placed under house arrest for life in Filur.

1336 *Year of the Highmantle*
With no direct male heirs of his own, King Rilimbrar has his daughter Sambryl wed her second cousin Imphras IV. Rilimbrar establishes the Lords of Imphras II, a governing council to control the realm on his death, until such time as his line and that of Imphras IV has died out. In this way he seeks to have the throne pass to the line of his now-dead uncle Velimbrar, fourth son of King Imphras II.

1338 *Year of the Wanderer*
King Rilimbrar of Impiltur dies in a fire at Filur. Crown Prince Imphras IV also perishes in the conflagration, making his wife Sambryl Queen-Regent of the realm. The infant Prince Soarimbrar, a descendant of Velimbrar, is crowned king but cannot rule until his sixteenth year.

1351 *Year of the Crown*
King Soarimbrar and his entire retinue are slain at the hands of unknown assassins while riding through farmlands outside Lyrabar. He is succeeded by his infant nephew Imphras V and Sambryl remains Queen-Regent.

1363 *Year of the Wyvern*
King Imphras V dies of a wasting disease before he can properly claim the throne of Impiltur. He is succeeded by his younger brother Imbrar II (age five). As before, Sambryl remains Queen-Regent of the kingdom.

1373 *Year of Rogue Dragons*
Impiltur is assailed by a Rage of Dragons caused by the machinations of the Cult of the Dragon and their leader Sammaster.

1374 *Year of Lightning Storms*
Current year.

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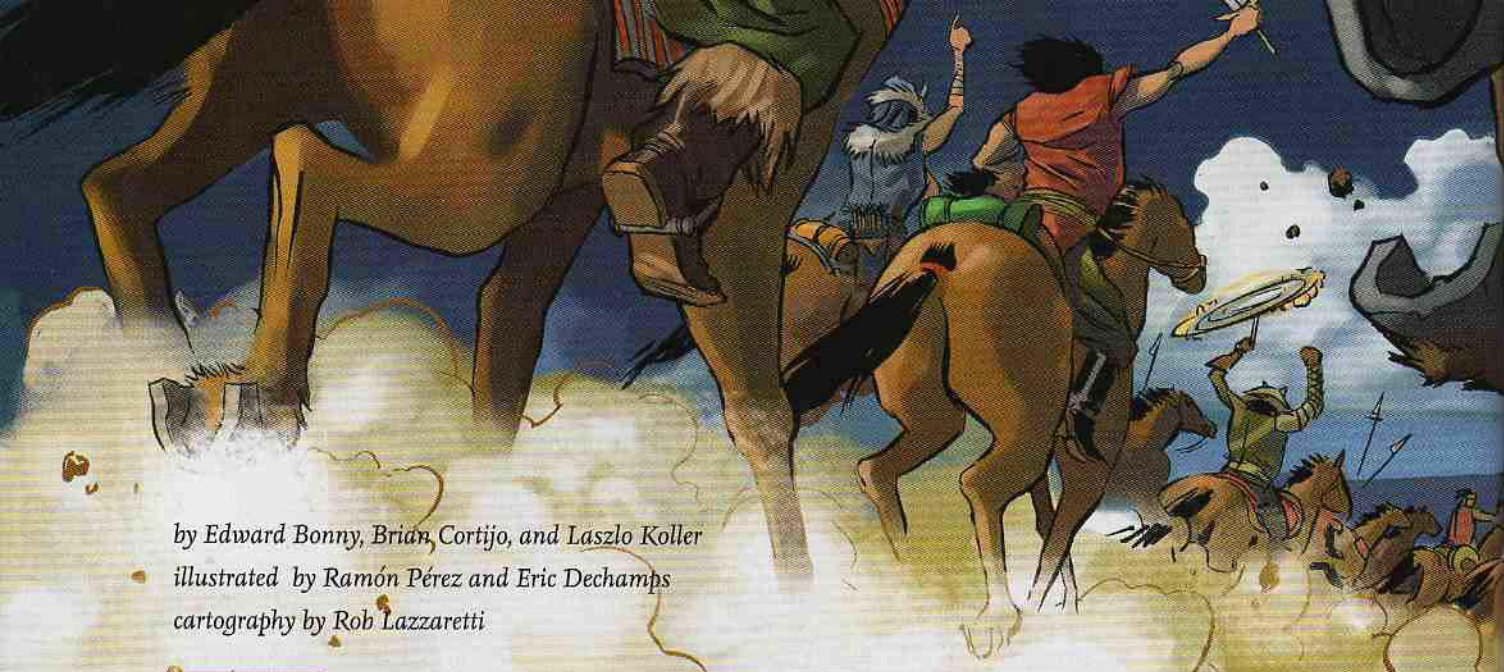


by Edward Bonny, Brian Cortijo, and Laszlo Koller
illustrated by Ramón Pérez and Eric Dechamps
cartography by Rob Lazzaretti

THE HORDE

BARBARIANS OF THE ENDLESS WASTE

Fifteen years ago, the charismatic Yamun Khahan united the barbarian tribes of the Endless Waste, massing a great army that spread east and west, threatening the more civilized nations of Kara-Tur and eastern Faerûn. Conquering or laying waste to whole regions, only the death of the Horde's leader at the hands of King Azoun IV of Cormyr finally brought an end to the barbarians' Realms-shaking invasion.

The Endless Waste has never been a peaceful region. Ages ago, a series of conqueror-nations invaded, seeking to bring the disparate human tribes under their yoke. Each of these empires fell in time, leaving the native horse nomads of the steppes to resume their simple lives of wandering and infighting. No matter what force united them, the barbarians always—eventually—broke into their constituent tribes, continuing as they had for centuries.

Even this truth is changing. Despite the defeat of Yamun Khahan's great horde more than a decade ago, the tribes of the Hordelands are again stirring. Perhaps it is time for another great war. Perhaps ancient enmities are rising. Or perhaps the horse-warriors of the steppes have grown tired of living in the shadow of their "civilized" neighbors.

A great many changes have taken place in the Endless Waste since the death of Yamun Khahan, some of which would frighten those in more civilized lands—were they close enough to see them. A new nation rises from the remains of the Tuigan Horde. Dark secrets of ancient empires are coming to light, luring the adventurous and the foolish with promises of powerful magic ripe for plunder. New wealth and trade flourishes again on the revitalized Golden Way, linking merchants and adventurers from far-flung kingdoms to the east and west. The strange lands of the Endless Waste beckon to native and outsider alike with the lure of wealth, power, and forgotten magic waiting to be discovered.

OVERVIEW OF THE ENDLESS WASTE

Visitors entering the Endless Waste soon realize the steppes are unlike the more civilized western realms. Wrongly considered to be a forbidding region devoid of life, the Endless Waste has long been an isolated land, its best known inhabitants being the nomadic and barbarous tribes of horse-riding humans, collectively known to outsiders as the Tuigan. The region is also home to a handful of tiny kingdoms of

gnomes, dwarves, and humans who live in stark contrast to the Tuigan. When these kingdoms interact with their nomadic neighbors it is for war or trade—and for nothing more.

Roughly the size of the Dalelands, Heartlands, the North, and Moonsea regions combined, the vast steppes of the Endless Waste are overwhelmingly pristine wilderness. Yet visitors in this mostly uncivilized region soon learn it is a place with inescapable history. Ruins of old human empires, most notably those of the Imaskari and the Raumathari, peek out, half-buried, from wide grasslands. They remain as silent sentinels, speaking to the might of those empires, and many are rumored to contain treasures and magic not seen or heard of in countless long centuries. Most Tuigan shun such places, warning away would-be explorers with dire tales of these long-fallen kingdoms.

Recent events also reverberate throughout this forbidding land, reminding all of the terrible potential that roils beneath a barren surface. The Horde War remains a vibrant force for change within the region. For the Tuigan, the war is a cause for pride, urging them on to future greatness. The other inhabitants of the Endless Waste consider the Tuigan as one would a force of nature: something to be avoided when possible, endured when necessary, and always to be feared, or at least respected.

Beyond the Endless Waste, the nations bordering the steppes have moved on from the Horde War. The peoples of Thay, Semphar, and Kara-Tur no longer consider the barbarians a threat, believing the Tuigan reverted back to squabbling tribes after the war. The Endless Waste has once again become a place for trade as well as a resource for their scouts and wizards to explore for gold and magic. Barbarians from the Endless Waste dealing with people from these kingdoms can expect to be treated with fear and contempt. The ruling elite of these outside kingdoms scorn the fledgling barbarian realm of Yaïmmunahar, which they believe to be a futile attempt by the defeated Tuigan to save face after losing the war. No one outside of the Endless Waste expects Yaïmmunahar to endure for very long given the Tuigan predilection for internecine warfare.

Hordelands Overload

Covering approximately 2,400,000 square miles, one article can only begin to detail the races, locations, and intrigues of the vast Hordelands. Those interested in more details can find them online in the FORGOTTEN REALMS: The Horde web supplement available at **paizo.com/dragon,** or in the PDF of the original *The Horde* boxed set offered at **wizards.com.**

The Taangan and the Tuigan

Prior to the rise of Yamun Khahan, the barbarians of the Endless Waste called the land they inhabited the "*Taan*," and themselves the "*Taangan*" (literally, "people of the Taan"). The horselords of the steppes belonged to small, independent clans, each of which was part of a larger, regional tribe: Commani, Dalat, Fankiang, Gur, Guychiang, Igidujin, Kahghun, Khassidi, Naican, Oigur, Pazru ki, T'aghur, Tsu-tsu, Tuigan, and Zamogedi. Each nomadic clan, or ordu (consisting of three or four villages known as obogh) was ruled by a hereditary khan.

Yamun became khan of the Hoekun clan by killing his father, the previous khan. With the help of allies from the Naican tribe, Yamun was able to conquer, subdue, or ally with the other ordu of the Tuigan, and was proclaimed khahan. Through war and intimidation, Yamun eventually united all the remaining tribes of the steppes beneath his banner, and proclaimed himself Emperor of All Peoples.

Since the khahan's death, through both conquest and poor translation, the name "Tuigan" has been adopted to apply not merely to Yamun's tribe, but all those he came to rule. To the eyes of the outside world, all of the barbarians of the steppes are Tuigan, no matter what clan or tribe they call themselves.

PEOPLES OF THE HORDELANDS

Two human races dominate the Endless Waste. The largest group, numbering about 100,000, are the nomadic Tuigan people who roam throughout the steppes. Far fewer in number are the Raumvira (less than 15,000), proud civilized descendents of the Raumathari Empire who dwell around the Lake of Mists in small towns and villages. Both the Tuigan and the Raumvira can serve as excellent character races given their predominance in the region.

The Tuigan

The Tuigan, also known as the Horselords, are the nomadic, warlike people of the Endless Waste. Until recently, they were long seen as a crude race scarcely above goblinkind and other savage humanoids. The Tuigan, however, are more than a simple, barbaric people. Their military prowess has shown them to be a formidable force when unified. They breed horses, raise goats, and farm the difficult steppes, trading with their Raumviran and Semphari neighbors. Geographic barriers and a propensity for warfare and raiding practically ensures that the Tuigan will not expand outside their native steppes.

The Raumviran

Appearing as the opposite of their Tuigan neighbors, the Raumvirans are peaceable human merchants settled around the Lake of Mists who trace their ancestry back to the ancient magical empire of Raumathar. Although Raumviran culture has diminished greatly since Raumathar's fall, a handful of Raumvirans seek to preserve the ancient arts of Raumathari battlemages and Raumviran

THE HORDELANDS
Shadowmount Peaks
The Great Ice Sea
Many Windowed Tower
Iceroot Forest
Forest of the Pazruki
Peqqir
Quaraquand
Jugicho
Liraz
Icerim Mountains
Horse Plains
The Glittering Spires
The Umberwood
Veilet Tower
Pigeon Rock Oasis
N
W
E
S
The Endless Wastes
Winterkeep
Pleasant Valley Gateway Oasis
Ni-ko Oasis
Spice Road
Chang-Liu-Shui
Arundi River
Swordrise Mountains
Citadel Rashemar
Winterflow River
Kourmira
YAMUNNAHAR
Sunrise Mountains
The Cave of 1,000 Gods
Quoya Desert
Kwachow
Beacon Cairn
Lake of Mists
Almorel
The Golden Way
The Firepeaks
Flowery Pond Well
Songfarla
Drubiev
Clearflow River
Horseshoe Temple Oasis
Merket Depression
Great Amber Steppes
Spiderhaunt Peaks
Sentinel Spire
Dragon Wall
Bitter Well Oasis
Mountains of Copper
The Great Wild Wood
Iris Well Spring
Ganath Wood
Port Ghaost
Nanhu Oasis
0
420
miles

Hordelands Regions

The following presents regional information for characters who call the Hordelands home. More information on regions and regional feats can be found in the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting* and *Player's Guide to Faerûn*. The Horse Nomad and Raumathar Heritor feats can be found on page 58 of this issue.

Endless Wastes Region

These vast tracts of unforgiving steppes are homes to an ancient and fierce nomadic people.

Preferred Classes: Barbarian, fighter, ranger.
Automatic Languages: Common, Tuigan.
Bonus Languages: Damaran, Goblin, Mulhorandi, Rashemi, Shou.
Regional Feats: Horse Nomad, Saddleback, Survivor.
Bonus Equipment: (A) Masterwork composite shortbow; or (B) light warhorse, bit and bridle, military saddle, and studded leather barding.

Lake of Mists Region

Dominated by the growing communities of Almorel and Drubiev, the Lake of Mist is home to a hearty people descended from the fallen magical empire of Raumathar.

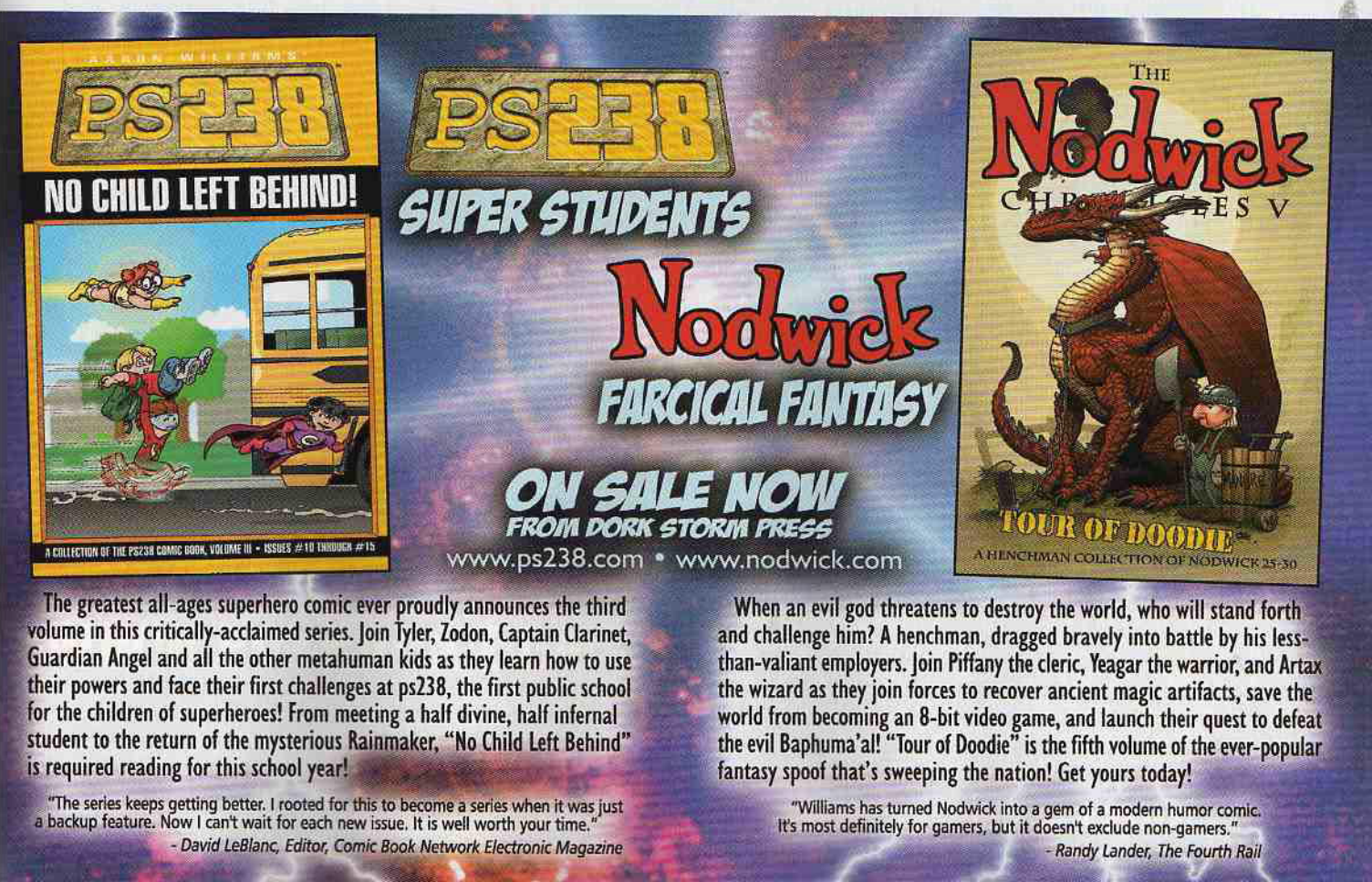
Preferred Classes: Fighter, ranger, rogue, sorcerer, wizard.
Automatic Languages: Common, Raumvira.
Bonus Languages: Damaran, Mulhorandi, Rashemi, Shou, Tuigan.
Regional Feats: Mercantile Background, Raumathar Heritor, Silver Palm.
Bonus Equipment: (A) Masterwork bastard sword; or (B) a camel and 100 gp; or (C) scrolls of *burning hands* and *Tenser's floating disk*.

conjurers. Once common in the lands west and south of the Endless Waste, the Raumvirans are much reduced in population today.

Most Raumvirans are content with their current lives. They suffered little in the Horde War and continue to profit from the steady flow of trade along the Golden Way. Some Raumvirans retain their ancestors' hunger for adventure and mastery over magic, and these few are the ones most often encountered outside the Lake of Mists region.

ENDLESS WASTE GAZETTEER

The vast, expansive region known as the Hordelands occupies the lands between distant Kara-Tur in the east and the western nations of Thay, Mulhorand, and Rashemen. These vast spaces feature very few permanent cities, being mostly odd assortments of nomadic tent villages and roaming camps. Despite this, civilized areas do exist, both above and below ground.



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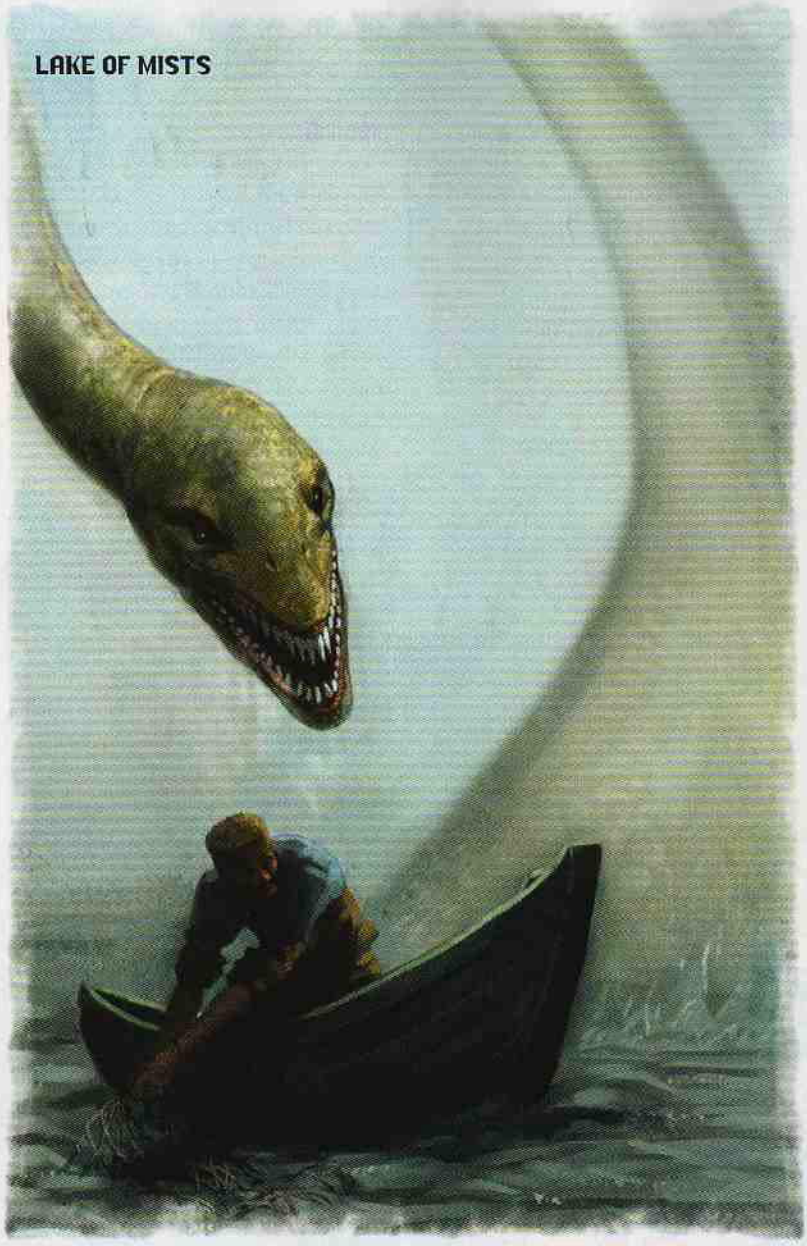

Almorel (Small City)

As a result of tremendous growth in trade along the Golden Way in the last decade, this sprawling settlement of coastal wooden homes has seemingly grown overnight from a large town to a small city of nearly 9,000 citizens. Much of this growth is fueled by the establishment of numerous merchant outposts by distant trading companies from the likes of Waterdeep, Neverwinter, and Sembia. The city's strategic position on the Golden Way and the Lake of Mists ensures it will continue to be a major waypoint for traders from the east and west.

The city's Lakemaster and three Keepers serve as the Mayor's council in times of both peace and war. Each Keeper appoints a successor who is expected to take up the mantle upon the current Keeper's death.

In the past centuries, Almorel has seen surprisingly few attacks by neighboring barbarians. The Horde War bypassed the city entirely in favor of more tempting targets in the west. The absence of barbarian violence, however, has not deterred Mavnar from replacing the city's wooden walls with sturdier stone. He is currently negotiating with the city's dwarves to design and build a stone keep that would replace Almorel's outdated wooden fortress tower.

Almorel (small city): Conventional; AL LN; 15,000 gp limit; Assets 6,672,750 gp; Population 8,897; Mixed (78% human [68% Raumviran, 18% Tuigan, 7% Rashemi, 5% Shou, 2% Mulan], 9% gold dwarf, 6% river spirit folk, 5% half-orc, 1% gray orc, 1% rock gnome).

Authority Figure: Mayor Mavnar Dyorn (LN male Raumviran human aristocrat 6/fighter 8).

Important Characters: Lakemaster Valin Orov (NG male Raumviran human druid 15), Keeper of the City Watch Evari Ruyost (LN female Raumviran human rogue 3/fighter 6/duelist 5).

Drubiev (Small Town)

The town of Drubiev has existed at the confluence of the Clearflow and the Golden Way since before the fall of Raumathar. The settlement lies at the foot of a centuries-old dwarven bridge called Riverview Span, more famously called Dead Dwarf Bridge for the sometimes-visible spirits of long-dead dwarven guardians. In 1371 DR, dwarven priests from Almorel permanently exorcised these restless ghosts.

Like Almorel, Drubiev avoided the worst of the Horde incursions, in part due to a large tribute of gold and timely promises of submission to Yamun Khahan's advance forces. The burgeoning town caters to the ever-increasing merchant traffic that plies the Golden Way. It is believed that as trade grows, Drubiev could easily swell to the size of a large town within a few years.

Such growth has caused disappointment among the town's small, vocal river spirit folk population. First Councilman Aevan Dragorovich has so far kept those in favor of expansion (led by Councilman Pavel Tragosk) and those opposed (championed by Councilwoman

Emmezel Tersku) from ending their disagreements with anything but angry words. The First Councilman fears this peaceful stalemate cannot last indefinitely, though. Councilwoman Tersku holds sway over most Drubievans, especially after recently banishing a fanatical missionary of Kossuth, thereby saving the town from the cleansing fire that the mad priest promised. Councilman Tragosk's seductive promises of wealth and power, however, have not gone unheard by many townsfolk.

The Council of Five makes important decisions regarding the village's affairs including appointment of the First Constable. The Council of Five is composed of five prominent citizens of the community elected at large once every Shieldmeet. In times of great crisis, nearly one hundred of the general community can serve in a hastily mustered militia under the First Constable's command.

The Endless Waste

The Endless Waste is the vast region of steppes running south from the Great Ice Sea to the distant Mountains of Copper. Tough grasses thrive here in the summer months, feeding the herds of goats and horses kept by the Tuigan. Each winter, monsters dwelling in the mountains that surround these steppes descend upon the plains to prey upon isolated tribes and the animals, travelers, and traders there. The Golden Way cuts across these steppes and marks the boundary between the frigid northern steppes and the warmer, fertile south.

South of the Golden Way, the icy tundra of the steppes soon gives

Endless Waste Timeline

This history of the Endless Waste weaves a complex tapestry of barbarism, war, and deadly conquest. Long before the united nomads under Yamun Khahan emerged from their ancestral steppes seeking conquest, the Hordelands were a place where great empires and fiendish armies once held sway. Even today, the impact of those ancient forces and many others still shape the lives of all who call the Hordelands home.

Timeline of the Endless Waste

Year (DR)	Event
–11900	Dwarves settle the Firepeak Mountains.
–8900	Tribes of Taangan (Tuigan) humans settle the Endless Waste.
–8350	Imaskari tribes settle the Raurin Plains.
–7891	Zexthandrim conquered by Imaskari forces.
–7403	Zexthandrim rebels against Imaskari rule and is destroyed.
–7100	Imaskari Empire subjugates Taangan tribes and demands semi-annual tribute.
–5000	A suspicious plague decimates Imaskar, then spreads to the Endless Waste.
–3149	With a large influx of gnome refugees arriving, Songfarla is officially founded.
–2488	Imaskar Empire destroyed by former slaves.
–900	The realm of Raumathar is founded with its capital at Winterkeep.
–280	Raumathari found Almorel.
–160	Raumathar and Narfell destroy each other in a decade-long war that pits arcane magic against fiendish forces. Fleeing from this war, river spirit folk settle the Lake of Mists.
–150	Barbarians drive Raumathari survivors from much of the Hordelands.
305	Orcs from the Sunrise Mountains descend on the Lake of Mists but are driven off.
1335	Rise of Yamun Khahan.
1358	The Time of Troubles. Tuigan Horselord Yamun Khahan unites the barbarian tribes of the Hordelands.
1359	Tuigan army conquers Semphar and Khazari, and then invades Shou-Lung, Thay, and Rashemen. Citadel Rashemar is destroyed.
1360	Tuigan forces invade Thesk. Allied armies from the Western Heartlands defeat the Tuigan. King Azoun IV of Cormyr slays Yamun Khahan.
1361	Tuigan bandits in Thesk terrorize merchants on the Golden Way.
1363	Hubadai, son of Yamun Khahan, declares himself khahan and founds the nation of Yaïmmunahar.
1365	Red Wizards of Thay melt glaciers in the Icerim Mountains prior to an invasion of Rashemen, flooding the northwestern steppes of the Endless Waste.
1367	Kourmira, capital of Yaïmmunahar, founded.
1369	Increased trade along the Golden Way prompts western nations to establish trading outposts in Almorel and Kourmira.
1374	The Red Wizards open a merchant enclave in Kourmira.
1375	Current Year.

way to temperate grasslands that grow ever more verdant nearer the region's southern mountain ranges. Formerly considered part of the Endless Waste, this region has been renamed the Great Amber Steppes by Hubadai, ruler of Yaïmmunahar, who sees much to be gained by making the area more attractive to his followers. The new name is only slowly being adopted by other kingdoms, a fact which frustrates Hubadai.

A large number of Tuigan tribes farm the steppes during the summer reaping harvests of barley and other grains. In the winter these tribes relocate to safer ground around Yaïmmunahar's capital, Kourmira, to avoid prowling gnolls and displacer beasts.

The Golden Way

The Golden Way is the most traveled trade route in the Hordelands, seeing hundreds of goods-laden caravans annually. The road connects the western nation of Thesk with Yaïmmunahar. The Golden Way is a vitally important trade route to Yaïmmunahar, which Hubadai sees as a cornerstone of commerce for his fledgling nation. He has ordered that the Golden Way be paved between Kourmira and Almorel. This monumental task requires much labor and the khahan's desperate envoys seek workers to cut and place road stones—at times without regard for the character of laborers or their personal freedom.

Lake of Mists

This fog-enshrouded lake is named for the eternal flow of cool mist that rises from the water's surface. The largest body of fresh water in the entire Hordelands, its forested shores serve as home to the Raumviran people, a race of humans who dwell around the lake in small, orderly communities.

The great lake is a popular watering spot for monsters of the steppes, barbarian tribes, and numerous bandit gangs. Few dare to sail across the Lake of Mists, preferring instead to hug closely to the shore. The constant steam rising off the lake hides a number of predatory sea-creatures, notably a number of powerful sea hags and a pod of elusive plesiosaurs.

Siremun

This kingdom of 5,000 gold dwarves is unmatched throughout the Hordelands for its craftsmanship and strength in trade. No other metal workers compare to the quality of the fine armor and swords made in the great smithies deep within the Firepeaks, and no buildings are built as strong or as beautiful as those made by the Siremun. They are responsible for most of the stone buildings in Drubiev, Almorel, Semphar, and Kourmira. The Siremun of old built palaces, towers, and keeps for the Raumathari and Imaskar empires, and that expertise continues into the present age.

The dwarves of Siremun are also famous for the unique mineral skystone. Found only in the Firepeaks, skystone is a colorless, transparent rock well suited for the construction of buildings. The dwarves are able to tint the stone any hue. Siremun has grown wealthy selling skystone to Semphar and Yaïmmunahar, which have used it to construct sparkling jewel-like towers.

Ruled by the ancient dwarf king Markos Silverhammer (LN male gold dwarf fighter 11/cleric of Moradin 8), Siremun is a prosperous, stable kingdom that has been a home to gold dwarves since it was claimed and deeply delved many millennia ago. The Siremun have deftly and proudly withstood the passing of the several empires and recently dealt with Yamun's great horde when they redirected lava from the Firepeaks to ward their kingdom from the horselords.

A few small clans of gray dwarves live deep beneath the Firepeaks as part of the Siremun Kingdom. It is the only region on Faerûn where gold dwarves dwell in relative harmony with their gray dwarf kin, most of whom are exiles from the nearby duergar kingdom of Fraaszummdin.

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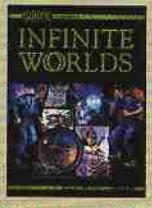

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The gold dwarves would normally care little for their dour-spirited kin, but they overlook their prejudices in favor of the duergars' great skill in breeding and handling rothé. Only a handful of gold dwarf-duergar marriages have resulted in Siremun; such unions are severely frowned upon by both sides.

Songfarla-The Hidden Kingdom

This hidden kingdom of gnomes lies nestled just under the eastern slopes of the Sunrise Mountains off a tributary of the River Murghôl. Settled almost 5,000 years ago by rock gnomes fleeing Netherese enslavement, Songfarla was founded when an influx of new refugees nearly quintupled the existing settlement's population. Since that time, the gnome population slowly dwindled until –496 DR, when Songfarla's population swelled with the unexpected arrival of four deep gnome clans—the Covarrkar, the Fungusfoot, the Glasszhorm, and the Longstepper. The Hidden Kingdom presently numbers some 12,000 gnomes, carefully secreted in a number of communities in the mountains east of Thay. Some half of them live in the city that names the kingdom.

The Hidden Kingdom is currently ruled by an aged rock gnome known only as the Laughing Mime, whose primary responsibilities are to maintain Songfarla's security as well as ensure the kingdom's deep and rock gnome communities work together.

Few gnomes outside Songfarla know of its existence. The Laughing Mime has only shared the secret with the valorous organization called the Shields of the Golden Hills (see page 104 of *Champions of Valor*), an order of gnomes from western Faerûn dedicated to defending gnome communities against any attackers.

Living in deep burrows, the gnomes consider secrecy vital to their existence. Treacherously close to the threatening shadows of Thay and the drow of Undrek-Thoz, Songfarla would certainly be destroyed should either nation learn of its existence. Despite these ever-present threats, the Hidden Kingdom has not only managed to survive, but has thrived for centuries.

Spiderhaunt Peaks

The Spiderhaunt Peaks comprise a small range of weathered mountains at the base of the Great Amber Steppes. Ancient Shou maps of the region name this range the Khopet-Dag. No humanoids live in the Spiderhaunt Peaks, but the mountains' twisted passes are infested with all manner of spiders, spiderkind (chitine, choldrith, ettercaps, and worse), and other web-spinning creatures. These spiders and arachnids are ruled over by the outcast drider, Davwarkra (CE male drider wizard 11). Davwarkra came from the drow city of Undrek'Thoz to the Spiderhaunt Peaks, where he has been nurturing an army of arachnids to fill his mountain range. A disgustingly bloated, thoroughly insane creature, Davwarka shows no mercy to those who traverse his mountains. He has a preference for the blood of females, leaving males to suffer at the hands of his servitors.

The Violet Spire

This slender minaret of purple granite is home to one of the last living survivors of the Imaskar Empire, Yaravindar Ipurnos (LN male Imaskari human conjurer 28/rogue 3/archmage 5). Having extended his lifespan several times through the use of powerful spells and rituals, Yaravindar is undoubtedly the

most powerful wizard in the Endless Waste and proves more than a match for most spellcasters in both Faerûn and Kara-Tur.

Yaravindar was a young artificer when the rampaging deities of Imaskar's slaves destroyed Imaskar. During the carnage, Yaravindar's master, Ondbiras, teleported his apprentice to a safe house in the Glittering Spires shortly before the final battle outside the Imperial City of Inupras. Ondbiras never returned, and Yaravindar traveled back to the Raurin Plain to find only burning ruins where Imaskar's great cities once stood. The artificer retrieved what magic he could salvage and returned to the Glittering Mountains, where he employed elemental slaves to construct the Violet Spire.

A small host of elemental servants and surviving Imaskari constructs defend Yaravindar's tower. Typical of most Imaskari buildings, the tower has neither doors nor locks. Entry to the spire's numerous extradimensional rooms and demiplanes is gained solely via keyed portals.

The ancient wizard maintains most of his age-old Imaskari beliefs about human superiority and still holds gods in great contempt. Although he sees no wrong in subjugating "lesser races," he no longer keeps any slaves because of the difficulty involved in managing them. Yaravindar richly rewards Tuigan nomads who bring him ancient Imaskari magic.

Winterkeep

Located at the southern tip of the Great Ice Sea, approximately 150 miles north of the Golden Way, sits the ruins of Winterkeep, ancient capital of the lost Raumathari Empire. The broken city's surface structures are little more than fire-scarred rubble and smashed stone, but beneath the ruins lie a surprisingly intact set of halls, crypts, and grottos.

In 1374 DR, the ice devil Ultael escaped from his Thayan master and fled to the underhalls of Winterkeep, plundering its forgotten treasuries and armories. The gelugon, along with a subjugated hag companion, enslaved several ice troll warbands. With this small army, Ultael seeks to carve a generous fiefdom out of the Endless Waste by conquering the area surrounding the keep. The ambitious fiend has only now begun to flex his muscle, sending out raiding parties of ice trolls to loot caravans on the Golden Way.

Yaïmmunahar

The new nation of Yaïmmunahar was forged singularly from the grand vision of Hubadai Khahan. Following the vision of his father, Hubadai sought to create a nation where none had ever existed before: at the very edge of the barbarous steppes. Less than a decade old, the young kingdom has experienced remarkable growth and has begun to have a significant political, economic, and social impact on neighboring nomadic tribes. Slowly, other settled kingdoms are beginning to notice this new power growing in the heart of the Hordelands.

Hubadai has sought to swiftly incorporate many of the accomplishments he witnessed during his travels throughout Faerûn through broad edicts. He outlawed slavery, and slave owners were recompensed for their loss. Women have been encouraged to pursue whatever life they choose to lead, taking up bow and horse as professions rather than only domestic skills.

Tuigan Sayings and Superstitions

Tuigan culture is firmly rooted in a personal honor system as reflected in their common sayings and superstitions. In their day-to-day speech, the Tuigan reveal much about the importance they place on honor, personal ambition, their horses, and luck.

- Those who intend to speak the truth should always be prepared to flee.
- Those who plan around wealth often leave out luck.
- If you said yes, then you cannot say it hurts.
- Do not lead a man along just one path or he will follow only that route.
- Of the worst misfortunes in life, there are but two. The first is to lose one's father when young. The second is to lose one's horse while journeying.
- If you see a wolf when you begin a journey, it is a good omen.

Horse Nomad [Regional]

You have been raised in a culture that relies upon riding and shooting

Prerequisite: Human (the Hordelands, Nimbral, the Ride, or the Shaar).

Benefit: You gain proficiency with the composite shortbow, light lance, and scimitar. You also get a +3 bonus on all Ride checks.

Special: You may select this feat only as a 1st-level character. You may only have one regional feat.

Raumathar Heritor [Regional]

You are descended from the fiend-hating battlemages of the Raumathar Empire.

Prerequisite: Human (the Hordelands, Lake of Mists, Rashemen, Thay).

Benefit: You gain a +2 bonus on Knowledge (the planes) checks and wizard becomes a favored class for you.

In addition, three times per day, you can detect evil outsiders. This effect functions as per the spell *detect undead*, but detects evil outsiders rather than undead.

Special: You may select this feat only as a 1st-level character. You may only have one regional feat.

The khahan has also been encouraging his tribesmen to forgo the ancient ways of nomadic herding and raiding. Hubadai has a standing offer to provide small herds of goats and sheep to any nomads who make the switch to a settled life. Those who take up the khahan's offer are required to build permanent dwellings. Many of Hubadai's nobles disapprove of these changes, although none dare to do so publicly.

Hubadai advocates tolerance for all faiths so long as each religion worships publicly and openly. Followers of the Red Knight were greatly impressed with the military tactics of Yamun Khahan during his campaigns and were the first to petition Hubadai for permission to build a shrine in Kourmira. Work was completed in 1372 DR on an impressive fortress of scarlet skystone aptly named the Red Temple of War. Uros Yabek (LN male Raumviran human fighter 4/cleric 9 of the Red Knight) heads up the Red Temple, which also houses the armory of Kourmira. Inspired by the widespread regional tradition of monasticism, Uros founded the Order of the Red Hound, a religious order of monks dedicated to the principles of the Red Knight. Warriors of the Red Hound fight on horseback. They are accompanied into battle with their specially bred war dogs, whose feral presence inspires great terror in their enemies. Hubadai points to the growth of the Red Knight's worship as one of the great successes of his new kingdom, and promises that it is only the beginning of many more.

Priests of Chauntea, the humble deity of growing things, also responded to Hubadai's call. Priests of the Earthmother can be found throughout the more fertile regions of the southern Great Amber Steppes, teaching agriculture to the growing number of settled farmers. The senior Chauntean priest in the Hordelands, Enther Uramar (N female human cleric 11 of Chauntea), has plans to build a garden shrine in Kourmira.

Despite its moves toward permanent civilization, Yaïmmunahar faces an uncertain future. The new kingdom sits at the heart of tens of thousands of barbarian kinfolk, many of whom are hostile to what they consider a betrayal of their ancestral ways. With Hubadai firmly committed to changing the way of life in the region, there will undoubtedly be many barbarians and nomads who resist—perhaps violently—the khahan's bold directives.

Kourmira (Large City)

The capital of Hubadai's nation sits alongside the southern bank of the Winterflow River between the Swordrise Mountains and Glittering Spires. Astride the Golden Way,

Kourmira (Koor-MEER-a) is well-situated for trading with Faerûn and Kara-Tur. The capital takes its name from the western realm of Cormyr, in honor after the great king who slew Hubadai's father.

In its current state, Kourmira is primarily a tent city with few permanent structures. In just a few years, though, the capital has seen remarkable construction. With help from the dwarves of Siremun, several impressive imperial structures have been built and more are being planned. Already, Hubadai's great palace and city walls have been completed. A military school, the Scarlet Keep, opened earlier in the year under the custodianship of priests of the Red Knight. Hubadai has extended an offer to the khans of the nomadic clans who rejected Yaïmmunahar. Those tribes that join his nation will have a great palace built for their khan alongside Hubadai's place. So far, only the Naican have accepted Hubadai's offer, and word of their grandiose palace tempts even the greatest of khans.

The recently finished White Spire is the capital's sole institution for arcane learning. Hubadai has recruited Faerûnian wizards to head up the academy. Most notable among them are Warixi Brandler (NG female Halruuan human wizard 13/archmage 4) and Lord Nommer Ingthul (LE male Waterdhaivian human Illusionist 9). Hubadai is determined to see the school succeed and so keeps a close eye on his superstitious kinfolk, who almost universally distrust magic. So far, most recruits to the White Spire are ambitious young women eager to be free from the daily drudgery of nomadic life.

The city's Golden Plaza is a large area of space set aside for caravans to rest and trade. Within the relative safety of Kourmira's walls, traders are free to conduct business with no worry of raiders or monsters. Hubadai does not tax any transactions, although he does charge traders a modest toll for entering the city.

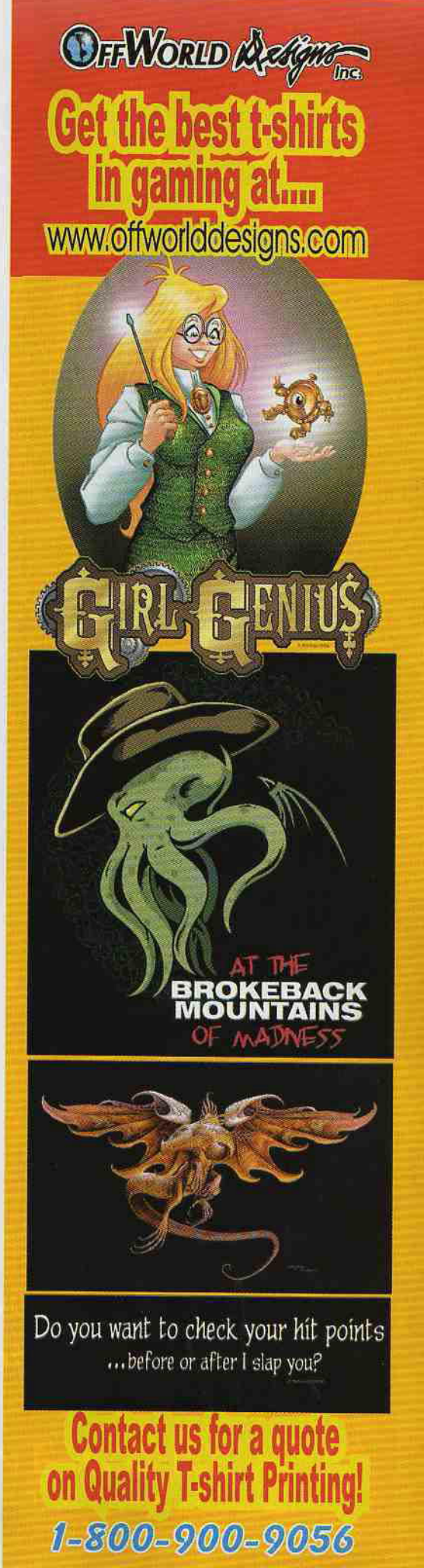
Zexthandrim

Carved out deep beneath the Mountains of Copper before the rise of Imaskar, Zexthandrim was a great mining kingdom of kobolds known for its precious metal and gem mining. The nascent Imaskari Empire annexed the kobold kingdom and enslaved its people, demanding gold and jewels as tribute from their new slaves. When the kobolds deceived their masters by withholding the choicest gems, the artificers sent an army of golem enforcers to punish their rebellious servants. The relentless Imaskari army was composed of two types of constructs: shepherd golems and portal golems. Shepherd golems were small, incredibly strong automatons tasked with herding the inhabitants of Zexthandrim through the portal golems: huge, slow-moving constructs with a portal embedded into their torsos. The efficient golems dispatched every kobold in Zexthandrim, sending all to an unknown doom.

A testament to kobold ingenuity, Zexthandrim remains a mind-boggling maze containing dozens of cleverly built death-traps. The kobolds rigged numerous collapsing ceilings, explosive devices, and other cruel contraptions to safeguard their crudely hewn treasures.

Since the fall of Zexthandrim over 8,700 years ago, the city's ruins have remained mostly undisturbed due to the presence of still-functional Imaskari constructs. Those few explorers who have heard of the legends of an ancient kobold kingdom never return from a trip to Zexthandrim. Invariably these lone individuals or small groups disturb the Imaskari golems who again and again fulfill their original orders.

In recent centuries, the gnomes of nearby Songfarla have taken it upon themselves to maintain watch over Zexthandrim to prevent anyone from entering and to hold back anything foul that might escape.



DZALMUS

The Hordelands breeds creatures harsh and deadly, and in no creature is this more evident than the native dragons of the Endless Wastes, the dreaded, multiheaded dzalmus.

Dragon (Air)

Environment: Any steppes or grassland.

Organization: Wyrmling, very young, young: solitary (with humanoid companions) or clutch (2–5); juvenile, young adult, adult, mature adult, old, very old, ancient, wyrm, great wyrm: solitary (with humanoid companions).

Challenge Ratings: Wyrmling 4; very young 5; young 6; juvenile 7; young adult 9; adult 11; mature adult 13; old 17; very old 19; ancient 20; wyrm 21; great wyrm 23.

Treasure: Wyrmling, very young, young, juvenile, young adult: standard; adult, mature adult, old: double standard; very old, ancient, wyrm, great wyrm: triple standard.

Alignment: Chaotic evil.

Advancement: Wyrmling 5–6 HD (Small); very young 8–9 HD (Small); young 11–12 HD (Medium); juvenile 14–15 HD (Medium); young adult 17–18 HD (Medium); adult 20–21 HD (Large); mature adult 23–24 HD (Large); old 26–27 HD (Large); very old 29–30 HD (Huge); ancient 32–33 HD (Huge); wyrm 35–36 HD (Huge); great wyrm 38+ HD (Huge).

Age	Size	Hit Dice (hp)	Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha	Base Attack/ Grapple	Attack	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Breath Weapon (DC)	Frightful Presence (DC)
Wyrmling	S	4d12+4 (30)	11	10	13	10	11	12	+4/+0	+5	+5	+4	+4	1d8 (13)	—
Very Young	S	7d12+7 (52)	13	10	13	12	13	12	+7/+4	+9	+6	+5	+6	2d8 (14)	—
Young	M	10d12+20 (85)	15	10	15	14	13	14	+10/+12	+12	+9	+7	+8	3d8 (17)	—
Juvenile	M	13d12+26 (110)	17	10	15	16	15	14	+13/+16	+16	+10	+8	+10	4d8 (18)	—
Young Adult	M	16d12+48 (152)	19	10	17	18	15	16	+16/+20	+20	+13	+10	+12	5d8 (21)	21
Adult	L	19d12+57 (180)	21	10	17	20	19	16	+19/+28	+23	+14	+11	+15	6d8 (22)	22
Mature Adult	L	22d12+88 (231)	23	10	19	22	19	18	+22/+31	+26	+17	+13	+17	7d8 (25)	25
Old	L	25d12+100 (262)	25	10	19	24	21	18	+25/+36	+31	+18	+14	+19	8d8 (26)	26
Very Old	H	28d12+140 (322)	27	10	21	26	23	20	+28/+44	+34	+21	+16	+22	9d8 (29)	29
Ancient	H	31d12+186 (387)	29	10	23	26	25	20	+31/+48	+38	+23	+17	+24	10d8 (31)	30
Wyrm	H	34d12+238 (459)	31	10	25	28	25	22	+34/+52	+42	+26	+19	+26	11d8 (34)	33
Great Wyrm	H	37d12+296 (536)	33	10	27	28	27	24	+37/+56	+46	+28	+20	+28	12d8 (36)	35

Age	Speed	Initiative	AC	Special Abilities	Caster Level	SR
Wyrmling	60 ft., fly 150 ft. (average)	+0	14 (+1 size, +3 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 14	Camouflage, immunity to enchantment	—	—
Very Young	60 ft., fly 150 ft. (average)	+0	17 (+1 size, +6 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 17	—	—	—
Young	60 ft., fly 200 ft. (poor)	+0	19 (+9 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 19	*pass without trace*	1st	—
Juvenile	60 ft., fly 200 ft. (poor)	+0	22 (+12 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 22	*Fog cloud*	3rd	—
Young Adult	60 ft., fly 200 ft. (poor)	+0	25 (+15 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 25	DR 5/magic	5th	17
Adult	60 ft., fly 200 ft. (poor)	+0	27 (-1 size, +18 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 27	*Slow*	7th	19
Mature Adult	60 ft., fly 200 ft. (poor)	+0	30 (-1 size, +21 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 30	DR 10/magic	9th	21
Old	60 ft., fly 200 ft. (poor)	+0	33 (-2 size, +24 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 33	*Chain lightning*	11th	23
Very Old	60 ft., fly 250 ft. (clumsy)	+0	35 (-2 size, +27 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 35	DR 15/magic	13th	25
Ancient	60 ft., fly 250 ft. (clumsy)	+0	38 (-2 size, +30 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 38	*Whirlwind*	15th	27
Wyrm	60 ft., fly 250 ft. (clumsy)	+0	41 (-4 size, +33 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 41	DR 20/magic	17th	29
Great Wyrm	60 ft., fly 250 ft. (clumsy)	+0	44 (-4 size, +36 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 44	*Storm of vengeance*	19th	31

A dun-colored dragon rises from the tall, dry grasses. Leathery, finlike wings taper back into a wedge-shaped tail, and from its muscular body snake three thick necks, each ending in a fierce, draconic head.

Dzalmus are malevolent and relentless hunters that roam the entire the length of the Endless Waste. They are three-headed scourges of the steppes famed for their ravenous appetites. Their feasting on horse and goat herds causes much hardship and suffering for local barbarians.

The three heads of a dzalmus dragon rest on long muscled necks that taper smoothly into the creature's torso. Their bodies are flatter and broader than most other dragons. The scales of the dzalmus range from drab yellow to dull sandy brown in color.

Young dzalmus do not hoard wealth or maintain permanent lairs. Older dzalmus of mature adult age or older prefer to dwell in isolated caves close to abundant food sources.

The dzalmus shun social contact, even refusing to acknowledge their own kind most of the time. Coupled dzalmus dragons part soon after mating, abandoning the nest to fate. Breeding occurs more often for dzalmus than for other dragons, which accounts for their greater numbers.

Combat

A dzalmus typically divides its attacks to engage as many foes as possible. These dragons prefer to surprise opponents by either leaping from a concealed position or rising suddenly from behind a large hill. Unlike most dragons, dzalmus do not have wing attacks, their wings being smaller and constructed differently that most draconic creatures. Their most obvious feature, their three heads, also aid them in combat, allowing them to make three bite attacks in a full-round attack.

Breath Weapon (Su): A dzalmus has one type of breath weapon: a cone of vampiric life-draining gas. Every creature within the area of the gas must succeed on a Fortitude save or take 1 point of Constitution damage per age category of the dragon. The victim must then succeed on a second save at the same DC 1 minute later or take the same amount of damage. Any of the dzalmus's three heads may use this attack, but only one can breath per round. Once the dzalmus uses its breath weapon, none of the heads can do so again until 1d4 rounds later.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will—*pass without trace* (young or older), *fog cloud* (juvenile or older), *slow* (adult or older); 3/day—*chain lightning* (old or older), *whirlwind* (ancient or older), *storm of vengeance* (great wyrm or older).

Skills: *A dzalmus gains a +10 on Hide checks in grassland environments.

FORGOTTEN REALMS

WATERDEEP

splendor of the city

BY ERIC L. BOYD

illustrated by scott fischer

Although not the largest in population or size, the City of Splendors is the greatest city of Faerûn and the heart of the FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign setting. Like the rest of the Realms, Waterdeep sprang from the fertile mind of the legendary Ed Greenwood as a place to set the adventures of the indomitable Mirt the Moneylender and Durnan the Wanderer.

Waterdeep is a powerful city-state with untrammeled mercantile ambitions but restrained political and military might. It rests atop a great plateau in the shadow of Mount Waterdeep and next to the greatest natural harbor of the Sword Coast. The City of Splendors is ruled by the secretive Lords of Waterdeep, mysterious rulers drawn from all walks of life, and the Open Lord, Piergeiron Paladinson. A mercantile nobility and an extensive system of guilds dominate the economic life of the city, but none of the city's many and varied faiths command the loyalty of a large fraction of the citizenry. Waterdeep is home to many adventurers, who use the Gem of the North as a gateway to the Savage Frontier and as a place to rest and recuperate between expeditions into the city's many dungeons. Ships and caravans visit the city on a regular basis, bringing an ever-changing mix of creatures to the city's streets. The City of Splendors is aptly named, for it represents the pinnacle of human settlement on the continent of Faerûn.

Waterdeep first saw print in the first edition product *FR1: Waterdeep and the North*, achieving the impossible by giving a good overview of the city and a cursory examination of the North in just 64 pages. This was the infamous product that gave rise to designer (AKA "Realms Traffic Cop") Jeff Grubb's rule, "Thou Shalt Not Use Mouse-Type" in Realms products thereafter, despite the best efforts of Ed and other authors (including myself) to eliminate space wasted on margins and excessively large (i.e., readable) letters. *City System* attempted to conquer Waterdeep's complexity by illustrating the city in 10 massive maps collectively large enough to carpet a room. These two products barely scratched the surface of Waterdeep's culture and society, but they laid out the framework in which many future tales could be told. Most of the NPCs detailed within were Waterdeep's iconics and low-level companions for fledgling adventurers.

Ed truly brought Waterdeep to life in *Volo's Guide to Waterdeep*, the first of the infamous "travel guides" published

by that illustrious rogue, Volothamp Geddarm. Steven Schend then knitted the city together in the sprawling, splendiferous *City of Splendors* boxed set. Most of the NPCs revealed in the former source were the shopkeepers, bartenders, and guild members who formed the backbone of the city's daily life, while the latter focused on the movers and shakers of the city—from the Lords of Waterdeep to the noble families and the guild masters.

Beneath Waterdeep's streets sprawls the legendary dungeon of Undermountain. First brought to life in *Ruins of Undermountain*, what we know of Halaster's Halls has continued to expand through such products as *Ruins of Undermountain II, The Lost Level, Maddgoth's Castle, Stardock, Skullport*, and *Drizzt Do'Urden's Guide to the Underdark*. Each of these products has focused on the dark underside of Waterdeep, slowly revealing the complex relationship between the city above and the dwellers below, and those who straddle the divide.

The secrets of Waterdeep and Undermountain were further revealed in the pages of DRAGON in articles such as "The Assassin's Run" (#64), "The Ecology of the Mimic" (#75), "Nine Wands of Wonder" (#102), "Open Them, If you Dare" (#106), "Welcome to Waterdeep" (#128), "Lone Wolves" (#172), "Seeing the Sights in Skullport" (#172), "If You Need Help, Ask the Drow" (#176), "The Game Wizards: Volo Goes to Town" (#190), "Part Dragon: All Hero" (#206), "I Sing a Song by the Deep-Water Bay" (#211), "Series Magic" (#213), "The Reports from Undermountain" (#227), "Venturing in the City" (#228), "Claugiyliamatar: Old Gnawbone" (#233), "Gaulauntyr: The Thief-Dragon" (#240), "Jalanvaloss: The Wyrm of Many Spells" (#243), "The Heroes of Selûne's Smile" (#246), "Nymmurh: The Wyrm Who Watches" (#250), "Thornhold: The Harpers at Twilight" (#251), "Dream Spheres" (#259), "Elminster's Guide to the Realms: The Roaring Dragon House" (#320), and "Elminster's Guide to the Realms: Nurneene's Marvelous Masks" (#321). DRAGON has played a critical role in the development of the city, giving extensive detail to small locales and obscure NPCs found within the city and by tying items found in hoards across the realm to the city's history and inhabitants.

The City of Splendors also saw print in the pages of POLYHEDRON, including "Adversaries: Lady Aridarye Phylund and Lord Urtos Phyland" (#93) and "The Cult of Ao" (#94) and in the pages of DUNGEON with "The Inheritance" (#26) and "A Dozen Eggs" (#30). It has made further appearances on the Wizards of the Coast website in the "Magic Books of Faerûn," "Rand's Travelogue," "Realms By Night," "Waterdeep Weather" columns, and the "*Champions of Ruin* Web Enhancement."

Waterdeep has also served as a backdrop for a wide range of tales. Elaine Cunningham depicted the adventures of Arilyn Moonblade, Danilo Thann, and Elaith Craulnober in her Song & Swords series (*Elfshadow, Elfsong, Silver Shadows, Thornhold*, and *The Dream Spheres*), and the stories of Liriel Baenre in her Starlight and Shadows trilogy (*Daughter of the Drow, Tangled Webs*, and *Windwalker*). Troy Denning concluded the Avatar Trilogy in the City of Splendors in the aptly named *Waterdeep* and returned to the city in *The Summoning*. Mel Odom launched his invasion of the surface lands in Waterdeep with *Rising Tide*. Many of these novels introduced great threats to Waterdeep's continued survival, precipitating the dark times that now beset the city. They also served to show the city's resiliency, with heroes coming to the fore in times of need to defend the Gem of the North.

Waterdeep has also served as the backdrop for "smaller" tales, less epic in scope, that have served to show the countless and varied stories that unfold every day in the City of Splendors. Ed Greenwood visited the city in *Elminster's Daughter, Hand of Fire*, and *Silverfall*. R. A. Salvatore's characters passed through Waterdeep in *The Halfling's Gem* and *Passage to Dawn*, and Brian M. Thomsen continued the practice in his *Once Around the Realms*. Short stories and novellas set in the City of Splendors include Lynn Abbey's *Hard Choices;* Elaine Cunningham's *Fire is Fire* and *The More Things Change;* Ed Greenwood's *Eye of the Dragon, The Keeper of Secrets, Ladies Night at the Yawning Portal*, and *Nothing Trouble;* Jeff Grubb's *Smoke Powder and Mirrors;* Roger Moore's *Gunne Runner;* and Brian M. Thomsen's *An Unusual Suspect* and *Shadows of the Past*. These have served to illustrate just how many tales of varying styles can be told in the shadow of Mount Waterdeep.

Undermountain has also been home to many stories, including Mark Anthony's "Escape from Undermountain" and "The Grotto of Dreams," Elaine Cunningham's "The Direct Approach," Ed Greenwood's "A Slow Day in Skullport," Paul Kemp's "Dawn of Night," and Brian M. Thomsen's "Volo Does Menzo." These stories have explored the divide between life in the Realms Above and the dark doings of the Realms Below, giving life to Waterdeep's underworld.

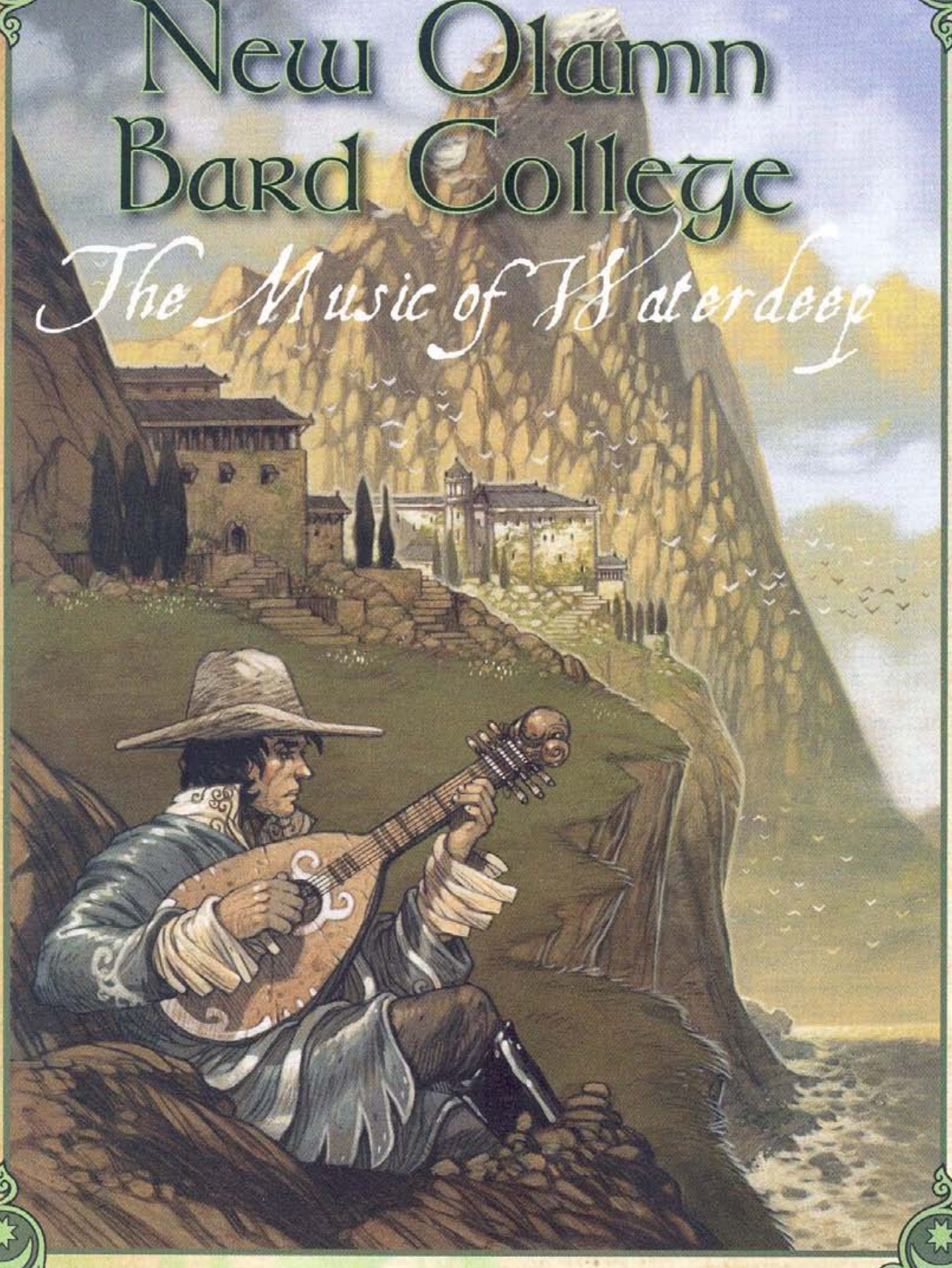
Now the City of Splendors has come full circle with Wizards of the Coast's release of the game product *City of Splendors: Waterdeep*, an accompanying web enhancement detailing the Environs of Waterdeep, and a novel by Elaine Cunningham and Ed Greenwood this month. Monthly, Matthew Sernett reprises the first level of Undermountain on the Wizards of the Coast website (**wizards.com**), and look for Steven Schend's *Blackstaff* and Paul Kemp's *Midnight's Mask* next year for further adventures set in the city.

The City of Splendors continues to evolve, with new arrivals every day mixing with the long-time inhabitants. New products, such as *City of Splendors: Waterdeep*, mesh the established Realmslore of what has come before with new revelations, making such products useful to longtime Realms gamers and new fans of the City of Splendors alike. Welcome to the City of Splendors, greatest city of the Realms!

by Elaine Cunningham • illustrated by Vincent Dutrait

New Olamn Bard College

The Music of Waterdeep



To Storm Silverhand does Danilo Thann send greetings.

Esteemed lady, it is with great humility that I take quill in hand to address the legendary bard of Shadowdale. I am all too aware of the irony inherent in this missive, which purports to instruct a lady whose knowledge of the bardic arts so greatly exceeds mine. Khelben Arunsun, the archmage of Waterdeep and my kinsman, has requested that I give you a full accounting of my recent visit to the bard college, New Olamn. Of course his slightest wish is my most urgent desire—or more to the point, writing this letter keeps my hands busy and lessens the urge to push my quill into Uncle Khelben's right ear and pull it out his left.

My most recent quarrel with the good archmage is this: He persists in regarding the restored bard college as a sort of stud barn established for the sole purpose of breeding his new brand of Harper. Since it would appear that he has had some success in this endeavor—and since "Harper" and "bard" are words so often spoken in one breath—I will address the Harper schism before moving on to such trifles as music, magic, and scholarship.

The Tel'Teukiira

As you are well aware, Khelben leads a new Harper offshoot known as the Tel'Teukiira, an elven term translated as "Moonstars" or, less commonly, "Silverstars." The archmage's stated mission is to protect people against the myriad hidden dangers of life in Faerûn and to preserve the balance between nature and civilization—not, please note, a desire to meddle in political matters. Waterdeep is abuzz with political and social unrest, and I join those who wonder how long Khelben and his followers will be able to keep their fingers out of so tempting an assortment of pies.

Indeed, I suspect that the creation of the Moonstars—not to mention the rivalry between Khelben's agents and the Harpers who take directive from Berdusk's Twilight Hall—is partly responsible for the upsurge of interest in the bardic arts and, by extension, the rapid growth of New Olamn. I acknowledge the importance of this, despite my impatience with Harper politics, about which I've heard far too much. As I am staying in Blackstaff Tower, I've heard Uncle Khelben sing the Moonstars' praises until I was bleeding from both ears. (Fortunately, I am not speaking literally, for the archmage couldn't carry a tune in a bucket if the fate of Waterdeep depended upon it.)

Garnet and the Riddle Curse

The half-elf bard Iriador (an elven name that's a close variant of the word for "garnet") Wintermist would have been remembered for her bell-like soprano and her heroic involvement in two centuries' worth of Harper causes, had she not had the misfortunate to outlive her normal lifespan—and, alas, her sanity. She lived to see the bard colleges close their doors and the Harpers drift away from their commitment to bardcraft. Her sadness became anger and then obsession, spilling forth in a series of strange attacks centered on the sites of the old bard colleges, connected by a complicated riddle and an obscure form of elven spellsong. Although defeated, Garnet won an unexpected victory. Many bards, sages, and even merchants saw the germ of wisdom in her mad vengeance and began to plan the reestablishment of the barding colleges.

New Olamn Patrons

The college has several sources of income, but one guild and five wealthy families were largely responsible for founding the college: the Council of Musicians, Instrument-Makers, and Choristers and the noble houses of Crommer, Estelmer, Majarra, Melshimber, and Thann.

In general, the guild is exceedingly pleased by the reestablishment of the bard college, which has caused its membership to soar and its coffers to overflow. The recent death of the long-time guildmaster, Kriios "Old Leatherlungs" Halamabar, has created an opening temporarily filled by Maxeene Rhiosann (NG female Tethyrian human expert 12). The Lady Voice of the Council holds that position until the next election in the Year of the Haunting (1377 DR). This position also carries the title Master Musician, an honor that the leadership of New Olamn would like to incorporate into the bard college. This is a matter of increasing tension between the guild and the college.

Two of the noble families include instrument making among their businesses. House Estelmer deals in brass instruments and has long held the monopoly on horns used by the Watch and City Guard. Brass instruments are usually associated with the fanfare of state occasions or tournaments and are seldom heard in Waterdeep outside of Piergeiron's Palace or the Field of Triumph. The Estelmers see the college as an opportunity to expand their business and they are actively recruiting brass players and calling for new musical compositions. Open-air concerts are regularly held in the garden of Garnet Hall, and the popularity of such instruments as cornello, glaur, gloon, and sackbut (an early form of trombone) is on the rise as scores of schoolboys eagerly set aside harps and lutes in favor of the more military sound and connotations of brass.

The Majarra family deals in silver and the making of silver instruments. Their flutes, longhorns, and bells are played throughout the Northlands, and they are particularly famed for their Tocken, sets of tuned bells mounted on frames and played with small, round-ended mallets. The popularity of this instrument is rising, for at least two Tocken concerts a day greet those who traverse Mount Melody Walk. The Majarras also deal with harping and harp training, and several members of the family hold teaching positions at New Olamn.

The Melshimber and Estelmer families deal in sage-lore and heraldry, providing information for a price. Both houses are well represented among the instructors of New Olamn, and the college also provides a second place of business, since travelers seeking knowledge often inquire at the bard college. House Estelmer has also been a leading force in the creation of the Font of Knowledge, the new church of Oghma. They donated many books and scrolls to the temple's Great Library, the greatest collections of books found in the City of Splendors.

I find that the Moonstars are almost unknown outside Harper ranks, despite the fact that this particular egg of Khelben's has been long in hatching. He created the Silver Safehold, an extraplanar clubhouse for himself and his followers, some three centuries past, and shortly thereafter linked it with his Waterdeep stronghold, Blackstaff Tower. Khelben's trial at the hands of the Harpers of Twilight Hall and subsequent resignation from the Harpers marked the official foundation of the Moonstars—assuming, of course, that any enterprise so secretive can be deemed "official."

Khelben exerts a level of control over the Moonstars that lead some to regard the group as his personal covert army. Nothing is done except by his express command. Every eight tendays, twelve senior agents convene in the Silver Safehold to report intelligence gathered from their underlings and to discuss matters of concern. These agents direct a second tier of Moonstars, which is divided into two functions: the thirty regional agents who gather news and the twelve field agents who implement actions decided upon by Khelben and his counsel of twelve. Lady Laeral has no official standing in this structure, but all Moonstars understand that she speaks with authority.

A small digression to matters of fashion: The Moonstars do not wear the Harper pin. They have replaced the traditional harp and crescent moon device with Teukiir badges, a magical device that grants access to the Silver Safehold (see Chapter 7 of *City of Splendors: Waterdeep*).

Of all the bards affiliated with New Olamn, perhaps ten are either members of the Moonstars or are being groomed for membership. I was also able to confirm that one student, the daughter of a wealthy Baldur's Gate wine merchant, is acting as an agent for the Harpers of Twilight Hall. This spy is Sondaria Greenglass (NG female Tethyrian human bard 4), an unassuming young woman who

plays the seven-stringed yarting with middling skill. She sings reasonably well and is not uncomely, but neither voice nor visage is remarkable. Indeed, I have never met a woman less likely to linger in memory. Her gift for fading into a crowd is extraordinary, especially for an aspiring bard.

Sondaria is universally described as "friendly," yet seems to have no close friends. Only by close magical observation was I able to link Sondaria with Eather Heilean (LG female Illuskan human paladin of Milil 5/harper paragon 10), recently dispatched from Berdusk to "restore order" among the Harpers of Waterdeep. It is my opinion that Sondaria reports to this Harper paladin, sharing observations about the loyalties and leanings of New Olamn's aspiring bards. Eather has begun to recruit "loyal" Harpers from among the school's graduates. She seeks to create distance between Those Who Harp and the Moonstars, and I fear that her efforts might undermine the effectiveness—and perhaps endanger the lives—of those bards who follow the Moonstar path. With this in mind, I am taking the precaution of naming some of the Moonstars of New Olamn in a separate message, which I will encode and protect with potent magical wards.

New Olamn

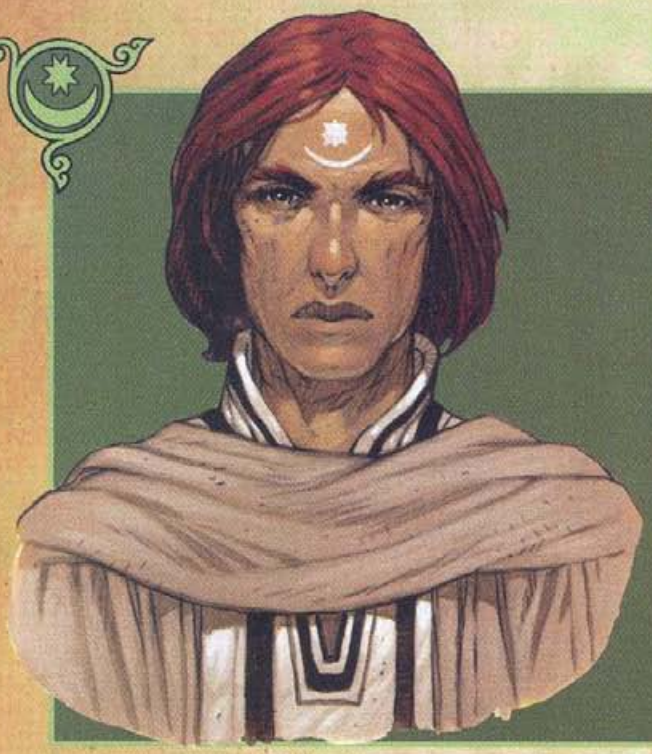
Now, on to the barding college itself. New Olamn was reestablished in the Year of the Staff (1366 DR). Its original location was the guildhall known as the House of Song. Thanks to the patronage of several noble families, we were able to purchase two Cliffride villas, formerly known as Heroes' Rest and Stormwatch. The former has been renamed "Garnet Hall," in honor of Iriador "Garnet" Wintermist and as a reminder of the perils of forgetting the past.

New Olamn is perched high above the ocean and is accessible either by the Cliffride, a gravel slope that runs along the western edge of Mount Waterdeep's northern spur, or a tunnel through the mountain known as Mount Melody Walk. The former is used mostly for carting in goods and is the only accessible path for riders and carriages. Those who walk to New Olamn invariably take the magically lit and well-patrolled tunnel through the mountain. This is a pleasant walk, for the path is shorter and more level than reality would suggest possible. Soft music fills the tunnel at all times, thanks to the concert series known as the Neverending String of Pearls. A small alcove, curved like a giant oyster shell, has been carved into the rock walls of the tunnel, and bards and minstrels vie for the honor of performing recitals in this venue.

Both of these paths to New Olamn are well traveled, for many people come to study, attend concerts,

Moonstar Agents at New Olamn

More than a few agents or associates of the Moonstars can be found wandering the halls of New Olamn. The following represents some of the more visible members.



Boondor Evenmist

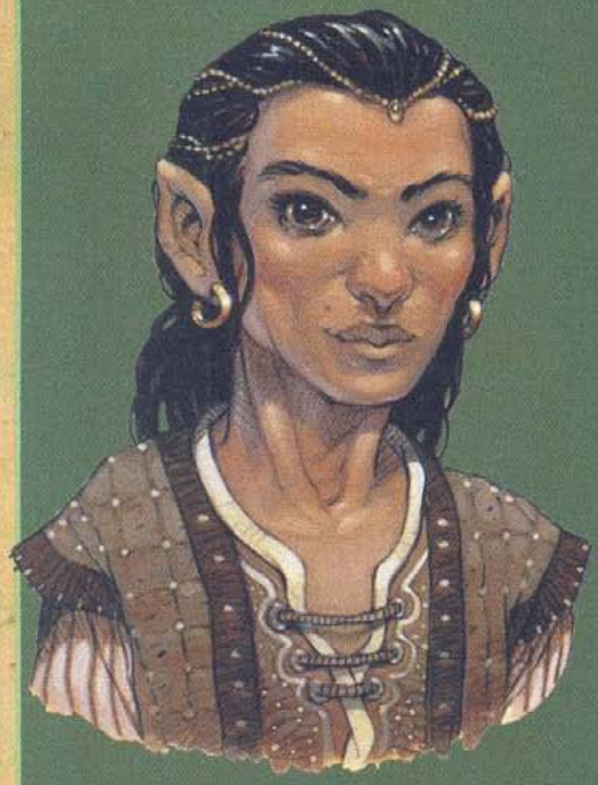
(NG male Illuskan human bard 10). Lord Evenmist is a minor noble from the Moonshaes who took his bardic training from a succession of private tutors, a path commonly employed after the closing of the old barding colleges. Despite his rank, knowledge, and age—more than forty winters—he enrolled as a student at New Olamn in order to gain the traditional title of Magnus Alumnae. He is extremely well versed in the lore of his native islands, and is a teacher in this specialty as well as a Full Fellow in pursuit of the title Master Bard. His knowledge of ancient cultures and languages drew him into sympathy with the Moonstars' goals. He has taken to wearing no other color than pale gray, a visible tribute to the nearly invisible silver-moon-and-star device tattooed above a pair of remarkably red and bushy eyebrows. Khelben is grooming Lord Evenmist for a high position in the Moonstars, in hope that he will gather the Harpers of the Moonshaes under this new banner.

Taeros Hawkwinter

(NG male Tethyrian human bard 3). Young Lord Hawkwinter has a passionate fondness for old tales, an extensive personal library, and, I might add, admirable fashion sense. He has not yet allied himself with the Moonstars, but Khelben has privately expressed interest in recruiting this young nobleman. Taeros is not a Full Fellow, but he is keenly interested in the lore taught at the college, spending many hours at New Olamn and in the library of the new church of Oghma. Taeros is something of a scribbler and his satirical commentaries on all things pertaining to Waterdeep are circulated on broadsheets and posted in popular taverns. Rumor credits him to be the author of *Deep Waters*, a popular collection of Waterdeep tales dedicated to the young King Azoun V of Cormyr. He is also notable for his close friendship with a certain rising young politician, and for his remarkable cloak woven from threads magically spun of amber and gold. He has been entrusted with a *slipshield*, a rare elven magic item that allows him to trade shapes with any sentient being. This magic item is nearly impossible to detect or trace. Created to protect the royal family of Evermeet, several came to Waterdeep after the sahuagin attack, a gift from the elven queen to Piergeiron. They add yet another layer of secrecy as to the identity of the city's hidden rulers. No more than a dozen people in Waterdeep know of their existence, so Taeros's possession of a *slipshield* marks him as someone the hidden powers of Waterdeep consider worthy of trust and destined for greater things.

Xingrum Swampwallow

(N male half-orc rogue 5). Ximgrum is, depending upon one's point of view, a stunningly handsome orc or a "ruggedly attractive" human. He has a fine baritone voice, but is better known for his athletic ability and enjoyment of an invigorating brawl. Tall and muscular, he is surprisingly light on his feet and is particularly at home in and around water. An expert swimmer, he's also an odds-on favorite in hippogriff water polo—one of the exotic spectator sports currently fashionable among coin-heavy Waterdeep gamblers. His chiseled features and lantern jaw have aged well and still catch many a feminine eye, and he has perfected the art of closing the deal by flashing just a hint of tusk in a bad-boy smile a vampire might envy—always delivered with a bard's flawless timing. His minor fame makes him a sought-after drinking companion to wealthy young Waterdhavians and something of a hero to the city's orc-blooded sell-swords and ruffians, so he's able to insinuate himself into nearly any bit of ongoing mischief.



Vanista Valebright

(NE female gnome rogue 4). One so seldom encounters an evil gnome that Vanista would be remarkable for that fact alone. She is known for her performances on complicated and occasionally eccentric musical instruments of gnomish design, and is a virtuoso hurdy-gurdy performer. Her primary claim to fame is the acerbic wit that has made her a popular guest at festhalls and private parties. Engaging her in conversation is like dancing on the edge of a volcano—no one knows when the lava will spew forth or whom it might scald next—but people take great delight in her biting comments. She is adept at gathering information as many Waterdhavians whisper secrets about their rivals in her ear, hoping she'll make bitter use of them. Vanista is so small and slender she is frequently mistaken for a halfling, but woe betides anyone who voices this observation in her hearing. With her fresh-faced beauty, apple cheeks, and glossy, nut-brown hair, Vanistra has the appearance of a miniature milkmaid. Her dainty appearance and amusing conversation are misleading, for her small hands have been bloody more than once. Despite the cruel streak that emerges through her witticisms, only paladins and the very perceptive are likely to perceive her dark nature. Vanista is a passionate advocate for her fellow gnomes, and she supports the Moonstars because she considers them to be far more aware of and responsive to the needs of Small Folk than any other society or government. Her evil nature is a detriment to her becoming a Moonstar, but she could become a valuable contact.

or pick up news from traveling bards and minstrels. These itinerant performers are guaranteed a bed in the former servants' quarters of Garnet Hall, and, if their skills warrant, a chance to perform in one of the mansions' grand halls or smaller salons.

The college currently employs twenty-two faculty members. Hundreds of students pass through New Olamn. Most come to the college to learn a bit of lore or music, or to round out their education. Eighty-eight students are currently enrolled as Full Fellows. These are highly talented students accepted to a rigorous course of study that culminates in the title Master Bard and the degree Magnus Alumnae.

Studies at New Olamn

Bards have traditionally served kings and princes as advisors and, upon occasion, as the voices of conscience. A thorough knowledge of history, politics, and lore is required of all graduates. They also learn to influence public opinion through performances.

Students at New Olamn are expected to attain expert proficiency on their chosen instrument, as well as the ability to play two other instruments with competence. They undergo rigorous memory training and are expected to know hundreds of tunes and commit to memory many songs and ballads. Creativity is also prized, and bards learn to compose new music as well as new arrangements of familiar pieces.

Plans are underway for the first annual Newsong Festival, a competition for new bardic works. The prizes are lavish—in addition to heavy coin purses, the grand prize is *siren strings*, a magical harp fashioned by an eccentric elf. It is hoped that such inducements will attract bards from far and wide, thus enhancing New Olamn's reputation and bringing in new students and teachers.

Opportunities for Adventure

Life at New Olamn is not all study and practice. Thanks to the tunnel passage, all the wonders of Waterdeep are but a short stroll away. Students are encouraged to explore the city. They are required to perform at private parties, festhalls, and taverns, where they learn to deal with people from all walks of life. Those handy with sword and spell are frequently recruited by the glory-seeking noblemen and parties of adventurers they meet in these venues. Indeed, spending at least one year on the road is a requirement of graduation.

The college sponsors expeditions to recover rare items, especially books of lore, magic instruments, and weapons fused with music and magic. Bronwyn Caradoon (NG female Chondathan human bard 7/harper agent 1), a Harper agent with considerable experience in this field, takes several students a year on these excursions. Students wishing to join a treasure hunt can leave a message for Bronwyn at her Waterdeep shop, The Curious Past. Alice Tinker, the gnome who presides over this collection of antiquities and oddities, is a shrewd judge of character and decides who among the many applicants accompanies Bronwyn on her next trip. Adventure-craving bards are advised to keep this in mind when approaching the little shopkeeper.

More than a few students at New Olamn are agents for various governments and secret societies, so the bard college is also a training ground in the art of espionage. Much of this is harmless gathering of information, but a young bard runs the risk (or the opportunity) of being drawn into deadly intrigues and entanglements. Agents of Twilight Hall, the Kraken Society, and the Zhentarim are thought to walk the halls of Stormwatch and Garnet Hall.

A rapidly growing aspect of New Olamn is the research into new music-related spells and musical weapons (see "Songsabers of Waterdeep" on page 74 of this issue). Testing these magics, both in development and in the field, provides opportunity for adventure. Particularly intrepid students might volunteer to test new varieties of singing swords in combat. Other bards explore the possibility of combining the enhancements of multiple harmonizing weapons (Melee weapons crafted to accompany a bard's song, granting a +6 bonus on Perform checks that involve singing. Weapons with this enhancement also extend the effects of bardic music for a number a rounds equal to the bard's Charisma modifier). Bards train in groups of two and three with weapons harmonized with each other as well as their wielders. Early successes are inspiring people to

wonder how else music might be used to combine the power of certain spells and magical items. This is well and good, but I would not like to see such weapons become plentiful and widely known. In particular, I shudder to think what might occur if the Red Wizards of Thay devoted their efforts to the crafting of harmonizing weapons.

Antharissa Nimesin (CG female gold elf fighter 12/bard 10), is currently investigating the possibility of training elven bladesingers at the college. This is a controversial topic among the elves, who for many centuries have traveled to Evermeet to learn this most elven form of magical swordplay. Other elves, however, point out that the Retreat is over, and argue for the return of all aspects of elven culture to the mainland. Another point of contention is the training itself, for it is traditional for an aspiring bladesinger to train with a single master. Many elves consider the notion of a "bladsinger school" ludicrous. A delegation is being formed to make the trip to Evermeet to take this matter before Queen Amlaruil, and perhaps to recruit master bladesingers to the ranks of New Olamn instructors.

Bards from other races have been vastly encouraged by this debate, as well as the gnome devices played by Vanista Valebright. As a result, there has been an upsurge of interest in the music and legends of halflings, dwarves, and many lesser-known races. Students at New Olamn are increasingly electing to travel to such places as Lurien and the Great Rift to study the music and lore of other peoples.

What New Olamn Means to Waterdeep

The restoration of the bard college is a matter of great pride to Waterdhavians. It has had a mild effect on commerce and a much greater impact on Waterdeep's cultural life, not to mention its prestige in the eyes of other, less mercantile cultures.

One aspect of the college worth watching is its impact on communication. For the first time, Waterdeep has a central source of information concerning the musical, intellectual, and social life of the city. Anyone wishing to publicize a concert, lecture, or tavern performance, a theatre troupe, private recital, or even a street performance can send a message

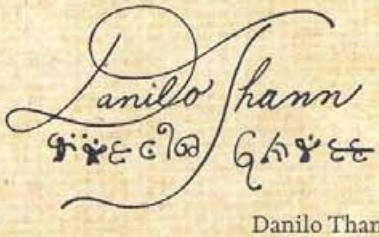
to New Olamn. Rare instruments, musical weapons, books of lore, and other items related to bardcraft can be advertised, and those who wish to hire bards are welcome to post notices. All this information is consolidated and made available to the citizenry at twelve small plinths newly erected in public areas throughout the city. These are manned by students, all of whom are required to spend a minimum of two bells a day at one of the plinths.

Anyone wishing to plan an evening's entertainment can see at a glance what is available throughout the city, but many other uses can be made of this information. Street vendors routinely check the plinth roles to ascertain the most profitable spots to set up shop. (Outdoor performers might find, to their dismay, that over-ripe fruit is in plentiful supply.) Because of the frequent updates, plinth roles provide a popular method to send hidden messages, to trace the whereabouts of rivals, and—unfortunately—to plot crimes. For a while, false information poured into New Olamn as various factions sought to cover their tracks and confound rivals, but more stringent requirements have cut down on this flow of disinformation. As a result, the plinth roles are rapidly becoming one of the most trusted sources of information in the city.

In closing, I would like to extend an invitation on behalf of New Olamn. We would be grateful and honored if the Bard of Shadowdale would see fit to grace the Newsong Festival with her presence, both as a judge of new competitions and as a guest performer. Long years have passed since Storm Silverhand has been heard in concert and so glittering a prospect would draw many eyes to this new event.

Lord Khelben has entered the room, and, as is his wont, has been reading over my shoulder these last few pages. He advises me to close this missive ere he is obliged to call in the Stablemucker's Guild to shovel out the knee-deep flattery. Lady Laeral also sends her greetings, and asks for your condolences. I trust you require no explanation of her meaning, as you and Khelben are well acquainted.

Ever yours in service to music and Mystra,



Danilo Thann

THE UNDER-GROVES

The Natural Dangers of the Underdark

by Tim Hitchcock · illustrated by Johnathan Wayshak

Far beneath the earth's surface lie the wondrous but alien cavern complexes collectively known as the Underdark. Hidden within this vast expanse of inky darkness, fragile ecosystems struggle to survive under harsh and dangerous conditions. Most adventurers are familiar with the Underdark's fungus forests and its settlements of strange humanoids, but few have explored the other, far more rare, ecosystems that exist here, which are known to Underdark residents as the undergroves.

A wide variety of flora and fauna struggle for survival in the undergroves. Each creature has its own ecological niche to fill within its particular environment. Some are beneficial and others are deadly, but all are as mysterious as the Underdark itself.

The different types of undergroves, along with their physical features and hazards of note, are described below. Each kind of undergrove is a self-contained ecosystem largely unconnected with the others or with the greater Underdark ecology.

Barnacle Fields

Barnacle fields are huge caverns in which the walls, floors, and ceilings appear to be covered with giant craters. From a distance, these depressions resemble nothing so much as pock-marks on the face of the rock. In fact, these "craters" are insectoid creatures known as deep barnacles.

Deep Barnacles (CR 6): These monstrously huge, cave-dwelling crustaceans look like 20-foot diameter rock-colored hills or craters about 10 feet high. Nearly immobile, these Huge creatures struggle to pull their great bulk more than a few feet in an hour. They survive in the Underdark because their size and shell allow them to endure the attacks of most creatures. Larger predators learn that the effort of clawing into a deep barnacle is poorly rewarded with awful-tasting meat and the danger of trog fungus infection. Most intelligent creatures learn to avoid the deep barnacles, but animals and unwary adventurers often become their prey.

Creatures unfamiliar with the deep barnacle can make a Spot or Listen check (DC 30) to note signs of life in the "rocky hill." A successful Heal or Search check (DC 25) indicates to a character that the deep barnacle is a living creature, but a failure by 5 or more results in the character's investigation leading her to the top of the hill. Examining the deep barnacle and succeeding at a Knowledge (nature) or Craft (stonemasonry) check (DC 20) reveals that the "stone" of the "hill" isn't stone at all. Note that dwarves receive a +2 bonus to these checks, and a dwarf that merely comes within 10 feet of a deep barnacle can make a Search check as though actively searching.

Most of the time, a deep barnacle's mouth remains open to catch dripping water, bat droppings, and any creature foolish enough to enter the cavernous opening. Deep barnacles have an ability

similar to tremorsense, and when a creature weighing more than 20 pounds walks within 400 feet of a deep barnacle, its mouth swiftly and silently shuts. When a creature that weighs more than 20 pounds walks onto the 10-foot square on the top of the deep barnacle, the mouth immediately opens. Any creature standing there must succeed at a Reflex save (DC 20) or fall into the deep barnacle's mouth. Success indicates that the mouth opening and the creature's reflexes move it off the deep barnacle's mouth. Once such a weight is within the mouth, it shuts, trapping the creature within. The mouth does not again open until the creature is digested or the deep barnacle discovers it cannot digest the object (such as if a boulder were swallowed). The creature trapped inside suffers 1d6 points of falling damage. On subsequent rounds, creatures inside suffer 3d6 points of acid damage each round. A deep barnacle can contain 1 Large creature, 2 Medium-size creatures, 4 Small creatures, or 8 Tiny creatures.

Individuals swallowed by the deep barnacle are considered grappled. A deep barnacle cannot grapple to cause damage or pin foes; it simply allows its acid to go to work. Swallowed creatures can try to wrestle their way free with a grapple check or shimmy out with an Escape Artist check opposed by the deep barnacle's grapple check (+25 bonus). Swallowed creatures can also use a light piercing or slashing weapon or a natural weapon to deal 30 points of damage to the deep barnacle to cut their way free. Once cut open from the inside, the hole seals itself; each swallowed creature must cut its own way out. A character outside the deep barnacle can try to pry open its mouth by opposing the deep barnacle's grapple check or attack it in the hopes of killing it and freeing a companion from the deep barnacle's corpse. Any creature swallowed by the deep barnacle or attacking it with a natural weapon risks contracting trog fungus (see below).

Although deep barnacles are living creatures, they should be treated in most ways as dungeon hazards like green slime. For the purposes of spells and attacks, a deep barnacle's statistics are presented below. Note that a deep barnacle does not move to avoid attacks, and it should be treated like a stationary object for the purposes of hitting it.

Corpse slime has an unlife all its own ...and it is one of the most dangerous hazards of the undergroves.

Juvenile deep barnacles are swifter and more aggressive, looking somewhat like rocky giant stag beetles and having the same statistics. Once they have eaten enough, they form a chitinous cocoon that eventually forms the body of a full-grown deep barnacle.

Deep Barnacle: CR 6 (hazard); Huge Vermin; HD 17d8+51; hp 127; Init +0; Spd –; AC 13 (-2 size, -5 Dex, +10 natural) touch 0, flat-footed 3; Atk –; Face/Reach: 20 ft. by 20 ft./–; SQ tremorsense, trog fungus, vermin; AL N; SV Fort +13, Ref +0, Will +5; Str 20, Dex –, Con 17, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 2.

Trog Fungus: Contact, Fortitude save (DC 14), incubation period 1d4 days; damage 1d3 temporary Dexterity, 1 temporary Constitution, and stench (see Disease in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).

Trog fungus is a skin affliction spread by contact with deep barnacles. On a deep barnacle it has no smell, but other creatures affected by the disease emit a terrible stench. Any creature with an olfactory sense that comes within 15 feet of a creature infected by trog fungus must make a successful Fortitude save (DC 12). Success indicates that the creature is unaffected by the stench for one full day; failure means the creature becomes nauseated (see Condition Summary in Chapter 3 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*) for 2d4 rounds and must make a new save at the same DC each time the nausea wears off, until he either saves successfully or moves out of range. The infected creature is immune to the stench's nauseating effects.

Blackwater Grove

When water seeping into the ground comes into contact with a large deposit of soluble minerals, it slowly dissolves them, creating a cavern known as a blackwater grove. Most blackwater groves are located below surface waterways of some type, often lakes or seas.

The ceiling of a blackwater grove drips water at an extremely slow pace—just enough to keep everything moist, but not so much that it feels like one is caught in a drizzle. Hundreds of small stalactites dot the ceiling, each slowly dripping like a leaky faucet. The sound of the constant dripping makes listening and concentrating within the cavern difficult. Anyone attempting to cast a spell within a blackwater grove must make a Concentration check (DC 8) or lose the spell. Furthermore, a -2 circumstance penalty applies to all Listen checks made within the cavern.

There is nothing unusual about the water itself, except that it tastes brackish because of its high concentration of minerals. A character who tastes water from the stalactites and makes a successful Wilderness Lore check (DC 15) can identify it as either salt water or fresh water, depending on its source—a determination that might help the characters discover their location beneath the surface.

The floor of a blackwater grove is covered with a thin sludge that ranges from 6 inches to several feet in depth. The watery mud is usually stagnant, though occasionally the natural grooves in the cavern floor channel it into slow-moving streams that eventually join with underground rivers. Beneath the water is a layer of soft silt that can range from 1 to 3 feet in depth. Walking across the floor of a blackwater grove is difficult, and a character who attempts to move farther than her base speed in 1 round must succeed at a Balance check (DC 15) or fall prone. Creatures walking on the bottom should be wary of blackwater sinkholes (see below). Swimming through the mud is possible, but a swimmer suffers a -3 circumstance penalty to all Swim checks.

Floating on the surface of the sludge are patches of a dark-purple growth called blackwater algae. The term algae is a misnomer, because this growth is actually a kind of mold. Blackwater algae is edible and has a spicy taste

similar to that of hot peppers. If properly prepared, it can also be used to stave off the effects of exhaustion. A successful Alchemy check (DC 15) allows a character to make a chewable substance from the mold that grants a +1 circumstance bonus on saves and checks made to avoid fatigue for 24 hours. Worth about 5 silver pieces at most markets, few alchemists create the item, but travelers in the Underdark sometimes find it useful.

The water in blackwater groves is also home to the infamous blackwater leeches. These creatures are quite delectable when properly roasted. Of course, the leeches are equally eager to dine on the blood of characters.

Blackwater Leeches (CR 1/2): These Fine parasites only live in fresh water blackwater groves and feed off of warm-blooded creatures that wander into the grove looking for water. Any warm-blooded creature that moves through the watery mud of such a grove attracts a cloud of these miniscule vermin. They slip through armor and other protections and attach to soft skin. Their bites are painless and hardly visible, and each leech takes only a miniscule amount of blood. Other leeches swarm near the creature sucking up small amounts of blood released into the water. All this activity causes no hit point damage, but a creature within such a swarm of leeches must succeed at a Fortitude saving throw (DC 12) each round it remains in the cloud of leeches or suffer 1 point of Constitution damage. Most attacks fail to significantly harm or deter the cloud of leeches, but an attack or spell targeting the pool that deals more than 10 points of electricity or acid damage kills all the leeches in the pool. In a few days, the leech population returns to full strength unless the sludge is removed from the bottom of the pool. Most pools have more than enough leeches to threaten any number of creatures that enter the pool, but the cloud of leeches can never deal more than 1 point of Constitution damage to a creature each round.

Blackwater Sinkhole (CR 5): Blackwater sinkholes represent another common hazard in a blackwater grove. A sinkhole is a 5-foot-wide, 10-foot-deep pit concealed by dark water and muck. A character walking across a pool of blackwater risks becoming stuck in the thick mud at the bottom of the sinkhole. A character walking into the sinkhole's area must succeed at a Reflex save (DC 20) or fall in, plunging below the water. A character who falls into a sinkhole is considered entangled as though by the *entangle* spell at the bottom of the pool. The trapped character can attempt an Escape Artist or Strength check (DC 20) to free herself. Blackwater leeches (see above) also inhabit the sinkholes. If not rescued, the character might drown. A Search check (DC 17) reveals the sinkhole. Characters who wish to help a trapped companion must first find her in the black water; reaching for such a character has a 50% miss chance due to total concealment. If a character swims down to the trapped ally, he must make a Reflex saving throw each round he remains in the sinkhole or become entangled by the mud as well. Freeing a trapped companion from a sinkhole requires a successful Strength check (DC 20) and is a full-round action that provokes attacks of opportunity.

BONE GARDENS

Bone gardens form beneath the graveyards of surface dwellers. A bone garden typically has a dirt-covered floor and an excess of bones strewn about. The earthen ceiling is usually very high, and it tapers gently into a dome shape. Instead of stalactites, the ceiling of a bone garden sports a profuse growth of a fungus called bloodroot.

Bloodroot is a hard, slender fungus that feeds on mineral-rich graveyard dirt. When freshly picked, bloodroot shoots are edible and high in protein. One-quarter pound of bloodroot makes a meal large enough to satisfy one Medium-size humanoid. After 24 hours, bloodroot rots and becomes inedible.

Blind-Eye Puffball (CR 3): Bone gardens are also home to a rare species of mushroom called the blind-eye puffball. These mushrooms are thimble-sized, and they grow only on bones and cartilage. When one of these fragile mushrooms is ruptured, it releases a cloudy, gaseous substance in a 10-foot radius. Any sighted creature in the area must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 13) or be blinded for 1d10+20 minutes. A successful Search or Knowledge (nature) check (DC 25), reveals that if the puffballs are disturbed they will release a gas. A successful Disable Device check (DC 27) allows a character to "bleed out" the puffball's spores slowly, rendering them harmless. Bleeding out a puffball is a full-round action.

Corpse Slime (CR 5): Another hazard associated with bone gardens is corpse slime, a lumpy gray sludge that is commonly believed to form in humanoid corpses. The true origin of this material is unknown, but corpse slime does seem to be most prevalent near and underneath graveyards. The substance clings to almost any surface in small patches (no larger than 3 square feet) and is difficult to see (Spot DC 25). Like green slime, it drops from walls and ceilings when it detects movement (and possible food) below.

Corpse slime has an unlife all its own, and for this reason the slime is considered one of the most dangerous hazards of the undergroves. Because it drains life energy, it is sometimes called wight's blood. When a patch of corpse slime comes in contact with living flesh, the victim must make an immediate Fortitude save (DC 14) or gain one negative level. A new saving throw at the same DC and with identical consequences for failure is required each subsequent round that the slime remains in contact with its target. Another successful Fortitude save (DC 14) is required to remove each negative level after 24 hours.

Unlike green slime, corpse slime can easily be scraped off at any time. Intense heat, sunlight, or a spell that destroys light-sensitive undead permanently destroys corpse slime. Positive energy also harms it. A clerical turning attempt that successfully turns a 4-HD undead creature and deals 4 Hit Dice of turning damage destroys one patch of corpse slime.

FLASHFIRE GROVES

The strange and rare phenomena known as flashfire groves were created when glaciers cutting across the surface of the world swallowed whole forests of sap-filled pine trees and forced them underground. Some of these trees were infested with scale bugs that had burrowed into the bark to feed on sap and hibernate for the winter. When those trees were pushed

beneath the ground by the glaciers, the comparative warmth of the Underdark signaled the scale bugs to come out of hibernation and devour the tree sap. As the trees began to decompose, they released toxic gases. Fleeing these deadly vapors, the scale bugs burrowed upward. As they made their way toward the surface, they deposited trails of a substance called lac. The buildup of this goo from the mass exodus of thousands of scale bugs created a thick, sticky "shellac" that eventually fossilized on cavern floors. The gases diffused upward through the burrow holes left by the scale bugs and were trapped by the buildup of fossilized shellac. As years passed, the gases softened the shellac, which swelled into viscous, balloonlike sacs.

These gas-filled sacs now bulge upward from the floors of caverns in the upper Underdark. In torchlight, they resemble translucent amber, streaked with oily scintillations of color. Although attached to the floors of their caverns, they almost seem to hover, as if they could break free from the ground and gracefully float away. Such collections of gas sacs are called flashfire groves.

Flashfire groves are usually found in small or medium caverns. A typical grove consists of ten to thirty gas sacs ranging from Diminutive to Large size. The sacs are erratically spaced; some are only inches apart, but most are several yards from one another.

Patches of yellow mold are occasionally found growing on gas sacs. If disturbed, these patches release clouds of poisonous spores (Fort DC 15; 1d6 Con/2d6 Con; see Dungeon Ecology in Chapter 4 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).

Gas Sac (CR 1 to 5): These gas-filled lacquer sacs are highly flammable and explosive. Any open flame (such as a torch) placed within 5 feet of a gas sac causes it to rupture in a *fireball*-like explosion. The area and damage of the effect depend on the size of gas sac, as shown on the table below. An exploding gas sac automatically ignites all others within the area of the explosion or up to 5 feet from its outer perimeter, potentially creating a fiery inferno of cataclysmic proportions. A character caught in the area of an explosion can attempt a Reflex save to halve the damage.

GAS SAC EFFECTS TABLE

Circumference	Area	Fire Damage	CR
Diminutive	5 square feet	1d6	1/2
Tiny	10 square feet	2d6	1
Small	15 square feet	2d6	2
Medium-size	20 square feet	3d6	3
Large	25 square feet	3d6	4

Gas sacs can be disarmed by puncturing them and releasing the gas. Gas sacs have no hardness and 1 hit point each regardless of size. Released gas dissipates within 1 round per 5-foot-radius of the gas sac's normal explosion. At any time before the gas has dissipated, it can be ignited, having the normal effect. Also, the dissipating gas is poisonous, and any creature within the area of the sac's normal explosion range must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 23) each round or fall unconscious for 1 minute; there is no secondary damage. The gas sacs can also be disarmed and stoppered for later use or disposal; this requires a Disable Device check (DC 20), with failure indicating that the gas has been realeased to the air.

Would-be soothsayers in the Underdark occasionally establish themselves as oracles near flashfire groves and send their disciples to collect the smaller gas sacs, which they use as inhalants. They believe that inhaling small doses of the gas puts them into a state of mental openness that allows them to receive divine messages. The dreams such soothsayers have while unconscious are interpreted for omens.

LICHEN GARDENS

A lichen garden is a strange self-contained ecosystem resulting from a fungus that grows up to the surface. It typically grows in a large cave, suspended from the ceiling by strands of fungi.

As a lichen garden grows, it becomes thick and strong enough to bear weight. Larger gardens grow up to 5 feet thick and can support almost 1,000 pounds of direct pressure. The total area of a lichen garden is limited only by the size of the cavern in which it forms, with one exception—a garden needs at least 10 feet between the main bed and any other surface. Thus, the garden grows no closer than 10 feet from the walls, floor, or ceiling of any cavern.

A lichen garden collects moisture from the surface through its fungus strands and stores it in thin-walled "bubbles" called cluster-sacks, which dangle like fruit from the lower strands of the lichen bed. Cluster-sacks range in size from as small as a pea to as large as a grapefruit. Water trapped inside a cluster-sack is saturated with minerals and proteins that it has accumulated on its long trip from the surface. The lichen absorbs some of the water from its cluster-sacks during photosynthesis, then recycles it to excrete surplus minerals and proteins back into the cluster-sacks. As a result, the liquid in the sacks slowly transforms into thick, viscous, protein-filled nectar.

A fist-sized cluster sack provides enough food and water to sustain one Medium-size creature for an entire day. Foraging for sacks is a full-round action that requires a Wilderness Lore check (DC 15) for every 5 feet of lichen searched. A successful check indicates that the character has gathered 1d4 fist-sized cluster-sacks. If a sack breaks (see statistics below), it spills its entire contents and becomes useless. Because cluster-sacks are difficult to eat, the DM might opt to have a character attempting the task make a Dexterity check (DC 10) to succeed. Failure means the character used too much force to pierce the sack and spilled its contents. Lichen gardens produce cluster-sacks year round.

These hanging lichen gardens can be home to numerous creatures. Besides including most varieties of bats and vermin, cloakers, darkmantles, and stirges are often found near lichen gardens. Some of these creatures feed on the gardens themselves, but others come to feed on what is attracted to the lichen.

Lichen Garden: Hardness 0; 1 hp/inch of thickness; AC 0; break DC 15. A lichen garden can be damaged by

physical attacks, but it takes only half damage from piercing and slashing weapons. Because of its high moisture content, it takes no extra damage from normal fire, but magical fire causes normal damage.

SALT HIVES

Salt hives are mazelike catacombs formed entirely out of salt deposits. Most of the passages in a salt hive are no more than 5 feet in diameter. Sages are not entirely sure how these passages form, but the most widely accepted theory is that they are the products of erosion caused by the runoff of subterranean lakes.

The walls of a salt hive are brittle and have no hardness; striking a wall or ceiling for 10 or more points of damage causes it to crack and collapse. Although not quite as deadly as a cave-in of a stone cavern (see Cave-Ins and Collapses in Chapter 4 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*), a hive wall collapse can still trap, injure, or bury characters. A typical salt hive cave-in has a 10-foot burial area with a 5-foot slide zone at either end. A creature in a bury zone takes 2d6 points of damage (Reflex half DC 15) and is considered pinned, but he takes no further subdual damage on subsequent rounds that he remains pinned. A character in the slide zone takes 1d6 points of damage and is considered pinned. A successful Reflex save (DC 15) allows the character to avoid being pinned and take no damage from the slide. Pinned characters take 1d6 points of subdual damage per minute they remain pinned. A character buried in salt is also in danger of slow suffocation (see Suffocation in Chapter 3 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). Pinned characters can escape by making a Strength or Escape Artist check (DC 25) or by being dug out by their fellows (see the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).

A gray, prickly substance called cactus fungus grows on the corridor walls of salt hives in a flat, semicircular shape. A typical cactus fungus grows up to 8 inches in diameter and can store enough water to sustain one Medium-size creature for half a day. Cactus fungi grow sporadically in patches, each consisting of 1d20+10 individual fungi. Intelligent Underdark humanoids harvest these fungi to make a sweet but potent liquor called salt hive stout.

Salt hives attract animals in need of salt, and their presence in turn attracts predators. Salt hives are also infested with minute scavengers called salt lice that carry disease.

Salt Louse (CR 1/2): Each creature in a salt hive has a cumulative 10% chance per round of acquiring an infestation of salt lice. Even after leaving the hive, any creature in the company of an infested creature has the same chance per hour of acquiring an infestation. An infested character must make a Fortitude save (DC 12) each day that the infestation remains or contract filth fever (see Disease in Chapter 3 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). An infestation of salt lice can be cured with a *cure disease* spell or a successful Heal check (DC 20).

> . . . The screams can echo through the surrounding caves like the discordant song of a demonic choir.

SCREAMING CAVES

Adventurers who think of the Underdark as a cold and silent place have obviously never experienced a screaming cave. Screaming caves form near large sources of geothermal heat. When the air beneath the caves is heated to extreme temperatures, it expands and forces its way out through fissures in the rock, making a horrible screaming sound as it escapes. The sounds of a screaming cave aren't constant; they come in spurts as pressure builds and releases. When multiple fissures release hot air simultaneously, the screams can echo through the surrounding caves like the discordant song of a demonic choir. In general, single screams occur every 1d4 minutes and "choral" screams occur every 1d4+10 minutes.

The hot air in a screaming cave keeps the temperature between 90 and 110 degrees. Characters wearing heavy clothing or armor take the normal penalties for very hot conditions (see Heat Danger in Chapter 3 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). The hot temperature of the screaming caves also attracts a variety of creatures and encourages fungus growth. Brown mold patches (see Dungeon Ecology in Chapter 4 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*) are especially common in these caves.

Water is readily available in these caverns. As the steam from the fissures and vents cools and condenses, it collects in indentations in the rocks, forming small pools. Druids sometimes carve out these indentations so that they can hold more water. Larger caves sometimes even have hot springs that create pools big enough to be used as baths by Medium-size creatures. Although bathing in hot springs is very relaxing, the high sulfur content of the water often has a terrible odor like rotten eggs.

Intensified Scream (CR 1/3): A character can use the Craft (sculpture or stonemasonry) skill to carve faces into the rock, and a successful Perform or Knowledge (nature) check (DC 20) allows the carvings to intensify the sounds made by screaming vents. Many Underdark creatures fear such places for good reason. Creatures within 40 feet of an intensified screaming fissure must make a Fortitude save (DC 16) or be deafened for 1d4 rounds. Deaf creatures are immune to this effect.

Steam-Burst Hazard (CR 1): Another hazard of screaming caves is the steam-burst, a blast of steam resembling a geyser. Steam-bursts also occur at random intervals, but with much lower frequency than the screams. Like a geyser, an individual steam-burst fires from a specific fissure in the floor in a 25-foot cone aimed straight up, but it fires superheated steam instead of water. Anyone caught in the area takes 1d6 points of damage from the heat (Reflex avoids DC 18). A Search check (DC 10) reveals the hole the steam issues from, and a Disable Device check (DC 10) allows a character to appropriately plug the hole. D

The Stag Lass

by Ed Greenwood • illustrated by Ron Spencer

Volothamp Geddarm at your service once more, gentles, setting truths of the Realms before you like the moonflowers that drift down to open, glowing with soft faerie light, on warm summer evenings in certain forests of Faerûn.

My topic this time is the Rite of the Stag Lass, which seems to fascinate men so that I'm often asked for rather salacious details of it in taverns—and even, on one memorable occasion, in the cloisters of Candlekeep.[1] For those few who know nothing of this curious summer ritual, which takes place each year on the first good-weather day of the month of Flamerule, read on.

A human woman from the city of Waterdeep (traditionally "a noble maiden") takes the role of the Stag Lass. Wearing a stag's head mask, complete with antlers, and a tunic and breeches of dark green, she rides a horse bareback through the village of Amphail from the direction of Waterdeep to well beyond the far side of the village, waving to the gathered inhabitants all the way.

The woman then dismounts and returns on foot (usually at a run) through Amphail to its central tavern, The Stag-Horned Flagon.[2] Along the way, villagers who see her usually give chase and fling goblets of water, soured wine, or old milk over her.

When the Stag Lass reaches the bar of the Stag, she must drain an old, antler-adorned drinking cup, traditionally filled with the most bitter beer the tavernmaster can find. At the bottom of the cup is a beautiful piece of jewelry, which is hers to keep.

A bath is then brought for the Lass; as she bathes, those gathered in the tavern drink her health. All beer poured in the Stag for her or for any resident of Amphail from the moment she enters the bath to the next dawn is free.

The History of the Rite

This ritual has been held annually for at least three hundred years, or so locals believe. Although the early years are more than a little hazy and the span might be shorter, no one can remember a year in which the Rite didn't occur. The celebration commemorates the violent death of Asaudrae Daerantree, a priestess of Mielikki who dwelt in Amphail over three centuries ago, and who had the goddess-granted gift of being able to take on the shape of a stag. (No, not a doe, as some scholars mistakenly "correct.") She was wont to spend long periods as a stag, roaming the forest and learning all of its lore that she could. One day, the inevitable befell her: Waterdhavian hunters pursued a splendid stag, wounding it with crossbow quarrels and javelins, and gave chase as it fled into Amphail.

These hunters claimed to have no idea their quarry was anything more than a beast, but villagers say they pursued and flung weapons even after a gasping, reeling Asaudrae reverted to her own shape. Trailing blood and pierced by quarrels, the priestess somehow reached the bar of the Stag, and there she died, pleading for aid, just as the nobles burst through the door with their knives drawn to fell their kill.

Some citizens of Amphail (and most worshippers of Mielikki) believe that Asaudrae was the goddess Mielikki herself, in disguise, and that the tavern and the village are sacred to the Lady of the Forest. Many rangers and druids come to Amphail every year, where they kiss the tavern's long, polished bar. No one ridicules them; legend insists that any true worshipper of Mielikki who kisses the bar can henceforth ask the goddess one question per year—and hear in her mind a clear, honest answer from the Lady of the Forest.[3]

The Rite Today

For at least the last twenty years, the Rite has been sponsored by priests of Mielikki active in the North. These priests provide the costume and the

ELMINSTER'S NOTES

1. Want a little more truth? Ed of the Greenwood asked for more details of the Stag Lass—far more than Volo ever bothered to find out—because of repeated demands for information from among the ranks of gamers. I'd no inkling so many of them were such admirers of stags.
2. An establishment described with, generosity demands I say, threadbare adequacy by Volo in his *Volo's Guide to the North*, pages 17-19.
3. Volo is ever the skeptic. I tell all of ye thus: Mielikki does answer those who venerate her (above all other divine beings, not merely when 'tis convenient) and make some action in support of her faith within a year in which they put a question to her. If she refuses to answer, she tells them wherein their failure lies—but only accomplishment of an arduous quest can induce her to yield up an answer within a year in which a questioner hasn't measured up.

horse, and they have the jewelry "won" by the Lass crafted in Neverwinter or Waterdeep. Just who is involved changes from year to year (it's an honored duty, and dream-visions sent to the faithful by the goddess has much to do with who takes part), but an elderly priest named Ilkin Ermbroar is a veteran of many Rites.[4]

The Stag Lass is chosen from among the residents—not necessarily citizens—of Waterdeep, although she is most often a Waterdhavian born and bred, and usually of noble birth. "Maiden" in this case doesn't mean a virgin, though the Stag Lass is usually young, unmarried, and beautiful. She is often, these days, a worshipper of Mielikki, but she might just be someone who wants to do the Rite as a lark or to gain fame, honor, or the promise of aid in the future—a part of the Rite that the general public rarely knows but which worshippers of Meilikki consider of paramount importance.

The Stag Lass is chosen by worshippers of Mielikki (supported by Laeral Arunsun and other important citizens of Waterdeep) in an ongoing process at the various parties and revels held by nobles from after the previous Rite until the last tenday of Kythorn.

The choice is usually made by the month of Mirtul, but there have been instances of maidens with cold feet—or watchful kin—who have changed their minds or been prevented from performing the Rite, at the last minute. "Kitten" of the Lords of Waterdeep once "stood in" as a last-minute replacement for a missing Stag Lass, cloaked in a magical disguise furnished by the spells of Laeral—and it's likely that female apprentices from Blackstaff Tower have done so on other occasions.

The Stag Lass is chosen thus: Bards and storytellers sympathetic to the aims and causes of Mielikki tell tales to young female revelers of the Rite and of its importance, and speak of how the goddess likes to smile upon those who perform it. "Mielikki looks at those who bear her tokens," the talespinners usually say. "Tokens like this." They then leave a silver staghead pin, or three, for all to see on a table, then move on to other stories, usually moving away to draw attention elsewhere so that an interested lady can pick up a token unseen. They always ensure that other identical tokens can be found on ledges, tables, and in many other places at the revel.

These tokens bear minor magics set by low-level wizards of the Watchful Order, and they can be traced. The untaken ones are gathered up after each revel, and any maiden who takes one is later visited by priests of Mielikki or former Stag Lasses who befriend her and question her about her aspirations in life. If they don't deem her arrogant, self-absorbed, materialistic, or manipulative, they work around to asking her whether she'd be willing to be a Stag Lass.

Many ladies don't really want to take part, or they change their minds after initial acceptance because they don't want to be seen as "strange" or "common and wanton" by their peers. Still, the selectors usually have two or three suitable candidates by the end of spring, of whom one is the most avid. The others are eventually told that "Mielikki desires them to wait."

The Route of the Stag Lass

When a Stag Lass rides through the streets of Amphail, no locals throw anything at her; instead, they often call out or even trade jests with her. It's the maiden's choice whether her ride is leisurely or a dramatic gallop. When done, she need not dismount within sight of the village—a priest of Mielikki usually awaits her, up the road, to take and tend her horse—but she must return through Amphail on the main road and lanes, not through backyards, orchards, or fields.

On her run back through the village, no one is allowed to catch hold of the Lass, directly bar her way, or knock her down. Rangers who worship Mielikki always lurk nearby to see to the safety of the Lass, since several maidens were either stripped and flogged in the past, or even attacked or carried off, by swordsmen hired by parents or rivals who desire that the lass fail to complete the Rite. Some Stag Lasses try to sprint and arrive as unscathed as possible, and others dawdle or flirt. Some have even invited young children and the infirm to douse them, and others have taken every side lane and gate in the village to give everyone a chance at them. The mask must be worn, but several Lasses

4. Ilkin Ermbroar is in thy game terms a male human Clr7 and is usually to be found in wooded areas northeast of Waterdeep. He's very weathered of face and gnarled of hands, is thin and wild-haired (although gray and white locks are conquering his former darker tresses), and wears simple robes and boots. Ye may know him by his fierce green eyes—that flame like lamps when he's angered—and by the staff he carries: a rough length of branch always studded with green, growing shoots and leaves. He carries some weight with his goddess, I hear.

who've valued their garments above their modesty, for they're allowed to wear a favorite item or two as adornment over the dark green garb, have left their costume with the priest who took their horse, then dashed for the tavern wearing only underclothes, or boots, or just their own bare skins.

The cup that awaits them is larger than many great war-helms; the Rite is incomplete if the Lass fails to drink all of its contents, though she can do so in as many sips as she desires. The drink she downs might be so strong as to need chewing or so poor as to be dismissed as a "dung-draught" by drinkers, but it can't be spoiled, nor can it have been tainted by spirits, poisons, or anything else not normally present in such a quaff.

The jewelry at the bottom of the cup is always fashioned of silver or gold in a smooth-curved or swirling design and set with gems. (Blue, brown, and green stones are favored over red, yellow, and orange gems.) It's usually worth more than 25,000 gp, and it bears a minor *everbright* enchantment, though some of these "Rite gift" pieces have been enchanted with the ability to glow with a faint, localized *faerie fire* (usually blue-white) when grasped and ordered, or if the bearer is in the presence of strong magic or danger. Stronger enchantments are rare, though at least once the equivalent of a *Quaal's feather token* has been given.

The Lass bathes in full view of all, in an open carry-bath usually set on a table in the taproom of the Stag-Horned Flagon. The bathing can be performed clothed, unclad, or partially clad, but it must be barefoot and unmasked.

Most Lasses remain at the tavern overnight (their stay is, of course, for free), feasting and drinking with all who care to visit, but they don't usually stay in the bath for long. Priests of Mielikki take it away and pour its water on gardens and newly planted trees with blessings for lush growth.

THE MOST IMPORTANT GIFT GRANTED TO THE STAG LASS IS SOMETHING FEW KNOW ABOUT ...

The Boons

The most important gift granted to the Stag Lass is not the jewelry but something few non-Mielikkians even know about: the promise of the senior priest of Mielikki presiding over the Rite to aid the Stag Lass in any one future deed or endeavor. Past instances of such aid have included rescuing a Lass from an unhappy marriage, captivity, the ravages of disease, blackmail, and even unwanted pregnancy when a husband wanted sons from an ill wife.

This promise binds the collective clergy of Mielikki, not just the individual priest; some aidings have involved the work and attention of forty priests or more. One Stag Lass was recently taken clear through the High Forest by a ranger to escape pursuers. Another, some years back, had her debts paid off by the clergy to keep her from being jailed or sold into slavery by creditors. A third was hidden by the clergy under a variety of shapes and names to keep her alive long enough to inherit family wealth and title in the face of relatives who wanted to arrange her "accidental" demise.

Traditionally, a Stag Lass who has completed the Rite is considered to be free of any feuds, guild memberships, marriage agreements, or other obligations that her noble birth or actions of her parents or guardians have drawn her into—if, that is, and only if, she desires to be so freed. A father who promised his daughter in marriage to another noble would be widely criticized in Waterdeep if he forced her to go through with the wedding, or openly punished her for failing to do so, after she performed the Rite and then refused the match.

Performance as a Stag Lass also offers a face-saving escape from justice for minor offenses, but more often the rite simply allows a shy and overly nagged or controlled maid a chance to spread her wings and taste some independence.

Persons sympathetic to Mielikki (experienced trail-guiding rangers in particular) often agree to guide and guard the Stag Lass on a trip to a destination of her choosing immediately after the Rite. (This is not considered to be the aid promised by the priests, but something extra.) Such a service allows an unhappy, oppressed young lady the chance to escape Waterdhavian life for good.

There are rumors that fervent worshippers of Mielikki who perform as Stag Lasses launch themselves on careers in the church of Mielikki, in some cases even acquiring priestly abilities where they lacked all aptitude before. These few are favored by the goddess lifelong—but only clergy of Our Lady of the Forest are qualified to speak on such things, and to date they haven't cared to.

A STAG LASS WHO HAS COMPLETED THE RITE IS CONSIDERED TO BE FREE OF ANY FEUDS, GUILD MEMBERSHIPS, MARRIAGE AGREEMENTS, OR OTHER OBLIGATIONS...

Current Clack

One recent Stag Lass of note was Cheslaera Fallowfern, born of a wealthy merchant family of the North Ward. Her family was the sort sometimes called "swirlcloaks" in Waterdeep, because they aren't noble but would like to be, and they attend all the right revels, buy the favor of nobles, and ape the habits, dress, and interests of the nobility in hopes of being mistaken for them. Cheslaera was a plain, rather sulky girl, bored and unregarded—but she had a will of iron and dreams of seeing the Realms and obeying no father or husband. She walked unclad to the tavern, making no attempt to avoid being pelted or ridiculed, and she even waited at one cottage while an old man too feeble to expect to take part in the Rite went to his larder to get some wine to dash over her. Cheslaera arrived in the Stag in the midst of an admiring throng, danced the night away when the Rite was done, and by morning had gathered half a dozen smitten adventurers around herself to form a new adventuring band.

The Flaming Sword Riders rode straight to Silverymoon to request a charter from Alustriel, received one, and have spent their days since battling orcs and other beasts in the North. They have also explored ruins and isolated wizards' towers, and uncovered at least one dragon hoard, which, so the rumors run, is haunted by the chilling spirit of either an undead dragon or one of its victims.

Cheslaera is the leader of the Riders and has become a woman of wealth and influence with investments (and lovers) in Waterdeep, Silverymoon, Everlund, Neverwinter, and Secomber. She's said to be contemplating either founding a new fortress-city in the North to trade with the barbarians and dwarven and gnome miners or else taking service with Alustriel in defending and expanding the nascent realm of Luruar.[5]

5. A lass to watch, to be sure. More hard-faced than handsome and more rough than refined, aye, but she did come across an enchanted blade with a mind and will of its own—one that had mastered more men than I care to recall and bent it to her will. Nay, I'll not say its name and powers here; every adventurer should be allowed some secrets.

PERFORMANCE AS A STAG LASS ALSO OFFERS A FACE-SAVING ESCAPE FROM JUSTICE FOR MINOR OFFENSES.

The Adventures of VOLO the Crumbling Stair

by Ed Greenwood • illustrated by Barbara Barion

Volothamp Geddarm at your service, gentles, setting truths of the Realms before you like hot buttered snails steaming in green Valgrath wine! This day I write of a ruin of the Sword Coast North many have heard of, but few know about beyond the impression of mystery and deceit imparted by the Waterdhavian expression "as curious as the Crumbling Stair."

What All Know And The Eye Beholds

Well-learned folk know the Stair to be a ruin that stands in what some call "the Sword Hills," a lawless, brigand-infested hill country east of Waterdeep, betwixt Ardeep Forest and Uluvin.

Some in the City of Splendors and places nearby (such as Amphail) can also recall fanciful nursery tales of elves dancing with unicorns and pegasi in the air by night around a glowing ruined stone stair in the wooded wilderness. Some might have also heard tales of the humans foolish enough to join the dance who were spirited away and changed in wits and powers, to be human no more.[2]

Merchants, drovers, adventurers, and a few brigands know it to be a broken marble staircase that rises in a grand, curving sweep up out of treacherous, pit-filled ground that's obviously the overgrown foundation of a once magnificent building. A mansion of the Fallen Kingdom, most folk think—and most also believe that the Stair is haunted.

I can now report that I have seen this ghost with my own eyes[3] and can swear to the utter truth of this belief.

The ghost of a slain knight strikes at those who try to camp near, ascend, or descend the staircase. Sometimes, this apparition is a phantom sword, floating alone, or a helm, or an actual ghost. Whatever its true nature or powers, it always glows, flickers in and out of visibility, and its insubstantial "touch" always brings a sickening sensation of weariness and utter, bone-chilling cold (though such contact seems to do no damage to the flesh).[4]

The ghost slays some, is never seen by others, and menaces most who venture near the Stair until they withdraw in fear or exasperation. Its origin remains mysterious, although many claim that it is the remains of this or that mage-cursed warrior or suchlike.

Know that I, Volo, have parted many curtains of mystery and folk-falsehood to lay bare for all readers many truths of this beautiful wilderland site.

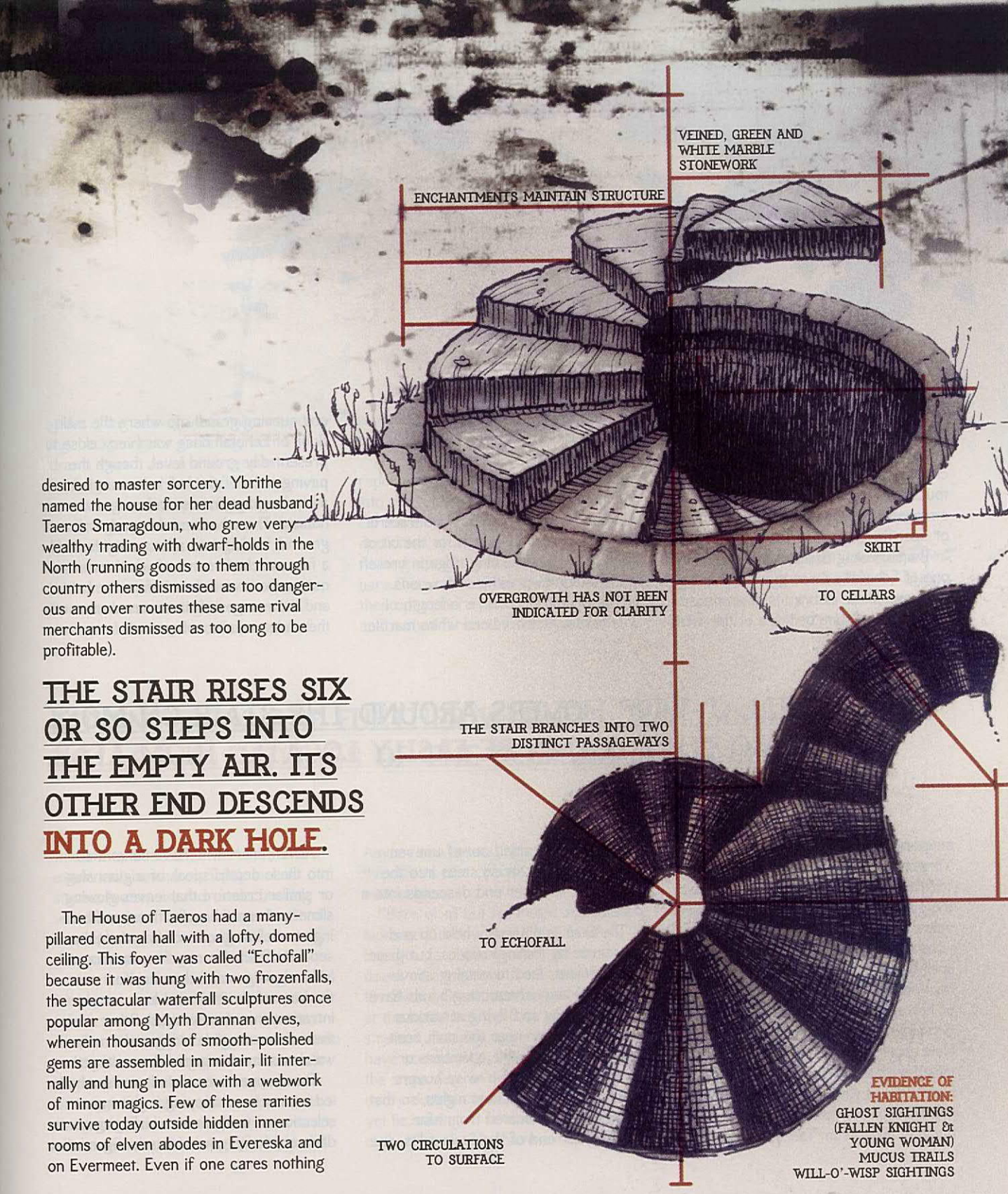
THE GHOST OF A SLAIN KNIGHT STRIKES AT THOSE WHO TRY TO CAMP NEAR, ASCEND, OR DESCEND THE STAIRCASE. SOMETIMES, THIS APPARITION IS A PHANTOM SWORD...

The History of the Stair

This ruin was once the site of Taeros, a grand mansion adorned with many turrets, set in wooded gardens adorned with fountains and pools stocked with jewelfish.[5] The house sprawled along a curving ridge in the heart of the region known as Loravatha, in the realm sages now call the Fallen Kingdom, and was home to the human sorceress Ybrithe. She spent her late husband's merchant fortune building the mansion and founded a school for young lasses who

ELMINSTER'S NOTES

1. **Ye would say** "fishy" instead of "curious" here. American English (and isn't that an oxymoron?) is such an amusing tongue, if rather overly steeped in sarcasm.
2. **Such romantic tales** are based on a true incident involving humans intruding on a service of worship to Lurue. I'm not at liberty to say what became of the humans, but I will reveal to ye that they live yet, far beyond their normal lifespans, and now regret nothing of their boldness, though their fate was regarded at the time of infliction, by both themselves and the worshippers, as a punishment.
3. **Ahem;** our diligent scribe somehow neglects to inform ye readers that his eyes were protruding in utter terror from his backside at the time, as he fled (with a swiftness that would do credit to a roused stallion) in the general direction of the Sea of Swords. Had several dozen trees of Ardeep Forest not stood in his path, he might well have found the waiting waves of that handy ocean. Let it never be forgotten that our Volo is a brave man. (We've no excuse for doing so, given the frequency with which he reminds us of this. Sufficient unto the common need, indeed.)
4. **Volo here stumbles** into being correct. The chill does no physical harm and has actually warned sleeping sentinels to defend themselves against stealthily-approaching brigands or goblinkin raiding bands. It might spur nightmares to trouble the dreams of some sleepers and has a more lasting effect on some: Contact with this phantom, which



desired to master sorcery. Ybrithe named the house for her dead husband Taeros Smaragdoun, who grew very wealthy trading with dwarf-holds in the North (running goods to them through country others dismissed as too dangerous and over routes these same rival merchants dismissed as too long to be profitable).

THE STAIR RISES SIX OR SO STEPS INTO THE EMPTY AIR. ITS OTHER END DESCENDS INTO A DARK HOLE.

The House of Taeros had a many-pillared central hall with a lofty, domed ceiling. This foyer was called "Echofall" because it was hung with two frozenfalls, the spectacular waterfall sculptures once popular among Myth Drannan elves, wherein thousands of smooth-polished gems are assembled in midair, lit internally and hung in place with a webwork of minor magics. Few of these rarities survive today outside hidden inner rooms of elven abodes in Evereska and on Evermeet. Even if one cares nothing

is the fading remnant of some mage of the Fallen Kingdom altered by his own over-reaching spells (the "true ghost" also seen here is someone else linked to the Stair by other deeds), awakens in some persons the power to receive, henceforth in their lives, visions of things past. Such visions are unpredictable and uncontrollable, but they are almost always vivid, accurate, and spurred either by proximity to a relic or place, or by the awakening or stirring of something long hidden, silent, dead, or undead.

Most are troubled by such a talent, but some have made a career of employing it.

5. **Then, as now, jewelfish** were things of fashion, employed by the idle rich as living decorations. They are tiny, inedible iridescent silvery fish whose scales can be dyed to take on vivid metallic hues. The popularity of this practice died out long ago, and only a few guild crafters of Waterdeep, Neverwinter, Memnon, and Esmeltaran still have complete particulars of the procedure, and then only in dusty books. Jewelfish look attractive in large numbers, swirling and darting in graceful unison, but have a habit of dying en masse whenever the weather grows too hot, and stink thereafter like, well, dead fish.
6. **Frozenfalls were much more** than Volo realizes. They were often the foci for minor house mythals, governing the building in which they were located, or housing the vigilant sentiences of family ancestors who lingered, like baelnorn, to watch over their descendants, guarding and

for their beauty, the component gems are worth staggering amounts. The most valuable frozenfalls are ensorceled to chime softly and musically when touched, on contact with the rising sun or moonlight, or with any other general or specific magical enchantments.[6]

The surviving Stair is thought to be one of Echofall's three grand ascending staircases, kept aloft in its precarious and decaying state because of the many supportive spells practiced upon it by Ybrithe's students.

After twenty-odd seasons of peace, the mansion was attacked one night by unknown mages bent on seizing what magic they could. In the fierce spell-battle that ensued, the house was torn apart, destroying Ybrithe and most of her apprentices. A trap (or perhaps a *contingency* spell linked to her death) blew apart most of the ridge soon after, taking the attacking wizards with it. Fearful elves who dwelt in the forests nearby kept the curious (and magic-hungry) away from Taeros for years until the kingdom failed and the land became wilderness overrun by a succession of goblinkin[7] raiders.

The Stair Today

Adventurers today will find no trace of the grand mansion except for the bit of staircase atop a curving ridge in broken lands overgrown with scrub woods.

The Crumbling Stair is a length of weathered, green-veined white marble that rises unheralded out of uneven turf to reach six or so steps into the empty air. Its other end descends into a dark hole.

The Stair is obviously held up and preserved by (failing) magics, but these enchantments lead to nothing aboveground. (Many adventuring bands have tried levitating and flying at various heights above or near the stair, fruitlessly seeking invisible chambers or portals there.) A will-o'-wisp hovers around the stair on most nights, so that it can be easily located from afar.

The lower end of the Stair splits, one end curving grandly to where the main floor of Echofall once was (very close to present-day ground level, though the paving slabs of the hall were carried away long ago for use in less grand homes). The other end descends below ground, leading into a long corridor and a few attached rooms of what were quite extensive cellars before the battle and the ravages of time caused most of the underways to collapse.

Adventurers who have penetrated into these depths speak of a giant slug or similar creature that leaves glowing slime-trails on the walls, floor, and ceiling, as well as ghosts or haunts (quite separate from the one that sometimes lurks aboveground) that manifest near the base of the stair and lure certain intruders into deadly traps. Other times these spectres glide along and simply watch visitors or ignore them altogether.

These apparitions include a disembodied human hand cupping a glowing selection of (sometimes whirling) gems; a dark, shadowy, cowled human figure that

A WILL-O'-WISP HOVERS AROUND THE STAIR ON MOST NIGHTS, SO THAT IT CAN BE EASILY LOCATED FROM AFAR.

guiding. An adventurer should not be surprised to feel observed or listened to when in the presence of such a sculpture—and should speak accordingly (many enjoy conversation, if one knows the right elven tongue).

Those who seek to pluck gems from a frozenfall, or damage its surroundings, should be aware that many frozenfalls can unleash spells as deadly as those of many a living mage.

Even "unadorned" frozenfalls often include gems that store or can be made to emit magics, if one touches them and knows how to call forth their energies.

7. **The word "goblinkin"** refers collectively to goblins, orcs, hobgoblins, and related humanoid creatures—the brutish predators that bedevil civilized Faerûn.
8. **Unknown to Volo,** that is. I can reveal that all of these manifestations have a single source: a now-insane shred of sentience belonging to one of Ybrithe's students, the would-be sorceress Analeithla.

A bad-tempered and graspingly ambitious lass, Analeithla habitually defied Ybrithe's rulings and teachings, boldly and rashly experimenting on her own and plotting to someday seize all of Ybrithe's power for herself. She'd just put some of her own flesh (the smallest joint of her left little finger) into the pommel-stone of a blade and created a magical link between her body and its amputated part (enabling her to see and speak out of the pommel-crystal), when the spell-battle that destroyed her occurred. Somehow her sentience was hurled through or drawn along the collapsing link into the pommel, where she remained, able to see and speak, but do nothing else.

glides along in swift, eerie silence, pointing, beckoning, or gesturing with a drawn sword; and a wild-eyed and finely-gowned elven lady in chains, who screams soundlessly and gestures imploringly to be rescued or released. Their origins and purposes are unknown.[8]

Over the years, various adventurers have reported finding all sorts of strange objects in the cellars (most of which they carried out as booty and examined elsewhere). These include staves, footstools, and cloaks bearing weird magics, that can be assumed[9] to be unfinished student projects stored in the isolated underground chambers where the spellcasters-in-training attempted their most delicate or powerful castings. Judging by past reports, their powers might or might not function properly, or (lacking any instructions) might simply be inexplicable to finders of today. For those who can dare the dangers, of course, magic treasures are always worth recovering—if only to sell to wealthy Waterdhavian collectors or hopeful mages everywhere.

Another phantom has also been reported by several survivors of forays into the ruins. When the door of a certain empty cellar is opened, the apparition of a young women appears floating upright with eyes closed, her bare feet well clear of the floor. She then opens her eyes, screams piercingly, and rushes forward to fade away. Anyone she passes through suffers the effects of a chaotic onslaught of wild magics.[10]

"Bare of all but fell magic and roaming monsters" is how the Bold Axe of Beregost, a recently-whelmed band of a dozen young bravos from up and down the Sword Coast, described the labyrinth at the bottom of the Stair. Others have stressed that although many visitors have scoured the chambers closest to the steps, few or none have reached every distant corner. Treasures might yet lie waiting to be discovered, especially to those who have a means of digging. It should be noted that one recent report warns that a beholder might have begun to do just that. Adventurers are further warned that some of the walls and ceilings of the surviving cellars of Taeros are demonstrably unstable; a skeletal hand protrudes from beneath one collapse in the main passage reached by the Stair, where an entire band of intruders might lie buried.

ADVENTURERS ARE FURTHER WARNED THAT SOME OF THE WALLS AND CEILINGS OF THE CELLARS ARE UNSTABLE.

Finally, the chaos of the spell-battle still lurks fitfully along the ridge. Any spells cast on the Stair, in the cellars, or in the immediate vicinity are apt to go wild, unleashing unintended and uncontrolled effects rather than the desired and expected results. D

Trapped in the cellar with the shattered, buried blade, Analeithla went mad. The blade's twisted magics power her ghostly manifestations (the beautiful elf is how she sees herself, though in life she was a human of rather homely and sullen appearance), and she seizes on all intruders as entertainment, luring them and exulting in their misfortunes.

If anyone finds the blade, however, she'll be seized with hope and try to cajole the new wielder into carrying the weapon along, promising to guide the unfortunate to treasure, watch over the individual's slumber, and so on—so long as the person wears the blade and allows Analeithla to see the world.

She'll not tell the truth about herself (and indeed will spin grand tales about godly purposes for the blade and the adventurer who's found it), and her insanity dooms to failure all attempts to magically read, influence, or control her mind—and endangers the sanity of those trying such contacts.

9. **Correctly, as it happens.** Adventurers should be aware that some such projects still survive, though some of them were magically twisted in the wild discharges of the spell-battle. All of them have at least three magical powers or properties (one of which is almost always the ability to either glow akin to a *faerie fire* spell or to levitate upon command). Many have six or more, though these will always be minor magics, useful as weapons or sources of profit only to the resourceful.
10. **This is nothing to do with Analeithla,** who ignores it, and I believe it to be the last remnant of another student, Jalastra Bluenthar, who was in a magical trance when the battle erupted. She no doubt perished just as her phantom records.

The Adventures of Volo

CORMYRIAN CONTACTS

by Ed Greenwood · illustrated by Ron Spencer

Volothamp Geddarm, at your service, gentles, setting truths of the Realms before you like a row of perfect mates for as many love-lorn suitors. This day I write of the right people for your needs.

Those who desire to make their fortunes in the rich realm of Cormyr often try to ingratiate themselves at court or with nobles they deem powerful—and find themselves inevitably at the bottom of a long line of grasping social climbers, limited from rapid advancement in their fortunes and in anyone's regard by the alliances they've just made.

Those whose purposes are a trifle shady or less than respectable (adventurers, for example) often find court officials, feuding nobles, or established merchants to be unsuitable contacts for getting things done with any speed or efficiency. It is to fill this pressing need that I set down certain contacts I have made, or learned of, who are active or interested in the Forest Kingdom of today.

Here then, in no particular order, are some folk who might be useful to the newcomer to Cormyr. These are by no means all who can serve such ends, and many Cormyrians might find some of my choices surprising. Unlike almost all other advisors, I dismiss most courtiers, who are far too adept at twisting the strivings of those who come to them to serve their own ends. Moreover, unlike most, I do not neglect the elves who preceded the human realm and still remain, nor yet avowed foes of the realm—though finding these might well be difficult, and working with them perilous. Undertake such overtures at your own risk, for I, Volo, did not send you off upon them, nor did I by any means recommend such persons.

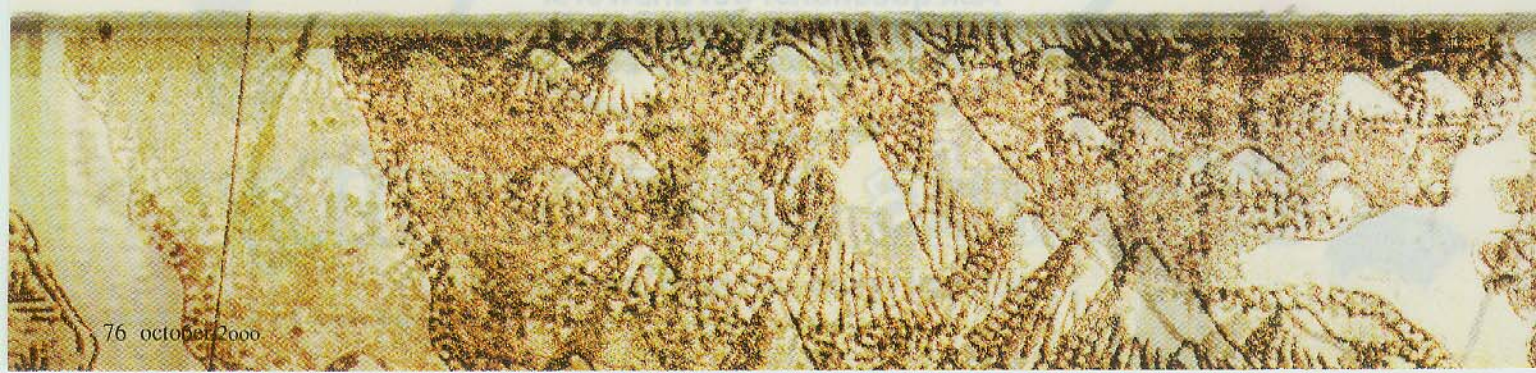
Darlutheene Ambershields

(1317 DR-)

An overweight, gossipy lady of the court whose pretentions far outstrip the actual station of her family (longtime Palace servants), Darlutheene's naked greed at the feast-table and shallow selfishness denied her a mate when her charms might have snared her one. These days, in a succession of increasingly tight and outlandishly flamboyant gowns, she seeks a man—any man—whose station is such that she'll profit from the match.

A lifelong resident of Suzail, Darlutheene now attends the most drunken of court revels and firmly leads many a staggering noble into the darker bowers of the Royal Gardens. Come morning, none of them evidence any desire to remain in her company for so much as morningfest, let alone for the rest of her lifetime. She's growing desperate—but that doesn't stop her from sneering condescendingly at the younger beauties at court and pretending to have been overly familiar with everyone from the Court Wizard to the First Trumpeter of the Gate.

Darlutheene has curly blond hair (usually tinted green and pink at the temples), and long, false, green eyelashes frame her striking violet eyes. Her several chins always sport artfully-applied beauty spots. Her figure is, well, ample, and her gowns are an extravaganza of daring plunges and cutouts, upswept plumes, and tinkling glass pendants cut to look like diamonds. She is a ridiculous



figure, and many of her catty observations are unintentionally hilarious.

"Ambermouth" (as she's known behind her back) might best be found at a revel, but best cultivated at her home, the green-tile-trimmed tallhouse that stands on the south side of the Promenade, four doors west of the Old Dwarf tavern, directly across from the Royal Court.

Blaerla Roaringhorn
(1326 DR-)
A slightly lighter, shorter brunette version of her friend Darlutheene Ambershields, Blaerla is a spiteful, judgmental loosetongue who never stops peeking and eavesdropping except when she's excitedly passing on what she's seen (and, of course, embroidering it in the process) to belittle someone else at court. This makes her ideal for an outsider who wants to spread word of his arrival or doings—so long as Blaerla can sniff some hint of mystery, deceit, or scandal, her tongue wags ceaselessly on your behalf. Cautioning her not to say something almost guarantees it being all over the Palace by the next nightfall!

A lady-in-waiting to Alusair (when that princess is at the Palace—hitherto a rare event indeed), Blaerla has much idle time to gather Palace gossip and pass it on to all who'll stop in the rooms she's charged with minding, chatting over mint wine or the drinks called "white frothies." On one memorable occasion, she even rattled on to Vangerdahast, who was in magical disguise—until she passed on a juicy rumor about how the Royal Magician spent his nights! (Blaerla's noble lineage saved her from dismissal, but her duties became, if possible, less important overnight.)

These days, Blaerla's nigh-constant partner in gossip is her friend Darlutheene, who is perhaps her only friend. Blaerla dotes on "Darling Dutheene," whose secrets she really does keep, but Darlutheene seems too mad for men to really notice.

Blaerla is always teetering on the brink of plunging from robust plumpness into being clearly and simply fat. She has snapping brown eyes and very red lips, and colors prettily (and often) when excited.

Known as "the Roarer" to those amused by her, and "the Tongue That Never Sleeps" or "the Shrieking Horn" to those less enchanted, Blaerla can best be contacted at her house, a triple-balconied tallhouse on the south side of the Promenade across from the Royal Court, and some seven doors down from the Dragon's Jaws tavern.

Huldyl Rauthur
(1335 DR-)
This war wizard of Cormyr is short, burly, and brown-haired, sporting a moustache big enough to hide his mouth. He has amber eyes, likes to wear lots of rings, and enjoys ale. Loyal to the Crown, he is in awe of Court Wizard Vangerdahast, and works hard at perfecting small spells and presenting them to the master mage as gifts.

Vangerdahast is amused and approving; he sees Huldyl as a useful servant of Cormyr who could grow to be quite a capable battle-wizard if never overly embarrassed at court or challenged with too great a crisis.

Unfortunately, the Abraxus Conspiracy handed Huldyl such a crisis, and he retreated for a time into grim watching and waiting, drinking heavily and playing endless games of chess with his close friend and fellow War Wizard Kurthryn Shandarn.

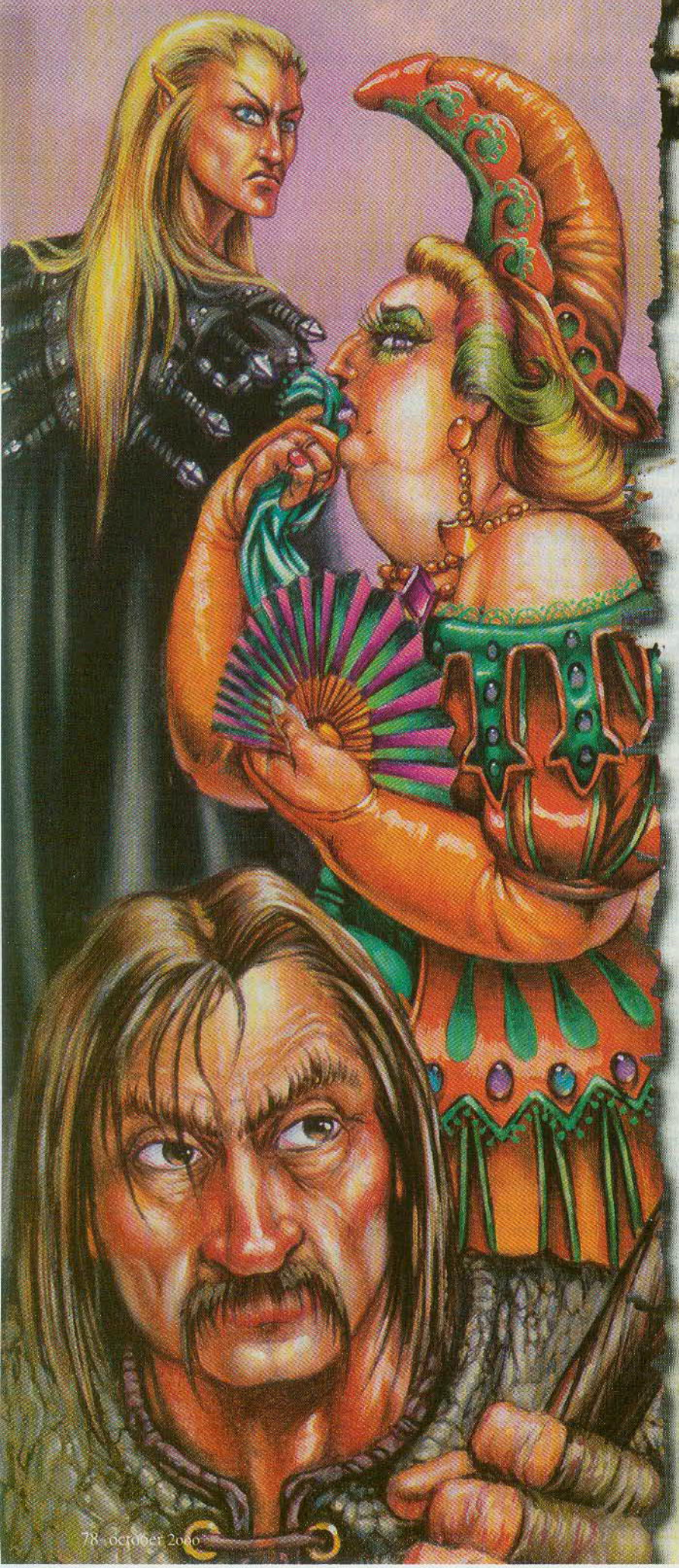
Only now is he again seeking a bolder role in court affairs, but he has found himself lacking in matters to be important about. This need, coupled with his relative lack of shrewd judgment (when compared with his superiors Vangerdahast and Laspeera), makes Huldyl ideal as a voice for outsiders seeking things done at court in Cormyr.

Huldyl dwells in the War Wizard apartments in the upper floors of the Horngate (where the Way of the Dragon enters the city of Suzail), but spends most of his waking hours either traveling about southern Cormyr on official business or in the Royal Court complex, consulting with Vangerdahast and doing the Royal Magician's go-between and fetch-and-carry work.

Ingleiyr Tammarast, Lord of Landuth
(1352 DR-)
An impoverished minor border lord among the nobility of Cormyr, the young Lord of Landuth only recently inherited his holdings, which lie on the western verge of the Vast Swamp, east of Ghars.

Ingleiyr's father invested unwisely in schemes for farming floating water plants in the swamp, and the new Lord of Landuth found himself ruling over a tumbledown keep, two hamlets, and fourteen or so farms between them, all of which were in need of coin.

Ingleiyr has been trying to make ends meet by raising cattle—cattle he'd like to sell to Sembia more cheaply overland, through Daerlun, than through the Marsember route that royal decrees



force him to use.

When Chalipur Hathangos offered him a covert arrangement of mutual advantage, Ingleiyr listened—but was infuriated to learn that the Sembian wanted him to leave Cormyr and join Sembia!

Lord Landuth will listen to you, too—so long as there's money in it for him. Need goods or people (even a modest army) housed and hidden for a time? Kept captive? Brought into a Cormyrian fortress—or even the Palace itself—as part of the retinue of a minor lord of the realm? Tammarast is your man—not disloyal to Cormyr or to the Crown, but with no time for courtly rules or niggling laws, which are fripperies he literally cannot afford. He's also not adverse to a little adventure, even if it means tricking Purple Dragons and their officers.

Ingleiyr has a tousled mane of black hair, brown eyes, a rough voice and rougher hands, and customarily wears plain leathers—the same breeches and vest that his men working down in the pens and the fields wear. He offers his guests mint wine and beer, lacking the funds to give them more than the plain bread and stew he himself eats. He'll be found either at Landuth Castle, at the southern edge of his holdings, or more likely in the fields with his herds.

Chalipur Hathangos
(1333 DR-)

This rich, fat Sembian merchant has a silken-soft voice, fat white hands that have never known toil, billowing silk robes embroidered with dragons eating their own tails ("Appropriate," Ingleiyr Tammarast once murmured), and is bald-

1. Ye would say "blabbermouth." Ah, the joys of explaining Volo ...

2. These would now be the Western Robing Room (where courtiers—not nobility—can change their garb or more often adjust their garments, hair, and applied cosmetics), Lord

ing; what little hair he has left (above his ears, and fringing his mouth) is red and curly. Hathango's many ruby rings mirror the strange red hue of his eyes, and he customarily wears a body-scent closely acquainted with exotic Thayan and Chessentan spices. The only armor he wears consists of magical bracers—and his own self-importance.

Inheriting a fortune built in the textiles and gems trade, Hathango now owns his own shipping fleet, though he itches to do something bold and successful that wasn't already done for him by his late father, Ghalador. He's looking to become a major force in livestock rearing, hence his need for lands he can dominate without having to pay for them, and his overtures to Tammarast. (See the previous entry.)

He smokes incense-laced tobaccoes from Thay and drinks cherry-flavored liqueurs from Chessenta and Threskel. Offers of beer, mint wine, and lesser beverages will be accepted—but with a sniff and a curled lip.

Hathango can be found most often in Daerlun, but might also be found from time to time in Wheloon, Suzail, or Immersea. Look for the most expensive and luxurious accomodations, and ask for him there. Be aware that Hathango goes nowhere without two hulking bodyguards, a pair of acrobatic slayers-for-hire who keep a lower profile but are seldom out of range of aiding their employer.

Sabran Cormaeril

(1350 DR-)

Sabran is a young, ambitious, scheming "blade" of the court—who slew or tried to slay—several nobles during the recent Abraxus Conspiracy. Now in exile, Sabran heads a shadowy band of dispossessed young nobles and dreams of one day ruling Cormyr.

Sabran delights in sending agents (hirelings, servants who left the Forest Kingdom with their masters, and other young exiled nobles who are exiled but can't resist a trip home in disguise) into Cormyr—south of the Starwater, that is. To Sabran, the rest of Cormyr has always been a wild backwaters where hunters and farmers toil, and he has no desire to dirty his hands among them.

Sabran's eyes and brows are black, his hair is a dirty blonde, and he's short, slender, agile, and clean-shaven. His clothes are the most dashing that fashion allows, and he always goes armed, swaggering about the many taverns of Westgate or Selgaunt (he slips from one to the other "to keep Obarskyr assassins guessing," though I think he fancies himself far more important than the Crown does) as if he was a royal prince, just as he once strutted in Suzail. He surrounds himself with many well-armed louts, of course, and his agents are willing to do anything in Cormyr, from carrying messages and delivering funds (at which, surprisingly, they can be trusted) to arson, slayings, and stealing wagons or even ships in harbor!

The best way to contact Sabran is to leave word at upscale tipple-houses, and await a response from one of his bravos.

Shaundyl Berethryl

(-998 DR-)

Six feet tall, soft-spoken, lithe in his movements, and menacing in his dealings with humans, this gold elven warlord dresses in close-fitting black garments adorned with everbright silver and is seldom without a small forest of throwing knives on his person (sheaths for one or more are worked into every ornament).

Arrogant and energetic, he bristled with fury at having to surrender Lythtlorn[3] to "bestial, unwashed" humans. Shaundyl dwells now in the depths of the Hullack Forest, surrounded by fearsome forest beasts that he dominates into serving him as guardians when hunting parties make forays into the green depths. He dreams of the day elves will rule all of Cormyr again. He will do nothing to harm the land (its forests in particular), but will otherwise covertly aid any humans interested in shattering the Obarskyr rule, weakening the War Wizards, or in bringing down general slaughter and unrest upon the realm. Those who use fire or chop trees he will never trust, no matter what goals they profess.

Shaundyl can best be contacted by leaving a written message for him within the edge of the Hullack Forest and waiting patiently at a country inn or cottage nearby specified in the message. He'll be aware of any forays into his forest and will eventually recover the message and come to where you wait with many magical and bestial allies, ready for treachery on your part.

Others

I, Volo, am well aware that many other exiled or discontented nobles are ripe for use as agents in affecting change in Cormyr. Nor have I forgotten that Red Wizards of Thay are rumored to have been involved up to their blood-drenched elbows in the Abraxus Conspiracy. At present, however, I'm seeking safer allies and contacts within the Forest Kingdom and might present my findings, if they shine well enough, at some future time.

Valdasher's Solar (given over to an untidy and growing collection of plants banished by the Crown Princess from the rest of the Palace), and the Room of the Ruby Archers. This last is named for a series of rather voluptuous red-dyed stone statues of female foresters plying their bows in a line down the center of the room. Seats have been placed backing onto each statue's plinth, and the out-of-the-way room is much used each day by lady courtiers for gossip, gossip, and more gossip.

3. Know ye that "Lythtlorn" was a name used by some local Fair Folk to describe the Wolf Woods, or what is now Cormyr.

The Adventures of VOLO

DRAGONWING STEW

by Ed Greenwood · illustrated by Ron Spencer

Volothamp Geddarm, at your service, gentles, setting truths of the Realms before you like morsels of spiced and simmered bustard before a starving man. This day I write of some culinary matters that have occurred to me in my travels. Nor are such concerns fripperies, for as more that one shrewd swordwielder has joked, "The way to a man's heart is through his stomach."

What All Know And The Eye Beholds

In my bestselling and peerless[1] series of guides to locales of the Realms, I've said much of fine eating establishments (and those that fall short of deserving such a description), and more about the inns and taverns in smaller places that a visiting traveler has no choice but to patronize.

Recent queries from those not overmuch used to journeying lead me to speak here of more mundane dining—the everyday eating of most Faerûnians in the Heartlands (a corruption of "Hartlands," by the way, a name once owned by the lands that were home to huge herds of deer) and the North. As my stomach has sampled a rather wider selection of dishes than most, let me be your guide to the cuisine[2] of lands that have thankfully known little of drought, blight, and famine—and just enough of realm-spanning trade to bring interest to even modest tables.

The fare in most upcountry inns, of course, differs little from what can be had in nearby farmhouse kitchens. Stew dominated by rabbit, groundfowl, and the berries, herbs, and greens that can be picked locally is common. Such meals are usually augmented by a small beer, crusty sourdough loaves, and, when local hunting or trapping is good, a joint of boar or bear (or several fowl or rabbits) doused in its own gravy. Winter, of course, causes fare to be scarce for all. Fresh fruit and fieldings can be had only by those with much coin and access to an open port.

But what of the other seasons? What of the market stalls in many towns and crossroads hamlets, or the shops in Bargewright Inn, Daggerford, other "way towns," and all larger cities?

Provender that travels and is sold in the open must be kept from spoilage. Only fruit and fieldings[3] can be sold loose or in punnets (small, open rush baskets that will just about hold the large, hairy fists of a tall human warrior, pressed knuckle-to-knuckle together).

Game and fish are often smoked and sold whole, usually dressed (skinned, plucked, and beheaded), or salted away in hand-kegs of brine. Cuts of meat ("joints") are treated much the same way or are made into sausages. Other foods are usually sold by the stonebolt.

A stonebolt is a lidless earthen bowl of hard-baked clay with a long pot handle (and sometimes a single ring-handle on the opposite side) made all of one piece. Stonebolts are always sealed with a thumb-thick layer of wax after being filled with edible contents, and they are transported in wooden carry-crates that are stacked with slats or tiles between them to prevent one sinking into the contents of its neighbor beneath.

Some stonebolts hold about as much as a clenched fist, but more often are about the size of a man's head. They are popular with merchants for the transport, sale, and storage of gravies, cooking fat (in the North, usually goose or goat fat), cheeses, pickles (including pickled eggs, fieldings, and offal), Calishite olives, stews, and sauces.

Gelgur's Feast of Plenty

I stopped by a wayside stall just south of Neverwinter that I deemed "typical." The selection on offer is also influenced by

Elminster's Footnotes

1. By the grace of mighty Mystra, may I have a trumpet fanfare for the glorious Volo, please? Thank you. Again, with feeling? Ah, e'en better. It does me good to see him reveling in it, like a dog rolling in—ahem.

2. Aye, "cuisine." This is as good a time as any to remind ye that in hitherto published Realmslore, thy modern words for food and cooking methods have been substituted wherever possible.

   Whereas one of the dandified lackwits that ye term "gourmets" might say, "Grilled trout, basil and potato crusted, with a sour apple and spicy lime chutney," the housemaster of a Faerûnian skaether (ye would say "restaurant") would describe the same dish as, "Fireseared slake under a shield of basil-shot potato, flanked with a ladle of sour apple and spiced lime chopped-sauce." (A "shield" with no mention of its making is always a pastry crust, such as is found over a steak-and-kidney pie.)

local staples that always sell reliably. In the case of this stall near Neverwinter, the local staples are rabbit, venison steaks, and smoked partridge. Leaving aside the fish, which would vary or dwindle to almost nothing if I was looking at a stall well inland, here's what was on offer.

Hanging whole: rabbits, pheasant, ducks, quail, bustards, and partridge.

Sold from the slab (cut to order) or from under hoods on the stall counter: venison, goat meat, rabbit pie, pheasant pie, smoked siake, elk, lamb quarters, lambs' kidneys, boar tails and trotters (the rest had become sausages), duck-liver sausages, and upcountry dark sausages (highly spiced red-meat sausages of whatever game choppings could be had, minced into a base of boar). Groundsnake (chopped and fried chunks of any edible snake); darkback skewers (diced, fried rodents consisting mainly of rats and voles, but also of mice and sometimes weasels, mink, and similar hunters that are run onto a skewer with onion), half a dozen cheeses, and the eggs of ducks, geese, hens, and pheasant (these last have olive green shells and a slightly stronger flavor than hens' eggs). Hand-tarts were also available.

Hand-tarts, named purely for their fit-in-the-hand size, are always savory meat-and-pastry tarts, usually of bustard and game cooked with gooseberries and strips of boar-fat (salt pork bacon). They're sometimes called "message tarts" because so many of them were once baked with clay discs inside on which had been scratched short missives from one Cult of the Dragon agent to another. (In some locales, it survives as a means of social protest, wherein the discs contain warnings against or critiques of the local ruler.)

In punnets, Gelgur had dried apricots, sweet dried mulberries, leeks, garlic, river clams, crayfish, and blynndurs. (These last are crusty loaves of bread stuffed with fireseared herbs and greens; when eaten on the trail, these are often cut open into rough, edible bowls and ladled full of stew or that common staple of travelers in wilderlands: pea soup.)

In stonebolts: fiery pickled "emerald eyes" (a spiced Calishite mixture of diced squid, snails, mussels, and a short, fat, finger-length green fish of the salt-water coastal shallows); local "flame in the belly" or red-pepper jelly, a sweet peach conserve made hot with a dash of zzar and some powdered Calishite spices; thargur (a dessert syrup of walnuts and diced apples embedded in molasses); and six sauces imported from Amn and Tethyr that consist of both mustard-dominated soured wine ladlings and "manyfruit" jellies.

From the open barrel: dried marrado beans from eastern Amn and Tethyr,[4] dried peas, and dates from Calimshan and the Tashalar.

Fieldings were largely absent from Gelgur's stall because such can be bought more cheaply and in bulk from nearby farmers.

Those who feel the urge to pilfer are warned that most such stalls employ fleet-footed youths who carry pouches of throwing-stones to chase, tackle, and bring down thieves until the proprietor can catch up and dispense rough justice with a cudgel. This usually involves mashing fingers and toes to make later attempts at thievery impossible.

Gelgur, like most such vendors, is a good shot with his sling, though he seldom uses it against people, and any young lass left alone to tend a stall will also have a horn ready at hand to summon aid if need be.

More often, Gelgur downs birds seeking to scavenge from his takings and adds them to the "simmer pot" he'll have hooked over a fire behind the stall in all but the hottest weather, which attracts customers with its aroma. He sells ladlefuls of his herb-rich stew—customers return the wooden dipper as soon as they've consumed its contents—for a copper each. Gelgur usually keeps two pots on the go, periodically switching the one over the flames with one cooling on a side-trivet from which customers are served, so as to keep scaldings to a minimum.

The Careful Diner

The traveler in farming country can eat much fresher, if simpler, food than in most cities (where spices, dyes, and heavy sauces are often used to cloak the taste of tainted meat and spoiled fieldings), but a few warnings are in order.

Those who threaten innkeepers, or seem overly rich and too lightly guarded, are often rendered sick (and hence easy prey for thievery or even enslavement or murder) by being fed a dish of poisonous mushrooms or toadstools.

Fireside tales often warn of spices that contain deadly poisons that can cause great injury or death unless you know what has been used and add the right powdered antidote to your own dish. Though such substances do exist (being sold chiefly in Calimshan, Mulhorand, and Unther), they are far more rare and expensive than most tales suggest. Those who sell them too openly or too often are likely to attract the attention of local slayers-for-hire and thieves' guilds.

The modern-day menu description "Seared venison stuffed with smoked whitefish and wild mushrooms, all topped with a juniper berry and ice wine reduction" would become in the Realms: "Flamed venison stuffed with smoked silverfin and goldenpanned browncaps, doused with a simmer of juniper berry and zzar." ("Goldenpanned" is the Faerûnian equivalent of sautéed.)

While I'm about it, I might as well give ye some quick nomenclature for raw materials. We use the same names for the meat of almost all edible beasts, though some need reminding that thy pork is "boar" in the Realms, and few of ye will know that horsemeat in Faerûnian cuisine is "vasark."

The most common fish of the table is "silverfin" (any whitefish), "bluefin" (ye would say tuna), "sheelie" (bass), "burslake" or more often simply "slake" (trout), "navalar" (catfish), "shaelings" (all sorts of tiny silver minnows), and "sorn" (salmon).

Of groundfowl, know ye that grouse are "blusterwing" (both singular and plural), to a Faerûnian, turkeys are "bustards," and squabs are "plounce."

The best known such poison is a purple, prickly-peppery (tongue numbing) powder known as "Jesseret," which is named for the lady thief who concocted it centuries ago. Its antidote is a gray powder consisting of fire ash and the ground horn or bone of the right beast (just which one is a closely guarded secret). Jesseret loses its effectiveness within a little over a tenday after its preparation, which I know involves boiling (and at least seven ingredients, one of which is a particular sort of snail). I know of no way of telling that it's fading, save that its victims survive. Some persons—as well as most goblinkin[5], and all lizard men and minotaurs—are immune to its effects.

According to legend (I must admit I've never seen it), another such poison takes the form of a glistening green jelly that is often hidden in fantastically-decorated feast desserts. Called "benightbite," it affects victims only hours later, beginning by numbing all sensation, and then causing lassitude, trembling, and slowness of movement until the victim either sinks into paralyzed slumber for a time and then recovers, or falls into a final, fatal sleep. Its antidotes include cherries or liqueurs and wines made from cherries.

Dragon Cookery

Any meat advertised as "dragon tail" or suchlike is almost always something else. Dragons do die, and their flesh—which tends to resemble the white meat of a bustard but with a much stronger taste—is edible if fresh enough.

Yet it is also rare enough to be whisked away by the swiftest means possible to Waterdeep or some other place where it will fetch pretty coin. Some merchant costers can rush a fast wagon with many horses, replacement wheels and axles, and crossbow-waving armed guards out to seize such a prize, sometimes without paying a copper to anyone claiming to own it. Such "snatch teams" often leave the large, hard-to-cut wings of a beast behind for later harvesting. If the guard placed on the carcass is too small, it's often overwhelmed by locals and passing opportunists seeking dragonscales and organs to sell for their own profit, or dragon-wing flesh for their own tables.

Dragon wings contain some of the largest and most flavorful joints of meat to be had anywhere, but it's a rare Faerûnian that gets to taste such fare even once. Dragon wings also yield sinews of great rubbery strength and great slabs of jellylike fat that are usually rendered down into stew or used to bait traps for bears and other large scavenging beasts.

Certain alchemists and sages also claim that distillates of certain organs of particular breeds of dragons, or their blood and other essential fluids, have various healing powers, magical uses and effects, and properties that make them antidotes to all poisons. Such matters are beyond my expertise. It should be noted that similar claims are made for alicorn (unicorn horn), and for fluids gleaned from the tails of wyverns. D

3. "Fieldings" are vegetables. In the North, these are chiefly potatoes, parsnips, leeks, and cabbage. Next most common are carrots, onions, and radishes—which grow much larger in the Realms than in thy world, methinks. The term also includes what ye would call "brussels sprouts," which we commonly call "knuckles," and "asparagus"—"spears" to us.

4. Ye would subsitute kidney beans, I believe, though the blood-red marrado bean is more peppery in taste than any pulse food of thy world I've yet tasted.

5. Those unfamiliar with the expression are advised that "goblinkin" refers to all humanoids related to goblins (orcs, hobgoblins, and so on). I can add to Volo's observations here that immunity to the effects of Jesseret is partial in all such creatures, but varies more from individual to individual, rather than by breed.

The Adventures of VOLO

LOST TREASURES OF CORMYR

by Ed Greenwood · illustrated by Ron Spencer

Volothamp Geddarm, at your service, gentles, setting truths of the Realms before you like long-lost jewels, glinting in the light of astonished glances as I set them before folk who never dreamed that old folktales would come to life before their eyes ...

When folk of Cormyr and visitors to that fair realm get to talking of treasure, they speak first of the fabled riches that fill royal vaults beneath the Palace in Suzail, the dozens of treasuries under High Horn, and richness from other fortresses of the kingdom.

Then they turn to the magics that must have been amassed—and hidden—by the Lord Mages of Cormyr, from legendary Baerauble onwards. Even those who bitterly resent the high-handedness of Vangerdahast admit that he's the Cormyrian epitome of shrewd. Few doubt that he can call on wealth to beggar the most proud noble houses without ever touching a coin of the royal treasuries. There are many who mutter darkly that he and his sorcerous predecessors might well have personally plundered royal vault after vault with no one the wiser.

Here I speak of more modest treasures—the riches on which the noble families of Cormyr stand. There is land and herds upon them, carts groaning yearly with produce, and castles in which lesser men can rent storerooms. There are also lost coins and gems. Of course, they're always found by someone and then hidden away. Sometimes, knowledge of these treasures die with the owner—but there are ways of learning such secrets even after death...

There's a grotto somewhere in Cormyr—I dare not reveal its actual location—in which eerie magic preserves floating, crumbling things that were once the brains of a select few Cormyrians. To touch them is to be nigh overwhelmed by failing yet desperate sentiences that seek to live anew, to seize one's body for their own. Yet if one is strong—as I was, though my survival was uncomfortably endangered—and resists the furious compulsions, one can command memories out of those fading minds and know of folk long dead and gone.

I might well return to that place one day and see more of kings and the like, but for now, hearken as I present more modest folk out of the mists of bygone times. Please bear in mind that some of the dates given herein, and even more lore, might be mistaken or false; I've had to rely on sages in dotage and fragmentary public records to properly place into history vivid scenes that were not my own memories!

Some of those concerned with our hidden treasures predate Cormyr itself.

THE RAYBURTON JEWELS

In the days of the dawn of Cormyr, when elves ruled the Wolf Woods and men were intruders scratching rude farms out of the dark and forbidding forest, the first tale of lost treasure was born. It swirled around but never touched the Obarskyrs and involved these men, the founders of proud and noble Cormyrian families:

Belmer Oelber Rayburton
(-43 DR-36 DR)
The fat, toad-featured, coarse-skinned, and loutish Belmer was a fearless warrior and avid hunter, and an essentially simple soul. His unruly brown hair and glittering black eyes made him stand out, and he never stopped scratching (fleas, no doubt). His normal modes of speech were the grunt and spit (the former constant, the latter when angry), but he knew where and how to hunt good game—a valuable skill in the fledgling Cormyr.

Belmer swung a huge morningstar and a stout handaxe. Never shy of battle, he took his greatest pleasures from hunting, outfacing foes, and gorging himself at the table.

Onkyl Drethan Rayburton
(-40 DR-41 DR)
The tall, laconic Onkyl was Belmer's younger brother; together they brought their families into what was to become Cormyr. Where Belmer was the expert hunter, Onkyl was the scholar and a natural organizer and rememberer-of-details. He was fearful of beasts, elves, dragons, orcs, forests, and just about everything else he found in the savage land of Cormyr a-borning. He wanted the comfort of a stout castle around himself as soon as possible. Surely, he thought, someone civilized dwelt hereabouts, hidden in the next wooded valley or over yonder ridge.

Onkyl was slim, with fair (almost white), long, flowing hair and a sweeping moustache of the same hue. His eyes were a warm brown, and his

clothes (as much as he could keep them) elegantly fashionable—which at the time meant hose with low pointed shoes and cross-garters that were worn under a long, embroidered tunic with dagged sleeves and an overcloak.

Telarn Erren Rayburton
(-51 DR-43 DR)
The tall, long-haired, burly son of Onkyl was almost as deadly a warrior as he thought he was. He rose to lead the defenses of the Rayburton families while his father and uncle grew ever stouter, and spent more and more time counting coins and plotting ways for the Rayburtons to grow richer. Telarn was quick to anger and even swifter with his favored weapon: a broadsword engraved with the black hawkdragon crest of the Rayburton family. (This icon was the result of a drunken Rayburton seeing a wyvern. This beast has a hawk's beak and feathered head and wings, but the forked tongue, scaled body, heavy claws, and reptilian tail of a dragon.)

Telarn liked to wear velvet doublets and gold earrings, and he had cold blue-green eyes, bad teeth, shoulder-length brown hair, and a scar on one forearm that he was very proud of (most of his doublets had slit sleeves to display it). Strangely, the tale of how he acquired this mark of honor (a dragon's talon as he slew it, the flung blade of an orc as he slaughtered twenty snouters singlehanded, or the dagger of an evil sorceress whose spells he'd broken through just before he kissed her into submission) changed from time to time.

Endeir Falconhand
(-46 DR—44 DR)
This close-mouthed, always calm huntsman and Rayburton retainer, this ancestor of Florin Falconhand of the Knights of Myth Drannor had hair and eyes of steel gray, and was an expert archer. Once the Rayburtons arrived in the future Cormyr, his longbow was seldom out of his hand.

Endeir always wore tall leather boots, dark green breeches and tunic, and leather gauntlets—and his arms (a white falcon with claws outstretched to strike on a dusty blue field) could be seen on a sash of dusty blue stretched diagonally across his chest.

"The falcon," as he was known, was tall, broad-shouldered, quiet, and always alert. Whenever one of the Rayburton brothers thought of some matter of defense, provisions, hunting, or scouting, Endeir was at their elbow, having already thought of it and dealt with the need, either personally or through the dozen huntsmen he commanded (whom the seven armsmen Onkyl kept guarding the Rayburton wives and daughters were frankly afraid of).

Relve Turcassan
(-46 DR—38 DR)
This cold-eyed warlord was the most capable human battle leader in Cormyr at the founding of the realm; he rose to prominence on merit, not because his family had wealth or influence with the Obarskyrs. Quiet and aloof from feuds and the drunken brawling so many of Cormyrian warriors (particularly the Rayburtons) were prone to, Relve was a competent bladesman and a good tactician, always foreseeing details that had to be attended to and dealing with them before crises developed. (He alone always posted sentries—deployed so each guard could be seen by others, and a man overcome before he could cry alarm could thus still warn the camp.) Relve learned iron control; few ever saw him lose his temper. Short, he wore a close-trimmed black beard and moustache, and a catlike smile. He also possessed flowing black hair and pale hazel—almost mauve—eyes.

Orndar Oulamn Merendil
(-14 DR-29 DR)
Swashbuckling, handsome, and the most hot-tempered of the human warlords when Cormyr was founded, Orndar came alone from the Vilhon Reach and rose rapidly in influence among the men of the Wolf Woods because of his reckless—and successful—conduct in battle. A deadly swordsman whom most men openly feared, he fascinated many Cormyrian ladies.

Orndar stood just a shade over 5 feet tall; had long, curly black hair and a moustache to match; pale brown eyes; a very hairy chest (usually prominently displayed in the open-fronted silk shirts of flame orange, vivid green, sky blue, or rich purple that he wore); and had a habit of humming. He was seldom without his curved saber, his vivid red sash, and a wine goblet in his hand—though he never seemed to show the effects of too much drink.

THE TALE OF THE JEWELS

An unknown Rayburton ally or kinsman came to the Rayburtons from overseas about a decade after the founding of Cormyr, fleeing trouble elsewhere (possibly Impiltur, and probably as the result of a theft that gained him the treasure he brought with him).

This forgotten man took shelter with Belmer Rayburton, which almost certainly proved to be a fatal mistake—he soon disappeared forever. It seems likely that Belmer murdered him and dragged his body out into the woods to be devoured by forest creatures in order to gain possession of two large and heavy chests of cut and polished gemstones the man had brought with him.

It's certain that Belmer's brother Onkyl learned of the hoard soon after Belmer disposed of its owner (or the man disappeared for some other reason), though given his character and quiet despair over family finances at the time, it's unlikely Onkyl took part in the disappearance of the gem-bringer.

It is almost certain that Onkyl suspected, or was told, what Belmer had done, for he hid a sealed letter where his son would be sure to find it after his death (and not before), detailing "my brief glimpse of the hoard: two goodly chests, the one holding two or three fistfuls of black sapphires[1] atop as many red tears[2], all upon a bed of nigh a thousand sapphires as blue as the sky when 'tis clear. The other chest was brimful with rubies, again a thousand or so." The letter spoke of the hoard "in the grasp of my brother Belmer," and that "You, my son" (Onkyl's son Telarn) "deserve it much more than bloody Belmer ever did—see that you claim it, and prosper beyond the rough lives Belmer and I forged for ourselves."

When monsters and raiding brigands pressed the fledgling realm hard, and the war-leaders Relve Turcassan and Orndar Merendil grew desperate for weapons and hireswords to defend Cormyr, they came to Belmer demanding funds. Given Belmer's tightfistedness and surly character, it's unlikely they'd have turned in his direction had they not known (or suspected) he possessed great wealth that he'd clearly lacked in earlier days.

It's evident from the few writings I was allowed to see in the Royal Court Records in Suzail that Turcassan, Merendil, and Endeir Falconhand, as Rayburton retainers and huntsmen on the one hand, and Belmer, on the other, had a violent disagreement. Though undescribed, it resulted in Falconhand's leaving the service of Belmer and being taken on by Onkyl; the deaths of both Rayburton armsmen and some warriors of the realm under the command of Merendil and Turcassan; the wounding of Belmer Rayburton, Turcassan, and Merendil; and a widening feud that was only kept from open butchery by Onkyl Rayburton turning on his brother and demanding peace—or he'd reveal a "secret Belmer holds dear, and would fain keep so."

In my view, Falconhand revealed the existence of the hoard to Turcassan and Merendil, or at least was suspected by his master of doing so after they learned of it somehow. Moreover, I judge that Onkyl had grown to fear and hate his brother; Belmer is said by several sources to have grown "ruled by his suspicion of all men, especially newcomers to the realm" in his later years. This suspicion might well have been born of the fear of losing his hoard gnawing at him.

Certainly Onkyl's threat to reveal a secret can only have concerned the treasure, as Belmer had openly—and even, it seems, proudly—engaged in swindles, philandering, slayings, and the deliberately taking on of debts he never had any intention of repaying (to weaken the lenders and thus give him a hold over them, for he seems never to have been all that short of coin). It seems hard to conceive of another secret such a man would fear being revealed, save perhaps treachery against the realm.

Some writers descended from Merendil and Turcassan wrote a few decades later of family beliefs that dark plots and repeated woundings by night assailants that made miserable the last days of both warlords were the work of "human dogs hired by Belmer," and it seems clear that the rancor between all concerned only ended with their deaths.

It also seems clear that Telarn found most or all of the jewels, because his two sons Rauril ("Rory") and Chelesmer both recorded in private diaries being (separately) shown "beneath father's bed, that takes four strong armsmen to lift, a stone with a ring that can be lifted, to reveal a chamber below. In it was a bed made of all of jewels, with the bones of our dead mother laid out upon them, at peace yet grown all over with mold, and hideously shrunken in."

We know from records kept by others that upon Telarn's death, both brothers hastened to put guards around his bedchamber—opposing forces that came to sword blows before Rory and Chelesmer arrived and curtly put an end to the hostilities.

They seemed to have warily joined forces together to move the bed and lift the stone—and "shrieked and shouted like madmen, accusing each other of all manner of vile and impossible crimes, spitting, foaming, and clawing with fingers when we wrested their blades away" after the chamber beneath was found to be empty of all but dust and the decaying remnants of a collapsed bedframe according to one nearby source.

Rory seems to have gone on to become a grim, brawling, self-reliant man, but the rest of Chelesmer's life was consumed by an endless search for their mother's body and the jewels.

Both men left writings for their children to read after their passings that mention the hoard but make it clear that neither brother knows its whereabouts—and that both suspect the other of having hidden it away and then lost it, or access to it, in some calamity they dared not reveal.

Whatever became of the jewels—and all trace of the chamber that held the shrouded corpse of Jaless Rayburton, the wife of Telarn, has vanished. No man alive today is able to identify even the fortress that held it with certainty. It seems clear that Rayburton kin and other treasure-seekers have often searched for the hoard since, but never found it ... unless the finder somehow spirited his find away out of Cormyr without anyone being any the wiser.

1. Described in *Volo's Guide to All Things Magical*, these rare gems are highly valued by mages for their protective magical uses.

2. Ye may learn particulars of these gemstones in the same source; priests prize them highly for healing purposes.

The Adventures of VOLO

LOST TREASURES OF CORMYR, PART 2

by Ed Greenwood · illustrated by Ron Spencer

Volothamp Geddarm at your service, gentles, setting truths of the Realms before you like coins rolling along a tabletop, drawing every eye. I write here of more lost treasures of Cormyr, tales that began as scenes—the memories of the dead—that so enthralled me in that grotto. Please be aware that some dates and lore herein might be mistaken or false, though I've done my best[1] to set things in their proper place.

THE RALLYHORN RICHES

In the days when Cormyr was young, the seeds were planted for what would later become a great vanishing of wealth. This affair involved the minor noble family Rallyhorn—and descendants of the first (and the greatest) High Mage of Cormyr.

Baerauble Etharr
Lord High Mage of Cormyr[2]
(-166 DR–429 DR)
This slim, quiet man came from the fall of Tarkhaldale to Lythtlorn (the elven woods between the Lake of Dragons and the Starwater) to put the intrigues and ambitions of men behind him. He befriended the elves, but they made him (against his will) an advisor to the fledgling realm of Cormyr. Though very bitter at what he considered their betrayal (returning him to the in-the-heart-of-intrigues life he'd renounced) Baerauble served Cormyr for centuries; years given him, some say, by elf-supplied *potions of longevity*. This time allowed him to grow in the Art and led to his appointment as Lord High Mage.

His children included a son, Baergast, whose son Aulard wed Emrylara, the daughter of Lord Theldrin Rallyhorn.

Baerauble was a gentle and humble man, polite of speech and never arrogant (though he spoke more sharply to Obarskyrs than to others).

His grandson Aulard (about whom very little is known) is said to have imitated Baerauble's dress and manner, and to have been born with almost identical looks. He seemed, as one observer put it, "an echo of his grandsire."

Though very bitter at what he considered their betrayal, Baerauble served Cormyr for centuries.

Lord Theldrin Rallyhorn
Steward of the Court
(92 DR–147 DR)
The distinguished, polite, and moustachioed "right hand of the throne" (as Baerauble once called him) assisted the kings Daravvan, Dorglor, Embrold, and Irbruin in the everyday business of running the realm.

Theldrin came to King Daravvan's notice as a quick and diplomatic letter-writer. He rose rapidly in royal service from King's Messenger through Seneschal of the Stables, Seneschal of the Gate, and Master of the Halls to become Steward of the Court—the official who oversees the staffing, provisioning, and defense of royal fortresses (which, in Theldrin's days, was just the Royal Keep in Castle Obarskyr); organizes court functions; and sees to the housing and needs of guests of the crown to this day.

Deeply involved in running Cormyr, Theldrin was ultimately trusted to make almost all royal decisions by every monarch he served. Irbruin is said to have been "lost on the throne, and floundering" (as one noble wrote privately) after Theldrin's death, until he had the wits to appoint Baerauble his daily advisor.

Lord Theldrin was an urbane, able courtier with an eye for details. He saw to it that warmed towels, large and soft houserobes, flasks of fine sherry, and fresh flowers were placed in guests' chambers, for example.

Over the years, Theldrin's raven-black hair turned gray, then shot through with white, and finally

snow-white and very thin, but its page-boy cut (and his carefully-trimmed moustache) never changed. Nor did the depth of the green of his eyes. He was thin, of average height, and always immaculately and elegantly dressed in the richest of conservative fashions.

Emrylara Etharr (née Rallyhorn)
(131 DR–162 DR)
The tall, grave, quiet, and beautiful daughter of Lord Theldrin Rallyhorn, Emrylara was a beauty much pursued by young male nobles. She was repelled by their boisterous courtings, however, admiring instead the kindly, wise, and quiet Lord High Mage Baerauble.

She married Baerauble's grandson Aulard, and bore two children. The second, daughter Narnytha, died young, and Aulard ultimately outlived both Emrylara and their son Obrynn, but died knowing he still had seven healthy children (by later wives).

Emrylara inherited her father's green eyes and raven-black hair. Her bone-white skin almost glowed in dim light. She favored dark, full gowns, and she seemed to drift as she walked, moving smoothly and silently in soft shoes.

THE LOST RALLYHORN RICHES

Lord Theldrin Rallyhorn, the inheritor of fabulous fortunes amassed by two uncles, put his wealth into land purchases, sponsoring farmers and loggers in a kindly manner and always selling holdings for several times what he'd paid for them. He didn't stint on himself or his family, but once busy at court, lacked the time and need to spend all that was his.

Desiring to provide for the future needs of his descendants and the realm, Theldrin had a huge adamantine coffin made in secret for himself, as well as a far smaller, simpler one of brass used at his funeral. The large coffin was laid ready in a vault deep beneath the Royal Palace—a chamber sealed from tunnelings and forcible entry by magics laid down by his friend Baerauble. Throughout Theldrin's life, these spells were renewed and augmented by the mage whenever Theldrin and Baerauble entered the vault to add to the Rallyhorn riches in the coffin. Before Theldrin died, they'd secretly filled the coffin to half its depth with handlength,

inch-thick bars of gold—"Some hundreds of them," Baerauble noted in a letter left to rulers after his death.

The smaller coffin, containing Theldrin's remains (including a black metal rod of office capped with fist-sized balls of gold and inset with many rubies and emeralds), was laid atop the bars, and the larger coffin closed around it. It was then sealed with Baerauble's spells, which caused the huge adamantine casket to levitate in the vault. The Lord Mage installed a dozen guardian horrors in the chamber and then sealed it, never to return.

When Aulard's wife perished, Baerauble laid her to rest in a side-vault amid objects of much beauty but not staggering value. The same was done for Aulard's son Obrynn, though not for his later children. These side-vaults opened off the passage to Theldrin's tomb, but at some distance from it; Emrylara's ghost still drifts up to Theldrin's door, vainly trying to enter.

A later monarch (carefully unidentified in court records) had need of the wealth and unsealed Theldrin's vault. The horrors were found still active, and the great coffin yet floated in midair, apparently undisturbed. Several careful days were spent penetrating Baerauble's spells—but when the coffin was finally opened, it was empty: Theldrin in his brass coffin and the many gold bars it had rested upon had vanished.

Many and mighty magics were cast in an exhaustive search for any trace of where the Rallyhorn riches might have gone, or who'd taken them—but these spells uncovered nothing. (The needy ruler had to settle for the adamantine coffin.)

The fate of Theldrin's fortune remains a mystery to this day. Mages usually suggest that the missing material must have been translocated[3] out, or a dimensional portal established within the larger coffin, affording entry to individuals who physically carried away Theldrin and his gold.

Against this must be laid the evidence that Baerauble's spells would have prevented such magics from tracelessly succeeding.

This leaves the remote likelihood that someone undid all of Baerauble's spells (reportedly overlaid so as to create a web of alarms and traps), plundered the vault, and then recast them all. If Baerauble himself, who was the only being known to be capable of such a venture, did so—why? He had no need of wealth, and no known tendency toward greed; if he thought the gold should be moved elsewhere, again, why? And where did the riches go? Cormyr still lacks answers to this day.

THE LAGARR LEGACY

One of the most troubled Obarskyr reigns was that of King Duar, a warrior hero who held the realm together through years when its survival was balanced on the sharp edge of his blade. In these perilous times befell a matter of missing wealth little talked of at the time, but much puzzled over since.

King Duar "Longyears" Obarskyr
(? DR–480 DR)[4]
A gruff, short-bearded, giant of a man possessed of mighty strength and hardiness, Duar was a great war-leader, sorely needed by a realm beset throughout his reign by many foes.

Duar left the realm larger and much stronger than when he came to the throne, with a loyal standing army of some size—and good training and equipment—for the first time in Cormyr's infancy. He did this through diplomacy and by the sword, adding the lands of Irongates Gard, Jarthroon (both now-vanished holds), and Wheloon to the kingdom.

Duar stood almost 7 feet tall, had brown hair (shot through with gray for half his life), and fierce blue-black eyes. He swung a two-handed sword almost as tall as himself in one hand and a fearsome mace in the other. In battle-legend he stands second only to Dhalmass as a warrior-king of Cormyr.

Jhanthyl Lagarr
(454 DR–510 DR)
The sharp-tongued, spirited wife of Kuthor Lagarr, Lady Lagarr stood beside the knights of Irongates and fought the warriors of Cormyr after her husband fell. She agreed to surrender without destroying an inherited enchanted item (what exactly it was I do not know) on the condition that the lives of the surviving men who'd stood defending her to the death be spared. She found the King of Cormyr to be a gentle and understanding man off the battlefield . . . a pleasant change from her cruel first husband (who spent his days drinking and his nights beating

In battle-legend Duar stands second only to Dhalmass as a warrior-king of Cormyr.

ELMINSTER'S FOOTNOTES

1. Aye, and that's the problem. If "Volo's Best" were an ale, it'd see most use as something used to swill out privy-bowls.
2. Baerauble also carried a cartload of variant titles around on his shoulders: "High Wizard of Cormyr," "Lord Wizard of Cormyr," and half a dozen other stylings, none chosen by him.
3. Though it wounds me to be reduced to the office of lecturer on the most basic concepts of magic, know ye that translocational spells are those that involve movement of beings or items from one spot to another without a visible passage between the two places. The teleport spell is perhaps the best-known translocational magic.
4. We've here spared thee from Volo's long lament as to the unwillingness of several clerks of royal records to let

her). She grew to love Duar, married him after the death of his second queen, Threena Cormaeril, and was devastated when he died years later.

Jhanthyl had shoulder-length brown hair, a lush figure, and a saucy, striking face—several courtiers wrote of her sardonically arched eyebrows and quick wit.

Kuthor Lagarr
(430 DR–475 DR)
The cruel Lord of Irongates Gard, Kuthor was a southern warlord who'd come to new lands to carve out his own hold. His rule was ruthless and efficient, and he brought many loyal warriors and servants with him. His farms prospered and grew wealthy, and he was soon able to import stonemasons from the Vilhon to raise a castle, Irongates Gard, northeast of Wheloon. Unfortunately, he'd built on land claimed by Cormyr, and his castle—seen by King Duar as a lasting threat to his rule if allowed to stand unchallenged—was finished barely in time to house his people as the knights of Cormyr swept down on the hold.

Kuthor died in his saddle fighting them, the blades of four knights meeting in his body. He is said to have gasped out, "Jhanthyl—forgive me!" before he collapsed and fell.

Kuthor had pale yellow eyes and curly red hair worn long but tied back like a woman's. He customarily wore a headband and bracers, was always seen in breeches and boots rather than hose, and sported an untidy beard and moustache. His voice was a rough roar, his temper quick and cold, and his ways were cruel; he enjoyed beating anyone close to him.

Elvrin Crownsilver
(427 DR–475 DR)
An urbane, perceptive veteran courtier at the time of his disappearance, Elvrin's youth was spent at court thanks to the troubles of the realm. Cormyr had then fallen on hard times, with the King's actual rule extending only as far as he rode from Helmstar Castle,[5] and his nobles doing much as they pleased. The wily King Duar tried to win future loyalty (and head off thoughts of rebellion by having hostages ready to hand) by requiring the heir and one other son (if such a one existed) of each noble house to come to court and be raised and trained there. Elvrin was one such; he genuinely respected the gruff King Duar, but he also saw how the kingdom worked with cynical clarity and wasn't afraid to speak of it openly.

Nevertheless, Elvrin won Duar's trust and was appointed a royal envoy and advisor. His elegant garb never varied: He always wore a tabard, silk shirt, breeches, and flaring boots, with a half-cloak displaying his family arms (three tumbling silver crowns strung along an upright, point-down, naked silver sword, on a field of dusty blue).

A LEGACY LOST

In the aftermath of Duar's conquest of Irongates Gard, Elvrin was placed in charge of a guard of some thirty warriors loyal to the crown (some of them bitter rivals of each other, no doubt chosen by the wily Duar to prevent any conspiracies involving the entire force) who were assembled over a wagon-train to transport seized Lagarr riches to Helmstar Castle.

There were some twenty-odd wagons in all, and they made the journey without pause, changing horses thrice at stables along the way—but only the foremost fourteen wagons reached Helmstar. The others "vanished in the night" along with their guards and the horses that pulled them. The disappearance was unnoticed by the surviving wagoneers.

The losses included much silver dining-ware, chests of gold coins, and a shield-sized coffer that held a vast array of gems (jewelry inherited by Kuthor Lagarr or seized during his career).

No trace of the vanished wagons was ever found; elves or brigands with magical aid (what but magic could make the wagons themselves so completely and swiftly disappear?) were suspected.

No trace of the vanished wagons was ever found; elves or brigands with magical aid were suspected.

Treachery by Elvrin Crownsilver seems unlikely; the lone remnant of the lost wagons was Elvrin's severed right hand, found lying in the road in a pool of dried blood, still clutching his sword. No other trace of Elvrin or the lost wagons and their treasure was ever found, and spells cast on the hand and sword failed to trace him or yield any information as to his fate.

him peruse writings about Duar's reign, the reason for the lack of a birthdate—385 DR, know ye—here. Suffice it to say that scribes who refrain from tearing pages out of historic diaries are more welcome thereafter than those who can't resist such vandalism. Jarthroon, by the way, stood west of Suzail on the northern shore of the Lake of Dragons, on what is now a rock-strewn but otherwise bare ridge.

5. Duar's name for Castle Obarskyr—a term that came to him in a dream, he once told me. When he had time for dreaming betwixt all the fighting and the ladies, I know not.

The Adventures of Volo

LOST TREASURES OF CORMYR, PART 3

by Ed Greenwood · illustrated by Ron Spencer

Volothamp Geddarm, at your service, gentles, setting truths of Faerûn before you like coins being hurled in a golden shower over the shoulder of a dwarf at work with his hammer, stamping coins out of soft gold. This day I write of another pair of lost treasure tales gleaned from the records of the great kingdom of Cormyr.

THE HARP OF HEALING

Debate still rages in scholarly Cormyrian circles as to whether the Forest Kingdom once either lost a great magic in the form of a harp that could heal those who touched it while it played by itself, or narrowly won freedom from a great evil.

Aubleth Crownsilver
(989 DR–1066 DR)
An always-laughing, stout-hearted hero of the knights of Cormyr, Aubleth was for some years the youngest member of King Arangor's elite Griffon Guard (an order of griffon-riding knights who acted as the eyes, envoys, and battle-commanders for the king). His lance later helped claim the life of Thauglor,* the last great dragon to hunt in Cormyr.

Aubleth was clean-shaven, wore his blond hair shoulder-long, was inclined to fat, and had amber-hued eyes. He was a close friend of Gardrath Roaringhorn; of the two, Aubleth was more the quick-tongued prankster and wit.

Gardrath Roaringhorn
(984 DR–1019 DR)
A tall, thin knight of the Griffon Guard, Gardrath helped to slay the dragon Thauglor with his close friend Aubleth. He was very much a noble in behavior and sentiments, and he had raven-black hair and piercing blue eyes that darkened noticeably when he was angry or amorous.

> He was found dead the next morning under the corpses of six of the beasts.

Gardrath's valiant service raised his family (the clan was considered noble in Waterdeep*) to ennoblement in Cormyr. He's still remembered in Purple Dragon barracks lore for his brave death: When a fever put Gardrath on his deathbed in the harsh winter of 1019, he put on his best boots, took down his best sword, and went out to hunt wolves. He was found dead the next morning under the corpses of six of the beasts.

Lareth Huntsilver
(996 DR–1059 DR)
A slender, sardonic blade of the court, Lareth befriended Halartan Wyvernspur when the latter arrived at court. When they went drinking together, Lareth's droll observations often had Halartan sputtering and snorting strong drink through his nose.

Lareth had ash-blond hair and a thin moustache, was debonair, and had a

deft way with the ladies at court, often romancing several at the same time.

He ended his days happily married to an innkeeper's daughter of common birth, Roatha Ildraen, as the Seneschal of the now-vanished road-fort of Turnstone.[3]

Aiken Wyvernspur
(1008 DR–1082 DR)
The son of Lord Gerrin Wyvernspur, Aiken had dark brown hair and eyes, a slim build and short stature, and a quiet, loyal nature. A shrewd investor and builder, Aiken solidified the family fortunes by building homes and shops in Suzail.

THE HARP THAT PLAYED BY ITSELF

At a roadside inn north of Suzail, not long after the slaying of the great dragon Thauglor, four men walking home from a night of revelry chanced upon a strange and eerie scene: In a glade just off the road, a radiance softer than firelight glowed. It proved to be coming from a floating harp whose strings were moving as if plucked by unseen hands. Diseased and maimed commoners were crawling or staggering from the trees up to it, touching it, and striding away seemingly cured. Suddenly vigorous and tall, they hurled aside crutches and shawls, laughed and shouted in joy, and ran off into the forest.

The four men on the road were all courtiers: Aubleth Crownsilver, Lareth Huntsilver, Gardrath Roaringhorn, and Aiken Wyvernspur. They were men not given to wild tales, nor were they unused to taking much drink.

The commoners seemed to melt out of the trees and run back into them, and this seemed suspicious to the four—as did the existence of the harp itself, unheard of and yet within an easy stroll of the walls of Suzail. The courtiers' duty was clear: Such a magic had to be investigated and given into the custody of the crown. The four moved into the clearing and seized the harp—whereupon the commoners melted away like smoke, both the frail and the joyous, leaving the harp lightless and silent in their hands.

The four took the harp straight to the Royal Court and presented it to the war wizard on duty. In the days that

followed, much magic was laid upon them and on the harp, trying to learn the truth about its origin and powers.

The conclusions were as follows: For unknown reasons, the harp would fall silent and remain so whenever any of the four men were within about six paces of it, but otherwise would glow, levitate to about chest-height (which was as they'd first seen it), and play tunes that no one in Suzail could identify.

Those who touched it spoke of warm feelings and the banishment of any pain from which they were suffering—but unlike the commoners seen by the four, injuries and afflictions did not pass from the bodies of such persons and their pains soon returned.

> The harp would levitate and play tunes that no one in Suzail could identify.

One war wizard of the time, Thamaeler Mornalar, advanced his suspicions that the harp cast magics on the minds of those who touched it directly (that is, with their bare skin) while it was playing—magics that seemed to sleep but remain in their thoughts.

When spells were cast to cleanse and banish all magics from those who'd touched the harp, many of them reacted with momentary rage and brief but frenzied attacks on folk around them. The frenzy ceased as the magical cleansing took effect.

Aubleth Crownsilver hadn't been given to sleepwalking before the appearance of the harp, but on a night some months after he helped bring it to Suzail, he burst into the room where it was kept, striking senseless both a doorguard and a war wizard whilst in his sleep, and tried to tear the harp apart with his bare hands.

Wild harp music resounded throughout the Royal Court, carrying to impossible distances and arousing many. Guards and war wizards burst into the chamber to find a translucent apparition of a robed human woman—presumably a sorceress, of rather plain countenance but burning, intent eyes—standing in the air above the harp. Lightning crackling from her hands seemed to be simultaneously reassembling the shattered harp and draining the life from the writhing Aubleth. When hastily hurled spells interrupted this process, the apparition glared at them, then vanished—with the harp.

The woman wasn't seen again, but the harp appeared in many places around Cormyr all through that night, flashing into existence whilst playing loudly and vanishing as quickly. Its music aroused many who'd touched it on previous occasions to rise from their beds and attack others, go to saddle horses, walk purposefully to particular places, and so on. Affected people soon ceased performing their acts, and those so ensorceled had no knowledge of why they'd undertaken such actions or how they'd reached their present locations.

The wasted, withered Aubleth Crownsilver recovered his health completely, but he never remembered anything of his actions or any other events of that evening.

The Harp of Healing has, according to tavern and fireside tales, been seen from time to time around Cormyr ever since, though more recent sightings have been few and separated by decades or entire generations. Many folk say it's a sign of the favor of the gods towards Cormyr, a hope to the injured and afflicted of the realm.

Thamaeler held rather darker conclusions and insisted that his thoughts be recorded in both court records and the annals of the Brotherhood of Wizards of War. He felt that the harp was a device used by a powerful wizard or wizards unknown to bring the minds of many Cormyrians under their magical control for some future purpose probably hostile to the realm or at least to the rule of the Obarskyrs.

Some war wizards believe the sorceress was Thayan, still others that she serves an exiled noble family, the Cult of the Dragon, the Zhentarim, or a Sembian conspiracy; all such beliefs, it must be remembered, are sheer speculation.

Most common folk of Cormyr believe the Harp of Healing is a good thing that was sent by the gods and that the crown attempted to seize for itself—but which by the grace of the gods who sent it escaped, to wander Cormyr playing by itself.

To this day, pranksters, brigands, and rogues often play harps at night to try to draw folk into the forest. Such music brings war wizards and Purple Dragons alike to full and wary alertness. They are likely to deal less than gently with such harpists they apprehend.

ELMINSTER'S FOOTNOTES

1. In full, as dragons style such things, "Thauglorimorgorus, the Black Doom." As for Volo's foolish comment about the "last great dragon to hunt in Cormyr," know ye that such words are a beckoning horn-call to dragons everywhere to descend on the fair Forest Kingdom in fury, just to prove Volo wrong—as if such proof were needed.

2. This is true, though blood relations no longer seem—if they ever were—any measure of common cause, loyalty, looks, or behavior. The Roaringhorns in both places are known for a certain lusty boldness, one might say; others have termed it "recklessness," "boorish impetuosity," and worse. Mind that ye do not confuse the Roaringhorns with the Rallyhorns; duels get started that way.

THE BLACKSTONE GHOST

These same four friends were involved in another matter of lost treasure soon after finding the Harp of Healing: the haunted manor of Blackstone and its missing owners and wealth.

Blackstone stood on the west bank of the Starwater River atop a high, rocky ridge on the inside of the great curve where Starwater turns to rush down to the sea. The same ridge is visible today as an otherwise bare, sheep-grazed hill topped only by a Purple Dragon lookout tower. In those days, a thick wood cloaked the ridge, and Blackstone—today only a shrub-choked dell of tumbled stones, where the manor collapsed into its own cellars—rose like a black, many-fingered hand among them.

Blackstone was the seat of the Theresparin, a swiftly-rising family of weavers and landowners most known to their fellow Cormyrians for their large herds of sheep.

There came a day when the fussy, careful-over-details head of the house, Naronder Theresparin, failed to appear at a long-awaited meeting with court officials. Then other appointments were missed, and it dawned on authorities and neighbors that none of the Theresparin—or their servants—had been seen for some days.

Mindful of their experiences with the Harp (and its aftermath, wherein their eager cooperation surprised him), the king sent Aubleth Crownsilver, Lareth Huntsilver, Gardrath Roaringhorn, and Aiken Wyvernspur to investigate.

They found Blackstone utterly empty—stripped to the walls, with no sign of life. The only sign of death was a huge bloodstain, such as could only have been made by the shed life-blood of many humans or lesser numbers of larger creatures. This stain covered most of the floor of the grand, ornately-balconied feast hall.

The four courtiers explored Blackstone from top to bottom, even to its drains, cellars, and roofs (murderers in those days had begun to leave bodies on rooftops for carrion birds and the weather to dispose of), but found nothing more. Two of them stood guard while the other two fetched war wizards to try spell-searching the emptiness.

They, too, found nothing. The Theresparin, their servants, and all the furnishings and riches[4] of their house—even to the horses and fodder in the stables—had disappeared, never to be seen again. To this day, no one knows what became of them, though for everyone but those who dwelt near, the tale soon faded into an oddity of the past.

> It dawned on authorities and neighbors that none of the Theresparin had been seen for days.

Whispers about Blackstone being haunted were born of what befell the four courtiers after their first day of searching. They decided to remain in the house and sleep in watches, suspecting that brigands in the woods might have stripped the house—and just might return to search its walls for secret passages and the like, perhaps having tortured information out of captives as to the whereabouts of secret hiding places.

No brigands appeared, but the four courtiers did hear a tremulous woman's voice whispering nigh their ears. No visible person was speaking. Their blades passed through where such a person should have been. It said such things as, "Gone, all gone away," and, "Elven work, without a doubt."

Lareth Huntsilver alone heard another voice, male, this time, speaking dreamily or uncaringly: "The blood calls them down. There is no escaping them." and, much later, "Watch for the sword that turns into a pegasus. She who bears it can break the gates."

Who these ghostly speakers were, and what they meant, can only remain a matter of conjecture—for two nights after the four heard these voices (and a night after war wizards had scoured Blackstone as thoroughly as they knew how), the manor house burned like a torch despite being almost bare stones inside and out, blazing away with a blistering heat that almost melted its walls. Shortly before morning, it collapsed into the state in which it lies today—and in later years was reclaimed by the crown, who awaits the possible return of the vanished Theresparins.

3. Turnstone, know ye, stood on the east side of Calantar's Way north of Immersea. Lareth made himself quite a fortune and reputation raising swift and beautiful horses there, and selling them to all who passed by—including me. He had three little daughters, rough-and-tumble spitfires as I recall; they pelted me with apples for fun, so I enspelled three little spheres of water out of the horse pond—one to drench each tousled little blonde head. Collect such memories, mind ye, as ye go through life; that remembered moment is all that's left of those lasses now.

4. These were estimated by their scribe-of-accounts at the time to muster over 80,000 gold coins, plus several times that in gems and trade-bars, hidden or stored in a dozen places that he knew of.

The Adventures of Volo

LOST TREASURES OF CORMYR, PART 4

by Ed Greenwood · illustrated by Ron Spencer

Volothamp Geddarm at your service, gentles, setting forth truths of the Realms like one last, glittering handful of gems cast like dice onto a gaming-table, to the gasps of less wealthy gamblers. Yes, this day I write of my last pair of "lost treasure tales" thus far gleaned from the records of the great kingdom of Cormyr.

The Hullack Hawk

In the days when Hullack was independent and Cormyr and Sembia struggled for control of Marsember and what is now eastern Cormyr, the "Hawk" was an outlaw who stole much Sembian gold and retreated into the Hullack Forest, providing Sembia with an excuse to invade Cormyr.

King Pryntaler Obarskyr
(1164 DR–1210 DR)

A hot-blooded, broad-shouldered warrior for much of his life, Pryntaler shrank in his later years into a tall, thin, almost gaunt king of indifferent health. With his illness, he astonished all by setting aside rashness, becoming wise, observant, considerate of others, and a diplomat of accomplished penmanship.

Pryntaler was brave, had piercing blue eyes, close-cut brown hair and beard, and faultless skill at dancing in youth and later age–but only at in his gray years could he have been called "cool-headed."

Eltrym Drauthglas
Lord of Hullack
(1128 DR–1202 DR)

Tall, dignified, gray-bearded, and balding, Eltrym was a widower who lost his four sons fighting Cormyr. To keep his six daughters (eldest to youngest: Jalalla, Theera, Ghaunyl, Ileeyra, Ormarra, and Yolara) from being slain or ravished if the Purple Dragons destroyed Hullack Hall, he surrendered–and Pryntaler allowed him to keep his title and powers.

The two men became friends who met often to play chess, drink wine, and discuss the business of Cormyr and the bright young men and women who'd lead it in the future. Eltrym was a good warrior and hunter before a horse rolled over him in battle, crippling him.

Donder Cormaeril
(1155 DR–1206 DR)

Head of House Cormaeril in his time, Donder was tall, laconic, moustachioed, and a deadly swordsman–quite a dashing figure as he "rode the realm." His hair was brown and his eyes green, and he raised and trained magnificent horses–escaping Jarthoon on one after defying its lord Ongmar. Ongmar had given Donder the choice of declaring against the King, or death; Donder's reply was to draw steel, wound Ongmar as he tumbled the rebel across the room as a shield against the hurled daggers of Ongmar's men, and then leap through a high window to the courtyard below to make his escape.

Althallan Crownsilver
(1157 DR–1212 DR)

Briefly patriarch of the Crownsilvers, Althallan was a small, catlike man with almost feminine good looks (notably, large indigo eyes and magnificent red hair) and a quick wit. Agile in a fight, he had a prodigious capacity for drink, once springing up to fight and slay a would-be assassin after a drinking-bout that left fellow nobles reeling. His favorite weapons were two slim, needle-like longswords–and many hurled tankards!

Chanthar Huntsilver
(1162 DR–1203 DR)

The longtime head of his house, Chanthar was a proud, "difficult" man with a red moustache, hair banished by disease (he always wore a hat and was very sensitive to jests and remarks about hair or baldness), and a flamboyant wardrobe.

Talking with King Pryntaler in camp, he once hurled himself forward to take an assassin's blade, slashing open the man's face so the King had time to draw steel, step in front of his queen (who insisted on traveling with him), and strike the assailant down.

Beldarm Truesilver
(1169 DR–1235 DR)

A burly, broken-nosed, good-natured warrior, possessed of unruly brown hair and a profusion of facial moles and sores, Beldarm spent years struggling to keep his impoverished family in

possession of their ancestral keep. A Sembian agent offered him much gold to betray his king to an assassin (the one Althallan Crownsilver slew), and Beldarm agreed. This was observed by an eavesdropper, Lady Auleethaea Cormaeril, who fled to tell the Queen.

Queen Alvandira grimly mustered armsmen and hastened off in search of Beldarm. In his apartments they found a manservant, who eyed their grim faces and drawn steel and told them his master had gone to the King.

"The King!" Queen Alvandira hissed, and they sprinted to the royal apartments of Helmstar Castle—to find Pryntaler pouring Beldarm a drink.

The noble had just reported all to his king and offered to surrender his sword and enter a dungeon cell, or to play along with the assassin, whichever Pryntaler preferred.

In the general relief, the Queen espied a man slipping away and hurled her dagger at him—but missed. She then announced grimly, "I think we can assume the assassin will know he can't depend on Truesilver aid."

Lady Auleethaea Cormaeril (1176 DR–1264 DR)

A quiet, rather plain, and very observant lady-in-waiting to Queen Alvandira, Auleethaea's diaries are the modern reader's guide to Pryntaler's handling of a tense confrontation with the Lord of Hullack, his avoidance of two assassination attempts sponsored by Sembian interests, and his foiling of an attempted rebellion by the young Ongmar Jarthoon.

Auleethaea had full access to the King and Queen, and she spent much of her time silent, eyes downcast, waiting to scurry and carry out any royal order; she was thus well placed to see everything that befell.

Auleethaea had ash-blonde hair, green eyes, and delicate features and skin—a petite and nicely-gowned noblewoman who saw far more than she appeared to take any interest in, and confided much to her diary.

The Hawk Swoops

Cormyrean scholars make much of the never-seen "Hullack Hawk" as a trumped-up Sembian excuse to invade the Forest Kingdom, but the loss of much wealth (from six pillaged warehouses and two sacked and burned estates—those of the merchant families Estcrar and Palindoemyn—near Daerlun) was very real. Estimates pegged the Hawk's takings from these specific raids at more than 300,000 gold coins, much of it in ready coin and trade-bars.

Just where that wealth lies is still a mystery. Outlaws, beasts, and elves mount swift and deadly strikes at anyone brave enough to mount a concerted search into the depths of Hullack Forest even today.

I, Volo, have delved rather deeper than most writers on this subject.[2] Hints in Auleethaea's writings, supported by other records, suggest that the Hawk might have been Beldarm Truesilver, operating with the aid and under the direction of Donder Cormaeril and Althallan Crownsilver, who had their own private scheme to weaken western Sembian holdings and blame it on the Lord of Hullack rather than Cormyr.

Beldarm was wounded and forced to abandon his takings—which might still lie, unburied but overgrown, somewhere just inside Hullack Forest—by Chanthar Huntsilver, who thought he'd caught a rebel or at least a brigand.

When Chanthar called on Donder and Althallan for aid in "hunting down the Hawk," they managed to lead him astray, allowing Beldarm time to escape. Let me be the first to tell the waiting world that the legend of the Hawk was their invention, spread by rumor as enthusiastically as they knew how.

The Missing Wagon

At the close of the reign of King Dhalmass, Conqueror of Marsember and Scourge of the Stonelands, there were murmurs of unrest among wealthy families he'd punished in Arabel and Marsember. Knives were drawn in darkness to take the life of the brawling, wenching king.

A few Purple Dragons fell as those knives struck in practise; documents and even courtiers went missing. No open strife broke out, for the King seemed to change his mind about many things ere he died,[3] but one crime did befall as the tension built: A Purple Dragon paywagon vanished somewhere on the roads of eastern Cormyr.

King Dhalmass Obarskyr, "the Warrior King" (1186 DR–1227 DR)

The most famous warrior of the Obarskyrs, Dhalmass stood well over six feet tall, broad-shouldered and burly. His ice-blue eyes "snapped" when he was angry, and his voice was a deep roar that carried far over the tumult of battle. His nose was a sharp beak, and his long, flowing hair, longer beard, and bristling eyebrows were light blond, almost white.

Prodigiously strong and fast, Dhalmass spent years riding his borders and scouring the land of brigands, orcs, and other monsters. He once defended Cormyr against the full fury of an orc horde—a host thousands strong—with a force a tenth the size, fighting and riding day and night, moving his men about as swiftly as possible by darting from castle to castle for fresh horses, and riding down orc warbands whenever he could catch them.

Orngrym Cormaeril (1196 DR–1249 DR)

This effete, slim-moustachioed, raven-haired warrior was head of House Cormaeril in his time. A veteran battle-knight with cold green eyes and a lightning-fast blade, Orngrym rode at the King's shoulder in most battles and was known for singing at the height of the fray. He was one of those rare men who truly enjoyed fighting, and his swiftness and skill saved the life of his King many times.

For this Orngrym was made a Duke, though it was made clear to all that the

dukedom would die with him. When it did, Orngrym had enjoyed a long, full, and lusty life, turning after the death of Dhalmass to a "retirement" of hunting and training young knights for the crown.

He once demonstrated the ineffectiveness of a watchpost garrison by attacking them alone and unarmed. Without killing anyone, he won his way through all twenty of them to seize the banner from the top of their watchtower.

Ardagast Falconhand
(1187 DR–1246 DR)
This grim-faced, close-mouthed huntsman was head of the King's Scouts for most of the reign of King Dhalmass (and, yes, was an ancestor of Florin Falconhand of the Knights of Myth Drannor). As tall as his King but far more slender, he had a nose every bit as large and sharp, but he also had a craggy face, glittering blue-black eyes, and pale brown hair that was white at his temples. Ardagast fought with a curved saber and a small arsenal of throwing knives.

Tharim Roaringhorn
(1185 DR–1227 DR)
Head of House Roaringhorn when the wagon went missing, this loud, hearty, burly man had a long, wild mane of brown hair, dark brown eyes, a huge and bristling moustache, and an ever-ready armory of warhammers and axes. Always roaring and laughing, Tharim was an irritation to quieter courtiers, but an inspiration in battle; his spirits never flagged, and he hewed down orcs as a farmer scythes grain.

Elbryn Scatterstars
(1192 DR–1227 DR)
A slim, cultured man who liked falconry, fine wines, and getting rich through shrewd shipping deals, Elbryn headed the Scatterstars as they rose from court service to attain nobility—largely through his smooth service to Dhalmass, who increasingly appreciated Elbryn's discretion and thoughtfulness regarding the treatment of guests and the running of the Palace.

Elbryn had blond hair, a moustache, green eyes, a fine-boned face, and a seemingly endless and quietly elegant wardrobe.

Nelnar Orthwood
(1191 DR–1227 DR)
This soft-spoken noble was head of a rising noble family until its power was smashed by his death—he was stabbed by a son, Nars, whose treachery against the throne Nelnar had just discovered. The Orthwoods were then heavily in debt, and the Crown seized their holdings to pay off their creditors, stripping them of noble status but providing Nelnar's widow Freeyel and daughters Taeronissa and Imroserel with a house of their own on royal estates east of the Starwater, and modest annual funds to live on.

Nelnar had flowing brown hair (which he wore as long as many a maid's), was clean-shaven, and had pale blue eyes. He was usually seen smiling absently and quaffing sherry from a belt flask.

Bardanther Uleeyon
(1177 DR–?)
A grizzled ex-warrior who'd turned to magic in later life and was gifted in its use, Bardanther's worldly experience and shrewdness made him a war wizard more capable than most. He soon became a "special agent," dealing with the most puzzling and delicate situations the realm handed its rulers.

Bardanther was a short, weather-beaten man given to plain dress and carrying a concealed knife at all times. He often "shepherded" novice war wizards through duties they found difficult and distasteful (evaluating them as he did so).

Bardanther himself was tempted by offers of great wealth, a chance to gain great magical power, and the pleasures of the flesh in tests covertly arranged by war wizard superiors—and every time proved his loyalty to law, king, and country.

Waevor's Wagon
The pay-wagon that went missing was commanded by Thandor Waevor, a Purple Dragon lancelord, but violent illness (possibly caused by a poison or spell covertly administered to him) caused him to send it on without him—under its usual guard of seven warriors and two war wizards (one a novice and the other a capable, loyal veteran).

Somewhere north of Marsember, the wagon vanished—horses, guards, its cargo of some sixty thousand silver pieces, and all.

The senior war wizard who disappeared with it, Bardanther Uleeyon, was wearing a Purple Dragon ring (a token that allows a wearer access to the monarch, or as if holding senior royal rank) at the time. In those days such items could not be readily traced by war wizards' spells—and this is one of only three (it's thought) such rings whose whereabouts are now unknown.

Ere it vanished, the wagon was encountered on the roads—thundering along after dark with no lamps lit and no outriders—by encamped riders on an escort mission for the Crown to greet and conduct a Sembian trade envoy safely to a meeting in Immersea.

The wagon was heard and seen by no less than the nobles Orngrym Cormaeril, Nelnar Orthwood, Tharim Roaringhorn, and Elbryn Scatterstars; it actually struck and hurled aside the latter two. Orngrym took to horse and went roaring off after the wagon, and Nelnar sent a huntsman in camp, Ardagast Falconhand, to also take up the chase. Orngrym soon lost all trace of the wagon, but the huntsman took a different trail, and caught up with what he believes was the wagon, racing along in the dark. He got close enough to reach for its rear rail—only to be hurled off his horse by a spear suddenly thrust out of the rear window-flap of the conveyance; it would have spitted him had he not been wearing a belt-of-plates under his leathers.

No trace of the wagon was ever found, and the fate of its guards and cargo remains a mystery to this day.

Elminster's Footnotes

1. And last, know ye, for some time to come—if Volo's precipitous flight from the Royal Court at Suzail is any indication. His efforts at good behavior grow no greater—nor more successful. Only his luck at staying alive outstrips the folly of his wayward ways. Theft and vandalism of royal records, indeed. 'Tis also wisest not to grope furious court librarians, no matter how enticing their forms and garb might be. I would ne'er do such a thing. Ahem.
2. As usual (sigh).
3. Readers of Chapter 26 of *Cormyr: A Novel* (Ed Greenwood and Jeff Grubb, TSR, 1996) know why.

The Adventures of VOLO

THE URGE TO HUNT

by Ed Greenwood · illustrated by Ron Spencer

Volothamp Geddarm at your service, gentles, setting truths of the Realms before you like a rare and strange beast, slain by hunters, the likes of which not one astonished observer has ever seen before. On this occasion, I write of two hunts currently gaining popularity and importance in Faerûn. The squeamish should be aware that this won't be a catalog of gory trophies nor an enthusiastic description of slaying after slaying, but (as the scribe Asgerlan Burtrann once described his controversial work *Cormyrian Customs And Scandals*), "a brief and tasteful inquiry into interesting social pastimes and their effects."[1]

The Dark Dragon Hunt

Pirate depredations killed the early Sembian "noble"[2] pastime of voyaging to monster-infested "Wild Isles" in the Sea of Fallen Stars for beast hunts centuries ago. Yet Sembians like to think of themselves as valiant, risk-taking hunters; those who doubt this given their general tendency to obesity and love of luxuries need only glance at the many hunting scenes on tapestries hanging in inns, taverns, and private homes. Many Sembians retain a thirst for hunting and pay large sums to be taken on boar hunts in the Dales, or to hunt more exotic game farther afield.

An enterprising pirate by the name of Endreth Molipher (who became involved with slavers and found it prudent to stage his own death in a shipwreck and "drop out of the trade" for a time) hit upon an idea after a harrowing experience in 1359 DR.

He was hired to kidnap a reclusive wizard, Onsible Draung, and deliver him as a blinded, tongueless, and handless slave to serve on the rowing-benches of a trading galley operating out of Westgate. Molipher managed to seize and subdue Draung, but he almost died under the claws and jaws of the wizard's monstrous guardians.

Under torture, Onsible revealed that he was in the habit of collecting monsters on his travels, subduing them with spells, and feeding them with lesser beasts produced by captive deepspawn. Molipher fulfilled his commission and returned to the wizard's estate—to find it being ransacked and blasted apart by greedy Sembian wizards in search of magic.

Aided by several minor wizards among these scavengers who were eager to earn easy fees for a task that would temporarily remove them from what was becoming a vicious many-sided spell-duel,[3] Molipher caged and carried away the deepspawn, sailing them to the large but undeveloped pirate island of Storna,[4] notable only for the dangerous shoals that surround it and its tiny, dangerous, rocky harbor (festooned with the remnants of many shipwrecks).

There Molipher built a dwelling and entered into a formal pact with three wizards whose identities he prefers to

ELMINSTER'S FOOTNOTES

1 "Tasteful" is a word whose boundaries folk seldom agree upon. It must be noted that the good Volo fails to apprise the reader of the fate of Asgerlan: He was dragged to death behind a horse on the orders of Throrton Marliir, for "staining the good names and characters of the fine families of the realm, and thereby besmirching all Cormyr, and moreover laying bare diverse secrets and weaknesses of the kingdom to all of its foes possessed of the ability to read, or listen to what others read aloud—which might well include a few Sembians."

2 That is, an activity undertaken by the richest Semmar—that's what we used to call them, though the term seems little used these days—merchants to show their less fortunate fellow Sembians just how wealthy they were. It was rare to have idle time enough for such dangerous and expensive pursuits. Therefore, look ye, how special they were.

3 This struggle is known to have caused the deaths of the wizards Ieirgyn Malaunt of Ordulin, Gargreth Mraeyvyn of Hillsfar, and at least a dozen minor wizards. The estate—formerly a wooded, walled triangle of land in the western reaches of the city of Saerloon with Draung's plain, simple stone tower at its center—was ultimately reduced to a smoking pit. Wild magic yet lingers there, though new homes have been raised on the site. No trace of trees, walls, or tower remains. At least one combatant was forced into the shape of a phantom fungus, a prison from which he's yet to be released; he's rumored to wander farm woodlots near Saerloon or lurk in its cellars or sewers.

4 An isle still not on most charts. Seek it a day or so south and west of the Dragonisle, close to the city of Telpir.

5 Know ye that they are, in fact, the fat, gluttonous, and wine-loving Halartan Groune of Drelt (a hunters' hamlet northeast of Daerlun); the cold, shrewd, and secretive investor Orbel Mhaerouzan of Saerloon; and the adventurer and legendary seducer of highborn ladies Gorstal Hammers of Telpir. If ye feel a hankering to rid the

Answer to Mind Blast: RING GATES (RESTAGING)

keep secret.[5] Each of them brings him magically subdued monsters whenever they can capture such beasts, and each of them has a hideaway ("magical cache" would perhaps be a more accurate term) on the island. Using the deepspawn to produce enough wild, roaming food, Molipher raises monsters on Storna and sails them, caged, to Yhaunn, for release into a large, wooded hunting preserve on the northern edge of Sembia. Every season, his agents start rumors of particularly rare and deadly beasts to be defeated in the "Dark Dragon Hunt"—and each year, increasing numbers of wealthy Sembians pay handsomely for the pleasure of being guided through the bogs, thickets, and rolling hills of "the Dark Dragon Lands."

There is no dark Dragon, and never has been, but Molipher has found that his guests like the thrill of danger his tales of a ghostly guardian dragon bring. It drives the more fearful among them into hiring some of his men as guides, and not wanting to incur "the dragon's displeasure" is his convenient excuse for not repairing the old ruined castle he uses as a hunting lodge into the palatial opulence that Sembians expect elsewhere.

The castle, built as the hold of a self-styled "Duke Baraudos" in the days when Sembia was young, has many deep and rather damp storage cellars, and in one of these Molipher keeps hidden some beast-trophies (claws, stuffed heads, and the like). Hopeless hunters are always convinced (with the help of drink and beautiful companions) to spend a last night at the secluded Haunted Lake Lodge, and there, after they are put to bed, one of Molipher's wizards puts vivid images of a fearsome monster attack—and their valor in slaying the beast—into their dreams. When they awaken, they are treated with awe, told of their prowess, and presented with a suitable monster trophy of "their" kill.

Molipher isn't loathe to sell discreet wizards and alchemists either live beasts or body parts and essences for their work. His staff needs provide solid career opportunities for folk who like to work magic, but they lack the ambition or ruthless, danger-dismissing nature necessary to really rise in the world as independent wizards. One can enjoy a good life, some excitement, and light work duties in the Dark Dragon Lands while pursuing magical studies in a relaxed manner—and there's often a chance for some real rewards, and peril, if one of Molipher's wizard partners needs magical assistance with a task or on an expedition.

In recent years, Molipher is known to have stocked the Dark Dragon Lands with a chimera, fifty or so wild boar, two behir, several manticores, a dozen lions, a wyvern, a stinger, a water naga (put into Haunted Lake, and still not slain), and even a beholder that is blinded in several eyes. Molipher himself is known to own and use at least two griffon steeds, and to have acquired enough magic items to escape alive from several confrontations with hostile Sembian wizards.

Just in the last few months, a disquieting rumor has surfaced in Ordulin and Yhaunn: For a fee, folk whose disappearance is desired can be kidnapped, transformed into beast-shape by magic, and released in the Dark Dragon Lands during a hunt, to be brought down by eager Sembian hunters.

The Black Bucket Hunt

A new and dangerous pastime has erupted among the bored and jaded nobles of Waterdeep. There have been only two annual "Black Bucket Hunts" thus far, but their wild proceedings have led no less than Khelben "Blackstaff" Arunsun to publicly warn: "I've been meaning to fill up Undermountain for some time now. This just might do it."

Fill up Undermountain? The greatest tourist attraction—and brigand removal service—of the great city of Waterdeep? It appears that wizards don't think before they speak any more

than kings do. Still, this tendency makes grand pronouncements prime entertainment.

This could, of course, be an empty threat, uttered to make participants curb their deeds. If I must hear threats, archmages at least have the vocabulary to make them interesting. I'd love to hear Elminster, The Simbul, and Khelben all threaten each other . . . from a safe distance away. Half a continent or so should be about right, don't you think?

The Black Bucket Hunt is undertaken by drunken, thrill-seeking nobles at a revel chosen by mutual agreement (thus far hosted by the Kothonts and then the Urmbrusks), and staged by a mysterious group of masked women sponsored by many senior nobles. From a large, battered, and fire-scorched bucket, small tokens are selected by participants, dividing them randomly into teams—often grouped with rivals and longtime foes.

The bucket is then filled with rubies and a dozen tokens that each exempt the bearer from all city fines, fees, and taxes for a year. It is then magically transported away (in a showy process of spellcastings, monster-summonings, and the like) to "a secret corner of Undermountain."

The teams (usually eight or more groups of at least six folk each) are then dressed in ridiculous, magically-luminous costumes and conducted through the city in a raucous parade to locales where they're teleported or shown down through cellars into Undermountain. The area where the Hunt occurs is, 'tis said, scoured of monsters thrice before the event begins,[6] and many passages temporarily walled off to largely seal it away from most of sprawling, dangerous Undermountain. Moreover, so the whispers go, Halaster himself approves of this hunt, and takes no part in frustrating or endangering it.

Nevertheless, there are some "monsters"—usually human skeletons, spiders with paralyzing bites, and the like—to be met with in the Hunting Ground, as well as unpleasant features like dung-slides, garbage heaps, and "perfume bombs" (rubbery spheres filled with cheap, strong, less-than-pleasant liquid scents) that participants can find and hurl at predators and each other.

The first team to lay hands on the Black Bucket is magically transported—all of its members at once, regardless of their condition or location—back to the revel, to divide their loot publicly (often in a violent squabble).

The luminous costumes are usually of pink, yellow, or orange flimsy cloth, and sport waggling tails, exaggerated bird beaks and wings, forests of small dangling arms, and the like. They provide the Hunt's only sources of illumination. During the hunt, participants are often stripped (so as to be left in the dark) by rival teams or even members of their own team, and although efforts are made to ban the use of armor, magic items, and weapons by participants, some always sneak in.

The Hunt usually includes a few murders, much violence, and a large number of wounded, senseless, or scared participants (the latter wandering cold and lost) who must be rounded up by a team of Watchful Order wizards and armsmen after the prize has been found.

Given the potential for slaying, maiming, or disfiguring foes, it seems surprising that so many nobles eagerly and avidly participate—but despite the silliness and relatively (to a noble) paltry prize to be won, "winning" the Hunt carries a considerable cachet among Waterdhavians of all social standing. Strangers and commoners who've been part of the two winning teams thus far have found doors opened for them in social circles, guilds, and both informal cabals and formal circles of investors all over the city. The Hunt is gaining fame and popularity, with word reaching up and down the Sword Coast, and Waterdhavians are speaking of it to outlanders with pride!

Between Hunts, the Bucket itself can be seen on display (under heavy and magically-assisted guard, after several successful "snatch" attempts) in the entry hall of Piergeiron's Palace.

Priests of many major faiths attend each Hunt to heal participants (healing fees are paid by the sponsoring nobles, not the hunters), and at the second hunt several "consolation prizes" (notably a huge silver tankard whose lid was topped with a sculpted, bejeweled beholder) were awarded to hunters who took particularly spectacular pratfalls or intrepid actions.

It seems several wizards will be allowed to cast modified *arcane eye* spells at future Hunt-revels (under strict Watchful Order supervision, to prevent all other magics from being cast into the Hunting Ground) that allow revelers to watch Hunt proceedings from afar (what the *arcane eye* sees being "projected" into the air as a large, floating vertical image). Only two such spells were managed at the last Hunt (none were cast at the first). These showed Guster Ilitul strangling Delbert Thorp during a battle between teams, and thrusting Thorp's body underwater, and an amorous encounter of great passion and acrobatic skill between Tlannada Gralhund and Daervin Husteem, undertaken in a room awash in cherry fruit jelly transported in onto their heads for the occasion by a mischievous Arsten Thunderstaff II. Both scenes were reported to be highly entertaining, and revelers loudly desired more extensive viewing of future Hunts.

Inevitably, betting on various outcomes of the Hunt has begun. In other events, such a "raising of the stakes" has led to violence, deception, and an escalation of weaponry—but in the Black Bucket Hunt, such tendencies were well underway, regardless.

The origin of the Bucket itself remains mysterious, by the way, though there are the inevitable rumors of its having magical powers, a sinister ultimate purpose, and sacred significance to at least one cult.

Realms of a wizard or three, feel free to choose these fellows; we'll not keenly feel their loss.

6 This is true, for I've seen the adventurers hired to do so. They're usually expendable sorts from outside the city, but they are always well-paid (and bribed even more highly by this noble family's agent and then that one, to leave a note, concealed weapon, false black bucket, or the like in the area they're scouring).

To make things more adventurous for these hirelings, there are even signs that some of the predators who inhabit Undermountain have begun to anticipate the event, and they gather to feed on the adventurers or the hunters who soon follow.

7 "Approves of" is a phrase I'd avoid here; let it be said rather that the entertainment it affords Halaster amuses him sufficiently that he deigns not to deliberately slay or entrap participants.

FORGOTTEN REALMS

VOLO'S GUIDE

Well met again, gentles all!

'Tis I, the famous wayfarer, fearless adventurer, and companion-to-kings Volothamp Geddarm, better known across all Faerun as "Volo," at thy service.

Despite what divers wizards, petty rulers, and angry husbands have claimed from time to time, the only service of worth I can offer is as a guide to secrets, forgotten treasures, and too-little-known colorful details of life in the Realms.

Wherefore, here I am, redeemed by the good offices of no less notorious a personage than Elminster, the sage of Shadowdale, known to many as a puissant wizard-but to far fewer as the sometime lover of divine Mystra, the goddess of magic herself! Once more I tread fair kingdoms and perilous wilderlands, and return to share lore that's exciting, or essential to your survival, or just plain juicy.

Few of us have sat kingly thrones, and fewer still have lowered backsides onto magic thrones. I have. Of some sittings, such as upon the cozy lap of Queen -----, I dare not speak, for fear of losing my head. Yet I am nonetheless proud to bring you what follows.

If it pleases, I urge you to remember with favor the name of:

Volo
(Volothamp Geddarm)

Lost Regalia of the North: The Toppled Thrones

by Eric L. Boyd, with special introduction by Ed Greenwood • illustrated by Andrew Hou

The detritus of countless kingdoms litters the Forgotten Realms, but nowhere is that more true than in the Savage Frontier. The lands of the North have always been rich in resources but particularly inhospitable to civilization and, as a result, for millennia kingdoms have risen and fallen with astonishing regularity along the Swordsea coast and the banks of the rivers Dessarin and Delimibiyr. Nonetheless, every petty lordling and would-be tyrant to plant a banner in the North seems to have been convinced that he or she was the progenitor of a dynasty that would stretch for generations and, as such, required regalia befitting his or her station. Due to such dreams, treasure hordes throughout the Savage Frontier are littered with the crests, crowns, rings, scepters, swords of state, and thrones of minor princelings long forgotten by history.

Thrones are often enchanted both to protect those who sit on them and to impress those who seek an audience before them. Many such seats of power exhibit an array of magical powers commensurate with that of a minor artifact or relic. Typically, each throne is unique, reflecting the history of the realm for which it was created. Although rarely found, the discovery of an ancient throne in a dragon's horde or lost amid the rubble of some ancient ruin by a company of adventurers betokens wealth and power far beyond that imbued in most objects enspelled by the Art. The following

is an accounting of some of the more noteworthy seats of power from ages past and the historical context of the realms that gave birth to them.

Bloodbone Throne of Uruth

Many treasures of Uruth Ukrypt were plundered under the baneful gaze of the Kingslayer Star in the Year of the Dracorage (1018 DR), including the *Bloodbone Throne of Uruth*. The seat of Uruth Ukrypt's first three kings was lost to Shammagar the black dragon during his plundering of the dwarf-built citadel of Melairrin. More than three centuries later, the wyrm lost the *Bloodbone Throne* in turn to Asilther Graelor, a beautiful half-elven rogue now famous for her theft of nearly his entire hoard.

Asilther is thought to have sent the royal seat of Uruth Ukrypt to the Herald's Holdfast for archival during her hasty disposition of the dragon's hoard, but, if she actually did so, it never arrived. It is almost certain she does not have the throne, for an intercepted missive from Mintiper Moonsilver to the Harpers of Berdusk indicates his concern at its mystifying disappearance during an ambush near the town of Nesmé. Of late, there have been some reports from the southwestern reaches of the High Forest of an antlered orc king who sits atop a bone throne bathed in blood, but whether or not such tales are true, let alone refer to the *Bloodbone Throne*, are unknown at this time.

Fashioned from the skulls and bones of the fallen defenders of Uthtower and Phalorm, the *Bloodbone Throne of Uruth* resembles a heap of shattered skeletons more than 12 feet in diameter and 10 feet in height, magically fused into a single seat of power. The polished skulls of six princes of Phalorm are paired to serve as steps up to the seat of the throne, itself shaped from the ribcage of a great crag cat of the North. The back of the throne is shaped in the form of a triangular stack of skulls, each sporting the single eye of Gruumsh.

Whomever sits atop the *Bloodbone Throne of Uruth* can call on its significant magical powers. These powers include the ability to enshroud the throne with the malevolent darkness of an *unholy aura* once per day and to speak as desired with the authority of a *greater command*. Thrice per day, all the skulls of the *Bloodbone Throne* can be instructed to belch forth a cold, cloying cloud of greasy darkness akin to the effects of an *unholy blight*. Anyone who sits atop the Bloodbone Throne for at least 3 consecutive rounds is cloaked in a dragon-shaped cocoon of bones and negative energy akin to the effects of a *death dragon* spell (see *Magic of Faerûn*) when they arise from the legacy of Uruth.

Once per day, whomever sits atop the *Bloodbone Throne of Uruth* can unleash a torrent of blood that pours forth from every aperture in every skull which then pools around the base of the throne. If the blood created by the throne's namesake power is allowed to pour forth for only 1 round, the blood rises up in the form of a Small "blood elemental." If allowed to pour forth for 2 rounds, the blood can be formed into a Medium "blood elemental." Likewise, if allowed to pour forth for 4 rounds, the blood can be formed into a Large "blood elemental." If given a full 8 rounds or longer to form, the blood forms into a Huge "blood elemental," the largest such creature the *Bloodbone Throne* can create. In all cases, a "blood" elemental is equivalent in power to a water elemental of similar size, with one exception: a successful attack ignites the victim's blood for 1 round, dealing an additional 1d6 points of fire damage.

Strong varied; CL 15th; Prerequisites: Craft Wondrous Item, *burning blood (Spell Compendium), death dragon (Magic of Faerûn), greater command, planar ally, unholy aura, unholy blight;* Market Price: 91,000 gp; Weight: 4,000 lb.

Shining Thrones of Splendarrmornn

The Royal Caverns of Splendarrmornn were stripped of much—if not all—of their treasure by the foul forces of Hellgate Keep, and they are now home to many sorts of undead and fell creatures of even greater evil. Two of the most important Ammarindan artifacts to apparently escape their plundering were the golemlike *Shining Thrones of Splendarrmornn*, both of which vanished during the fighting in the Year of the Curse (882 DR) as a horde of fiends overran the realm.

The *Kingthrone of Splendarrmornn* vanished during the Battle of Karscragg, which unfolded near the confluence of the Rivers Delimibiyr and Heartsblood. As the Ammarindan and Eaerlanni armies made their final, futile stand against the demonic hordes flooding down the Delimibiyr

valley from fallen Ascalhorn, the dwarven queen's cousin, Kulduke Daggan "the Hammer" Rockfist, blood of Olaurin, donned the *Kingthrone* in defense of the realm. In the absence of a king to lead the Stout Folk, the Kulduke had the strongest royal bloodline of any living male dwarf, a birthright that obligated him to employ the *Kingthrone* and lead the dwarven armies into the fray. It is said that Daggan slew a score or more fiends ere he vanished into the High Forest near the end of the battle in pursuit of a murmur of vrocks, each of whom clutched a struggling dwarven warrior in its claws. All but one of those dwarves emerged from the High Forest thanks to Daggan's relentless pursuit of the vulturelike fiends, but neither the Kulduke nor the *Kingthrone* were seen again for centuries. The Nine, a now-disbanded company of adventurers whose former stronghold lies on the banks of the Unicorn Run, reportedly battled the *Kingthrone* while unsuccessfully hunting Grimnoshtasdrano, the "Riddling Dragon," amid the Endless Caverns of the High Forest. If this most recent account of the *Kingthrone* is to be believed, the Kulduke's spirit remains trapped within the royal seat, attacking all living creatures under the delusion that they are fiends.

The *Queenthrone of Splendarrmornn* was lost, along with the rest of the valiant dwarven rearguard, in the savage fighting in the Vale of Naurogloth (Bleached Bones Pass) as the surviving Stout Folk of Ammarindar fled southward to Oghrann. Queen Helmma's company bought time with their lives for the less warlike of their people to flee the orc raiders who sought to slay the dwarven refugees. As every dwarf in the rearguard died during the Battle of Bleached Bones, including their valiant queen, there were no survivors to keep the *Queenthrone* from falling into orc hands. In the centuries since Ammarindar's fall, there have been periodic reports from that region of an intricately carved dwarven golem employed by one orc tribe or another in their endless battles for tribal supremacy, but no expedition has ever returned from the Greypeak Mountains with reports of having actually observed the *Queenthrone*.

The *Shining Thrones of Splendarrmornn* resemble intricately carved darksteel seats, one fashioned to resemble a royal queen bearing the likeness of Berronar Truesilver and the other shaped to resemble a royal king bearing the likeness of Moradin the Soulforger. The lap of each statue serves as the throne's seat, and the arms and chest of each construct serve as the royal chair's arms and backs. Each of the *Shining Thrones* wears a three-horned crown tipped with flashing beljurils and is engraved with all manner of ancient runes filigreed in gold, collectively thought to imbue the thrones with much of their magical power.

Anyone seated on either one of the *Shining Thrones* can call on any of its powers by silent act of will, but only one such power may be employed per round. Powers of the *Kingthrone* include *commune with earth, divine power,* and *silverbeard.* Powers of the *Queenthrone* include *spell resistance, stone tell,* and *stoneskin.* Powers shared in common by both *Shining Thrones* include the ability of occupants to merge their form into the seat (in a fashion similar to *meld into stone*) and then animate the thrones as iron golems under their direct control. If an iron golem is slain, the merged occupant is immediately expelled, unharmed.

Kingthrone: Strong varied; CL 16th; Prerequisites: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Wondrous Item, *cloudkill, commune with earth* (see *Races of Faerûn*), *divine power, geas/quest, limited wish, meld into stone, polymorph any object, silverbeard* (see *Magic of Faerûn*), creator must be a dwarf; Market Price: 372,200 gp; Weight: 5,000 lb.

Queenthrone: Strong varied; CL 16th; Prerequisites: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Wondrous Item, *cloudkill, geas/quest, limited wish, meld into stone, polymorph any object, spell resistance, stone tell, stoneskin,* creator must be a dwarf; Market Price: 490,100 gp; Weight: 5,000 lb.

Soaring Throne of the Witch-Queen

During her thirty-three-year reign over Stornanter, Laeral crafted numerous unique spells and magic items, many of which still survive today. The most famous of her creations from this period was the result of a potent collaboration with the Court Wizard of Stornanter, Malek Aldhanek. The *Soaring Throne of the Witch-Queen* is a glassteel seat shaped in the form of a rampant griffon. The griffon's chest forms the back of the throne, while its forelegs serve as chair arms.

The griffon's wings curve between its legs, forming the sides of the crystalline throne.

When Laeral all but quit her court following the apparent death of Malek, she kept with her Stornanter's royal seat, regularly employing its ability to transform into a crystalline griffon to fly about the realm (and, not incidentally, keeping it out of the hands of overly ambitious courtiers). The last recorded sighting of the *Soaring Throne* occurred in the Year of the Leaping Lion (834 DR), when the Witch-Queen battled a gigantic kraken just outside of Port Llast's harbor during a raging storm. Laeral eventually managed to drive off the monster with a barrage of fearsome spells, but the monstrous cephalopod's grasping tentacles dragged the griffon construct with it back into the depths.

Today, the *Soaring Throne* lies amid the sunken ruins of Ascarle, a long-lost elven city off the coast of Trisk (the western isle of the Purple Rocks), in the hoard of the Slarkrethrel, the Chosen of Umberlee. The legendary kraken has grown greatly in power in the centuries since its battle with the Witch-Queen, and its tentacles now extend the length of the Sword Coast through its command of the secretive Kraken Society. Laeral is undoubtedly aware of the *Soaring Throne's* approximate location, but the legendary wizardress has never seen fit to reclaim the lost seat of Stornanter, no doubt in part due to her shame in failing the citizenry of that lost realm. Should a daring band of powerful adventurers someday retrieve the realm's royal seat from its watery grave, Lady Arunsun would undoubtedly cede it to them willingly if they sought to refound her ancient realm with good and noble purpose.

Although neither Laeral nor Khelben has ever precisely detailed the powers of the *Soaring Throne of the Witch-Queen*, sufficient reports exist in the archives of the Arcane Brotherhood to detail the properties of the royal seat. Constructed of glassteel, a rare material fabricated by avariels and sun elves, the *Soaring Throne* has strength beyond iron, with a hardness of 20 and 40 hit points per inch of thickness. At will, once per round, anyone sitting on the *Soaring Throne* may employ the spells *Mordenkainen's sword, shield, spell turning,* or *whispering wind.* The throne also acts as a *figurine of wondrous power* (albeit without the normal size alteration), transforming into an advanced 15 HD griffon for as long as 8 hours a day. Unlike a normal figurine, however, if slain the griffon simply reverts (intact) to crystalline form and cannot reanimate until at least ten days have passed.

Strong Transmutation; CL 13th; Prerequisites: Craft Wondrous Item, *animate objects, Mordenkainen's sword, shield, spell turning, whispering wind;* Market Price: 617,150 gp; Weight: 5,000 lb.

Acknowledgements

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FORGOTTEN REALMS

VOLO'S GUIDE

to the Forgotten Dead

Volo again, gentles. Every tavern has its chilling tales of hauntings and dead that walk to wreak revenge or devour the living.

I once thought minstrels desperate for meals and warm fireside beds had spent years outdoing each other with tongue-waggings about burning skulls that fly, faceless and boneless things that clutch and smother, and so on and on. I could scarce believe even drunken bards could invent so much lurid nonsense.

Until I traveled the wide Realms, and saw as wild a variety of undead and more. Faerûn is crawling with magic; I can only conclude those energies have made so many different undead that new menaces are being discovered even now.

Volo

(Volothamp Geddarm)

by Brian Cortijo, with special introduction by Ed Greenwood • illustrated by John Gravato

In the FORGOTTEN REALMS, the dead do not rest easy. With great magics and fell deeds inspiring the realm of the living, it's no wonder that the departed are often called back to Toril—either by the will of those still breathing or by their own needs to influence the mortal world. Yet, while many of these spirits seek to aid the living or bear warnings from lands beyond, many more rise as a result of dark magic, painful memories, and out of a need for justice. Thus, across the lands, blessed are the tombs that stand quiet and the gravekeepers whose watches are dull.

Presented here are three undead monstrosities native to the FORGOTTEN REALMS. The inquisitor and skuz first appeared in the second-edition bestiary, *MC11: Monstrous Compendium FORGOTTEN REALMS Appendix,* while the charnel custodian is a newly risen terror.

CHARNEL CUSTODIAN

The very graveyard seems to come alive around you. Earth shifts, rising into a horror composed of soil, gravestones, and the bodies of the dead. Reaching out a hand of bone and splintered coffin-wood, dozens of skulls open across the creature's form, mouthing silent screams.

CHARNEL CUSTODIAN **CR 11**

Always NE Huge undead

Init +1; **Senses** tremorsense 30 ft., Listen +3, Spot +3

Languages none

AC 25, touch 9, flat-footed 24
(–2 size, +1 Dex, +16 natural)

hp 143 (22 HD); morbid rejuvenation

Immune undead immunities

Fort +7, **Ref** +8, **Will** +16

Spd 40 ft. (8 squares); gravebound

Melee 2 slams +17 (2d6+8) and
3 bites +12 (1d8+4)

Ranged monument +10 (2d8)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Base Atk +11; **Grp** +27

Atk Options bury, hurl monument

Abilities Str 26, Dex 13, Con —, Int —, Wis 16, Cha 14

SQ gravebound, morbid rejuvenation, +2 turn resistance,

undead traits

Environment any
Organization solitary
Treasure none
Advancement 23–34 (Huge), 35–46 (Gargantuan)

Bury (Su) When a charnel custodian begins its turn with a grappled opponent pinned, it can drag that creature into its body with a successful grapple check. Once inside, the opponent takes 2d8+12 points of bludgeoning damage per round from the grinding stone and bones within. A buried creature can dig its way out by winning an opposed grapple check against the charnel custodian, which the undead creature makes as a free action. Once the creature frees itself, earth and debris clog the hole; another buried creature must fight its own way out. Creatures killed by this ability cannot be *raised*, *resurrected*, or *reincarnated* by any means until the horror is permanently destroyed.

A Huge charnel custodian can bury up to 2 Large, 4 Medium, 8 Small, 32 Tiny, 128 Diminutive, or 512 Fine or smaller opponents in this way at one time.

Hurl Monument (Ex) As a standard action, a charnel custodian can pluck a mass of sculpted rock from its body and throw it as a ranged attack.

Gravebound A charnel custodian is permanently bound to the location where it was formed. The custodian cannot move more than 100 feet beyond the borders of the cemetery, battlefield, or similar spawning place. As a full-round action, a charnel custodian can discorporate, merging with the earth of its domain. The creature cannot be harmed in any way while it is discorporate and it may reform anywhere within the location it is bound to as another full-round action.

Morbid Rejuvenation (Su) A charnel custodian reduced to 0 hp recedes into the ground but is not permanently destroyed. 24 hours following its destruction, a charnel custodian rises again within the area it is bound to, restored to full hit points. This rejuvenation can only be prevented by destroying the horror then casting a *hallow* spell on the site or by setting right the offense that raised the creature.

Formed from materials drawn from crowded cemeteries, charnel custodians are masses of bone, earth, coffin-shards, and sepulchral monuments. Beings of unmitigated rage, these spontaneously forming terrors are forever bound to the boneyards that spawn them.

Charnel custodians form at locales where some great injustice has been committed upon the dead interred there. In some cases, those buried have not been granted proper funereal rites, or were laid in unconsecrated ground. In others, new constructions have been built upon old graves or an undeserving body—such as that of a tyrant, criminal, or foul priest—is buried among those deserving of a more peaceful afterlife.

A charnel custodian has no will or consciousness of its own, it knows only that it has been wronged, and seeks to avenge the residents of its graveyard. Only through the destruction of its physical form and the proper consecration of its grounds can the abomination's unquiet spirits be put to rest.

Charnel custodians are rare in the Forgotten Realms, but they occasionally rise at the sites of battles where the fallen dead are left unburied and in towns and villages wiped out by swift-moving plagues. Once discovered, a charnel custodian usually persists for a season or two, until local priests or passing adventurers can determine the cause of the disturbance and lay the creature to rest.

Several recent deaths in the City of the Dead in Waterdeep have recently been blamed on one of these undead, while one of the oldest and largest known charnel custodians, a mound the size of a small hill, still stalks the lands around the Battle of Bones.

inquisitor

A gaunt, zombielike creature emerges before you, its teeth clearly visible between the stretched lines of its lipless mouth. Wicked hooks, rusted chains, and a shuddersome array of torture implements abuse the thing's few withered strips of remaining flesh. One clawed hand eagerly grips the coils of a well-used whip.

INQUISITOR **CR 3**

Always LE Medium undead

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., Listen +8, Spot +8

Languages Common, varies (any additional 2 appropriate to the region)

AC 17, touch 11, flat-footed 16 (+1 Dex, +6 natural)

hp 26 (4 HD)

Immune undead immunities

Fort +1, **Ref** +3, **Will** +5

Spd 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee 2 claws +3 (1d6+2 plus disease) or

Melee mwk whip +6 (1d3 non-lethal/20)

Base Atk +2; **Grp** +3

Special Actions fear gaze

Abilities Str 13, Dex 14, Con —, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 16

SQ torture, undead traits

Feats Persuasive, Weapon Focus (whip)

Skills Bluff +12, Escape Artist +5, Intimidate +14, Listen +8, Sense Motive +8, Spot +8, Use Rope +4

Environment any

Organization solitary

Treasure double standard

Advancement 5–12 (Medium)

Disease (Ex) A target that takes damage from the inquisitor's claw attack must succeed on a DC 15 Fortitude save or become infected with a disease known as wasting inquisition (incubation period 1d3 days, damage 1 Str and 1 Con). The save DC is Charisma-based.

Fear Gaze (Su) Viewing an inquisitor's face inspires terror. Creatures that meet the inquisitor's gaze must succeed at a DC 15 Will save or suffer the effects of a *fear* spell as cast by a 6th-level caster. The DC is Charisma-based.

Torture (Ex) As a full-round action, an inquisitor can deal 1 point of Charisma damage to a helpless victim. When employing the Intimidate skill during torture, the inquisitor gains a +4 bonus on its skill checks. (For complete rules on torture, see page 37 of the *Book of Vile Darkness*.)

The cruel, ancient undead known as inquisitors exist solely to torture victims and extract information. Created hundreds—even thousands—of years ago by magical rituals and torturous sacrifices, an inquisitor has no memory of its mortal life. All it knows is inflicting pain and the twisted joy of the suffering of living creatures.

In combat, inquisitors fight to incapacitate rather than to kill. Although these creatures have no compunction against slaying foes, an inquisitor is far more satisfied when it has at least one victim to torture following a battle. It is not unknown for an adventurer to awaken, bound fast, in an inquisitor's lair following what she thought was certain death.

An inquisitor's lair is typically dark and filled with all manner of instruments of torture, blood-spattered tables, and the occasional preserved trophies of past victims.

Inquisitors often serve liches and other beings who want to gather information without going through the messy trouble of evisceration, torture, or interrogation themselves. Unless commanded by a powerful spellcaster or undead, inquisitors prefer to lair in or near urban centers, where they can have ready access to victims.

An inquisitor can be created by a cleric of 14th level or higher with the *create undead* spell.

In the FORGOTTEN REALMS, inquisitors are most common in Thay and Sembia, although a few have been found in the North, near the fallen cities of Eaerlann and ancient Illefarn.

SKUZ

A vaguely humanoid shape of noxious green rises up from the water before you, seeming to pull the algae and slime from the surface to constitute its form. As the head forms, it turns toward you, the jellified jaws opening to spill forth a false tongue of ooze and putrid flesh.

SKUZ **CR 9**

Always CE Large undead

Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., fluidsense 60 ft.; Listen +14, Spot +14

Languages Common (understand only)

AC 21, touch 13, flat-footed 17 (–1 size, +4 Dex, +8 natural)

hp 71 (11 HD); **DR** 10/bludgeoning

Immune grapple, trip, undead immunities

Weakness *control water*
Fort +3, **Ref** +9, **Will** +8

Spd 10 ft. (2 squares), swim 40 ft.
Melee 2 slams +7 (1d6+3)
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.
Base Atk +5; **Grp** +12
Attack Options drowning grapple
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 11th)
3/day—*animate dead, create water, control water, major image* (DC 15), *suggestion* (DC 15)

Abilities Str 16, Dex 19, Con —, Int 15, Wis 12, Cha 14
SQ create skuz, fluid form, undead traits
Feats Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Stealthy
Skills Climb +16, Hide +15 (+23 in water), Listen +14, Move Silently +19, Spot +14, Swim +32

Environment any
Organization solitary
Treasure none
Advancement 12–20 (Large), 21–33 (Huge)

Fluidsense (Ex): A skuz can automatically sense the location of anything within 60 feet that is in contact with the same body of water as itself.

Spell Vulnerability (Ex) A skuz is susceptible to the lower water effect of the *control water* spell, which halves the creature's current hit points with no saving throw allowed.

Drowning Grapple (Ex): Any creature grappled by a skuz is considered to be underwater. For as long as a creature is grappled, it must hold its breath or risk drowning. Holding one's breath within a skuz is more difficult than usual, as the fluid undead attempts to invade any being it grapples. As such, a grappled creature can only hold its breath for a number of rounds equal to one-quarter of its Constitution and the DCs of Constitution checks made to resist drowning increase by +2 every round. See page 304 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for rules on drowning.

Create Skuz (Su): Any humanoid killed by a skuz's energy drain swiftly decays and rises in 1d4 days as a skuz. Skuz formed in this way are not bound to the skuz that created them. They do not possess any of the memories or abilities they had in life.

Fluid Form (Ex) A skuz cannot be grappled or tripped, although it can initiate both types of attacks. A creature can only grapple a skuz to oppose a grapple the undead initiates. Trip attempts against a skuz have no effect.

Skills A skuz has a +8 racial bonus on any Swim check made to perform some special action or avoid a hazard. It can always choose to take 10 on a Swim check, even if distracted or endangered. It can use the run action while swimming, provided it swims in a straight line. In addition, a skuz has a +4 racial bonus on Hide checks; this bonus increases to +12 when the skuz is in water.

Formed from bodies left to putrefy within muddy graves and stagnant waters, skuz number among the most disgusting of all undead. Consisting of equal parts stagnant water, rotted vegetation, and liquefied corpse, skuz are consumed by a blind need for vengeance, seeking to inflict their horrible demise upon all living creatures. Making their home amid swamps, sewers, and stagnant areas of ponds and rivers, they await live prey to drag into their revolting pools. Preferring solitary existences, multiple skuz rarely linger together, with newly created spawn oozing away to pollute their own territories.

In the Forgotten Realms, skuz are most common in the Swamp of Akhlaur, the Vast Swamp, the Farsea Marshes, the River Umber, and a few locations along the coast of the Easting Reach. Rumor has it that, several times a year, the remains of the dead god Moander exudes one or more powerful skuz, possibly the forms of long-dead victims slowly excreted by the profane corpse's decay.

Volo's Guide

outsiders of the forgotten realms

Volothamp Geddarm at thy service once more, gentles. Yes, 'tis I, the famous-or infamous, as I must needs admit-Volo, wayfarer extraordinaire across fair Toril, seeker of marvels and wonders, scribe of routes and inns and taverns and more.

My tireless, public-minded writings, meant only to assist other travelers and lead to the betterment of life for all, have evoked awestruck admiration (among ladies) and harsh criticism (among unhappy innkeepers and festhall owners, and especially among the most humorless wizards-which seems, I must say, to be most of them). Some have even said I am inhuman.

Well, I finally have a proper answer for such critics (aside from the colorful language they so richly deserve). Read on, and learn of the true "inhumans" of the Realms, the outsiders, fair and foul, who all too often stalk among us, sometimes cloaked in disguise.

Be warned, and check over your shoulder as you read this, for they are EVERYWHERE.

Volo

FORGOTTEN REALMS

by Thomas M. Costa, with special introduction by Ed Greenwood • illustrated by Ramón Pérez

The FORGOTTEN REALMS's World Tree and River of Blood, the byways of the heavens and the underworld, are home to more creatures than the mortal realm itself. The following are but a few of the divine beings who populate those planes.

CELESTIAL, HARMONIOUS CHOIR OF THE WORDS

This small glowing oblong ball of light bears a faint and alien face with runes coming from its mouth. The text streams outward constantly, fading as it reaches the periphery of the celestial's light. The creature's voice is that of dozens of beings speaking in perfect unison.

HARMONIOUS CHOIR OF THE WORDS **CR 12**

Usually NG Small outsider (extraplanar, good, incorporeal)

Init +9; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +18, Spot +18

Languages All

AC 25, touch 25, flat-footed 20; +4 against evil foes (+5 Dex, +10 deflection)

hp 45 (10 HD); **DR** 10/evil

Immune acid, electricity, mind-affecting effects, necromantic effects, polymorph

SR 23

Fort +7, **Ref** +12, **Will** +12

Speed fly 120 ft. (perfect) (24 squares)

Ranged light ray +17 touch (2d4 Str and 2d4 Wis)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Base Atk +10; **Grp** —

Special Actions bardic music, incarnate vessel, turn undead (8/day; as 10th-level cleric)

Bard Spells Known (CL 10th)

4th (1/day)—*modify memory* (DC 19), *rainbow pattern* (DC 19)

3rd (3/day)—*confusion* (DC 18), *good hope, remove curse, slow* (DC 18)

2nd (4/day)—*blindness/deafness* (DC 17), *calm emotions* (DC 17), *eagle's splendor, mirror image*

1st (5/day)—*animate rope, lesser confusion* (DC 16), *remove fear, sleep* (DC 16)

0 (3/day)—*daze* (DC 15), *ghost sound, lullaby, mage hand, mending, prestidigitation*

Spell-like Abilities (CL 10th)

At will—*analyze dweomer* (DC 21), *commune, daylight, detect thoughts* (DC 17), *discern lie* (DC 19), *enthrall* (DC 17), *flare* (DC 15), *legend lore, message, read magic, speak with dead* (DC 18), *stone tell*

3/day—*dispel evil* (DC 20), *dispel magic, glyph of warding* (DC 18), *major image* (DC 18)

1/day—*erase*, *hold person* (DC 18), *shatter* (DC 17), *shout* (DC 19), *suggestion* (DC 18), *summon monster V*, *teleport* (DC 20)

Abilities Str —, Dex 20, Con 10, Int 20, Wis 20, Cha 20

SQ bardic knowledge, dispel silence, glyph mastery, incorporeal, protective aura, words of creation

Feats Improved Counterspell, Improved Initiative, Negotiator, Weapon Focus (ray)

Skills Appraise +5 (+7 with related Craft skills), Concentration +13, Craft (any 3) +22, Diplomacy +22, Knowledge (arcana) +22, Knowledge (any 2 others) +22, Knowledge (all others) +5*, Listen +18, Perform (sing) +22, Sense Motive +20, Spellcraft +20, Spot +18

Advancement 11–30 HD (Small) or by character class; **Favored Class** bard

Bardic Music (Ex) As a 10th-level bard. The harmonious choir can use the following effects up to a total of ten times per day: countersong, *fascinate*, inspire courage, inspire competence, *suggestion*, and inspire greatness.

Incarnate Vessel (Su) Once per round, a harmonious choir can merge its body with another creature on the same plane as itself. This ability is similar to a *magic jar* spell (CL 10th; *Player's Handbook*, 250), except it does not require a receptacle. To use this ability, the choir must be manifested and it must try to move into the target's space; moving into the target's space to use the incarnate vessel ability does not provoke attacks of opportunity. The target can resist the attack with a successful DC 20 Will save. A creature that successful saves is immune to that harmonious choir's incarnate vessel ability for 24 hours, and the celestial cannot enter the target's space. If the save fails, the harmonious choir vanishes into the target's body. *Protection from good* and similar effects ward a creature from this ability. The DC is Charisma-based.

Bardic Knowledge (Ex) As a 10th-level bard (total bonus +15).

Dispel Silence (Su) The harmonious choir may dispel magical silence effects, such as a *silence* spell, at will. CL 10th.

Glyph Mastery (Ex) The harmonious choir can automatically bypass (with no effect) or dispel any magical glyph, rune, symbol, or writing, including *explosive runes*, *glyphs of warding*, and *symbols* (CL 10th). It never suffers from the negative effects of magical writings unless it chooses to.

Protective Aura (Su) All allies within 20 feet who can at least see or hear the harmonious choir (including the harmonious choir itself) gain a +4 sacred bonus to AC and a +4 resistance bonus on saving throws against an evil creature's attacks, spells, and supernatural and spell-like abilities The harmonious choir can lower or reactivate this aura as a free action. In addition, this aura produces the following continuous effects: *arcane sight*, *detect evil*, *know direction*, *light*, *speak with animals*, *speak with plants*, *tongues* (DC 18), *true seeing* (DC 20)

Words of Creation (Ex) A harmonious choir can use the Words of Creation (*Book of Exalted Deeds*, 31) without taking damage. Using the Words of Creation doubles the effects of the bardic music abilities inspire courage, inspire competence, inspire greatness, and inspire heroics. For bardic music abilities that require a Perform check (countersong, fascinate), the Words of Creation grant the choir a +4 sacred bonus on the check. The Words of Creation also increase the saving throw DC for the suggestion and dominate abilities by +2. The Words of Creation

SUMMONING NOTES

You can cast *planar ally* and *planar binding* spells to summon the outsiders presented here as normal. You may also call some of them via the use of *summon monster* spells: *summon monster V* can conjure a sliver, *summon monster VII* can conjure an umbral gloom, and *summon monster IX* can conjure a harmonious choir of the words or death devil. In addition, death devils might appear (at the DM's option) in lieu of dread wraiths if the skull card is drawn from a *deck of many things*.

REALMS OUTSIDERS IN OTHER CAMPAIGNS

The celestials and fiends in this article can be incorporated into most other campaign worlds, fitting in wherever other celestials and fiends prowl, whether it's the Great Wheel or EBERRON's planes of existence.

Harmonious choirs of the words typically inhabit the Concordant Domain of the Outlands, are always neutral, and serve no deity. They roam freely about both that plane and the libraries of Sigil as well. In EBERRON, these celestials are always neutral good and serve as the historians of Syrania, the Azure Sky.

Slivers call the Olympian Glades of Arborea home, where they serve Sehanine Moonbow, elven goddess of the moon. In EBERRON, slivers are found at the edges of the Faerie Court of Thelanis.

Black beasts of bedlam live in the Windswept Depths of Pandemonium, tormenting those in that horrible plane. They stalk the Churning Chaos of Kythri of EBERRON's outer planes.

Death devils amid the Great Wheel join their baatezu kin in the Nine Hells of Baator. In EBERRON, they continue their torment of souls on Dolurrh, the Realm of the Dead.

Umbral glooms roam the Plane of Shadow in most campaigns but call Mabar, the Endless Night, home in EBERRON.

increase the bard's effective caster level for the song of freedom by +2.

The Words of Creation can enhance any process of creation. If the Words of Creation are spoken as part of the casting of a Conjuration (creation) spell, the duration of the spell is doubled. If they are spoken while using a Craft skill, they grant the crafter a +4 sacred bonus on the Craft check.

The Words of Creation help energize good magic. If used in conjunction with a good spell that has a verbal component, the Words of Creation increase the spell's effective caster level by +1.

If the harmonious choir has discovered a creature's true name (through the use of its *legend lore* or *commune* spell-like abilities), it can exercise its power over that creature in a number of different ways, each of which requires a full-round action. It can impose a –4 penalty on the creature's saving throws to resist a specific compulsion spell or effect. It can reduce the creature's spell resistance by 4 or reduce the amount of its damage reduction by 5. This reduction lasts for 1 minute. It can cast *teleport* or *greater teleport* on the creature without including itself as a target of the spell. It can gain a +6 bonus on its opposed Charisma checks to compel service from the creature after it summons it with a *planar binding* spell.

Skills Harmonious choirs have a +4 racial bonus on all Craft, Knowledge, and Perform checks and the ability to use all Knowledge skills untrained.

A harmonious choir of the words is a living embodiment of the Words of Creation, the words used to create all things at the beginning of everything. It is, in fact, made up of many words, which, like a sentence or a paragraph come together into a single structure. Most live among the enormous libraries and public courtyards of the House of Knowledge. A harmonious choir speaks the languages of all intelligent creatures, but it prefers Celestial.

Strategies and Tactics

Harmonious choirs are creatures of language and song and prefer to avoid combat. If pushed, however, they do not shy from defending themselves or those under their protection. A harmonious choir usually begins combat by targeting spellcasters with its own spell-like abilities and spells before turning to its light ray.

A harmonious choir's natural weapons are treated as good-aligned for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction.

Harmonious choirs often take levels in the bard class. Their bard levels stack with their racial bardic knowledge, bardic music, and spellcasting abilities.

Ecology

Voluble and often friendly, harmonious choirs love nothing so much as deeply intellectual conversations. They care little if the conversations occur among peers or serve more as tutorials—the wrestling of ideas, the enjoyment of learning, and the beauty of language are their own rewards. They sing frequently, compose poetry, and constantly seek out new knowledge, no matter how trivial. Harmonious choirs gladly share their knowledge, but keeping them on topic often proves difficult. Getting a complete answer from a harmonious choir requires a successful DC 15 Bluff or Diplomacy check.

Typical Physical Characteristics: Harmonious choirs generally look like 2-foot-diameter balls of light. Up close, their smooth, not-quite-human faces become visible, as do their endless stream of gibberish in a mesh of dozens of languages. The colors of the face within the sphere of light and the runes floating from the creature's mouth vary by individual, although most

exhibit the cooler colors of blues, greens, and violets.

Alignment: Most harmonious choirs care more for the promotion of good than the relative structure (or lack thereof) in the universe, and are thus neutral good. Many serve Deneir, the god of the written word, and Milil, the god of song and poetry. A fair number of harmonious choirs are true neutral and serve Oghma or, more rarely, Gond.

Treasure: As incorporeal creatures, harmonious choirs cannot carry anything, and thus they do not typically have treasure.

CELESTIAL, SLIVER

This beautiful being has the shapely form of a human woman composed of moonlight and flame, the illumination of which shines visibly in her eyes, hair, and the tips of her fingers.

SLIVER **CR 5**

Always CG Medium outsider (chaotic, extraplanar, good)

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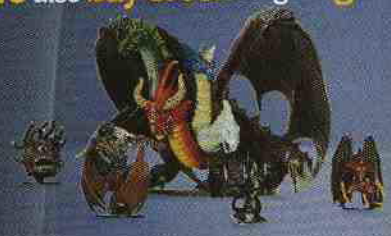

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Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, pure sight; Listen +9, Spot +9
Aura moonglow 10 ft.
Languages Celestial, Common

AC 17; touch 17, flat-footed 13 (+4 Dex, +3 deflection)
hp 16 (3 HD); **DR** 5/evil
Immune acid, disease, electricity, fire, light, petrification, poison
Resist cold 10, sonic 10; **SR** 15
Fort +7, **Ref** +10, **Will** +7

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares), fly 60 ft. (good)
Melee 2 starfire hands +4 touch (1d8+3 against living or 2d8+3 against undead)
Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.
Base Atk +3; **Grp** +4
Atk Options Combat Reflexes
Special Actions moon magic, smite evil, starfire hand
Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 3rd, melee touch +4, ranged touch +7)
2nd—*shield other*[D], *spiritual weapon*
1st—*command* (DC 12), *cure light wounds* (×2), *protection from law*[D]
0—*create water*, *detect magic* (×2), *guidance*
Domains Chaos, Protection
Spell-like Abilities: (CL 5th)
1/day—*prayer*
3/day—*augury*, *bless*, *burning hands* (DC 13), *detect evil*, *produce flame*
At will—*dancing lights*, *daylight*, *faerie fire*, *flare* (DC 12), *moonbeam** (DC 14), *tongues* (personal only)
**Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting* 73

Abilities Str 13, Dex 18, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 15
SQ moonshield
Feats Alertness, Combat Reflexes
Skills Concentration +7, Diplomacy +10, Knowledge (religion) +6, Knowledge (the planes) +6, Listen +9, Sense Motive +7, Spellcraft +6, Spot +9, Survival +1 (+3 on the planes)
Advancement 4–9 HD (Medium)

Moonglow (Su) This constantly glowing aura grants a +3 deflection bonus to AC against attacks made by evil creatures and a +3 resistance bonus on saving throws made against evil spells and effects, in a 10-foot-radius spread. It also functions as a *magic circle against evil* effect for the sliver (caster level 5th). This aura can be dispelled, but the sliver can create it again, as a free action, at will. (The defensive benefits from the *magic circle* effect are not included in the stat block.)
Pure Sight (Ex) A sliver can see as if constantly affected by *true seeing*.
Starfire Hand (Su) Winking motes of light that resemble a cluster of twinkling stars surround a sliver's hands, with which she deals 1d8+3 points of damage to living creatures and 2d8+3 points of damage to undead. In addition, a successful strike with a starfire hand temporarily scrambles magic. On the target's next turn after a hit from a starfire hand, the creature must make a Concentration check to use any spell or spell-like ability. The DC equals 10 + damage dealt + spell level.
Moon Magic (Ex) A sliver casts spells and spell-like abilities at +3 caster level when standing in visible moonlight. This benefit does not apply during the day, underground, or during a new moon.
Smite Evil (Su) Three times per day, a sliver can make a normal melee attack that deals +3 points of damage against an evil foe.
Moonshield (Ex) The sliver's innate magic of the moonlight grants her a +3 bonus on saving throws made against all enchantment, illusion, and necromancy spells and effects, and spells and effects with the darkness descriptor.

Slivers, a group of shining female servitors said to be created from equal parts fire and moonlight, serve the goddess of the moon, Selûne. The goddess often sends these celestials to aid mortals or to show her favor or presence.

strategies and tactics

Chaotic, fickle, and easily angered, slivers wildly attack those who provoke them or evil creatures in general. They enter fights using their spells and spell-like abilities, but when need dictates they do not hesitate to strike with their starfire hands.

A sliver's natural weapons, including her starfire hands, are treated as good-aligned, chaotic-aligned, and silver weapons for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction.

ecology

Slivers roam the Gates of the Moon, especially the city Mahogany, a swampy river delta of bayous and hidden inlets. Slivers also serve as guards and guides along the Infinite Staircase at the behest of Selûne.

Some have confused slivers with the shards (the seven mighty planetars Selûne also keeps in her service), but they lack both the power and stature of those awesome beings. Slivers and lillendi—who also serve the goddess of the moon—tolerate each other but are not allies. Slivers do not find lillendi emotive or fervent enough, and lillendi find slivers erratic and impractical. Consequently, slivers avoid those areas under the jurisdiction of lillendi, and vice versa.

Although quick to anger and easily offended, slivers try to be friendly and accommodating,. Anything pertaining to Selûne, her realm, the moon, or the slivers themselves might enrage these celestials if phrased as anything but compliments. When angered, slivers might attack for a round or two or they might just leave. If treated well, however, slivers sometimes provide guidance and assistance.

Typical Physical Characteristics: Slivers always appear as beautiful human women with long, flowing blue hair and pearly-white skin. They can also grow feathered wings as whim and need dictate (they must have wings to fly).

Alignment: Despite their quick tempers silvers genuinely wish to serve Selûne and those she deems worthy of their guardianship. Thus, they are chaotic good.

Treasure: A sliver has the standard amount of treasure for a creature of her CR (about 4,300 gp), most of it composed of fine silk clothing, expensive diamond and silver jewelry, and aesthetically pleasing magic items (regardless of abilities).

FIEND, DEATH DEVIL (JERUL)

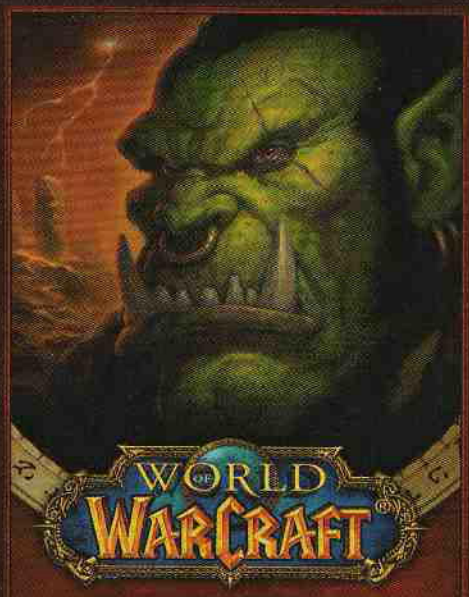
This enormous skeletal creature is clad in a billowing, black-cowled robe, with an alien head like that of an emaciated vulture. Its four sunken eyes gleam with a cold and evil yellow light. Four withered, sinuous arms ending in elongated clawed hands sprout from its torso, and four skeletal wings covered in wasted flesh extend from its back. The creature carries an enormous scythe and a wicked-looking whip.

DEATH DEVIL (JERUL) **CR 11**

Always LE Large outsider (baatezu, evil, extraplanar, lawful)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., see in darkness; Listen +16, Spot +16

Languages Abyssal, Celestial, Common, Infernal; telepathy 100 ft.



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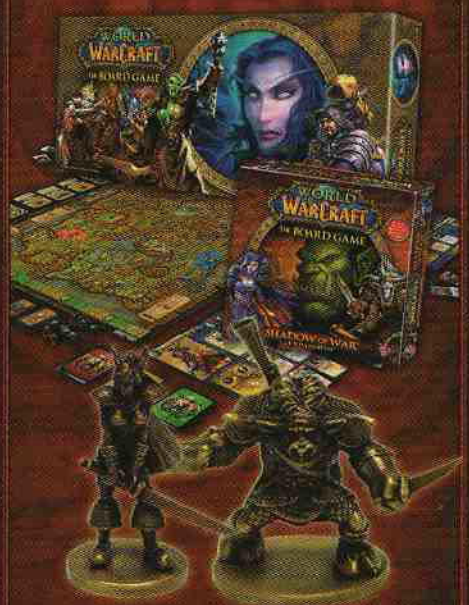

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AC 25 , touch 15, flat-footed 19 (–1 size, +6 Dex, +10 natural)
hp 65 (10 HD); **DR** 10/bludgeoning and silver
Immune ability damage, ability drain, cold, death effects, disease, energy drain, fire, mind-affecting effects, paralysis, poison
Resist acid 10; **SR** 22
Fort +9, **Ref** +13, **Will** +10

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares), fly 60 ft. (average)
Melee mwk scythe +14/+9 melee (2d6+7/×4 plus exhausting) and claw +12 melee (1d6+5 plus exhausting) or
Melee +1 *stinging whip* +14/+9 melee (1d4+3 nonlethal plus exhausting) and claw +12 melee (1d6+5 plus exhausting)
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft. (25 feet with whip)
Base Atk +10; **Grp** +19
Atk Options Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, ghost strike, sadism
Special Actions rebuke undead, *summon baatezu*
Spell-like Abilities (CL 10th):
At will—*animate dead, greater teleport* (self plus 50 pounds of objects only), *dimensional anchor*
3/day—*deeper darkness, desecrate*
1/day—*enervation, unholy blight* (DC 17)

Abilities Str 20, Dex 22, Con 15, Int 14, Wis 17, Cha 17
SQ detect as undead, fortification (50%), necrotic life
Feats Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Diehard, Endurance,
Skills Bluff +16, Climb +5 (+7 involving climbing ropes), Concentration +15, Diplomacy +7, Disguise +3 (+5 to act in character), Escape Artist +6 (+8 involving ropes), Heal +16, Intimidate +18, Knowledge (religion) +15, Knowledge (the planes) +15, Listen +16, Sense Motive +16, Spot +16, Survival +3 (+5 when on other planes), Use Rope +19
Advancement 11–20 HD (Large); 21–30 HD (Huge)

See in Darkness (Su) All baatezu can see perfectly in darkness of any kind, even that created by *deeper darkness*.
Exhausting (Su) Those struck by a death devil's natural weapons or any weapons it wields become exhausted unless they make DC 17 Fortitude saves each time they are hit. Exhausted characters move at half speed and take a –6 penalty to Strength and Dexterity. The save DC is Constitution-based.
Ghost Strike (Su) A death devil's natural weapons, as well as any weapons it wields, deal damage normally against incorporeal creatures. In addition, it can deliver sneak attacks or critical hits to an undead creature.
Sadism (Ex) For every 10 points of damage a death devil deals in a round, it gains a +1 luck bonus on attacks rolls, saving throws, and skill checks until the end of its next turn.
Rebuke Undead (Su) Death devils may rebuke undead as a 12th-level cleric, at will. (Note that a death devil's ranks in Knowledge (religion) grant the devil a +2 synergy bonus on turning checks.)
***Summon Baatezu* (Sp)** Once per day, a death devil can attempt to summon 2d10 lemures or 1d4 bearded devils with a 50% chance of success or another death devil with a 35% chance of success. This ability is the equivalent of a 4th-level spell.
Detect as Undead (Ex) Death devils register as undead creatures for the purposes of *detect undead* and similar effects. A death devil counts as half its HD for the purposes of aura strength.
Necrotic Life (Ex) Even on a failed save, a death devil suffers only half damage from spells and effects that deal hit point damage due to negative energy, such as *inflict* spells, and with a successful save a death devil suffers no damage.

Death devils are more often known as Tormentors of the Faithless and False or as "*jerul*" in the Infernal tongue.

strategies and tactics

Death devils excel as torturers and prefer to attack physically, teleporting up close to their foes and using full-attack actions whenever possible.

A death devil's natural weapons, as well as any weapons it wields, are treated as evil-aligned and lawful-aligned for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction.

ecology

Death devils are the most common devils found on the Fugue Plane, and with the leave of Kelemvor (and Cyric, Myrkul, and Jergal before him), they are allowed to exact punishment on the spirits of the faithless and false.

Typical Physical Characteristics: Death devils stand about 10 feet tall and weigh about 550 pounds.

Alignment: As baatezu, death devils share their brethrens' discipline and cruelty, making them the standard lawful evil of other infernal beings.

Treasure: A death devil typically has the standard amount of treasure for its Challenge Rating (roughly 21,000 gp), usually held in ornate but ghoulish pieces of jewelry as well as its powerful and valuable whip.

FIEND, UMBRAL GLOOM

This mass of rubbery, glistening black tentacles is studded with many small purple eyes. and is lost within an umbral miasma that seeps from its slimy flesh.

UMBRAL GLOOM **CR 11**
Always NE Large outsider (evil, extraplanar)
Init +6; **Senses** all-around vision, darkvision 120 ft., low-light vision, see in darkness, Listen +11, Spot +19.
Languages Common, Loross, shadow talk

AC 23 (–1 size, +2 Dex, +8 natural, +4 deflection), touch 15, flat-footed 21
hp 78 (10 HD); fast healing 2; **DR** 10/magic
Immune blindness, cold, critical hits, energy drain, poison, sleep effects, stunning, paralysis, polymorph
SR 21
Fort +10, **Ref** +9, **Will** +8; evasion

Speed 60 ft. (12 squares), swim 40 ft.
Melee 12 slams +14 (1d6+4 plus crushing despair)
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.
Base Atk +10; **Grp** +18
Atk Options Combat Reflexes, crushing despair

STINGING

A weapon with this ability ignores the absolute protection offered by armor against certain weapons.

Description: A stinging weapon is typically covered in tiny barbs and spines that do not negatively affect its usefulness in any way.

Prerequisite: This ability can only be applied to whips and similar weapons whose damage is partially or fully blocked by armor.

Activation: You need only use the weapon normally.

Effect: This weapon deals normal damage against creatures with armor or natural armor.

Aura/Caster Level: Moderate transmutation. CL 6th.

Construction: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *gaseous form*.

Weight: —.

Price: 1,000 gp.

Special Actions engulf

Spell-like Abilities (CL 7th):

At will—*knock* (by touch only)

3/day—*scare* (DC 16), *modify memory* (cannot increase clarity or recall; DC 18), *plane shift* (self only; to or from Plane of Shadow only)

1/day—*nightmare* (DC 19)

Abilities Str 19, Dex 15, Con 16, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 18

SQ *control light*, deeper darkness, evasion, no discernable anatomy, shadow blend, shadow blessing, shadow stride, shadow talk

Feats Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Toughness, Weapon Focus (Slam)

Skills Bluff +17, Diplomacy +8, Gather Information +17, Hide +17, Intimidate +17, Listen +14, Move Silently +21, Search +22, Sense Motive +14, Spot +22, Survival +1 (+3 when following tracks), Swim +12

Advancement 8–14 HD (Large); 15–21 HD (Huge)

All-Around Vision (Ex) Their many eyes give umbral glooms a +8 racial bonus on Spot and Search checks, and they can't be flanked.

See in Darkness (Su) Umbral glooms can see perfectly in darkness of any kind, even that created by *deeper darkness*.

***Control Light* (Sp)** Umbral glooms can decrease the level of natural light within a 120-foot radius by any percentage up to 100%. For example, a human can normally see 20 feet by the light of a torch. If an umbral gloom were to diminish the light by 50%, the human could see only 10 feet. Creatures within the affected area gain a +1 bonus on Hide checks for each 25% decrease in light.

Crushing Despair (Su) A creature hit by an umbral gloom's slam attack or engulfed by an umbral gloom succumbs to great sadness unless it succeeds at a DC 17

Will save. An affected creature takes a –2 penalty on attack rolls, saving throws, ability checks, skill checks, and weapon damage rolls. This effect counters and dispels *good hope*. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Engulf (Ex) An umbral gloom can flow around creatures that fit within its space as a standard action. It cannot make a slam attack during a round in which it engulfs. The umbral gloom merely has to move over the opponents, affecting as many as it can cover. Opponents can make attacks of opportunity against an umbral gloom, but if they do so, they are not entitled to a saving throw. Those who do not attempt attacks of opportunity must succeed on DC 17 Reflex saves or be engulfed; on a success, they are pushed back or aside (opponent's choice) as the creature moves forward. Engulfed creatures are subject to crushing despair and are considered to be grappled. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Deeper Darkness (Su) An umbral gloom can radiate shadowy illumination in a 60-foot radius at will. All creatures within the area gain concealment (20% miss chance). Even creatures that can normally see in such conditions (such as with darkvision or low-light vision) have the miss chance in an area shrouded in magical darkness. Normal lights (torches, candles, lanterns, and so forth) are incapable of brightening the area, as are *light* spells of 3rd or lower level (such as *dancing lights*, *daylight*, or *light*). Higher-level *light* spells are not affected by the deeper darkness. Deeper darkness counters or dispels any *light* spell of 3rd or lower level.

No Discernable Anatomy (Ex) Umbral glooms have no discernable anatomy and are not subject to critical hits or stunning.

Shadow Blend (Su) In any conditions other than full daylight, the umbral gloom can disappear into the shadows, gaining a high degree of concealment (40% miss chance and a +10 circumstance bonus on Hide checks). Artificial illumination, even a *continual flame*, *daylight*, or *light* spell, does not negate this ability.

Shadow Blessing (Su) Infused with the stuff of shadow, an umbral gloom gains a constant bonus on initiative checks (included in the stats above) and a deflection bonus to Armor Class equal to its Charisma modifier. In addition, it gains an equal profane bonus on saving throws made against spells and effects from the schools of enchantment, illusion, and necromancy, as well as spells with the darkness descriptor. Once per day, as a standard action, the umbral gloom can share this blessing with others (usually only the faithful of Mask or Shar) with a touch. The shared blessing lasts for 7 rounds and can only be granted to willing targets (spell resistance does not apply).

Shadow Stride (Su) As a move action, an umbral gloom can vanish from its current location and reappear in any shadowy area within 360 feet, as often as once every 2 rounds.

Shadow Talk (Su) Umbral glooms can communicate through the shadows of the mind. They can whisper short messages to all other creatures of their choice from the Plane of Shadow (as well as worshipers of Mask or Shar) within 500 feet. Creatures within 10 feet of the umbral gloom can also hear its communications with DC 15 Listen checks, but those not specifically targeted by the umbral gloom cannot decipher the ineffable whispers.

Skills An umbral gloom has a +6 racial bonus on Hide and Move Silently checks and a +8 racial bonus on any Swim check to perform some special action or avoid a hazard. It can always choose to take 10 on a Swim check, even if distracted or endangered. It can use the run action while swimming, provided it swims in a straight line.

Umbral glooms are among Shar's most valued servitors, reminding all those they touch of the power of loss. Shar often sends them to punish her clergy, who frequently summon the creatures for their own inscrutable purposes. Mask, Lord of Shadows, has subverted many of these fiends to his own will—and for now, Shar tolerates his theft.

strategies and tactics

Umbral glooms always try to begin combat by removing most light sources and then sneaking up on their foes to engulf them in despair. They remain hidden as long as possible and do not initiate attacks unless they can do so from ambush. If surprised, umbral glooms quickly douse all lights and use the resulting confusion to flee into the shadows, from whence they begin crafting plans for quick revenge.

An umbral gloom's natural weapons, as well as any weapons it wields, are treated as evil-aligned for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction.

ecology

Umbral glooms prefer to wander the darkness of the Plane of Shadow, passing into Faerûn to inflict pain on the meek mortals of that weak place. When greeting one another, umbral glooms speak the nearly dead tongue of Loross, the language of fallen High Netheril now spoken only in Thultanthar (Shade) and the Gates of the Moon's Selûnarra (Opus).

Typical Physical Characteristics: Usually around 9 feet in diameter, an umbral gloom's body (made up mostly of whispy shadow essence) frequently weighs no more than 50 pounds. The purple eyes that cover the umbral gloom's freakish appearance range in size from barely larger than peas to as wide as dinner plates.

Alignment: Seeking to indiscriminately spread misery defines umbral glooms as neutral evil.

Treasure: An umbral gloom considers itself wealthy if it can spread suffering and nightmares to those who have done no offense to it or its patron deity. Composed of the very shadow that spawned it, an umbral gloom has no use for material items and thus never has treasure.

Volo's Guide

cormanthor: war amidst the trees

Well met again, gentles; Volothamp Geddarm, at thy service!

This time, I bring lore of fabled Cormanthor. The deep woods of the elves, whose mysterious shadows hide ruins, drow, marauding and skulking beasts, the proud Fair Folk, and dangerous adventurers—a place most folk of Faerûn love to hear about, but would not dare to set foot in; a vast realm of pastoral beauty and lurking deadliness.

Well, that's where Volo comes in. You need not venture into such perils; I'll do it for you. Spell-disguised as a tree or daring to scramble and trot about as myself, I went everywhere and saw (almost) everything. I nigh-perished in this fair cause, but am all the more proud to lay the fruits of my boldness before you. If you could do as I have done, and stand on the mossy banks of a clear, shimmering forest pool in the moonlight, gazing up past gigantic, gnarled oaks and shadowtops at the stars overhead, listening to the hooting calls and rustlings of the Elven Woods all around you... you could die happy.

(And probably would, in a breath or two, when something pounced on you.)

Volo

FORGOTTEN REALMS

by Eric Boyd, with special introduction by Ed Greenwood
illustrated by James Zhang • cartography by Rob Lazzaretti

SPOILER WARNING

This article updates the current situation in Cormanthor to the end of the Year of Lightning Storms (1374 DR). It contains spoilers for game products such as *City of the Spider Queen* and the upcoming *Shadowdale: Scourging of the Dale*, as well as novels such as *Blackstaff*, the Last Mythal series, and the War of the Spider Queen series. Players and readers be warned.

HISTORY

For millennia, the great forest of Cormanthor has been known as the Elven Woods, home to the Fair Folk of Cormanthyr who held their domain against the ever-encroaching threat of humanity. Since the Weeping War (712–714 DR), the capitol city of Myth Drannor has been in ruins, overrun by all manner of monsters, while elders of the Elven Court ruled the rest of the woods. After centuries of deliberation, the Elven Court declared a Retreat in the Year of Moonfall (1344 DR), which led to a mass decampment of the Fair Folk for Evermeet, the Green Isle. Although they left traps and wards to guard their ancient homeland, even the Fair Folk were surprised at how quickly their ancient nemesis—the drow—infiltrated the Elven Woods. The dark elves were but the first of many groups to rush into the vacuum created by the Retreat, with the demon-tainted gold elves of House Dlardrageth and their fey'ri legions following soon thereafter. Now, in the wake of a great crusade launched from Evermeet, Myth Drannor has been reclaimed, but the struggle for control continues beneath the fabled boughs of Cormanthor's great oaks.

RECENT EVENTS

Over the past two-and-a-half years, Cormanthor has been convulsed by war. The following timeline summarizes the conflict.

1372 The Year of Wild Magic

Eleasis 28	Lolth falls silent.
Eleint 23	An army of goblins, ogres, giants, and demons led by Kurgoth Hellspawn, a half-fiend fire giant, attacks Maerimydra. Although most of Maerimydra's drow are slaughtered or enslaved, small bands of refugees escape into the surrounding Underdark, known as the Deep Wastes. House Dhuurniv, which fell into disgrace after forging the Spider's Truce during the Weeping War, is the only Maerimydran noble house to survive with significant holdings, as most lie outside the city.

1373 The Year of Rogue Dragons

Hammer 1	Sammaster completes his transformation of the Dracorage mythal, precipitating a Rage of Dragons independent of the appearance of the King-Killer Star in the heavens.
Ches 28	Lolth's Silence ends. Halisstra Melarn, Lolth's Lady Penitent, begins harrying the surface-dwelling drow of the Darkwoods, Eastern Fringe, and Velarswood.
Tarsakh 17	Zarlandris emerges from Glaun Bog and attacks the town of Highmoon. After a desperate battle, the great black wyrm dies amidst the rubble of the Tower of the Rising Moon. Lord Theremen Ulath vows to rebuild.
Mirtul 22	Sirvinhandra, thought dead for centuries, emerges from a hidden lair in the Dun Hills and lays siege to the Abbey of the Just Hammer. After inflicting terrible devastation, the great green wyrm is laid low by Lord High Justiciar High Avenger Deren Eriach.
Elesias 7	Thraxata the Flamefiend, a red dragon, sets fires across Battledale that consume large swaths of woodlands.
Taraskh 5	Narlgathra, a red wyrm, emerges from the ruins of Myth Drannor and flies south to attack Tangled Trees. The summertime inhabitants are slaughtered, leaving only a handful of survivors later discovered by far-wandering residents upon their return.
Taraskh 12	A band of dragon hunters destroys the Zhentarim garrison of Elmwood and three war galleys.
Uktar 13	Verthandantalynx, a green wyrm lairing in the depths of Cormanthor west of Myth Drannor, succumbs to the Rage and attacks the village of Trenahess, leaving it in ruins.
Nightal 6	Sammaster is destroyed and the rage comes to an end.

1374 The Year of Lightning Storms

Taraskh 12	In the wake of a failed assault on Evereska, the half-fiend gold elves of House Dlardrageth return to Myth Drannor, accompanied by a legion of fey'ri liberated from the Nameless Dungeon.
Mirtul 6	House Dlardrageth's legions destroy the Morninglord's temple in Myth Drannor, killing most of the clerics, although a few escape through a portal.
Mirtul 10	Scyllua Darkhope learns of the fey'ri presence in Myth Drannor.
Mirtul 13	Lady Sarya Dlardrageth, matron of House Dlardrageth, summons Malkizid, an exiled archdevil, to Myth Drannor.
Mirtul 19	Araevin Teshurr and his adventuring companions uncover the portal network Sarya used to move her army from the ruins of

	Myth Glaurach, her bastion near the High Forest, to Myth Drannor.
Mirtul 22	Scyllua Darkhope begins preparations to march a Zhentarim army south to Yûlash.
Mirtul 24	Lord Seiveril Miritar of Elion, leader of the Crusade from Evermeet that rescued Evereska, convenes a Council of War in the ruins of Myth Glaurach. The commanders of the Crusade agree to travel via the portal network discovered by Araevin to Semberholme in hopes of defeating House Dlardrageth once and for all.
Mirtul 28	By the shore of Lake Sember, Seiveril revives the Dales Compact with Battledale, Deepingdale, Mistledale, and Shadowdale.
Kythorn 1	The Crusade marches north toward Mistledale and Shadowdale.
Kythorn 4	House Dlardrageth forms an alliance with Hillsfar and Sembia. Hillsfar begins mustering an army to send south down the Moonsea Ride to Mistledale and Battledale. Sembia recruits a mercenary army to send north along Rauthauvyr's Road through Featherdale and Tasseldale.
Kythorn 12	Hillsfar allies with Zhentil Keep. The Black Network agrees to invade Daggerdale and Shadowdale.
Kythorn 16	Sembia's mercenaries cross Blackfeather Bridge and occupy Battledale.
Kythorn 21	Hillsfar reneges on its alliance with House Dlardrageth.
Kythorn 24	The Crusade routs Scyllua Darkhope's army, forcing them to retreat to Yûlash.
Kythorn 26	House Dlardrageth attacks the city of Hillsfar and Hillsfar's army based at the Standing Stone. The First Lord's tower is destroyed, but Maalthiir, ruler of Hillsfar, escapes.
Flamerule 3	House Dlardrageth breaks Hillsfar's army at the Standing Stone, forcing it to flee back to Hillsfar. Sembia's army begins to dissolve under repeated assault by the legions of House Dlardrageth.
Flamerule 21	House Dlardrageth destroys the Standing Stone and allies with the House Jaelre drow.
Eleasis 5	Emissaries of the Crusade reach a truce with the Sembians. House Dlardrageth launches a raid against the Crusade encampment at Semberholme, but is repulsed.

Eleasis 6	Zhentil Keep's army crushes the Hillsfar garrison at Yûlash (*Final Gate*).
Eleasis 9	House Jaelre attacks the Sembian and elven delegations in Tasseldale; all three groups suffer casualties. Maalthiir decamps from Hillsfar; destination unknown.
Eleasis 10	The Zhentilar invades Hillsfar's western territories.
Eleasis 11	The Crusade allies with Sembia against House Dlardrageth.
Eleasis 17	Fzoul issues his terms to Hardil Gearas, High Warden of Hillsfar (*Final Gate*).
Eleasis 17	The Crusade battles the legions of House Dlardrageth in the Vale of Lost Voices. The Zhentilar besiege Hillsfar.
Eleasis 18	Malkizid is banished. House Dlardrageth retreats from the Vale of Lost Voices. Hillsfar capitulates to the army of Zhentil Keep.
Eleasis 20	The Crusade surrounds Myth Drannor.
Eleasis 22	The Crusade overruns Myth Drannor and House Dlardrageth falls. A handful of fey'ri escape. Seiveril Miritar is slain.
Eleasis 27	Fzoul Chembryl meets in secret with Jezz the Lame of House Jaelre and representatives of the Auzkovyn Clan. The three groups agree to work in concert to destroy the Fair Folk before they can truly reestablish the City of Song.
Eleasis 29	Fzoul Chembryl orders Scyllua Darkhope to seize control of the Moonsea Ride by establishing a series of fortifications along the road south from Hillsfar.
Eleint 3	Skirmishes between the Zhentarim and Myth Drannor erupt along the Moonsea Ride. Masked drow support the Black Network with targeted assassinations. This marks the beginning of the Cormanthor War, pitting the Army of Myth Drannor against the Army of Darkhope and the Masked Brigades (Vhaeraun-worshiping drow of House Jaelre and the Auzkovyn Clan). In the months that follow, a series of increasingly deadly raids and counter-raids are mounted by each side.
Eleint 12	Storm Silverhand, Dove Falconhand, and the rest of the Knights of Myth Drannor arrive in the City of Song to aid in its defense. Within hours they are engaged in a series of hit-and-run battles with drow skirmishers in the forests to the east.
Uktar 3	A Sharran priestess, Esvele Greycastle, forges an alliance with Fzoul Chembryl, Tyrant of the Moonsea.
Feast of the Moon	Esvele Greycastle forges an alliance between the Lolth-worshiping drow of House Dhuurniv and the Zhentarim.

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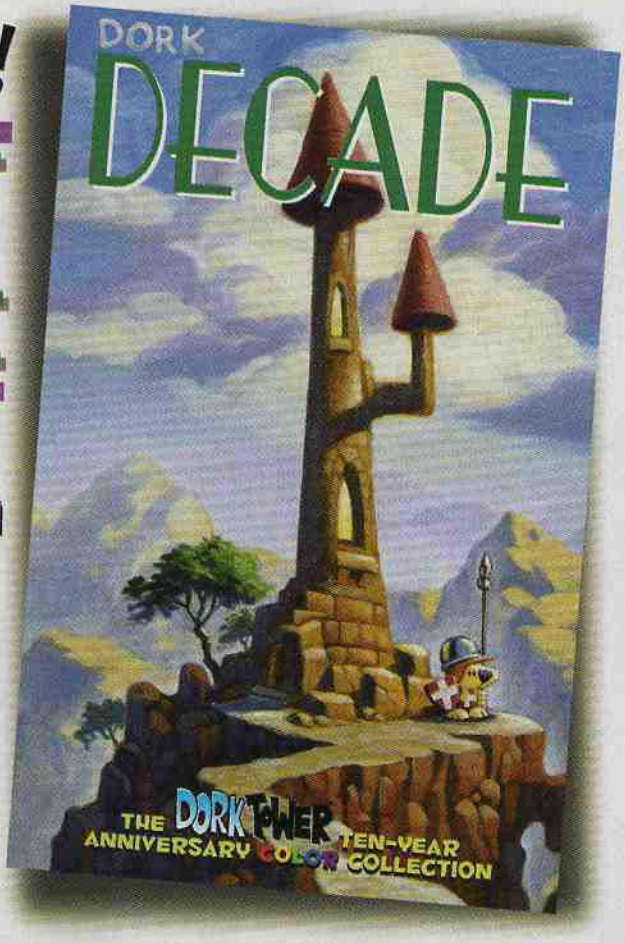
DORK STORM



Nightal 1	Scyllua Darkhope returns to Zhentil Keep to lead an additional division into the field. To her surprise, Fzoul orders her to invade Shadowdale again, but this time with support from the Church of Shar and the drow of House Dhuurniv.
Nightal 15	Sharran assassins infiltrate the village of Shadowdale and attack Elminster's Tower. After a fierce battle, Elminster vanishes and his tower is blasted into ruin and hurled into another plane.
Nightal 16	In the early morning hours, the Zhentarim army led by Scyllua Darkhope overruns Shadowdale with the aid of the Church of Shar and House Dhuurniv. The Army of Myth Drannor is unable to respond as Zhentarim brigades to the east launch simultaneous attacks on several key elven fortifications.
Nightal 18	Lord Mourngrym Amcathra publicly embraces the Army of Darkhope as allies and defenders of Shadowdale.
Nightal 27	Scyllua Darkhope begins preparations to march south with two brigades to attack Mistledale, leaving behind the Brigade of Shadows to occupy Shadowdale.
Nightal 29	The triggering of ancient wards alerts Coronal Isevele Miritar that Ary'velahr'Kerym, the fabled Warblade, has returned to the Realms Above (or the uppermost reaches of the Underdark) in the vicinity of the Twisted Tower.
Nightal 30	Storm Silverhand and Dove Falconhand lead an elite contingent of elves into Shadowdale. The Chosen of Mystra are grievously wounded upon their arrival due to the interaction of their silver fire with the local Weave and forced to teleport away. Their comrades-in-arms are left behind to an uncertain fate.

FACTIONS

Although Myth Drannor has been purged of the Cult of the Dragon, House Dlardrageth, the phaerimm, and Zhentarim-summoned devils, the Elven Woods are still home to many competing factions who battle each other amidst the trees.

Army of Darkhope

The Army of Darkhope, consisting of Zhentilar troops supplemented by mercenary companies who equal them in number is ensconced in Hillsfar, Shadowdale, and newly built fortifications along the Moonsea Ride. High Captain Scyllua Darkhope reports to Fzoul Chembyrl, Tyrant of the Moonsea. He has ordered her to work with the Masked Brigades to dislodge the Army of Myth Drannor from the City of Song before the Fair Folk can reestablish their power in the region.

Army of Myth Drannor

In the wake of the Seiveril's Crusade, the Fair Folk and their allies have reclaimed the City of Beauty. Although at this point the settlement is little more than a fortified encampment amidst the ruins of a once-great city, the new inhabitants have plans to restore Myth Drannor's former glory. The newly ensconced defenders, under the command of Isvele Miritar, have renamed their legions the Army of Myth Drannor. Isvele's forces now control the Heartwood (the region of forest surrounding Myth Drannor) and are actively skirmishing to extend their control north into the Beast Marches, west toward Shadowdale, south toward Mistledale and east to the Moonsea Ride.

Cult of the Dragon

The Followers of the Scaly Way have suffered a series of reverses in the Eastern Heartlands in recent years, from the loss of their base in Myth Drannor to the death of Sammaster. In the wake of the last Rage of Dragons, the Followers of the Scaly Way have retreated to three major strongholds in the Cormanthor region: the environs of Dretchroyaster's Lair, Haptooth Hill, and the ruins of Aencar's Manor. Although the Wearers of the Purple hope to recruit one or more new Sacred Ones (dracoliches) from the ranks of those wyrms awakened by Sammaster's Rage, the bulk of their efforts are directed at undermining the burgeoning influence of the Zhentarim.

Masked Brigades

Two clans of Vhaeraun-worshiping drow dwell beneath the boughs of the great forest of Cormanthor. The reclamation of Myth Drannor has prompted the two groups to unite against their common foe. The alliance is known as the Masked Brigades for the many mask-wearing clerics of Vhaeraun in their ranks, a practice that has since spread to most of the assassins and skirmishers who fight from the shadows. The Masked Brigades are strongest in the Darkwoods surrounding the Elven Court, although they have been driven from the seat of elven rule, but small bands of dagger-wielding drow stalk Cormanthor from the outskirts of Mistledale to Halvan's Wood.

Eric L. Boyd is the collective pen name of Phil Athans, Rich Baker, Thomas M. Costa, Ed Greenwood, Paul S. Kemp, George Krashos, Steven E. Schend, Lisa Smedman, and a host of sages from Candlekeep, each of whom contributed significantly to this article. An effort to amicably resolve whose name should be listed first resulted in a tavern brawl at the Old Skull Inn, and all are now barred from the premises.

JONGRATH'S MILL

by Ed Greenwood · illustrated by David Day

Most folk are familiar with grain mills that stand beside streams and use water to turn their creaking waterwheels. Many of these mills exist throughout Cormyr, Sembia, the Dales, the Vast, and the Western Heartlands. Yet there are also thousands of unconventional mills in farm backlands across Faerûn. These mills pop up where water is scarce or where the land lies so low that a millpond would likely cause flooding.

One better-known "waterless mill" is Jongrath's Mill in the countryside of Tethyr. It's a day's ride east of Krennashar, in the vast expanse of what travelers on the Trade Way sometimes call Lower Tethyr. Some parts of the county of Bardshyr, in the Duchy of the Purple Marches, are well watered, but other areas have stretches where water lies deep and must be drawn up from wells. In these areas, livestock clusters around muddy waterholes, and streams are but tiny trickles, certainly not strong enough to turn a mill's wheel.

Ilmurk Jongrath (CG male human Exp6/War2) makes his home, and his livelihood, in a deep-water area, where water-powered mills are out of the question. Jongrath owns a number of draft horses—great lumbering giants, patient, stolid, and capable of carrying and moving great burdens if harnessed properly—that he uses to power his mill rather than water.

WHAT MEETS THE EYE

Jongrath has let much of his grazing land return to scrub saplings and shrubs—a ready source of kindling and fence-poles when he must clear it. The miller uses stones and stumps for border fences, and otherwise lets his livestock roam freely around the property. Those stumps have given Jongrath's farm its local name: Stump Hill.

A visitor to Stump Hill finds not only grazed wilderlands, but a small, neat cottage, sturdy but unadorned wooden stables, and a mill-shed with wood-shingled roofs, all gathered around the millrun: a circular patch of hoof-trodden dirt with a gigantic spoked wheel at its center.

Wooden angle-braces hold up a wood collar that in turn holds a barrel-sized central shaft (made up of many tree-trunks bound together with strapping) upright as it turns in a smooth stone socket.

Wooden tripod-braces hold a horizontal shaft in position overhead as it reaches over the horsepath to hold a toothed cogwheel interlocked with the spokes of the upright shaft. As the upright shaft turns, it turns the cogwheel and thus turns its shaft. The far end of the shaft vanishes into the mill shed, where grinding can be completed under cover from harsh weather and hungry birds.

When he's milling, Jongrath's horses walk endlessly in a circle, harnessed to the bars of the central capstan that protrude like spokes on a wheel. Their efforts turn the overhead cogwheel whose teeth are interlocked with the capstan-spokes and in turn spins the shaft linked to it. At the far end of that shaft, inside the mill shed, is a millstone that grinds against another stationary millstone—and by means of another shaft-mounted toothed wheel, at the same time operates a pump that lifts deep water to surface troughs, to water Jongrath's stock.

From time to time cogs wear or break off wheels, but Jongrath grinds grain into flour for his neighboring farmers and so has plenty of coin saved up to pay for repairs by stonemasons in Myratma or Port Kir. In fact, several of the millstones and cogwheels that he claims have broken are hidden under sacks of flour stored in his shed and are actually unused spares ready for him to put into service when real breakage occurs.

Whenever a sturdy tree becomes available, Jongrath cuts it and adds it to the replacement central shaft he's building in the mill shed. Made of numerous thick trunks strapped together and then soaked in oil to keep them from rotting, the shaft rests on trestles at one end of the mill shed, waiting for the day when the old shaft starts to crack and needs replacing.

Jongrath doesn't make all of his coin from milling and stock sales—he's something of an entrepreneur who has at least two other sources of income. After his wife died, Jongrath found their house lonely, so he moved into the mill shed, where he sleeps atop his valuables and has his horses nearby in the stables. This has left his small but pleasantly furnished house empty. Jongrath now rents out the house to merchants who come cattle buying and need a place to stay. Since there's no inn nearby, he makes a decent wage from the rent.

Jongrath also delights in painting and runs a profitable part-time business of limning heraldic arms and badges onto shields, armor, wooden plaques, and coach doors. A simple shield (for a retainer or man-at-arms) costs about 6 gp, less if the shield

uses no more than two colors. A typical knight's shield bearing a large and intricate blazon costs 20 gp (25 gp for a rush order). He follows the same pricing structure for body armor but adds an additional 5 gp on top of those listed for shields.

Nobles of Tethyr consider such prices to be splendid bargains since heralds add several hundreds of gold pieces to Jongrath's prices. He doesn't do work on fabrics but sometimes designs arms for those who want him to, and he does touch-up work on scarred or dirty arms brought to him (3 gp for small items, 12 gp for large items).

BLAZONRY BEKNIGHTED

The practice that gets Jongrath in the most trouble with local heralds is his design work—which infringes (or so they claim) on their exclusive expertise. Jongrath cheerfully acknowledges that the heralds are the experts but says there's nothing "exclusive" about heraldry that gives them the sole right to make designs. As evidence in favor of this view, he points out the thousands of crafter's marks that furniture-carvers, bottle-blowers, and weavers all across Faerûn work into their wares (distinctive marks or badges that heralds have neither designed nor approved).

Jongrath openly invites heralds to examine his work for mistakes and asserts that they won't find any. A herald might well have designed something differently than he did, but his designs aren't wrong.

None of these arguments have persuaded the local heralds Aldrur Heriburt (LN male human Exp8), based in Myratma, and Chastus Beldrorn (LN male human Exp5/War1), based in Darrowmar, to desist in their efforts to have Jongrath fined, jailed, and prohibited by duchal decree from practicing any form of blazonry.

Although the two heralds are pompous, persistent men with wealth and ready access to officials on their side, the Duchess of the Purple Marches is amused by Jongrath, whom she visits on occasions when she goes incognito as Lady Farefar and rents his house while she goes hawking. She refuses to sign any such decree that Heriburt and Beldrorn place before her.

The two heralds aren't of the exalted ranks of heralds who work regularly for the nobility, keep rolls of arms for a realm, and administer realm-wide heraldic law, but they furiously defend what little authority they have, which happens to be registration of blazonry practiced by non-nobles in the Purple Marches (such as ship's banners, trading coster badges and symbols, millers' marks on sacking, and so on). Jongrath offends them, and they're determined to have him punished and put out of all heraldic affairs.

Jongrath is in turn irritated by the stiff letters and personal rudeness the heralds have offered him—in particular, an expedition led by Beldorn in which hireswords tried to seize several freshly emblazoned shields drying in Jongrath's stables and retreated only after the miller had been forced to pin several mercenary arms and wrists to shed-posts with shafts from his crossbow. Jongrath is determined not to let the heralds dictate to him in any way, and he finds every possible opportunity to needle and annoy them.

A bitter battle has now erupted between the heralds and Jongrath. The latest turn of events is that the heralds have been spreading rumors that Jongrath is a thief, a Calishite agent, and a rebel seeking to overthrow the new regime in Tethyr. Jongrath, in response, has invited King Haedrak to personally investigate "all the doings and practices of me, Ilmurk Jongrath, of Stump Hill, with an eye to establishing my personal loyalty to the crown and clearing my name of the aspersions cast by increasingly dishonest and immoderate heralds."

King Haedrak is reported to have replied verbally (when Jongrath's letter was read to him), "I'm rather busy right now, but tell the good miller that I've every confidence in him and shall continue to do so until I personally find evidence otherwise. He should await my visit, in the next year or two, and continue to enjoy his good name entirely untrammeled until that time."

ELMINSTER SAITH:

'Tis folk like Ilmurk Jongrath that make dwelling in the Realms such a delight: stubborn and inventive, desiring to be commanded by no one and yet with no ambition to rule or oppress others. I know a thing or three about heraldry—several of the tomes the High Heralds consult were compiled by me some centuries back using a spell that duplicates a drawing in hue and shape, creating an identical work of the original—and Jongrath's claims are true: No self-granted charter can give any herald exclusive rights to anything (except where a royal grant, warrant, or charter gives that herald or a body of heralds exclusive rights within a realm, city, or territory that the grantor has lawful writ over), and Jongrath's designs contain no heraldic mistakes. Most of them are so simple, mind, that it would be hard to find room to make a mistake. As for his battles with the heralds—well, ahem; in his comportment, know ye, he reminds me of . . . me.

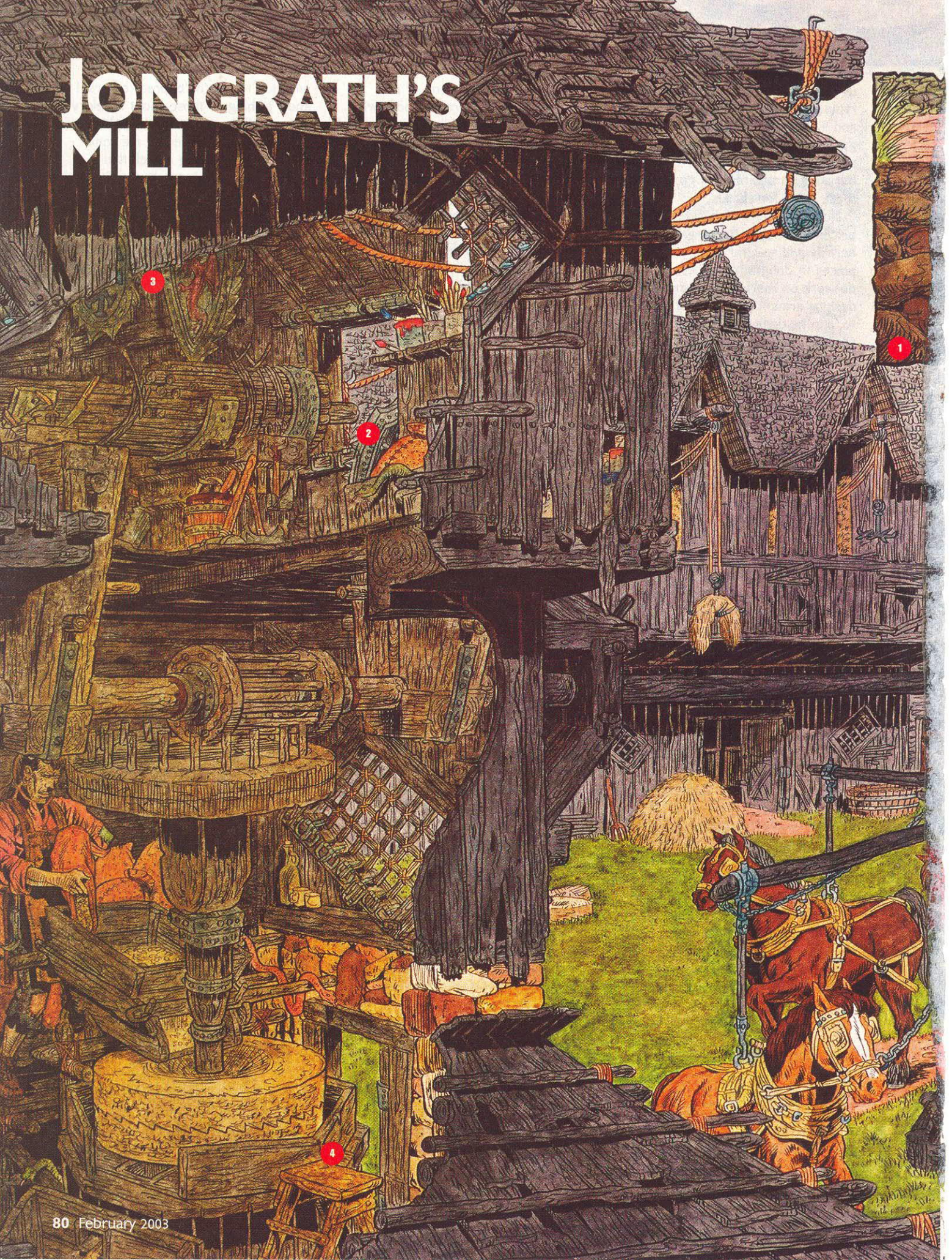
A rumor persists that the mill houses a powerful shield left behind by a cleric who was killed in battle before she could return to pay Jongrath for his heraldic work. Indeed, Jongrath does retain items when his clients are unable to pay him or fail to return for the finished product, and many of them are worth a pretty penny. One such item is a large steel shield that looks rather ordinary in its design. Looks are deceiving in this case, for despite its plain appearance, the shield houses powerful magic. Jongrath has heard the rumors, and always the honorable businessman, he's taken great pains to hide the shield, hoping that his client will return one day to claim it.

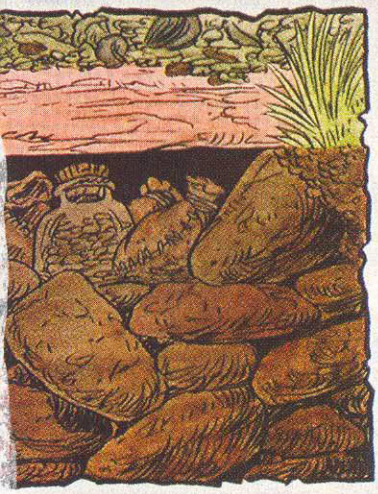
SHIELD OF SENSES

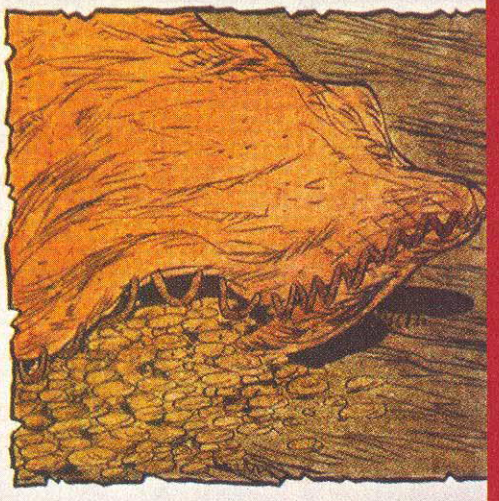
This *+1 animated, fire resistance large steel shield* automatically confers *remove blindness/deafness* twice per day when the wearer is exposed to an attack that causes blindness or deafness, whether the effect is normal or magical in nature.

Caster level: 12th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *animate objects remove blindness/deafness, resist elements;* **Market Price:** 49,170 gp; **Cost to Create:** 24,585 gp + 1,966 XP.

JONGRATH'S MILL







1. Jongrath keeps his wealth in unused well shafts that were dug by previous landowners in days when there was more water and shallow wells yielded all that was needed. He blocks the shafts by tumbling large stones down them until cavities approximately 10 feet deep are left. Then the miller makes long, narrow coin-boxes that hang down the shafts from cables whose ends are anchored to the stones set around the lip of the well. Those who know of them can easily draw the boxes up from the well shafts, but Jongrath has covered all but one of these unused wells with old, worn-out millstones. It takes a successful Search check (DC 20) to notice that the millstones look recently placed. The well that isn't covered by millstones holds his "ready money," and he hides it with a flat stone atop which is his compost heap (Search check, DC 20).

2. Jongrath has devised "snap-traps," which he places at all windows and doors of the mill shed to catch and kill vermin (to keep grain and milled flour from being eaten). Jongrath also encourages rodent-eating snakes to dwell in the shed (he and the snakes live quite happily together, although more than one visitor has been startled to see a serpent slithering nearby).

3. Jongrath can't leave his heraldic work to dry in the mill shed (they'd be covered in flour within hours), and he dislikes cluttering up his house with his temporary tables (boards he places on saw-horses), so freshly painted shields and wooden plaques are slung on rafters in the stables to dry.

4. Dwarf-made grinding-wheels are affixed to the overhead shaft under a weather-cover here; when Jongrath needs tools sharpened, he simply sets up a stepladder and grinds away.

Moon Mountain BREWERY

by Ed Greenwood · Illustrated by David Day

This ramshackle, little-known establishment stands in a wooded area on the banks of the Unicorn Run two days' travel north of Secomber. Here a small live-in staff of halflings make "moonslake," a minty drink that's rapidly gaining favor in the Heartlands. It's already the most popular drink among halflings in the lower Delimbiyr valley.

The Moon Mountain Brewery also makes and ships "topkegs" for those who prefer ale flips, a traditional cold-weather favorite among humans of the Sword Coast North. A topkeg has a small "crown" compartment at one end (its name comes from its brewery-preferred uppermost position, if the keg is placed on end) containing rum. The larger lower part of the cask, typically fifteen times the size of the crown, holds ale.

What Meets The Eye

Built among the trees by halflings who seem to have a love of stairs, balconies, flying bridges, outside ladders, and slide-chutes, Moon Mountain is made of any and all local woods that came to hand—mainly duskwood, pine, maple, oak, elm, and shadowtop, in descending order of prevalence. These beams and boards were fitted together with wooden pegs and a minimum of reshaping from their natural sizes and outlines, so parts of the brewery look almost as if they grew that way. Most of the wood has gone silver with age, and nothing is painted; moss and pitch has been used to chink the widest gaps, and whenever a piece of wood fails, another board is nailed over it or another prop wedged into place beside it.

The halflings who dwell here only relax when downpours make outside work pointless and there isn't a full load of tasks waiting along the various processes of making drinks and preparing them for transport. However, they prefer their work to earn them coin—so expansions and repairs to the brewery itself have all been done in haste. Successive slapdash building efforts at different times have resulted in an endearingly crazy structure of odd little rooms, ramshackle roofs sprouting in various directions, structures built around or incorporating living trees, little steps and stone-lined storage pits dug into handy hillocks, and so on. Wooden ladders ascend one of the tallest adjacent trees to reach a lookout platform where lanterns can be hung to signal shipping readiness, meals, dangers, or an urgent need for their presence to Moon Mountain folk working out in the fields.

Inside, the brewery is a labyrinth of flagstone-floored rooms (overlaid with dirt and rushes to make them level) full of vats, open tanks, trough-pipes, presses, casks, and blown glass bottles of all sorts of hues, sizes, and origins (which the halflings buy in Secomber from peddlers who salvage them from Waterdeep and more southerly cities). These bottles are used in brewery processes and for certain sales in Secomber.

What Goes On At The Mountain

Although the brewery stands in terrain studded with many little hills, there's certainly no mountain nearby. The name "Moon Mountain" is a corruption of Mrune Moontan, the name by which the half-elf bride of the long-ago adventurer Oblar Minstrelwish was known among the halflings of Secomber. Oblar and Mrune met while adventuring, and she's remembered as wielding mighty sorcery, for dancing in the moonlight with "strange monstrous visitors," and for brewing better ale than any Minstrelwish hitherto had. Her method and recipe are the basis for the Moon Mountain Ale of today.

Eighteen adult halflings (and seven children, who work as hard as their parents) call Moon Mountain home. Many of them belong to two interrelated families, the Borulglar and the Minstrelwish, and all of them work hard. Barrels must be made from trees they fell along the edge of the High Forest, substantial crops of apples, barley, hop vines, and sugar beets must be farmed, wild mint found and harvested in the forest, and the drinks must be made and then shipped down to Secomber and thence to the wider Realms.

The halflings distill rum from the sugar beets, brew beer from the barley and hops, and make moonslake from fermented apple cider that's distilled—or in winter, just set out to freeze and the ice scooped off. The brewing (malting and boiling), distilling, and barrel-making consume great quantities of firewood, so the halflings of Moon Mountain spend a lot of their time as woodcutters.

So stubbornly industrious are they, in fact, that no one has yet questioned

why it is that they bother. How can a brewery so far from large markets succeed? Why is the brewery so close to the perils of the High Forest?

The answer lies in the secret sponsors of Moon Mountain: the Zhentarim. Through this front, the Black Network ships information and small, valuable items to their agents, allies, and contacts throughout the Heartlands and the Sword Coast. Some of the casks leaving Moon Mountain have hidden interior compartments that contain messages or contraband, in addition to the drink they're supposed to contain.

Tarth Brallowgath (NE male human, War1/Rog1) comes to Moon mountain to sell supplies to the halflings and buy casks and kegs of their output. Brallowgath is actually a Zentarim agent, sent to the halfling holdout to arrange for the Black Network's smuggling needs. Only Yarimmur Borulglar (LE male halfling, Exp4/Ftr3), Kelter Minstrelwish (LE male halfling, Rog1/Ftr2) and "Old Chin" or "Mother" Nurvala Minstrelwish (NE female halfling, Exp4/Rog1) know Brallowgath's true loyalties—and covertly receive both the items he wants them to secretively ship, and the payments he brings for doing so.

Most of the other Moon Mountain halflings know there's something "not quite right" about the dealings between Brallowgath and Yarimmur and the Old Chin—but most of them don't want to know what's really going on. The youngsters are the most curious, and Kelter began as a youngster who took to spying on the little closed-door meetings with Brallowgath until he knew everything. Upon discovering this, Yarimmur simply took him into the little Zhent cabal.

Due to the construction of topkegs, over a dozen of the Moon Mountain halflings are skilled at making interior compartments in a cask or keg, but only the cabal of these three senior halflings assigns what casks are shipped where.

On very rare occasions, Brallowgath will order the halflings to poison particular casks (to eliminate clients who have displeased his Zhentarim superiors). Because of the possibility of the business being ruined if such a cask goes astray, the halflings hate doing this. Their poisons are derived from natural forest sources, and they haven't yet discovered any sleep-inducing or paralyzing substances that retain effectiveness when mixed with brine or alcoholic liquids and transported over distances.

Elminster's Notes

The Zhents are well aware of the possibility of kegs going astray through breakage, raft wrecks, or thefts, and almost all of the messages transported via Moon Mountain are either coded or consist of cryptic abbreviations. An example of the latter follows: "Suthask sunrise/three out/Blackleg." This means the operation named "Suthask" is now starting ("sunrise"), and the recipient is to do his assigned part. In this case, that includes disposing of or selling three casks, wagons, slaves, or whatever, and for guidance, more information, to report final success, or if anything goes wrong, the recipient is to contact the Zhent agent who goes by the Zhent nickname of "Blackleg."

I can tell thee some details of two Moon Mountain poisons (derived from secret teas made by boiling precise mixtures of certain barks, mosses, and fungi in water) that do survive when combined with alcoholic beverages. Both of them fade over time and with dilution, but when fresh and strong, they are as follows:

Bittermint (the name describes its faint, betraying taste): Ingested, Fortitude save (DC 17); initial damage 2d4 hp, secondary damage 1d4 hp and 1d4 temporary Dexterity.

Tulade (tasteless, but laces drink with tiny black oily bubbles): Ingested, Fortitude save (DC 16); initial damage 3d6 hp, secondary damage 1d6 hp and unconsciousness.

To Please The Gullet

Two-thirds of the output of the brewery is the light, clear Moon Mountain Ale. Though it's a popular quaff in Daggerford, Loudwater, Llorkh, and Secomber, most of it consumed elsewhere finds its way into ale flips.

An ale flip is made with the aid of a metal bowl, a fire, ale, rum, a handful of sugar, and a metal bar called a loggerhead. The rum, ale, and sugar are mixed in the bowl (fifteen times as much ale as rum, and as much sugar as the drinker desires), and the loggerhead is heated red-hot and then plunged into the brew.

The brewery also makes rum, moonslake, and a dark beer.

Moon Rum is fiery, raw, red-purple in hue, and little loved on its own; though one can buy hand kegs of it at the brewery or in Secomber, elsewhere it's only found in topkegs, for use in ale flips.

Moonslake is simply alcoholic apple cider that's been mixed with water in which crushed mint has been boiled and then strained out again. It's cool, fresh taste clears throats that are suffering from hearth-smoke in many a tavern, but a great many humans hate its minty aftertaste. Halflings and gnomes seem to like it best, with the occasional dwarf, elf, or half-elf finding it to their liking. Sales of moonslake have soared in Waterdeep, however, since certain sly halflings started to spread the rumor that imbibing moonslake makes drinkers far more attractive to folk of the opposite gender—and more alert, hardy, and in need of less sleep, too.

Moon Mountain Dark is a full, nut-bitter beer that's beloved by many halflings, gnomes, and dwarves—but slower to find favor with humans, some of whom have been heard to mutter, "Salty beer? Ugh!" and similar comments. It does, however, make a superb mulled brew, and it is served in many inns and much enjoyed there by the same humans who profess to be disgusted by Moon Mountain Dark.

Mulled brew is simply beer dosed with a handful of sugar; two pinches of ground nutmeg, cloves, and blackroot, a handful of ground ginger; and a piece of apple or lime, all heated just to the beginnings of a boil. A dash of rum is then stirred in, the mull is taken off the hearth to cool for the space of a short muttered cook's charm or song, and then served hot.

In Your Campaign

Using an "Elminster's Guide" article in your game is easy. Simply switch the names of groups and individuals so they suit your campaign or come up with some new scenarios for how the elements of the article work together.

- The Zhentarim can be any evil-aligned organization from your campaign. Alternatively, the group that uses Moon Mountain as a front might be a secretive organization of do-gooders fighting the oppression of an evil tyrant.
- Perhaps the haphazard Moon Mountain brewery is inhabited by another race. Elves gnomes, and dwarves are good choices, but it could be built and maintained by stranger creatures like sprites, goblins, or satyrs.
- Perhaps the brewery is no brewery at all but is instead a home to an eccentric circle of druids who brew up magic potions and plant growth serums in huge vats.

Elminster's Guide to the Realms:
MOON MOUNTAIN BREWERY
2

Moon Mountain Brewery

1. Stone-lined storage cavities have been introduced into the middle of living trees (that have grown around them). Wall-panels in many places around the brewery allow access to these spaces.

2. Salvaged glass bottles hidden behind sliding wall-panels beside many door frames contain contact poisons (sassone leaf residue and terinav root, see the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for details) for hurling as missiles at intruders if the brewery is ever attacked. A Search check (DC 15) locates one of these compartments. Most rooms have at least one, and many have two or three.

3. This and several other brewery doors are false entrances that lead into corridors lined with pit traps. See the *Dungeon Master's Guide* or *Song and Silence* for example pit traps.

4. Panels in some outside walls open into hidden storage spaces for Zhent drop-offs and stolen goods. These compartments come and go as the halflings repair and add to their home, but there are usually a dozen or so available at any one time. A Search check in the area (DC 20) locates one of these compartments.

ELMISTER'S GUIDE to the REALMS

Lost places, familiar haunts, and strange sites in the lands of Faerûn.

MRELGAUNT'S TURRET

by Ed Greenwood · illustrated by David Day

In a wooded ravine northeast of Everlund, above a small, nameless stream, floats a foresters' landmark few have seen. Mrelgaunt's Turret is a crumbling tower lacking its lower levels—they've fallen away to leave the upper floors held aloft by enchantments that could fail at any time.

Once the home of the reclusive, studious wizard Mrelgaunt, the Turret is today a haunted ruin. The collapse of its lower levels happened almost a century ago, of unknown causes.

The few adventuring bands who've reached the floating tower report that unseen Mrelgaunt, now a ghost, whispers fell secrets to those who venture into his uppermost room. No civilized beings dwell nearby, and the wild forest and rugged topography makes sighting the Turret from afar difficult.

The cylindrical Turret is topped by a conical, taper-sloped, slate-shingled roof surmounted by a bare flagstaff. Birds shun the dark, floating tower. They refuse even to fly into it, let alone perch or nest on or in it.

The stones of the Turret's circular foundation are awash in the stream, rising out of the waters like stony fingers to enclose a small, constant whirlpool whose clockwise flow drags down small creatures and stream-borne items, drawing them into the unseen tower cellars. There's no way out but back up through the whirling waters, and there's no air space below. Beside the whirlpool rises the only possible handhold for weak swimmers: a circular stone stair that climbs a few steps up into the air and then breaks off.

Writings preserved in Silverymoon record that Aulstaer Mrelgaunt was born in southern Tethyr of wealthy merchant stock almost four hundred years ago. At an early age he showed a grasp of the Art, wielding magic with astonishing maturity. Certain folk sought to make the boy their servant-mage, but he saw through their ruses and slipped away with a passing caravan, seeking fabled Candlekeep.

What then befell him is lost to scribes, but despite never entering that seashore enclave, Mrelgaunt somehow acquired many tomes of magic, a broad and cultured learning, and a love of research that became the ruling passion of his life; he devoted his time to acquiring knowledge rather than taking an active part in the wider world.

At least the last four decades of Mrelgaunt's life were spent in this tower, studying and modifying spells. Far more than most human mages, he came to understand the ways in which magic harnesses natural forces, enabling him to modify spells "on the fly." It's said that even now, as little more than a voice, he can hurl spells that precisely meet the weaknesses of those who try to despoil his tower or carry away its contents. All accounts agree, however, that the whispering voice in the uppermost room of the Turret seems lonely and eager to speak with those venturing into the ruin, imparting advice rather than seeking battle.

Mrelgaunt's knowledge of passing history ends (with a few exceptions, presumably learned from visitors) about two hundred years ago, when he apparently died or passed into undeath. He gives no coherent answers about his passing or where his magic is stored. Perhaps he no longer knows such things, but he is eager to explain the intricacies of arcane spells of low and middling levels, identify items shown to him, and impart the locations of long-dead sages and caches of lost magic.

He apparently relishes the role of confidant and confessor to wizards who are actively adventuring or grappling with mysteries of magic, and he has carried on friendships with mages for years, sometimes guarding items they leave with him, and in return asking only for news of advances in the Art.

Mrelgaunt can confirm that dwarves (led by a short, redbearded stonecutter calling himself "Haelburt Downdelve") built the Turret for him and that Mrelgaunt himself cast the spells that preserved it and its furnishings. However, he remains vague about the magic he used. Certain answers he's given in the past suggest he might have forfeited or even traded away such knowledge to achieve undeath—a fate about which he's similarly cryptic.

Some adventurers say Mrelgaunt never speaks anywhere but in the uppermost room (though his voice can, if he desires, echo down from it, or into the air around the Turret), but his awareness of intruders' actions and movements—and his spells—can reach throughout the ruin and for some distance around it in all directions.

AULSTAER MRELGAUNT

Medium-size Undead (Incorporeal)
Male Human Ghost 19th-level Wizard
Hit Dice: 19d12 (78 hp)
Initiative: +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)
Speed: Fly 30 ft. (perfect)
AC: 23 (+3 Dex, *+6 bracers of armor, +2 ring of protection, +2 amulet of natural armor*)
Manifested AC: 22 (+3 Dex, +3 Cha, *+6 bracers of armor*)
Attacks: Incorporeal corrupting touch +9/+4 melee (+12/+7 melee vs. material opponents); or incorporeal dagger +12/+7 ranged
Damage: Incorporeal corrupting touch 1d4; incorporeal dagger 1d4
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Manifestation, corrupting touch, malevolence, spells
Special Qualities: Undead, incoporeal, +4 turn resistance, rejuvenation
Saves: Fort +9, Ref +12, Will +17
Abilities: Str 11, Dex 17, Con–, Int 20, Wis 17, Cha 17
Skills: Alchemy +15, Concentration +27, Diplomacy +8, Knowledge (arcana) +27, Knowledge (history) +16, Knowledge (the planes) +26, Listen +10, Scry +25, Search +7, Sense Motive +9, Spellcraft +24, Spot +9, Wilderness Lore +5.
Feats: Alertness, Combat Casting, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Maximize Spell, Scribe Scroll, Silent Spell, Spell Focus (Evocation), Spell Mastery (*chain lightning, fireball, spell turning, wall of ice, whirlwind of bones*), Spell Penetration, Still Spell
Challenge Rating: 21
Alignment: Neutral good

Mrelgaunt was a 19th-level wizard when he passed into undeath. His full roster of spells isn't known but some of them appear below. Adventurers report that he can speak Chondathan, Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, and Illuskan. His spirit's purpose seems to be to teach and advise living users of arcane spells, but Mystra might have another, as yet hidden, destiny for him. When confronted with enemies, he often utilizes the bones of intruders (kept in an old tree nearby) by means of the *whirlwind of bones* spell (see sidebar).

Undead: Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and disease. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

Incorporeal: Can be harmed only by other incorporeal creatures, +1 or better magic weapons, or magic, with a 50% chance to ignore any damage from a corporeal source. Can pass through solid objects at will, and own attacks pass through armor. Always moves silently.

Spells (4/12/5/10/5/5/4/4/3/3) from the following list: 0 level: all; 1st level: *cause fear, shield, grease, mage armor, magic missile, message, summon monster I, charm person, silent image;* 2nd level: *arcane lock, identify, minor image, knock, levitate, summon monster II, summon swarm, web;* 3rd level: *dispel magic, fireball, magic circle, sleet storm, summon monster III, suggestion, lightning bolt, wind wall, major image, shrink item;* 4th level: *minor globe of invulnerability, evard's black tentacles, summon monster IV, arcane eye, scrying, ice storm, Otiluke's resilient sphere, wall of ice;* 5th level: *dominate person, magic jar, nightmare, lesser planar binding, summon monster V, contact other plane, cone of cold, telekinesis;* 6th level: *globe of invulnerability, greater dispelling, planar binding, legend lore, chain lightning, disintegrate, eyebite, move earth, true seeing;* 7th level: *finger of death, mass invisibility, plane shift, summon monster VII, spell turning, greater scrying, whirlwind of bones;* 8th level: *greater planar binding, maze, Otto's irresistible dance, polymorph any object, power word–blind, summon monster VIII;* 9th level: *energy drain, meteor swarm, gate, summon monster IX, wish.*

Possesions: *+6 bracers of armor, +2 ring of protection, +2 amulet of natural armor, +3 cloak of resistance, staff of frost, ring of wizardry I, ring of wizardry III,* seven spellbooks. All items listed here are incorporeal.

WHIRLWIND of BONES

Necromancy
Level: Sor/Wiz 7
Components: V,S,M
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Long (400 ft + 40 ft./level)
Effect: 20 ft. radius area of flying bones
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: Reflex half
Spell Resistance: Yes

A deadly *whirlwind of bones* appears and flies at the caster's behest.

The *whirlwind of bones* can fly up to 80 feet per round with perfect maneuverability. It moves as you actively direct it (a move-equivalent action for you); otherwise it merely stays at rest and damages all creatures within the effect. The *whirlwind* has no actual wind, so it does not put out torches and the like.

When the *whirlwind* stops, creatures within the effect take 1d6 points of damage +1 point per caster level to a maximum of +10 (half damage on a successful Reflex save). Half the damage is bludgeoning damage, but half results directly from negative energy. Undead creatures suffer only bludgeoning damage from the spell. A moving *whirlwind of bones* causes no damage.

Material Component: A skeleton of a Medium-size or Large creature. The bones can't be part of a living or undead creature, or a construct, nor can they be constrained in any way.

THE THIRD FLOOR
TAPESTRIES ROT HERE, THEIR SCENES WORN AWAY, BUT THEY WERE MERE DECORATION, OF NO CONSEQUENCE, WHEN NEW. SPHERE OF GLOWING AIR ABOVE THE TABLE, AN IMMOBILE "LAMP THAT IS NOT," SEEMS PART OF THE TURRET ENCHANTMENTS. STRONGCHESTS SIT OPEN AND EMPTY, BUT MRELGAUNT KNOWS MAGIC THAT REACHES "OTHER-WHERE" TO WHISK THINGS PUT INTO THE CHESTS INTO EXTRADIMENSIONAL SPACES AND THEREFROM RETRIEVE THEM.
HERE HE LURKS.
TRAPDOOR, WITH NO TRAP-SPELLS THAT I'VE YET FOUND. YET I MISLIKE THE LOOK OF IT.
THREE SMALL, WATER-FILLED CHAMBERS BELOW. THEY'VE STONE-BLOCK WALLS AND ARE CHOKED, KNOW YE, WITH WATERLOGGED NATURAL REFUSE, MANY DROWNED BODIES, BONES . . . AND POSSIBLY TREASURE.

THE SECOND FLOOR

GLOWING TAPESTRIES HERE, OF FOREST HUNTING SCENES; HELMLESS HUMAN KNIGHTS IN PLATE ARMOR ON HORSEBACK IN FEARLESS PURSUIT OF SHE-PIXIES (TERRIBLY DANGEROUS, NO DOUBT). FAINT PRESERVATIVE SPELLS, BY ALL REPORTS, BUT A SENSE OF SOMETHING STRONGER, LINGERING . . . ORNATE CEILING LANTERN (PERHAPS MAGICAL) OVER A CENTRAL TABLE, AN ACTIVE HELMED HORROR BESIDE IT THAT AWAKENS ONLY TO ATTACK THOSE WHO VANDALIZE TURRET STRUCTURE OR FURNISHINGS.
SOMEONE HAS LEFT SOME SMITHS OR ARMORERS' TOOLS HERE. REMOVING ONE FROM THIS CHAMBER EITHER CREATES OR SUMMONS ANOTHER HELMED HORROR THAT HUNTS THE TOOL TO RETRIEVE IT.

THE FIRST FLOOR

A STOOL HERE, AND NOT MUCH ELSE, FOR UNLESS I'M GREATLY MISTAKEN, THIS IS A PORTAL CHAMBER–THE FOUR-POINTED STAR SYMBOL GRAVEN INTO THE FLOOR MATCHES SOME I'VE SEEN ON HIGH MOUNTAIN LEDGES AND IN REMOTE RUINS AROUND THE SWORD COAST NORTH. THERE'S STRONG BUT SLUMBERING MAGIC HERE, TOO; 'TWOULD SURPRISE ME NOT TO LEARN THAT THE PORTAL IS TRAPPED, OR PERHAPS IS ITSELF A CATCH-TRAP THAT SNATCHES PERSONS WHO USE CERTAIN MAGICS IN THIS ROOM AND TAKES THEM FORCIBLY TO ANOTHER PORTAL ELSEWHERE IN FAERÛN.

THE GAPING INNARDS OF THIS OLD AND RIVEN DEAD TREE ARE FILLED WITH TANGLED HUMAN BONES, BEST LEFT UNDISTURBED. IF ANGERED, MRELGAUNT CAN AWAKEN THEM INTO A DEADLY WHIRLWIND OF BONES MOBILE TO HIS WHIM. THIS HARMFUL CLOUD CAN MOVE AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE AWAY FROM THE TOWER, FASTER THAN MANY MEN CAN FLEE.

ELMINSTER'S NOTES

MRELGAUNT'S TURRET

Know ye that I'm certain of little of this lurking sentience and am forbidden by Mystra to pry into his nature and purposes, which suggests that he hath continuing importance. As a teacher of magic I cannot judge him, yet know that he speaks truth, so far as I can tell, and although possessed of some whimsy, hath never shown any shred of deceit or hurtful omission.

Here are some of his more cryptic utterance–things I desire to know more about, were I free to investigate. They hint that Mrelgaunt has held counsel with The Lady of Mysteries herself. Hearken ye:

"Four are the sorcerer-kings sleep near, mighty in their sorcery, each knowing nothing of the entombed others. I know why one waits slumbering; I fear the reasons the others had for submitting to age-long oblivion."

"If one knows the way, any spell can be twisted and so brought to bear fully on a foe. It must be learned by practice, for Mystra imparts this gift only to those who earn it for themselves."

"There is a ring that awakens portals by its very presence, and it is abroad again in the North, on the finger of one who knows not what it does."

"Three liches serve a darker, greater fell thing–a beast that hunts and devours Phaerimm."

"Beware floating helms, but heed the words they speak."

"When a being passes through certain sequences of portals swiftly and in the right order, Azuth visits powers on that being, such anointings lasting several years or more–and coming with what is even more precious: the lore governing their use."

"The lips in the shadows belong to Shar."

NURNEENE'S MARVELOUS MASKS

by Ed Greenwood · illustrated by David Day

For years, the most stylish and spectacular masks worn at revels in Waterdeep have been made and sold at Nurneene's Marvelous Masks. Nurneene's is a tiny, almost demurely hidden shop that stands on the east side of the Street of Bells in Waterdeep's Castle Ward. Better known for its colorful proprietress and her wares than as a flashy landmark, Nurneene's is also notorious for the mask in its display window—and increasingly for rumors of its connection to the god Mask, Master of All Thieves and Lord of Shadows.

WHAT MEETS THE EYE

This shop rises four floors above street level and has a peaked roof (with a porthole window opening into an attic) that makes it seem even taller. It's only about 10 feet wide, and it's jammed between two other, larger shops set a foot or two back from the street with glittering facades of lamps, angled mirrors, and mannequins clad in stylish gowns. The front of Nurneene's is sheathed in fieldstone, and its upper floors each have a single shuttered window. These windows are all closed and barred from within; only the uppermost is ever opened, and then only in the hottest summer weather. A tiny, round door is located in the pinnacle of the eaves, where the steep slope of the roof reaches its peak. Like many Waterdhavian shops that abut neighboring structures, the entire roof is sloped not just from side to side, but also canted so that its side-gutters are markedly higher at the street-front wall, draining away to downspouts in the rear.

The storefront of Nurneene's is taken up by a door and a display window. Through the window, the same thing can always be seen: cream-hued muslin rising in a smooth drape from the counter it covers to a valance. Between the valance and this backdrop hang three lanterns. They illuminate a row of black wooden letters set individually on the cloth-covered counter to spell "Nurneene" and "Masks," and a floating black cloth half-mask that hangs in the air beneath the lights, turning slightly as if an invisible wearer is scrutinizing passersby.

This effect is so eerie and pronounced—the mask moves rapidly forward to peer at some individuals—that many Waterdhavians refuse to pass by the shop. A street roustabout given to bouts of drinking and violence once loudly declared his intention to "get rid of that haunted mask shop," and hurled a cobblestone through its window in the darkest hours of a winter night, intending to follow it with a burning brand. The tale of what befell next has spread all over Waterdeep, as one of the many whispered snippets of local lore: The mask lunged at the would-be arsonist, nearly smothered the man, and chased him through the streets until the man was wrestled to a halt by a Watch patrol.

The ground floor of the shop is the showroom and wrapping area, with a "buying corner" at the back. Showrooms (with closets of angled mirrors for a client to stand amid) and storage drawers for standard models of masks are on the second floor. Cutting rooms containing softwood heads with pins, shears, dyeing pans, and drying stretch frames fill the two topmost floors. The uppermost floor also has some beds for workers to sleep in and a hipbath. The attic above is used to store old furniture, shop records over a decade old, and the like. The cellars are used to store bolts of cloth (wrapped in linen covers and hanging from the rafters on angled end-hooks).

THE LURKING MASK

In appearance, the black floating mask—dubbed "the Lurking Mask" by someone long ago—is a drop-point-front, back-tie model that looks identical to the illustration on page 246 of the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting*, except that it's unusually thick and large enough that only a titan or giant could actually wear it as a facial cover. The mask is a dark purple that appears black in most lighting conditions.

Some time ago, Nurneene worked as an apprentice in a mask-making shop somewhat larger (but less prestigious) than her own store. Clearly more skillful than any other apprentice (and some say even her master), Nurneene toiled in the back of the shop, creating mask after splendid mask, for which her master took full credit.

One day, after Nurneene had lived this life for several years, an ancient-looking man returned to the shop (having purchased one of Nurneene's skillfully rendered masks for a ball) in search of the one who had created it. When Nurneene's master took credit for the handiwork, the man scoffed and demanded the truth. Flustered, the mask-maker brought out Nurneene and presented her to the ancient man, who promised someday to reward her for her excellent craft.

Several years later, as Nurneene watched the dream of her own shop crumble down around her, the ancient-

looking man called upon her and promised to bring in more customers than she alone could handle. He instructed her to make a large mask with the same attention to detail of her normal masks and clear out her front window. When he returned a few days later, he set the mask in the empty front window and cast a number of spells upon it. Before Nurneene's eyes, the mask rose into the air and took the position it has maintained ever since.

The mask is a Small animated object permanently enchanted with *animate objects* and *fly* spells. It is programmed to hover in the window, to peer at passers-by, and to guard the shop and itself if one or the other is attacked. The animated mask also obeys simple verbal commands from Nurneene. Only once has anyone ever successfully dispelled the permanent spells on the mask, but the mask regained its enchantments in a few days.

NURNEENE AND THE LORD OF SHADOWS

The proprietress of the most highbrow mask shop in Waterdeep is a skilled seamstress and crafter of masks, with a true genius for cutting, steaming, and binding materials to obtain a desired shape. Many of her masks soar like crowns or support shells or side-wings that alter the perceived shape of the wearer's head. Scaled, plush, metallic, or satinlike, the surface finish of her creations is exquisite.

Nurneene is also patient, a diplomat used to handling arrogant and difficult clients, and a good teacher. Her small but loyal staff of six fitters and mask-crafters have, under her tutelage, acquired skills almost to match her own. The two men and four women who work for her can all serve in the shop and make masks; Nurneene simply divides their time so the most beautiful women do the most meeting of clients, and the less attractive plus their male counterparts do more of the backroom work.

Petite and graceful, Nurneene has white skin, russet hair, and large green eyes. Her voice is husky and inclined to rasp when raised, so she's adopted a quiet, murmuring mode of speech. In recent years, she's increasingly retired from public view, gliding regally out from a curtained alcove behind the buying-counter when patrons become difficult. If real trouble erupts, she summons her other staff with a handbell. Nurneene's male staff are both rogues (LE male human Rog3) chosen for their strength and swiftness; they are customarily armed with—and skilled in the use of—daggers, darts, saps, and slings.

Some years ago, Nurneene fell in with some thieves who hired her to make masks that would conceal lockpicks, flexible saw-knives, and poisoned darts. She was excited by their exploits but wise enough to know she'd never be more than adequate at actual thievery—and could make a better and safer living as a fence, coin-cleaner (Note from Elminster: *Ye would say "money launderer."*), and procurer of supplies for thieves wanting to keep out of sight for a time. She became an avid fan of the city's thieves, fascinated by their deeds and hungry for news of their unfolding plots and exploits. This knowledge in turn made her dangerous to them—but she saw a way to justify her curiosity about Waterdhavian thievery, stay alive, and even hold some power in Waterdeep's shady underworld: becoming a cleric of Mask.

To do so, Nurneene sacrificed her wealth and herself to a cold and cruel priest of the Lord of Shadows named Hathrel. As her master, he commanded the building of a chapel to Mask in the deepest cellars beneath her shop (at Nurneene's expense), and set her to the task of acquiring poisons that would slay, paralyze, blind, deafen, or cause slumber. By ongoing sales of these substances, Hathrel hoped to become truly rich. Unfortunately, he didn't consider Nurneene's distaste for handling such substances, and he misjudged how her hatred of him had grown to outstrip her fascination and fear. In Skullport, he fell victim to the poisons he'd ordered her to procure, leaving the mask-maker to take control of the small flock of thieves who worshipped at the chapel.

Now grown in number to sixteen or so, these worshipers are almost all street thieves. They have come to love Nurneene, who gives them shelter, food, encouragement, hiding-places for themselves and their loot, and even clothing and bathing facilities—all in return for their "confessions." So long as they tell her all, she makes them welcome, never demands offerings to Mask or coins for her services (although the devout who can afford it do leave temple offerings), and shares news and gossip she thinks will be of benefit to them.

For her part, Nurneene (NE female human Clr6 [Mask]/Exp6/Rog1) has found a satisfying purpose in life (beyond creating ever-wilder masks for rich and frivolous fools). She's come to truly believe in Mask, and now spends hours praying before his altar, seeking inspiration and guidance. Already she's been rewarded with visions that directed her to where Hathrel had hidden a scroll, and she has been told in whispers by a hooded dream-figure to "weave schemes and plots to make thieves of Waterdeep's wealthy and powerful."

ELMINSTER'S NOTES

Know ye that Nurneene bids fair to become a real power in Waterdeep if no ill befalls her. She's clever enough not to let greed rule her. If the thieves who obey her can manage to do the same, she might well guide them in a sophisticated and subtle series of intrigues and thefts that earns far more coin than even the most spectacularly bold "snatch job" . . . and do so unnoticed, mayhap for years.

As for her plots, I can reveal that she's already begun spreading rumors among young noble wastrels—knowing very well that they'll whisper them to their friends—of a secret society of Deep Lords they might be able to join if they contact the right folk in Skullport and successfully undertake the missions they're given. Being a Deep Lord, the whispers say, will bring riches and in some few years real power, as the Deep Lords begin to subvert the Lords of Waterdeep and ultimately come to rule the city.

Now, only foolish nobles are likely to believe they could ever hold real power when dealing with illithids, drow, and worse from the Realms Below . . . but then again, Nurneene won't be the first cunning person to profit from the naiveté of others.

She's also busily trying to arrange a warehousing cartel and a corruption of the tax clerks of Castle Waterdeep. When she feels in need of a little entertainment, her own concealing creations allow her to attend revels in costume, posing as visiting nobility. Dalliances there often allow her to collect a few gems from young, impressionable noblemen without even going to the trouble of thievery. Not bad for a mask-maker, eh?

NURNEEN'S MARVELOUS MASKS

1. The "lurking mask" dominates the front window. During the day, Nurneene partially pulls aside the draped fabric behind it to allow passers-by to see beyond it into the shop. Few seem to notice, however, as the free-floating, moving mask often dominates the attention of those who pass by.

2. A speakingtube and dumbwaiter connects all levels of the shop for the transfer of items and communication via handbells or speaking.

3. Four joined steps and risers halfway down the flight of wooden cellar stairs can be slid sideways into a wall cavity when a hidden catch is released, revealing an opening that drops down into an undercellar. Here Nurneene hides her chapel to the god Mask.

4. Pressing buttons incorporated into the stairposts' elaborately-carved decorations allows the wooden balls that crown them to be lifted off, revealing cavities capable of holding pilfered valuables.

OLD ANGRATH'S SMOKEHOUSE

by Ed Greenwood · Illustrated by David Day

Old Angrath's Smokehouse, a local landmark in Red Larch, stands well back from the Long Road, to the east of that caravan-route. It's near the northern edge of Red Larch proper (though well within the outlying farms of that town) and is reached along its own rutted cart-drive. Turn off the Long Road at Nurnath's chicken barns (the green tiled roof of his large, fairly new roadside barn is distinctive) and follow the cart-track between the hornapple orchards of Mragan Gulther and the pasture belonging to Indurr "Warsword" Stalnstern (a retired mercenary turned cattleman) for about a mile.

The cart-drive then climbs a small, tree-cloaked hill and ends in a wagon-turn. The hill belongs to Angrath Dree, and the aromatic smoke drifting from the hilltop leads even travelers unfamiliar with Red Larch to Old Angrath's Smokehouse.

What makes Old Angrath both very busy and somewhat notorious is that she's known to be a Harper "eyes and ears" who allows Those Who Harp to use her smokehouse as a meeting place and item drop location.

What Meets The Eye

The wagon-turn is a round, muddy area strewn with gravel. Here and there, the earth is disturbed, as though things have been buried and then dug up again. Curious visitors who are bold enough to dig their own holes sometimes find a large, flat stone about a foot below the surface. Those finding such stones are advised that they mark the presence of something buried for Harper business.

The wagon-turn occupies most of the northern end of the hilltop; beyond it, to the north, is a small outcropping of rock crowned by a signal beacon (a large unlit fire, shielded from wet weather by cut saplings and bark propped up around it in a cone shape). Beyond the rocks, the hill falls away steeply into brambles.

To the south of the wagon-turn, the hilltop rises slightly to a herb garden. At its peak stands the remnant of a lone felsul tree that rises perhaps eight feet off the ground: the trunk and one horizontal limb, held up by a wooden prop. Hanging from this bough is a storm-lantern, and beneath it is the hollow that holds Angrath's fire pits. The prevailing wind on the hilltop is out of the northwest, and so the three smokehouses (looking very much like small but tall, unusually tidy one-room stone cottages) stand in a cluster to the southeast of the lantern-tree.

To the southwest, well down the hill, is a trash-heap dominated by old soot-caked barrels and several smoke-damaged wooden boxes (temporary miniature smokehouses that Angrath drags back up the hill into service at the height of her work season). Angrath dwells inside the hill, in a few small, root-walled caverns with windows to the east. Her home is an untidy warren of stored fruit, vegetables, and herbs, and it has been deliberately littered with old buckets, spokes of broken wagon-wheels, and the like. All of this "homey trash" (as Angrath calls it) serves to conceal many yellowing or crumbling scraps of parchment and vellum that bear written messages. She knows precisely where each message is, but a thief or brigand trying to snatch a particular writing would have to search long and hard.

Old Angrath

"Old" Angrath Dree is a CG female human Exp4/Sor9/War2. Angrath is a wrinkled, obviously aging woman who retains broader shoulders and mightier thews than many large fighting-men. She's bow-legged, fat, and ugly, and she shuffles when she moves. Long, gray-white hair hangs around her in an untidy cloud except when she's working with food or her axe (her favored weapon—with a supplement of throwing daggers—as well as her most-used working tool). Her underground dwelling contains many nooks hollowed out of the earth that hold spare axes and weapons, as well as a handful of healing potions and, for emergencies, potions that duplicate her favored escape spell: *gaseous form.*

ELMINSTER'S NOTES

The woodcutters who bring Angrath her wood are Harpers; unloading and stacking the wood gives them plenty of opportunities to converse with her, even if clients are present. The hill is honeycombed with hiding-places for items, but these tend to be cached weapons, gear, and supplies, not unique or hard-to-replace items or valuables. Once Angrath was the guardian of many such things, but no more.

This is due to the reason she also stores and passes on many cryptic or even false messages—Those Who Harp know very well that Angrath's Smokehouse has become too well known to be secure.

Angrath knows it, too, and 'tis a credit to her pride and her resolve that she pretends not to and goes on playing a dangerous role.

That's not to say her home isn't a refuge for Harpers on the run. Nor does it mean Angrath's ignorant of Harper doings in the Sword Coast lands. She does take care that she never knows enough to endanger fellow Harpers, knowing that she could fall into the clutches of Zhentarim or Red Wizards who could use spells to rummage through her memories and knowledge.

If Angrath becomes gaseous anywhere on her land, she knows the cracks, passages, and tiny fissures that riddle the hilltop and can use them to flee into or out of her home, and away into the trees (the trees of her hilltop trail down the hillsides to the northeast and southeast to become hedgerows dividing the darm fields of others, providing her with several miles of "scrub cover" to move around in.

Officially, Angrath makes her living smoking meats and fish and by selling dried and powdered herbs and ointments. Angrath's ointments include the standard list of alchemical items found in the *Player's Handbook,* along with four unique herbal and sap concoctions.

Biteabate: This soft white gel soothes temporary hurts, clears the head, and relieves the pain of minor bruises and wounds. Each application of biteabate heals 1d8 points of subdual damage.

Cost: 20 gp; **Alchemy DC to Create:** 20; **Weight:** 1 lb.

Brightvigil: This clear, light liquid induces wakefulness, making the wearer less likely to succumb to magical sleep effects. Brightvigil provides a +5 alchemical bonus on saving throws made to resist sleep effects. The effects of brightvigil last one hour.

Cost: 30 gp; **Alchemy DC to Create:** 15; **Weight:**—

Softshield: This thick, pungent paste reduces the chance of infection. If applied within 10 minutes of the time of infection, softshield provides a +1 alchemical bonus to saving throws made to resist the initial infection of disease. It provides no benefit on subsequent saving throws to resist the disease.

Cost: 10 gp; **Alchemy DC to Create:** 15; **Weight:** 1 lb.

Focus: Made from steeped duskwood bark and a selection of herbs found near Angrath's, focus is one of the part-time alchemist's most successful and valuable mixtures. Focus provides a +2 alchemical bonus to Concentration checks. This benefit lasts for 10 minutes.

Cost: 30 gp; **Alchemy DC to Create:** 25; **Weight:**—

The Daily Smoke

Angrath cures her meats in brine. Between curing batches, she boils her brine in old cauldrons, skims off the scum, and seasons the water with her own mixture of herbs, spices, and rock salt. Then the cauldrons are emptied back into well-seasoned duskwood barrels, and meats are put into the barrels and held under the level of the brine with weighing stones. Every four days, Angrath removes the meat, skims off any scum, stirs the brine well, and repacks the barrel.

When cured, the meat is washed in fire-warmed water and then given a cold rinse. Salt deposits are scrubbed away, and then meat is hung on hooks, in iron baskets, and in metal pincers in the warm room of the smokehouse to dry.

When meats are cured, Angrath cold smokes them in one of three separate smokehouses—small, square tile-roofed stone cottages with vents in their roof peaks. Inside, they're identical: a flagstone-floored single room with a smoke vent in the center of the floor. Over the smoke vent stands a low table made of old scrap metal covered with remnants of shields so that there are plenty of gaps in the tabletop. This baffle helps to spread the smoke.

Parallel bars of duskwood and shadow wood run across the room, their ends resting in sockets in the interior walls. The meats hang from these bars on many stout hooks and baskets.

Beneath the smoke vent of each smokehouse is a buried pipe that descends straight down for a foot or so and then curves smoothly around to a more horizontal, ten-foot-long run underground to Angrath's fire pit. This long run descends about a foot as it goes, and Angrath's pipe is old dwarf-made pipe-tile.

The far end of the smokepipe is a hole (about 3 feet deep and a little less across, with the smokepipe entering one side of it about a foot below the top) lined with stones and covered with a large stone lid. Angrath has built her smokehouses so that the smokepipes converge and her three fire pits are clustered together (upwind of the smokehouses).

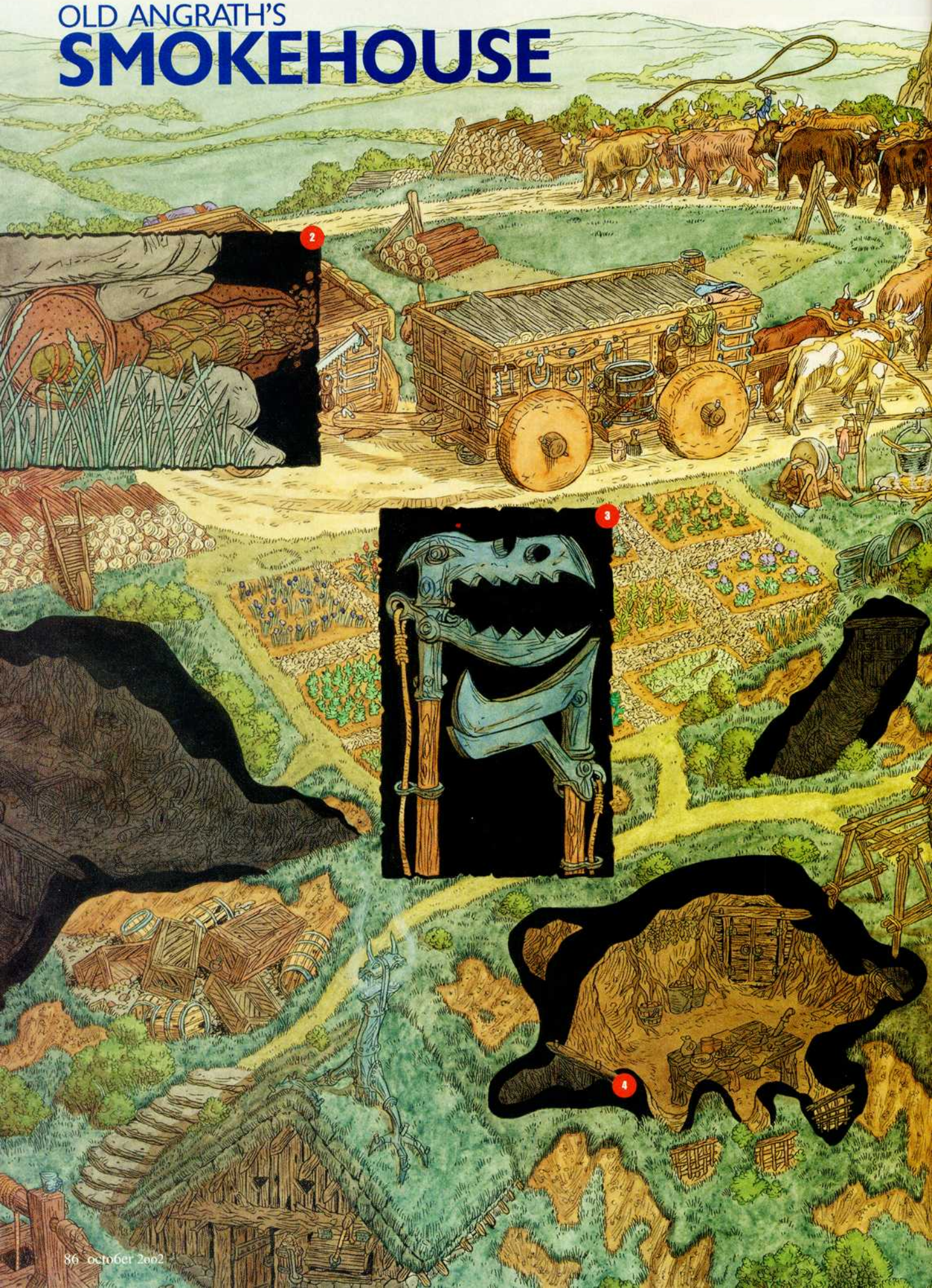
In the pits, Angrath starts fires with dry hardwood, lets them burn down to glowing coals, and then adds damp hardwood chips and shavings. As might be expected, most of her time is spent with axe and hand-maul, chopping duskwood logs into fuel capable of producing the dense, white smoke necessary to cure the meat. D

IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

Old Angrath's Smokehouse is an out-of-the-way, out-of-the-ordinary venue through which the Harpers can communicate with their agents and other good folk, including adventurers. It's also purposefully seeded with misinformation, so you're free to choose which of the leads listed below are true and which are not.

- The Arcane Brotherhood of Luskan has devoted much of its attention and energy in recent years to rooting out a traitor in its midst—a wizard who time and again betrays Brotherhood plots to outsiders. Several members of the Brotherhood have died, others have suffered narrow escapes, and many of their plans have accomplished little, all thanks to this informant. The Harpers know that there is no traitor within the Brotherhood. By chance, many senior Brotherhood members started using a linked set of nine ancient Imaskari *crystal balls* looted from a dragon's lair—crystals that allow clear speech and images to be relayed between them in addition to their normal scrying powers. The Brotherhood does not know that this set has not nine crystals, but ten. A Harper sorceress has the tenth crystal, and so far she has been able eavesdrop on the Brotherhood without being detected.
- Someone in the North (not part of any known evil group) has somehow managed to find a means of locating dragons. This mage seems to delight in goading powerful dragons into attacking other dragons, awakening dragons by means of hired adventurers unwittingly led into contact with sleeping dragons in their lairs, and so on.
- Silverymoon is expanding at a great rate and attracting folk of wealth, creativity, and artistic skill. Inevitably, the dishonest, the corrupters, and the exploiters have moved in among them—and the Harpers have begun hunting these "dark shadows among the glory," acting as an increasingly energetic secret police for the city. Alustriel is aware of this Harper initiative, and these efforts make her both grateful and uneasy.

OLD ANGRATH'S SMOKEHOUSE



1 Some "spreading vine" herbs cover rocks that can be lifted out of the earth to reveal small shallow-buried coffers where keys, coins, and written messages are stored. These coffers can be located with a DC 25 Search check.

2 Several old, disused firepits and smokepipe tunnels can be found down this side of the hill. The tunnels are used for storing weapons and long, thin tools (wrapped in oiled canvas to keep rust at bay). The tunnel entrances are lightly concealed, requiring a DC 10 Search check to locate.

3 Reaching hooks (ten-foot-long poles with hooks and "pincer" arms—one fixed jaw and one moving clamp jaw, operated with a pull rope) move smokehouse louvers. Angrath also uses them to place small metal message-storage coffers high in tree-crotches and hollows inside half-dead trees, all over the hilltop. Treat these reaching hooks as ransuers. They can be used as martial weapons.

4 Harpers know that all of the treasure maps displayed prominently on workbenches are dangerous fabrications that lead those using them into underground peril (known Undermountain monster lairs, dangerous corners of the Underdark, goblin and kobold warrens, and the like).

SHADOWDARK

BY ED GREENWOOD · ILLUSTRATED BY DAVID DAY

Just inside the Sunset Gate, or western wall-gate, of the Sembian city of Daerlun is the great open Westmarket. On maps it resembles an eye or egg, exceeded in expanse only by the central Place of Banners, where stands the seat of local government, Bergun Hall.

The largest building in western Daerlun stands along the north side of the Street of the Dragon, and from above it resembles a hand or gauntlet poised to close its fingers. This is the well-known Black Banner Inn, long the most luxurious of Daerlunian inns. Although guests can enjoy both meals and the vintages of a very good wine cellar in their rooms, public dining and carousing such as one might enjoy in a tavern are impossible or frowned upon at the Banner. Guests desiring such amusements are directed to the Mighty Mace inn and tavern, the best carousing house in Daerlun. It's the largest building fronting on the Westmarket, filling much of the southeastern face of the marketplace. Directly to the south of it, fronting on Saurovin Street (a major, cobbled thoroughfare that links the Westmarket with Barrel Lane, the major route from the Place of Banners to the Sea Arch, the city's southern wall-gate), stands a row of typical city tallhouses, such as might be found anywhere in Cormyr, Sembia, Westgate, or even Waterdeep.

A tallhouse is typically high and narrow, often touching the walls of its neighbors. It usually has underground storage cellars, a shop at street level, another shop or offices above, and living quarters above that. In prosperous Northern situations, it's often of stone at street level, with upper floors sheathed in dark exposed beams with white stucco panels between.

One such tallhouse, the third building in on the north side of Saurovin going east from the market, is Shadowdark House. It lacks a street sign or a shop awning, has three floors above ground level, and appears old, well-built, and unremarkable—yet everyone in Daerlun knows of it, because it's the closest thing in this most peaceful and civilized of Sembian cities to a magic shop.

Beings of all sorts who enter the dim, cluttered interior of Shadowdark House find an ever-changing miscellany of magic for sale; in other words, beyond *light stones* (stones bearing *continual flame* enchantments, sold in carved, slide-apart, two-piece stone sheaths) and *cure light wounds* potions, the stock is unreliable and can range from a small armory of enchanted daggers to pieces of furniture that speak whenever moved. Oddities with several powers (some hidden and some that will be exhausted after only a few uses) are the rule, and prices range from 600 gp to 200,000 gp, with average prices in the mid-thousands.

Most customers, however, come for advice. For fees of 2,000 to 5,000 gp per attempt, depending on what she's being asked to do, how dangerous she thinks it is, and her opinion of the client (Mystra frowns on magic-hoarders or wizard- and sorcerer-slayers), Lady Shadowdark will try to discern the nature or properties of magic items or enchantments.

Thelbaerone Shadowdark is a grouchy old crone possessed of a strong chin, a beaklike nose, a balding head (surrounded by a halo of glossy

WAITING SPELLS

Visitors should beware of reading aloud any words they see etched into door- and window-frames anywhere in Shadowdark House. Many, if uttered, trigger spells already cast but held in abeyance by other magics, waiting indefinitely between casting and taking effect.

Most "waiting" spells are defenses placed on the shop, but others teleport those speaking them to distant locations in Faerûn, open portals to unknown places, or put utterers in either mental or audible communication with unseen beings of magical power for hours or days; strange voices will mutter out of the empty air beside a shop-visitor's shoulder, or inside his head, saying cryptic and often alarming things. Other words instantly confer temporary "face masks" of illusory magic onto their utterers, altering their apparent age, race, or gender.

HOUSE

white hair) and a direct, commanding, emerald-eyed gaze. Some who've met her in dim surroundings, like the interior of the shop in which she lives, swear that her green eyes glow in the darkness like tiny, angry lamps. Those who fear or dislike her call her "the Old Vulture."

She's operated the House for over forty years, and Daerlunian elders can recall her dwelling there for at least twenty years before that. Most folk avoid her, and if they've met her at all term her a "formidable woman" for her short temper, fearlessness, and snap-voiced manner. Most vaguely remember hearing that she was a real beauty in her days, one who had daring adventures of some sort.

ELMINSTER SAITH

The city's pronounced "Dare-LOON," by the way. The most important warning or secret I can pass on about Shadowdark House is this: to further her own mysterious aims, Mystra often works through Thelbaerone (a divine whimsy that the Lady Shadowdark knows about, but has no control over, and won't willingly discuss) to grant extra charges, or to confer on an item additional, new powers it has never before possessed. These are often revealed only much later, when conditions desired by the Lady of Mysteries are met.

Oh, and don't try poisoning Thelbaerone or unleashing monsters in her shop: Mystra's anger will be swift. Tricking Lady Shadowdark, now *that's* considered fair fun.

THELBAERONE SHADOWDARK

Human Wiz10: CR 10; HD 10d4; hp 28; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15; Atk +5 melee (1d4/19-20 crit x2, dagger); AL NG; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +11; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 11, Int 18, Wis 17, Cha 16.

Skills: Alchemy +17, Appraise +10, Concentration +15, Hide +8, Knowledge (arcana) +17, Listen +8, Scry +17, Spellcraft +18.

Feats: Brew Potion, Craft Wand, Craft Wondrous Item, Scribe Scroll, Silent Spell, Still Spell, Skill Focus (Concentration), Skill Focus (Spellcraft).

Possessions: Quarterstaff, two masterwork daggers, *scroll of fireball* (10th-level caster), *scroll of flesh to stone, scroll of teleport, potion of haste, +1 cloak of resistance, +1 ring of protection, ring of spell storing, wand of lightning bolt* (28 charges), *wand of magic missile* (34 charges), *+2 bracers of armor.*

Thelbaerone has access to many more magic items, but she always wears a *ring of spell storing* that contains *teleport* and *wall of force.* She uses this for personal defense but has been known to teleport clients along to specific destinations for a fee (typically 500 gp). Thelbaerone keeps a fully charged duplicate of the ring in the hollow heel of her left boot; her other boot contains 10 gp.

Spells (4/5/5/4/4/2)

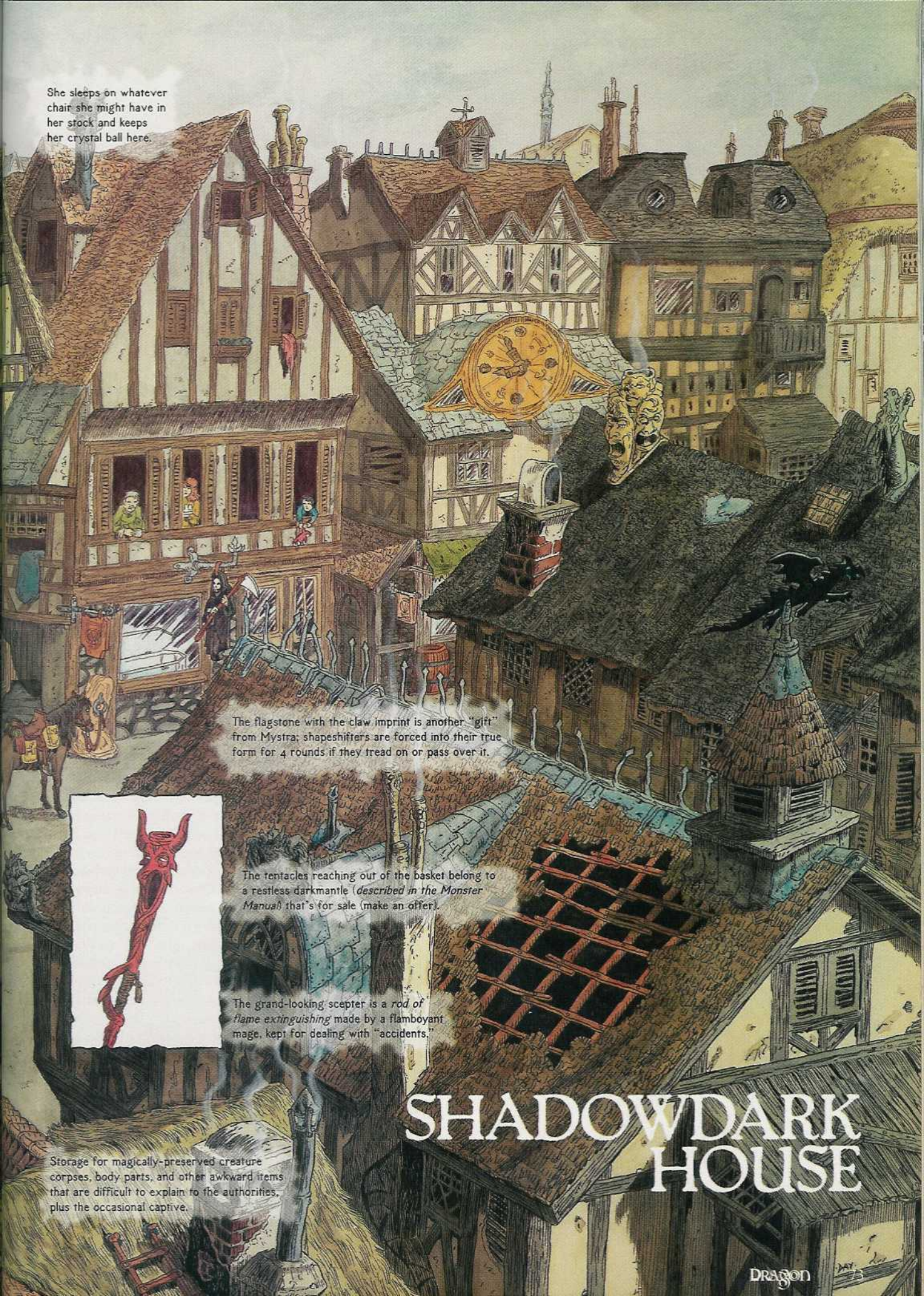
0-level: *arcane mark, detect magic, mage hand, read magic*
1st-level: *detect undead, magic missile, message, reduce, sleep*
2nd-level: *alter self, continual flame, invisibility, levitate, web*
3rd level: *haste, fireball, fly, lightning bolt*
4th-level: *charm monster, dimension door, ice storm, polymorph self*
5th-level: *hold monster, teleport.*

Thelbaerone has access to a large library of spellbooks and can study and cast almost any spell of 5th level or lower that can be found in the *Player's Handbook.* Most of the spellbooks can be found on bookshelves out of view of customers, but several are hidden in secret compartments or disguised by magic.

SORCEROUS AID

Helping wizards and sorcerers master spells is usually simple for Thelbaerone Shadowdark. Lady Shadowdark has a useful teaching power. She can send to the mind of any being touching her a mental picture of a still image or an animated scene from her own mind. Either message lasts only a few seconds, long enough to show one action or the gestures for a single spell. With the help of this ability, she instructs wizards and sorcerers. She identifies faults or omissions in their scrolls or incantations, then either suggests how they should experiment or research to correct the magic or else sells them a complete, correct scroll of the desired spell, at market (*Dungeon Master's Guide*) price. Suggestions cost at least 25 gp but usually twice as much, and the price is 100 gp or more for help with spells of 6th level or higher.

Cloud of twinkling "stars" is an *everstars* spell (a variant of *continual flame*). Thelbaerone's favorite lighting.
The mirror is a portable *portal* to unknown destinations. At random times it changes to another destination from among a small, set selection that Thelbaerone hasn't yet investigated.
The floating tabletop is supported by magic and is a mere 1,000 gp because it might have other properties Lady Shadowdark isn't so sure about.
The low-ceilinged and stone-lined cellar is crowded with barrels of provisions (for example, smoked silverfin in sauce) and alchemical substances for sale.
Lit by a candelabra that looks like a scaled hand; this is a Small Animated Object that moves to Thelbaerone's bidding and can fight for her. Its base is hollow with a swivel bottom opening and can be made to release a quantity of carrion crawler brain juice (which causes paralysis on contact; see Poisons in Chapter 3 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).
Dirt tunnel crawlway reached via a trapdoor in the center of the cellar floor, usually hidden under a barrel.


She sleeps on whatever chair she might have in her stock and keeps her crystal ball here.
The flagstone with the claw imprint is another "gift" from Mystra; shapeshifters are forced into their true form for 4 rounds if they tread on or pass over it.
The tentacles reaching out of the basket belong to a restless darkmantle (*described in the Monster Manual*) that's for sale (make an offer).
The grand-looking scepter is a *rod of flame extinguishing* made by a flamboyant mage, kept for dealing with "accidents."
Storage for magically-preserved creature corpses, body parts, and other awkward items that are difficult to explain to the authorities, plus the occasional captive.
SHADOWDARK HOUSE

SHATTERSHREE'S REST

by Ed Greenwood · Illustrated by David Day

This is a false coffin 4 feet across and high, by 10 in length, atop a two-step bier; it is immobile, bottomless, and of solid granite. The lid relief is carved in the likeness of a serene female human knight in plate armor, but without a helm. She has long hair, a face that could belong to anyone—and which I believe echoes no real person—and her hands are clasped on a drawn sword and a wand, held ready to discharge.

In Common: "Within sleeps she of great magic/Disturb only what ye dare/For wealth and power still are here."

The coffer holds a human skull (scavenged at random from a battle bonepit around Teshwave) enspelled with a *continual flame*. The scabbarded longsword is not magic, and the "treasure map" drawn by the dragon is often fantastical, but usually begins with a real, labeled location that Shattershree wants explored.

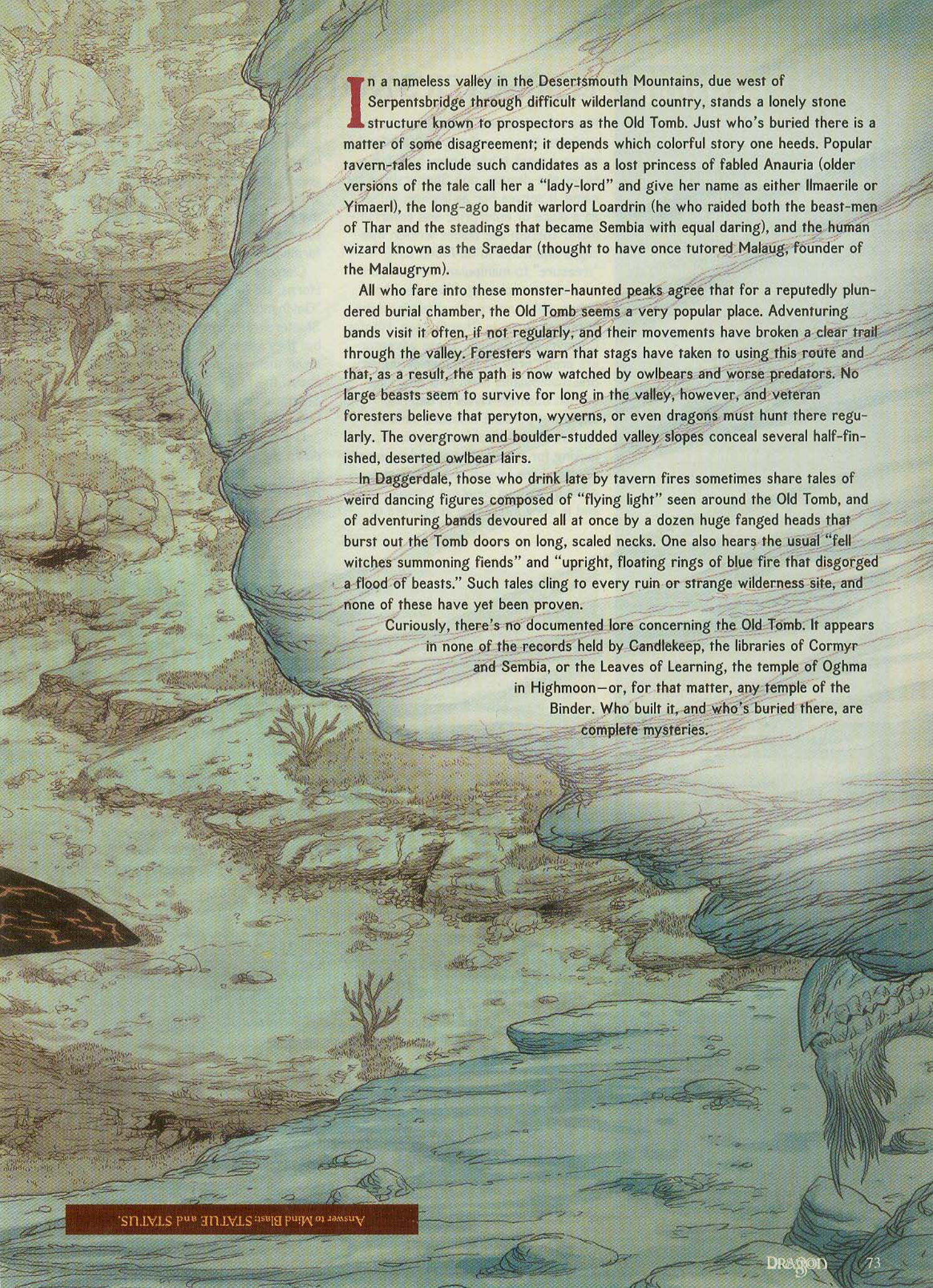
On the table there are four parchment sheets—whichever current written "lures" Shattershree wants seen—and a ring. Also in this room, there is a dagger in a stain (water tainted with owlbear-hide dye) and a warm wool cloak. The dagger, ring, and cloak bear only Shattershree's beacon tracer spells, to alert her to their locations whenever magic is cast on them.

This room holds a climb-shaft of carved handholds, a chair and table of stone, and an open coffer holding three scrolls: a *cure serious wounds* and two *invisibility* spells. Their inscriptions are interlinked with beacon tracer spells of Shattershree's devising. When a scroll is used, she is alerted to the user's location.

The furnishings shown are always here, just as depicted. Shattershree replaces those removed, damaged, or moved about by visitors.

The ring of keys on the sidetable were spell-duplicated by Shattershree from originals stolen from grand houses and guild vaults around Cormyr and Sembia. Next to the keys lie lumps of drawing chalk. The chalked circle on the floor is intended to look arcane and powerful, but it is pure fantasy. The collar manacle is very real; in human disguise, Shattershree will question any captive left alone here.

The water in the well is cool and drinkable. The wooden stand displays armor taken from old Anaurian and Netherese tombs; they are always old and impressive-looking, often magical—and always enspelled with beacon tracers for Shattershree's entertainment.



In a nameless valley in the Desertsmouth Mountains, due west of Serpentsbridge through difficult wilderland country, stands a lonely stone structure known to prospectors as the Old Tomb. Just who's buried there is a matter of some disagreement; it depends which colorful story one heeds. Popular tavern-tales include such candidates as a lost princess of fabled Anauria (older versions of the tale call her a "lady-lord" and give her name as either Ilmaerile or Yimaerl), the long-ago bandit warlord Loardrin (he who raided both the beast-men of Thar and the steadings that became Sembia with equal daring), and the human wizard known as the Sraedar (thought to have once tutored Malaug, founder of the Malaugrym).

All who fare into these monster-haunted peaks agree that for a reputedly plundered burial chamber, the Old Tomb seems a very popular place. Adventuring bands visit it often, if not regularly, and their movements have broken a clear trail through the valley. Foresters warn that stags have taken to using this route and that, as a result, the path is now watched by owlbears and worse predators. No large beasts seem to survive for long in the valley, however, and veteran foresters believe that peryton, wyverns, or even dragons must hunt there regularly. The overgrown and boulder-studded valley slopes conceal several half-finished, deserted owlbear lairs.

In Daggerdale, those who drink late by tavern fires sometimes share tales of weird dancing figures composed of "flying light" seen around the Old Tomb, and of adventuring bands devoured all at once by a dozen huge fanged heads that burst out the Tomb doors on long, scaled necks. One also hears the usual "fell witches summoning fiends" and "upright, floating rings of blue fire that disgorged a flood of beasts." Such tales cling to every ruin or strange wilderness site, and none of these have yet been proven.

Curiously, there's no documented lore concerning the Old Tomb. It appears in none of the records held by Candlekeep, the libraries of Cormyr and Sembia, or the Leaves of Learning, the temple of Oghma in Highmoon—or, for that matter, any temple of the Binder. Who built it, and who's buried there, are complete mysteries.

Answer to Mind Blast: STATUE and STATUS.

SHATTERSHREE

Shattershree is a whimsical, human-friendly dragon who loves to make wealth (but not necessarily keep it), influence events covertly, and manipulate folk. Nothing gives her greater pleasure than watching trade matters unfold as she's clandestinely caused them to do. She's neither malicious nor a lover of outright lies or law-breaking, but she seeks to punish or frustrate corruption in others and works against those who do ill while remaining technically within the law.

Shattershree has many friendships with humans, in a variety of guises. Sometimes she tests the loyalty of her human friends, or tries to learn more about their characters, by dealing with them in disguise. So far as she knows, thanks to her precautions, no human knows her true nature. In fact, Elminster, the Seven Sisters, and certain other Harpers know, but they try to avoid Shattershree since she is doing things they favor without their meddling, and contacting her might bring her to the attention of their foes. Shattershree has caches of treasure all over the western Dragonreach, from Tunland to Thar. She won't hesitate to spend her wealth to gain items or services she wants.

SHATTERSHREE

Female Mature Adult Silver Dragon (CR 17, 290 hp) with the following:

SKILLS

Alchemy 15
Appraise 25
Balance 15
Bluff 25
Diplomacy 25
Escape Artist 15
Gather Information 25
Heal 15
Intimidate 15
Knowledge (arcana) 25
Listen 30
Search 30
Scry 25
Spellcraft 30
Spot 30

FEATS

Alertness
Improved Initiative
Quicken Spell
Quicken Spell-Like Ability
Silent Spell
Snatch
Still Spell

ELMINSTER'S NOTES

Mysteries and bewilderments to some, perhaps. Know ye that yon "Old Tomb" is but a mock burial-house built for a silver she-dragon, one Shattershree by name. It serves her as lair—or, rather, as a place of enterprise and entertainment. Therein she places written messages and items to be found as "treasure" to manipulate adventurers who come exploring. She lures them hither with rumors she spreads whilst in human form, in Zhentil Keep, Hillsfar, Cormyr, and Sembia. These adventurers aren't prey to her, merely dupes. She manipulates them into attacking certain business rivals in Sembia, exploring possible treasure sites in Anauroch and the Moonsea North, and looking for trouble in particular places. Shattershree invests the riches she gains in various Sembian companies and is very interested in matters of trade and wealth in that realm. If ye dabble in trade in Ordulin, ye might well have met her in one of her many guises. She favors appearing as pretty little ash-blonde female scribes of crisp manner, but I've seen her as male foresters, wheelwrights, and even farmhands.

Clanless dwarves out of the Storm Horns, led by one Hamhaerth "Goldhand," built the false Tomb for Shattershree some eighty years ago, but they know that to say so might mean their doom. On a mountainside above the tomb is a ledge where Shattershree can lie in dragon form, to keep watch over her lure.

I've made something of a hobby, down the years, of looking over what she leaves there for adventurers to find. Here are some of her recent written missives, with my notations:

"When the usual sword-heads in Selgaunt start holding back grain, the price will soar. Last year the pirates waited until it was dearer than gold, then swooped in and snatched it all from the warehouses. This year it'll be upland warehouses in the Dales, or on their own country estates, guarded by the best sellswords coins can buy. They'll want to sell quick and quiet, not telling all the thieves in Sembia where the stuff's to be had, so they'll go to markets in Suzail and Tantras to whisper in the right ears. When big wagons start creaking up back roads, look within for the gold."

Such false goods shortages are practiced by all Sembian self-styled nobles and "deep-pocket" merchant cabals from time to time. Here the dragon is hoping adventurers will try to rob or otherwise harass Sembian trade-rivals if she points the way to them. Many Sembians will applaud anything that shatters such "dark trading" deeds.

"Rethgar, come with all haste. They hold the gold at the Teshford Arms all this month and want bones of dragons, wyverns, and undead—skulls get the best price, but even dust is accepted. Ask for Tethtan, but seek me first, as 'Hathla the Red.' Don't expect to recognize me."

Although wizards, Thayan traders in particular, do buy certain bones, this is designed to lure adventurers into attacking trade rivals of Shattershree, who take up seasonal residence in the Arms in Dagger Falls and pay prospectors handsomely for gems brought out of the mountains.

"Starag says the Gethlen band is to blame. Three chests of silver they buried under the westernmost Zhent guardpost in Yûlash. The gems they hid elsewhere, and only this little deceit keeps them alive, for Lord Raven's men dare not slaughter them until that hiding-place is found."

Know ye that "Lord Raven" is a notorious Sembian crime lord whose identity remains mysterious. I believe both Starag and the Gethlen band are fictitious.

"This blade belongs to Amalthus, heir of the family Roakhier, a decadent Sembian clan indeed. They've not seen Amalthus for a decade, since he began trading with drow out of Scornubel, and wouldn't recognize him if he greeted them in the street. Middling height, hair so dark brown as to be almost black, eyes much lighter brown, and he always wears cast brass full-face masks. So if you've a man in your band who can match this, he can be Amalthus forevermore. He must remember his father is Sandras, his mother Maetha, his two younger sisters Arnsalae and Shimra. His only friend among the servants was his man Tholt, now dead. The family arms is a black raven flying to the sinister with a big gold ring in its talons; the family estate is Stonepost House in the Flametree Hills, and the Roakhier manor in Saerloon is Sevenstars House on Blackpearls Lane. Only I know where Amalthus Roakhier's bones lie, and his father grows desperate for his return—not because he cares two coppers for his son, but because a visible heir makes his own neck that much safer in dealings with shady folk."

"This blade" lies in the Tomb now. So far as I can learn without prying overmuch into the sordid lives of Sembians who have more coins than is good for them, all of this is true. It would amuse Shattershree to control a Sembian noble house, but she has no interest in the danger and boredom of impersonating the heir herself when she can get someone else to do it, befriend or seduce him, and then steer his deeds. I'd not expect a long lifespan for Sandras Roakhier, once his false heir "returns" to the fold.

"These should get you past the doorguards. Your tongue will have to work a way past any War Wizards. Nathra awaits those clever enough to reach her in the Red Helm Room. She needs non-mages to be her 'silent agents' in the Dales and around Hullack, and she pays well."

"These" refers to a helm, dagger, and ring of particular design, currently lying in the Tomb. Nathra is a War Wizard loyal to Alusair. She is trying to forge a small, undercover force of adventurers to spy on rebellious Cormyrean nobles and their dealings with Sembia. The Red Helm Room is in the easternmost wing of the Royal Court, on the second floor of the South Front, overlooking the Promenade (with the Low Garden, so named because of its uniformly knee-height plantings) rather than Vangerdahast's Tower, which faces the East Front. Nathra has an office in that chamber of red tapestries—and yes, it has huge tilting helms, painted red, flanking its doors. Some courtiers have very strange ideas of decor.

A TYPICAL SHATTERSHREE CACHE

The silver dragon keeps at least one treasure cache hidden in the vale that holds the Old Tomb. Elminster suspects it's in a spot she can see while lying in dragon form on her lookout ledge.

He's found some of her other caches. All had similar contents:

A ring of various keys to coin vaults, and lock-coffers in those vaults, in Sembian merchant banks, and to warehouses Shattershree owns, mainly in Sembia.

A hoop-top carry-chest with stout metal handles at both ends, and metal collars—tubes for carrying-poles to be thrust through—on both sides. It contains three drawstring canvas sacks containing 50 gp each, 1 sack of 50 sp, and 6 empty sacks. Not locked or labeled.

A coffer (1 ft. x 2 ft. x 6 in.) locked with two padlocks and reinforced with an exterior iron "frame" binding, that contains a small cloth bag of 1d6 gems and two unlabeled potions, one of *invisibility* and one of *cure serious wounds*. A magic mouth on the coffer speaks when anyone but Shattershree touches it, saying in calm, cold female tones: "The curse is now upon you." (This is a bluff.)

The padlock keys are hidden nearby, not in the cache.

Lost places, familiar haunts, and strange sites in the lands of Faerûn.

ELMINSTER'S GUIDE TO THE REALMS

The SHRINE of SWORDS

A single chamber enclosed in metal, in a welded cage shaped like a gigantic warrior's gauntlet of interwoven spears and bars overlaid with rusting shields. The thumb and forefinger frame the oval entry arch. Upperworks are watertight, but there are chinks in side-walls; smooth, continuous flagstone floor.

Many hooks for the leaving of offerings (weapons); 2-foot-long lengths of wire provided for hanging weapons not intended for suspension (to take away wire without paying with a weapon is a sin punishable by blood loss at the hands of the faithful of the wargod).

Interwoven swords (not welded together) forced into a latticework support for a surface of overlapping shields. Enspelled to emit *continual flame* (white; the "Light of the Wargod's Regard").

Flagstone trapdoor, 20-foot shaft (wooden pole-and-crosspiece ladder) to chambers below. Guardian swords await non-faithful intruders partway down the shaft.

BY ED GREENWOOD · ILLUSTRATED BY DAVID DAY

The eastern side of the High Road south of Neverwinter is lined by many wooded dells. Some of them are sinkholes, some abandoned quarries, and some of unknown origin—but all are ideal camping-places in harsh weather. One that has felt far fewer firewood-seeking axes than most has been made into a wayside shrine to Tempus.

Visitors will see a lone dome-like chamber made of used armor and weaponry welded together in the shape of a gigantic gauntlet or armored hand. The structure encloses a glowing altar fashioned of shields, which is supported by a network of interlaced swords upon a flagstone floor. The place provides spare accommodations, but it is available for a day and night to all who make offerings of weapons, and it often provides vital protection against pursuing brigands or wolves, for no one can draw blood within the sanctified area of the shrine, save in a ritual dedicated to Tempus, without awakening the seven animated blades that guard the shrine. Any priest of Tempus within sight of the shrine can mentally command the blades to strike in accordance with his or her will (as a free action, but the character can only select targets for the blades, not control them otherwise).

Intruders who find the concealed flagstone trapdoor and try to descend the shaft beneath it into the rooms reserved for clergy of Tempus and their guests also face attack by the blades. If they try to take anything from the underground armory without uttering the proper pass-phrase, they'll suffer attack from the helmed horror waiting there. Only a priest of Tempus can call off these guardians once they are activated, but the horrors do not pursue targets outside the temple's holy ground.

The Shrine of Swords was established some twenty summers ago by several wandering priests of the Wargod, and it has been expanded since then and is often both restocked with weapons and stripped of offerings by needy clergy.

Without revealing rituals to unbelievers, it can be said that the shrine exists as a stopover place for all faithful of Tempus, and its altar allows for the full range of normal—that is, non-battlefield and non-monsterslaying—devotions such as vigils, weapon consecrations, prayers for guidance, "honor woundings," and daily offerings and reverences.

A variable array of well-oiled, sharp weapons available to all faithful of Tempus. Some unusual weapons (such as caltrops and lengths of spiked chain) can be found here, but except in times of war or orc horde, there will always be at least:

- 20 halberds
- 20 glaives
- 10 battleaxes
- 10 greataxes
- 10 heavy maces
- 10 morning stars
- 40 daggers
- 20 longswords
- 10 greatswords
- 20 pairs of spiked gauntlets

Grouped by type, always including weapons suitable for users of varying sizes and strengths. In keeping with the faith of Tempus, ranged weapons will be rare or absent.

Shallow well with draw-bucket, guarded by a helmed horror floating above it that attacks those who seek to remove items from the armory without speaking the proper pass-phrases. It has no crossbow, but it does have a greatsword. The helmed horror gives its greatsword the power of wounding.

THE GUARDIAN BLADES

The seven silently hovering longswords that defend the shrine customarily hang vertically, point-down (except for the two that guard the shaft to the Rooms of Refuge). These guardian blades are Small animated objects (see the animated object entry in the *Monster Manual*) with the following non-standard characteristics: HD 4d10 (22 hp); Init +2 (Dex); Spd Fly 60 ft. (perfect); AC 15; Atk +2 melee; Dmg 1d8; SQ SR 20 (spells cast by clerics of Tempus affect the swords normally); SV Fort +1, Ref +3, Will -4.

PASS-PHRASES

The underground areas are reserved for the use of clerics of Tempus and those who accompany them, and the guardians are governed by the following pass-phrases that must be uttered while touching either a metal weapon or the buckle or fastening of a piece of armor. Priests of Tempus and those in physical contact with them need not use the pass-phrases.

- The password to pass the blades in the shaft when going down is, "Bright blades forfend." Upward travel is harmless unless the helmed horror is active, whereupon this pass-phrase must be used to avoid attack.

- To open the armory door from the well chamber side without activating the helmed horror one must say, "For the sharpest need."

- Any weapon taken from the armory past the helmed horror will awaken it unless the words "Tempus arms me true" are spoken.

The following phrases work only if uttered by clergy of Tempus:

- To halt any guardian: "Mercy behind the blade."

- To return any guardian to its former position (after halting it; this phrase has no effect on an active guardian): "Vigilance before all."

THE WILL OF THE WARGOD

Some powers of the shrine are extended to non-believers only if they make an offering of either a weapon or blood shed in battle (usually a vial of such blood, but bloodstains are acceptable if the garment is left on the altar, whereupon it, like a weapon offering, will silently fade away before the power takes effect). These powers come without price to the faithful of Tempus.

- The faithful of Tempus or a person who made an offering gains the effect of a *ring of warmth* throughout the sanctified area (includes underground areas).

- A weapon touched to the altar by a creature who wills it not to be given as an offering but rather to know more about it, will emit visions—scenes that appear above the altar, and remain frozen there, in three dimensions, for some minutes—first of its most recent use to draw blood, and then one of its most important or bloody uses.

  If the weapon has an alignment, sentience, inherent magic, or temporary enchantments, all of these things will be made known to the being holding the weapon. The Shrine also reveals if such weapon properties have recently changed (for example, if a permanent or temporary enchantment have recently been applied).

- A poisoned weapon will be purged of such taints instantly upon contact with the altar (this power causes the altar to emit a deep, bell-like tone).

POWERS of the HOLY GROUND

Within the sanctified area of the shrine, where the will of Tempus is strong, certain properties pertain. Some of these are secrets of the faith, but others have become known over the years, including:

- wounds heal (naturally) at double the normal rate
- all healing magic restores twice the usual hit point total when applied to wounds made by manufactured weapons (not claws, fangs, or other such natural weaponry)
- weapons make no sound when struck or striking objects
- no weapon can be broken
- enchanted armor and weapons can be mended with a good chance (governed by the will of Tempus on a case-by-case basis) that their properties will survive or be restored
- no metal will rust
- no guardian blade can be removed from the consecrated area; attempts to magically do so will rebound with harmful and strange effects on the caster or source.

ELMINSTER'S NOTES

The faith of the Wargod is not my expertise, and Mystra smiles not upon those who cut down any who possess knowledge of the arcane, or an aptitude for magic. Yet I can say something of potions such as those stored at this shrine.

There are many more local and guild symbols, often deliberately cryptic, but these listed are universally understood. To falsely label a potion vial is a serious crime against guild law, Thayan trade rules, and MageFair protocol; the usual punishment is to be magically forced into another shape for a set amount of time (usually not less than half a year).

For some years, the best potions have been prepared and sold in cork-stoppered, wax-sealed steel vials, graven at the necks with symbols to denote their type:

- a circle: *cure light wounds*
- two circles: *cure moderate wounds*
- three circles: *cure serious wounds*
- a triangle: *delay poison*
- a feather: *fly*
- a flame: *fire breath*
- a mouth: *truth*
- a shield: *neutralize poison*
- a spider: *spider climb*
- a star (many crossed rays): *remove blindness/deafness*
- a sun (circle of radiating rays): *remove disease*
- an eye: *vision*
- an eye radiating rays: *darkvision*

Starfall Pool

by Ed Greenwood · Illustrated by David Day

Perhaps a mile in from the southern edge of the Moonwood, almost straight north from the Hunters' Gate of Silverymoon, is a tranquil green glade, long known to Harpers, wherein lies "Starfall Pool."

The pool has given its name to the entire glade—a name now famous throughout the Silver Marches because of the ballad also called "Starfall Pool." Composed by an unknown minstrel, this long lay sings of the glade's dryad and strange magics.

"Starfall Pool" has many verses, differing from minstrel to minstrel, but its refrain is widely known:

Though to stray so deep is the act
of a fool
I regret no stride toward Starfall Pool

A sampling of verses follows:

There is a place in the deep green wood
Where the dryad Olsheirie dwells
Dancing where a keep once stood
Girt with magic of chiming bells.

Came I there by happy chance
And there I'll thither go again
To dream more dreams of fair romance
For by the pool I know no pain.

Trees old and green, dark and still
Ring 'round an oak as old as time
Fall down keep and rise up hill
Rest and hear the dryad rhyme.

Kindled by the dying embers
Of a fire that must not stay
Magic soars and then remembers
Warding me again away.

Back I'll go when I am able
Though long rides may lie between
Peace again upon my table
Lying on the moss so green.

Most versions of this ballad speak of the singer finding a refuge where he can rest deeply, in slumbers that seem to heal hurts and bring dreams of folk he doesn't know—half-elves and humans—wooing, laughing, and frolicking in the same glade where the singer rests. Some variants introduce dark, lurking magic around the pool that will snare the unwary, or a fell wizard who threatens the glade's continued existence, but the song is clearly meant to be of the "somewhere there's a fair and happy place, a refuge we can all take comfort in" sort.

There is indeed a Starfall Pool, a placid pond of drinkable water that lies in a small glade in the Moonwood. It was named for how many reflected stars it mirrors by night, and it is surprisingly small; it by no means dominates the glade.

What does dominate the glade is a huge oak tree, and a dryad does dwell therein—though her name is not "Olsheirie." She'll answer to Olsheirie, but if she doesn't like the look of the intruders, she'll hide in her oak and not show herself.

What Meets the Eye

Despite the ballad's theme of returning to the peaceful glade again and again, no trail leads to Starfall Pool; the only folk to regularly visit it are Harpers, and they take care to approach by slightly different routes each time.

The forest around the glade is typical of cold, damp northern Sword Coast forests. Dawn and dusk mists are common, and the trees are a mix of evergreens competing with gnarled oaks and many young, soaring duskwoods and maples.

The glade of Starfall Pool is surprisingly small, but it's hard to miss if one draws near by daylight because the forest floor in the area isn't rugged enough to block vision for any great distance, and sunlight striking down into the glade illuminates it in a shaft of light.

Save when snow buries everything, the glade is floored in ferns, lush green moss, and grass—everything looks green and growing. The gnarled old oak standing at its center towers over both the clearing and the surrounding forest.

Just visible in the grass and ferns near the base of the oak is a curving line of old, massive, largely overgrown stones: part of the ring-shaped foundation of a fallen and largely vanished castle tower, Northwind Keep.

The pool is small and placid, though thankfully free of the floating weed and scum that cloak many standing waters in warmer climes. Its banks are covered in moss, it has a population of trilling frogs, and its water is cool, clear, and drinkable. Visitors expecting natural beauty won't be disappointed; as the ballad claims, Starfall Pool is a pleasant spot to lounge or sleep beside, but those expecting something large and grand are apt to be downcast.

There is something striking to be seen in the glade, though: a floating shield.

The Floating Shield

Many folk have tried to seize this handsome large shield—only to discover that it's an illusion: All attempts to grasp the shield simply pass through it. The shield always floats upright, usually about 7 feet off the ground, but it can be encountered anywhere in the glade, even above the pool. What causes it to move about isn't known; some visitors report seeing it drift silently from one spot to another, and others say it "winked out" in one spot, and then shortly thereafter "blinked into being" elsewhere—but there's general agreement that it doesn't move often. As for the dryad of the glade, the Harper

Horthil of Elturel put it best: "She ignores the shield, and it ignores her." Olsheirie won't talk about the floating shield; if pressed about it, she'll say firmly that she doesn't know anything about it beyond the fact that it has "always been here" (for as long as she can remember).

Although reports suggest that the details of its appearance have varied over time, the floating shield has in recent years looked the same to all visitors. Painted on the front of the floating shield is a strange but distinctive rune or heraldic device, its meaning now lost. Some have described it as "a crowned fishhook," but its grand complexity makes it clear that it was intended to be no such thing.

Nearly every tale of Starfall Pool advances a different reason for the existence of the shield, including:

- It's the last remnant of an old warding spell.
- It marks a tomb.
- It marks where a great cache of magical arms lies hidden that works only to those who say the right words.
- The ghost of a man was forced into the shield by an evil sorcerer, and so it lingers, hoping for deliverance.
- It mirrors the movements of a real shield, preserved and animated by magic, that floats in a cavern somewhere underground and nearby.

Elminster's Notes

The Harpers rebuild the cellar every time a treasure-seeker tears it apart. I know not all of the portal's destinations, beyond the fact that one of them is atop the Stone Bridge, and another is a bare hilltop not far north of Secomber.

I can say that Olsheirie has more magics under that oak than she needs to defend herself against anything short of a large band of marauding orcs (or adventurers)—and that Harpers who find themselves facing such troubles won't hesitate to call upon me.

As to the puzzle of the floating shield, let me share this much: The apparition does mirror the movements of a real shield that floats in a cavern somewhere nearby, and other magic weapons are in that same cavern. A few beings—and no, I'm not going to reveal who they are—can, with the right words, call forth magical discharges from those cached weapons to erupt out of the illusory shield in the glade at foes they designate. There's no way to cause the floating shield to leave the glade nor any way to trace the location of the cavern through the illusory shield.

Lastly, there is a portal hidden in the pool itself, operated by immersed beings uttering the correct words, but it has nothing to do with the cavern of weapons, and it leads somewhere else entirely. Where? Let's just say more than one dragon waits at the other end. I do hope those emboldened by these words will wind up their worldly affairs tidily ere rushing off to Starfall Pool.

Northwind Keep

Some three hundred to four hundred years ago, a simple tower stood here—built by humans as a lookout and defensive shelter against orcs—a refuge in which a magic portal could be hidden to allow surprise forays of armed men into the Moonwood.

Some say the portal still exists—invisible, operating whenever anything living passes through it, and floating some twenty, thirty, or forty feet above the ring of foundation stones. As usual, tales disagree on where the other end of the portal is, and if it's safe to use or not.

What is certain is that the majority of the stones of the keep are now missing, blown to dust or carried off elsewhere. What remains of the ruins today are several dozen scattered stones little larger than a human fist, a stone-lined cellar, and a foundation ring with many gaps in it. The sixteen surviving foundation stones average about the size of a large strongchest.

The cellar is a square-sided hole 4 feet deep and 6 feet on a side, lined with small but close-fitted stones; if a visitor gathers fallen saplings and boughs and spreads a cloak over them, the cellar can be temporarily roofed to provide rough shelter and a measure of concealment. Tavern talk insists that a coffer full of gold coins was once found behind a loose stone in the walls of this cellar. True or not, that belief has caused every last stone of the cellar to be dug aside scores of times, to yield nothing more exciting than dirt. Folk in the North say magic or ghosts must rebuild the cellar—for shortly after every demolition, it's back to its intact state.

The Dancing Dryad

Olsheirie is a dryad no different than others. Over the years she's become quite friendly with many of the Harpers who visit the glade, and she emerges to speak with them (for she's always hungry for news of events large and small in the wider world) and dance—even when they have guests with them who are first-time visitors to Starfall Pool.

Olsheirie watches over folk sleeping in the glade, observing them and their gear closely if they're strangers, and arousing them if possibly hostile creatures approach if they are her friends.

In Your Campaign

Using an "Elminster's Guide" article in your game is easy. Simply switch the names of groups and individuals so they suit your campaign or come up with some new scenarios for how the elements of the article work together.

- The Harpers can be any good-aligned organization from your campaign. Alternatively, the group that guards the grove and its portals could be a neutral-aligned circle of druids or even an evil group of rangers.
- Perhaps a green hag inhabits the pool and masquerades as a dryad to ambush foolish people who come to investigate the grove after hearing the song she created about it.
- The floating shield might be a powerful magic item waiting for the proper wielder, like the sword in the stone from Arthurian myth.

To Harp by the Pool

Harpers use Starfall Pool as a meeting-place, a message-drop, and something of a refuge, trusting in their friend Olsheirie to watch over them as they sleep. They clean up the glade as she directs and bring druids to aid her if intruders have done her or her oak more lasting damage. Olsheirie keeps a gift from the Harpers, a magic item that allows her to cast a *sending* spell at will.

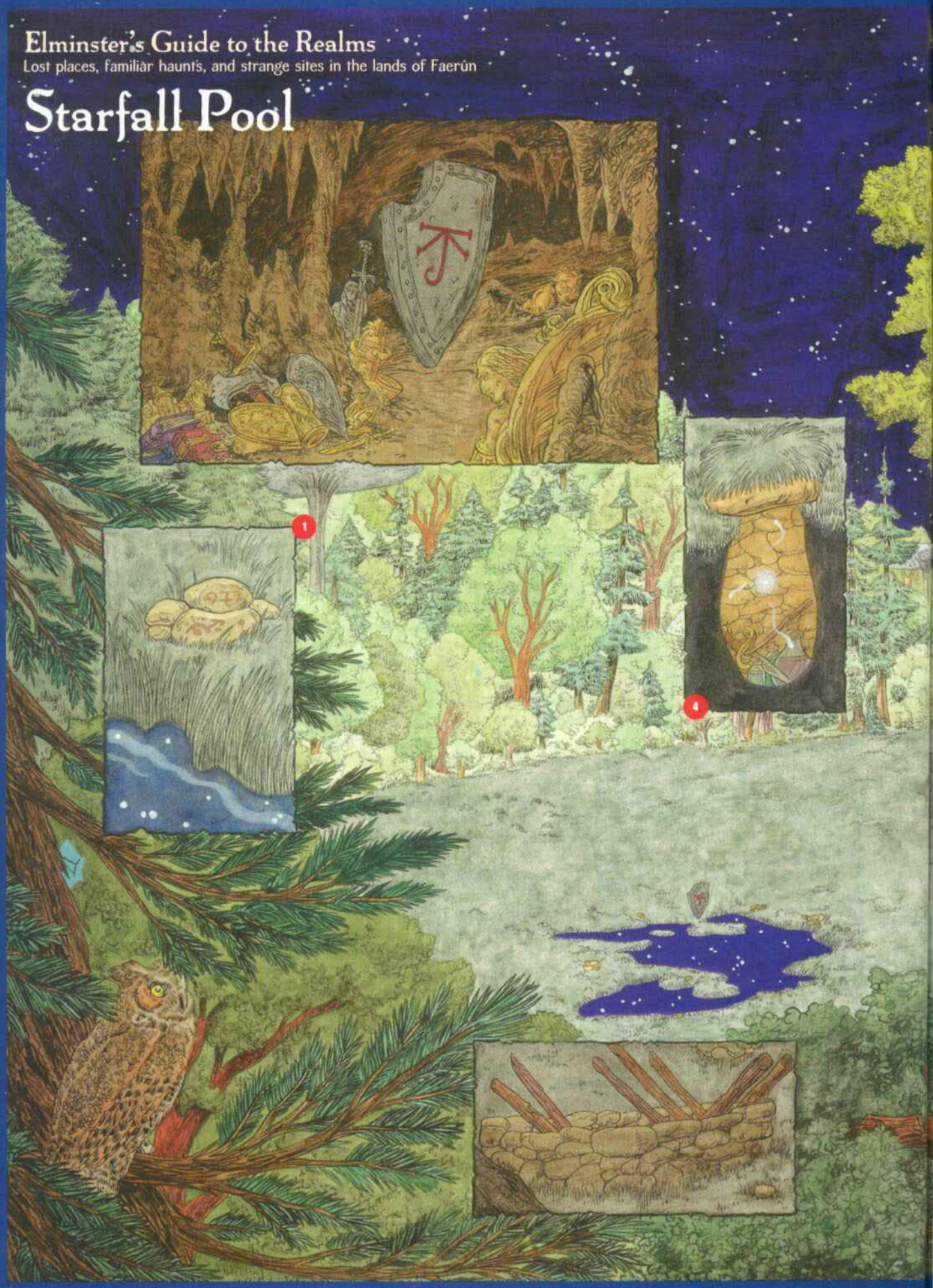
The Northwind Keep portal does still exist, and although the Harpers say its use is dangerous, a silent step through the portal transports the user to a certain room of an old Harper-owned stone house in the oldest part of Silverymoon.

Harpers arriving in haste to answer the dryad's *sending* emerge 30 feet above ground and fall to the ground unless Olsheirie has time to rig up a tripod of lashed-together poles that she keeps high in the limbs of her oak tree. She's become quite adept at throwing it down so that its legs splay out and it's "set up" with one heave.

Elminster's Guide to the Realms

Lost places, familiar haunts, and strange sites in the lands of Faerûn

Starfall Pool



Starfall Pool

1 Harpers use the stones of the ruined keep to leave messages for each other. Some are way-runes scratched on the stones, and others are written messages hidden in the ruins, their whereabouts conveyed by arrangements of certain other rocks. A Search check (DC 25) locates one of these messages, but the meaning might not be clear. A Decipher Script check (DC 30) can reveal the message.

2 The oak has many hollows and boughs where items can be left, but the dryad suffers no "additions" to her tree to remain for long.

3 The depths of the pool are solid, bare rock (clearly seen through the acidic, clear water), and no treasure lies submerged there.

4 Stones in the grove can be lifted to reveal small hollows or cavities walled by other, buried stones—and in these, some minor treasures from the fallen keep still remain: magic daggers, wands, and potions. One foot-wide, 4-foot-long niche is known to be governed by a seemingly permanent *make whole* spell, which restores any item placed into it. A Search check (DC 20) locates one of these hiding places.

TATHA'S BROOMWORKS

by Ed Greenwood · Illustrated by David Day

Many farms lie on both sides of the Skuldāsk Road running west out of Elturel. They nestle between the countless gentle hills of the rolling, unfenced countryside. Light woods cloak the heights and swampy backwaters of the area, and all else is tilled or grazed—save only very few leaf farms, newly invented hybrids between conservation and commerce.

One of these is Aloum Lyndren, the home and livelihood of Tatha Beruel. It's called a leaf farm because Tatha rears trees that are planted and tended for specific purposes, a relatively recent practice encouraged by some elves to keep human depredations of the forest to a minimum.

Aloum Lyndren is named for the elf who helped Tatha found the farm around a small natural spring. Aloum Lyndren was a sun elf whose kin dwelt among humans along the Sword Coast for several centuries. All of them, Aloum included, have gone to Evermeet, the elven refuge to the west.

Tatha's farm lies on the north side of the Skuldask Road running west out of Elturel, close enough to that city to just be able to see its walls from atop the farm's easternmost hill. Tatha's farm is a destination for many folk not much interested in the brooms she makes or the herbs and wooden spars she sells.

They come for what Tatha calls "her gift from Mystra." Tatha has the ability to see scenes of past uses of a magic item. This ability operates fitfully, sometimes failing altogether and sometimes operating very strongly (though almost always briefly), and it involves Tatha touching the item to be examined and then falling into a brief trance. The curious, the desperate, and the wise come from all corners of Faerûn seeking Tatha's gift, and they pay handsomely to make use of it (from 20 to 2,000 gp per attempt).

During trances, she sees vivid mental images of events involving the use of the item. Most of these images are glimpses of a single instant, but some, usually events involving great magical energies, reveal a short scene lasting no longer than a few seconds. Sounds, smells, and physical sensations are never conferred by Tatha's ability.

Tatha slips out of trance quickly, and she is never disoriented or prevented from immediate action. She remembers what she's seen perfectly, although she's under no compulsion to describe her visions, and over the years has become quite skilled at accurately describing the images she sees. Of course, the fragmentary images quite often reveal some of the powers of the item; the identities, natures, or purposes of previous owners of the item; and uses to which the item has been put.

Tatha Beruel is a chaotic good female half-elf. She has long, lustrous black hair (usually worn bound up with leather in a "mare's tail"), golden-hued skin, delicate features, and large green eyes. She's slender with shoulders and arms corded with muscle and scarred from cuts suffered in farm work. Few things frighten her, and she dislikes individuals who try to coerce or scare her or anyone else to do anything.

Although it's unclear how closely Mystra watches over her, Tatha seems to regard herself as immune to all threats and harm, denying sinister wizards, raiding orcs, and slavers with the same calm demeanor.

She dwells alone at Aloum Lyndren, having survived there for 20 years apparently unscathed despite known encounters with hungry winter wolves, murderous brigands, and at least a dozen slaver bands sent specifically to capture her. "Mystra provides" is her calm explanation for many things, her own survival among them.

Tending farm plants and trees, the ongoing process of making brooms in bulk, and feeding herself keeps Tatha steadily—and apparently, contentedly—busy. She is known to enjoy reading and dancing, and she often buys books from peddlers.

WHAT MEETS THE EYE

Visitors to Aloum Lyndren first see a pleasant, horn-shaped expanse of trees fronting on the Skuldask Road. The farm lies on the north side of the road, between (and including) two hills, and encompassing a third, smaller hill well to the north, about 2 miles off the road. This small forest is surrounded by rolling grazing land belonging to other farmers (the half-orc cattle-breeder Ohlongh Vrurr to the west; the mixed stock farm of the Trindle human family to the north, and the energetic, human rancher Elmair Broruk to both the east and to the south).

Tatha Beruel apparently enjoys cordial relations with all of her neighbors, and she occasionally provides them with herbal remedies for their own complaints and ailments affecting their livestock.

Small trails wind from one small clearing to another in Tatha's forest, and alert observers notice that although trees of all sorts grow mixed together, there's a prevalence of maples on the slopes of Sundown Rise (the hill on the west) and an abundance of oaks across the southern border of the farm to Vixen Rise (the hill that forms the farm's eastern flank).

Heading north through the farm, blueleaf trees take over as far as the summit of Dark Rise (the third hill on the farm), and from there to its end at the Graw Rocks in the northeast, hazel, hornbeam, and ash trees are the most numerous.

Casual observers traveling on the Skuldask Road could easily mistake the farm for a remnant of a larger forest left behind after woodcutters had felled all the best and biggest timber, home now to nothing larger than deer. Tatha's home and main broom barn are both hard to spot, because they're stone structures sunk so greatly into the ground that their sod roofs (both planted with herb gardens) seem to be no more than tiny hillocks.

Tatha's home has a main room and two sleeping chambers, one of them largely used for storage (housing the products of Tatha's whittling, a large loom, and general household oddments). Most of her broom making is done outside, before the doors of her broom-barn, unless poor weather drives her inside its doors. She keeps her shavings for kindling.

The buildings occupy two of the smaller clearings on the farm. Cutting has created three larger clearings spaced about the forest. Tatha owns two draft horses (boarded at a neighboring farm) that she uses to pull out stumps and the largest tree trunks. However, she prefers to cut and carry everything herself.

Tatha's preferred method of harvesting trees is to climb the largest ones if need be to trim branches, fell the trees, cut them on-site, split them on the spot if she's making firewood, and take finished cuts back to her barn, collecting the bark and shavings last of all.

On most days, visitors can readily locate Tatha by either the sound of her axe or by spotting her sitting out in front of her barn at work on brooms. Her house is the stone-walled garden mound that has the bell and sign out front and the pair of outhouses out back, whereas the barn sports a chopping-block, two sawhorses, and three large, rustic wooden chairs.

AN EXAMINATION OF MAGIC

A recent example of how Tatha's gift works is provided by a caravan merchant from Scornubel, who on a run through Elturel to the coast called in at the Broomworks and asked Tatha to examine a wand he'd found in a cottage he'd seized in lieu of debts after its owner died. The merchant suspected he had a wand, at least, because it was a rare polished, foot-long stick of tapering bone that was stored in its own box, wrapped in moldering silk. Tatha charged him 100 gp (if he'd been a kinder, more polite, or poorer man, her fee might have been as low as 50 gp), laid herself down on a patch of moss outside the door of her house, and he put the wand into her hands.

She saw a dark cave, lit by lantern-light, and the eager faces of men with picks and shovels, moving purposefully to a spot on one stone cavern wall with the wand held in front of them. That vision faded into darkness, and next she saw the furious face of a dwarf in armor, glaring at her as his greataxe whirled back behind his shoulder—and then came cleaving down. The vision exploded into brightness that left her blinking and shuddering . . . and gave way to a third vision: the item being placed onto a heap of treasure at the feet of a dead dwarf laid out in splendor, with grim dwarves standing all around. That vision in turn gave way to the last: torchlight in the same tomb, and eager human faces crowding close as someone reached down into the thick dust all over the same treasure-heap and grasped the item.

In all of the visions, the item looked like an ornately worked (smooth, but chased and riddled with sculpted holes), rod of shining silver with a flared end.

When Tatha emerged from her trance, she asked the merchant what the bone stick had looked like while in her grasp. He confirmed that it flickered momentarily into a semblance of a "rod of fine silver" on several occasions. Tatha then told him that it was her guess that he was the owner of a *rod of metal and mineral detection* that resembled a wand when inactive. This guess later proved to be correct, but it was a rare instance—usually Tatha doesn't venture opinions, but limits herself to careful and extensive descriptions of her visions.

ELMINSTER'S NOTES:

Tatha regards her gift from Mystra as a sacred trust, not to be misused—and has said as much, several times, to visitors who desired to hire her services for themselves alone, or offered her coin to mislead other individuals as to the nature and powers of a particular magic item.

However, I know that she does mislead clients from time to time—either by saying she can't learn anything about an item, and therefore only owe her the minimum 20 gp fee, or by understating or omitting powers she's discerned. She does this when she judges that owners of items she examines will misuse them based on the information she gives. Usually, she fears they'll be emboldened into tyranny and wanton destruction.

Tatha told me that she doesn't view this as slighting Mystra, because those who misuse magic in such ways destroy the lives and freedoms of others who would otherwise be free to use magic themselves, and thereby also increase the general fear and oppression of wizards and sorcerers. Further, she informed me that Mystra hath personally and directly assured her that she is correct in this view—and her description of the manifestation of the goddess leads me to the inescapable conclusion that Mystra did indeed appear to her.

Additional evidence of the Mother of Magic's personal interest in Tatha is this: On several occasions, unscrupulous merchants and slavers have attempted to take advantage of Tatha's trances to confine her and transport her elsewhere.

In all such instances, she has been teleported back to her farm unscathed, and those who made such attempts against her were affected as if by a *feeblemind* spell, their feebleness of wits lasting for two tendays or more. Tatha herself has no trained skill at magic, and no means of causing such effects.

TATHA'S BROOMWORKS

TREASURE?

1. Two outhouses stand side by side here—one of them in use, and one obviously in ruins. Cleverly placed stones allow easy climbing down into its privy-pit, where hefting aside a stone in the side of the pit wall closest to the aromatic active privy allows access to a large earthen pot set into the earth. Inside, Tatha keeps her amassed wealth. It takes a Search check (DC 30) to find the hidden wealth.

HIDDEN WEAPONS

2. In a hollow tree near a small swamp at the edge of the farm, Tatha keeps larger, bulkier valuables—including, according to rumor, several magic weapons left by visitors who feared the visions she reported to them. It takes a Search check (DC 25) to find this cache.

BOLT HOLE

3. The stone foundations of a very old structure—probably human-built—are located here, overgrown by the forest. If Tatha needs to hide (or hide a visitor), two readily moveable stones offer access to an underground, stone-lined cellar equipped with cots and basic provisions. The hidden cellar can be found with a DC 20 Search check.

TOOL ROOM

4. Tatha keeps her most valuable tools (her best axes, stump-chain and spikes, mallet and wedges, and her favorite splitting maul) hidden in stone-lined storage pits hidden under old tree stumps. The storage pits can be found by DC 20 Search checks.

THE BLACK DWARF MINE

by Ed Greenwood · illustrated by David Day

The countryside due east of Waterdeep consists of open grazing land, long denuded of trees and bushes by Waterdhavian military decree—and kept that way by foragers in search of any firewood they can sell to citizens in the often chilly and fog-shrouded port city.

An endless succession of caravans and driven livestock keeps the terrain of the "Bare Hills" close-cropped and muddy. The topography of this stripped land is obvious to the casual eye: a series of small, rolling hills whose sides occasionally break into rocky outcrops and faces, known as tors.

For years small children in search of baubles and adults in search of mineral wealth have chipped away at exposed rock here and there on these tors, creating several small, shallow caves. These often serve foxes or wild dogs as dens and occasionally shelter more dangerous beasts—until word spreads and soldiers sally forth from the city to "cleanse the holes" again. Some six summers back, persistent probing of the hills began. The prospectors were a handful of dwarves driven from the Sunset Mountains by Zhentarim attacks.

These dwarves couldn't accept that the stones of so many hills could hold nothing of value. They spent three years digging holes, into which enterprising Waterdhavians promptly began dumping more embarrassing sorts of refuse (such as corpses and stolen items too easily identified to be salable). Eventually the dwarves worked their way to a point about 7 miles east of Waterdeep. There they found a long, low ridge whose roots held an extensive and very pure vein of iron ore, and what's come to be called the Black Dwarf Mine began its legitimate operations.

The name comes from the chief trade negotiator among the five dwarves, Aldurghen Stormhammer (N male dwarf War 3/Exp 6). Gruff-voiced but often joking, he is distinguished by two things: crude, black, homemade armor (a knee-length mail shirt studded with armor plates and an iron helm) and an ankle-length and always-filthy beard. Stormhammer is seldom seen in Waterdeep without his armor, but when he does doff his helm, he reveals a face that is equally blackened (either permanent pig-mentation or the result of never washing)—hence his nickname: the Black Dwarf.

Stormhammer comes to Waterdeep accompanied by at least two dwarves, whose backbreaking labor has left them not only strong but with a very low tolerance for pranksters and thieves. Not that many folk have the strength to steal from them: They typically sell pig iron and cast-iron pots, pans, fire screens, clothes irons, boot-jacks, door "dragons" (ornamental weights that hold doors open), and trivets. They transport these wares in a handcart, the finished goods stored under a braced bottom weighed down by hundreds of pounds of pig iron. At the end of a trip to Waterdeep, the cart is instead filled with smoked sides of meat and several kegs of strong drink, leaving behind the cargo of iron—and words muttered in a few shrewdly chosen ears by Stormhammer about what's "in back" of his mine (described below).

WHAT MEETS THE EYE

The Black Dwarf Mine comprises a series of tunnels bored into the western upper face of a bare rock ridge, with gravel paths linking them to a heap of tailings and a furnace. The dwarves work the mine with pickaxes and tip-carts, carrying ore and stone rubble out of the tunnels to the furnace or the tailings heap, respectively. Two other paths lead away from the mine: One connects to a drovers' trail running down to that Waterdeep-bypass spur of the Trade Way known as "the Run," and the other winds westward across the hills to a limestone quarry.

There are also two large, ramshackle wooden sheds with watertight roofs. One just below the furnace covers the casting trough into which molten iron is poured. The other—off to one side—stores charcoal, carts, and piles of raw materials. The dwarves do not use it for shelter; in wet weather, they sleep with their finished iron in one of the worked-out tunnels. Only exhaustion, not storms, can stop the near ceaseless forge-work.

The furnace is a squat stone chimney lined with firebrick beside a spring of rushing waters that turn a water wheel. The wheel's axle in turn drives two vertical wooden pistons through a series of cranks. The pistons rise and fall inside cylinders that look like oversized, straight-sided kegs, although with far heavier strapping; the cylinder tops have flap valves that let them "breathe" in and out. The pistons force air through pipes into a mixing chamber, and thence via a tapering copper pipe into the depths of the bulbous furnace, to keep its fire hot.

The dwarves tip cartloads of iron ore, limestone from the nearby quarry, and charcoal into the furnace from above through the "maw," a hole in the side of the chimney above the fire. The limestone serves as flux: During smelting, it combines with nonmetallic parts of the ore to make glassy slag (waste tailings). The dwarves buy charcoal from the busy human and halfling woodcutters along the fringes of the High Forest. They know very well how to burn charcoal for themselves, but their forge-work simply doesn't allow them time.

Day and night, the dwarves "feed the maw," dumping successive layers of ore, then flux, and then charcoal atop the air-blasted fire. Two and a quarter tons of ore, a ton and a half of flux, and a hundred handcarts of coal make a ton of Black Dwarf iron (in less-rich ore deposits, two and a half tons of ore and 150 carts of charcoal would be needed). The stack can't be more than about 35 feet high, or the weight of ore crushes the charcoal and chokes off the fire.

The metal melts and runs down to the bottom of the furnace into a small crucible, the "hearth," where it builds up behind a clay plug. The dwarves open a large cinder hole just above the hearth hourly to rake out the slag from atop the molten iron. The plug is broken every 12 hours or so to let the liquid iron run out. It flows out into a channel dug in the deep sand under the adjacent shed, into a long central trench (the "sow") that branches, like the veins of a leaf, into rows of smaller side cavities (the "pigs"). When these are all filled, the hearth-dam is plugged again. After the bubbling, smoking metal cools and hardens, the dwarves use hammers to break the pigs apart from the sow, then lift the smelted iron with hooks to prepare the trenches for the next pour. A pig of Black Dwarf iron weighs 75 pounds, and a sow 250 pounds.

Smaller tappings of the hearth fill fire-hardened clay molds buried in the surface of the sand to make pots and pans, or run into a clay-lined casting ladle set into the sand. A casting ladle is a long-handled pan with a beaklike spout on one side, which is lifted out when full to pour the iron into smaller, more delicate molds.

Pig iron is hard and brittle because it contains a lot of carbon. Producing malleable wrought iron requires removing the carbon, and the dwarves of the Black Dwarf Mine have begun doing this too. Directly north of the furnace they have built three smaller forges—open fireboxes that burn charcoal with forced-air drafts from another trio of water wheel-and-cylinder assemblies.

Many dwarves consider all of this backbreaking but simple work too crude for their skills ("leave such to the gnomes" is a common dwarven expression), but these landless outcasts don't seem too proud for it, and they obviously enjoy their forays into Waterdeep. They incur no shipping costs, so they can undercut the prices of all other ironworkers and thus capture the market.

In just a few seasons the Black Dwarf five have become very wealthy—not just from their iron, but also from their work "in back."

"IN BACK"

In its first year of operations, many folk of Waterdeep dropped by the Black Dwarf Mine out of curiosity—and suspicion. After dark rumors of "walking metal men" and other dangerous weapons swept through the Dock Ward, they wanted to see for themselves what the dwarves were up to.

Most came away with the impression that Stormhammer and his fellows work far too hard to be up to anything. So drenched with sweat that they often stagger into the millstream to drink and cool themselves at the same time, the fire-blackened dwarves toil nonstop with their hammers and tongs, in austere surroundings resembling a cave more than a building, and in heat and din so fierce that humans must peer at what's going on from a fair distance.

However, the mine does indeed have a very profitable secret sideline: discreet, short-term, high-fee storage of "hot" goods and other items folk want swiftly hidden. This is what the Black Dwarf five refer to as "in back." Valuables are stowed in the worked-out back caverns, often behind temporary walls of heaped rubble that look for all the world as if the digging ended there. Corpses, monster body parts, and more dangerous goods are often buried under the slag heaps (covered by an overturned tip-cart if such treatment would harm them).

ELMINSTER'S NOTES

Ye should be aware that what makes Aldurghen Stormhammer's armor and skin black is not the iron at all, but a grimy preservative oil in which he regularly submerges both his tools and his armor. This edible but horrible-tasting oil, called "thaolet" by dwarves, is a mixture of specific stone dusts and oils derived by boiling particular plants. It serves two purposes: to drive out dampness, and to dissolve rust and tarnish by undoing what ye call the "oxidification" that occurs when air, water, and most metals meet. Many dwarves keep a small open barrel of thaolet on a worksite to stand tools in, or to wash away the blood of foes from weapons after battle.

Most dwarves prefer not to look like wet coal-heaps when dealing with humans, and wash thoalet away with clear oils before donning their armor for "public viewing," but Aldurghen cares not. Humor and whimsy rule him, although he's shrewd behind his jests and air of wide-eyed deviltry. Let not his act conceal from ye a mind as sharp as honed steel and a gaze that misses nothing.

As for what's "in back" at the Black Dwarf mine, all I'll say is: Ye'll be surprised.

ALDURGHEN STORMHAMMER

Aldurghen Stormhammer, Male Dwarf War 3/Exp 6: CR 8; HD 3d8+6d6+27; hp 62; Init +0; Spd 15 ft.; AC 17, touch 10, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +7; Grp +10; Atk +11 melee (1d8+4, *+1 warhammer*); Full Atk +11/+6 (1d8+4, *+1 warhammer*); AL N; SV Fort +10, Ref +3, Will +7; Str 16, Dex 11, Con 17, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 13.

Skills: Appraise +5, Bluff +5, Craft (armorsmithing), +8, Craft (blacksmithing) +4, Craft (weaponsmithing) +6, Climb +5, Handle Animal +3, Intimidate +7, Sense Motive +5, Spot +5, Profession (iron worker) +13, Use Rope +4.

Feats: Endurance, Great Fortitude, Neogotiator, Skill Focus (Profession (iron worker)).

Languages: Common, Dwarf.

Possessions: Masterwork spiked chainmail, *+1 warhammer*, *+1 dagger*, *bracers of armor +2*, *2 potions of bull's strength*, 47 gp.

THE BLACK DWARF MINE

1. Behind several slag heaps are shallow caves (mine shafts abandoned early). The dwarves use these to store tip-carts, replacement water-wheel buckets, chains, pulleys, and other valuables they don't want stolen.

2. If the dwarves need to hide contraband in a hurry or anticipate a search, they typically scoop a hole in one of their paths (built up from tailings), bury the loot, and then replace the path. They then resume their mining, pushing a stream of heavily laden tip-carts of ore, flux, and charcoal right over whatever's hidden.

3. More than one dishonest merchant of Waterdeep has been induced to confess or impart secrets after sweating out hours suspended head-down from a pulley in one of the hot, smoky, noisy forges. The Black Dwarf five terrify such captives by moving them to hang directly over molten metal or an anvil where their hammers are thudding down.

4. This disused passage is full of empty ale barrels brought back from the city. The dwarves, wasting nothing, sell these to traders who wish to reuse them (or hide contraband in them).

The Bone Dance

by Ed Greenwood · Illustrated by David Day

In the Border Forest not far north of Dagger Falls stands a haunted hill avoided by local hunters. Its snarling ghosts are said to slay hunters with savage glee.

The Bone Dance is said to be haunted not by human dead, but by monsters who perished in the region. Their skeletons have often been seen dancing around its bare, rocky height at night, shrouded in strange glows that make them visible from afar. If living creatures venture too near, even by day, the skeletons give chase, ripping into those they catch with their bony claws.

As a result, few trap or hunt near the Bone Dance, and small game is plentiful in those trail-laced trees.

The Brave Blade

Although folk of Daggerdale and the Tesh valley shun the Bone Dance, they seem fascinated by it; unlike the local horrors that go unmentioned elsewhere in Faerûn, locals seem proud of the haunting in their midst and readily share descriptions of particularly scary monsters such as ghostly dragons coiling restlessly in the air above the Bone Dance's bare summit.

Any traveler who asks about such apparitions is sure to be told of the grisly fate of the Brave Blade. Around twenty-four autumns ago, this band of proud young adventurers out of Yhaunn (reckless fools in the eyes of most locals) were hired by a now-dead furrier, Lhastal Darramooth of Daggerdale, to end the haunting of the Bone Dance.

Although the tale has grown in the telling and is full of many obvious embellishments, the most chilling part of this local fireside shiver-tale is that its central narrative is utter truth. The Brave Blade was hired, set forth amid much laughter, set upon that same night, hunted down, and torn apart. The haunts left some of the band members' bloody limbs on Darramooth's doorstep for the furrier to find, and they left a bloody trail of death back into the woods that many local folk saw and recall all too vividly. No heads of the dead adventurers were seen that day, but their skulls still turn up from time to time—always perched on rocks beside trails or in other prominent places—as warnings to stay well away from the Bone Dance.

The Bone Dance

The infamous haunted hill is surrounded by thick stands of trees, but the top is largely bare. Those who've dared to venture near one of the many game trails (a dozen or more such trails climb the hill, presumably converging at its top—a strange route for game to habitually take) say that the Bone Dance looks odd—like stones dropped and shaped by a god, as one put it—and not something that should be there at all.

Such impressions are rooted in the shape and composition of the hill. Its flanks are of boulder-studded gravel scree and dirt, to which a few low shrubs and creepers cling. The hill is dome shaped, but its top is of jagged rocks, with a roughly circular hollow at the center.

This hollow is perhaps forty to fifty feet across and twenty feet deep at most. At its center stands a stone table: a huge, roughly rectangular slab set atop two flat-topped boulders. The slab has been darkened by many overlapping bloodstains.

The few locals bold enough to actually peer into the hollow have all concluded that they were looking at an altar of some sort, and fireside tales all agree on this—although they vary widely in their claims as to what faith the altar belongs to and precisely what—beyond sacrifices—it is used for.

Many cling to the idea that the ghostly monsters rend and then devour living creatures atop the Bone Dance in a ritual that involves dancing or capering around the altar. Some ascribe this to a perverted worship of Malar, others to one of the Beast Cults, and a rare few to various deities of death, the dead, or even a divine Bone Lord venerated by undead monsters; it has been said that for every tankard of ale one purchases in a Daggerdale tavern, one can hear a different tale of what happens atop the Bone Dance.

Beneath the stone table, the truly bold find many skulls, tusks, fangs, jawbones, claws, and the like—all carefully placed well away from the edges to keep them from weather or incautious feet.

The Snarling Hunt

Elminster was able to take us beyond local rumor and shiver-tale embellishments and lay bare the truth about the Bone Dance. The great mage reported that the apparitions of dancing monster skeletons are just that: spell-spun illusions. Even close up, they're menacing and impressive, and they often stare down from the hill into the surrounding forest. They move in silence, and they have no feet, their legs fading from view at the ankles. They dance over, through, and above the jagged hill-top rocks as if such obstructions don't exist.

The most often seen ghosts of the Bone Dance are phantoms of giants (often sporting multiple heads or arms), chimeras, hydras, wyverns, and trolls of gigantic size. Behirs, dragons, retriever tanar'ri, and even illithids are also often seen. From time to time their hides or living bodies seem to

appear and briefly cloak their bones, or they ride their skeletons as shadows or mists before fading away again.

The apparitions sometimes make bestial sounds. Often these are strange hootings, ground-shaking roars (called "longthunder" by many folk of Daggerdale, who can hear this particular sound at a great distance), or wolf-howls, rather than the calls or sounds normally made by the creatures the phantoms resemble.

When they detect intruders venturing too close to the hill, the monsters give cry, lower their heads, and rush down the hill to give chase. As they pursue, they all make extremely loud, menacing snarling noises, and they often overrun fleeing creatures.

Interestingly, no beast ghost has ever actually slain anyone. Harm is done by spells that appear to be physical attacks made by the phantoms, and directly by beast-headed humans who pounce from hiding, employing weapons such as bear-claw-studded clubs, claw-like bladed gauntlets, and the like.

These ambushing attackers are worshipers of Malar wearing beast-masks and the pelts of forest creatures. The dancing ghosts are a fraud they maintain to keep the faithless away from the Place of Offering, their sacred site.

Fangfalls

Many of the largest and most obvious trails close to the Bone Dance are lures for intruders and prowling predators. They are kept clear of fallen trees by the Malarites, but the growth of shrubbery and undergrowth is encouraged to better conceal pit traps.

The cultists call these traps "fangfalls" for two reasons: Pointed wooden stakes line each pit, and the Malar cultists place aggressive, poisonous snakes in the pits to attack victims.

Elminster's Notes

Every tribe of the People has its own rites, but non-believers need only remember two things: hunts and sacrifices. Malarites like to spill blood in the name of Malar, both on altars and in the chase, and blood-lust is their preferred state. Some might approach prey stealthily and with cunning, but the chase is what fires their blood, and most will wound to spill blood as they pursue, trying not to fell a fleeing creature before they must.

A typical fangfall is about 20 feet deep, with a cover of interlaced tree boughs covered with vines, a light coating of earth, dead leaves, and growing plants and fungi. Fangfall stakes are usually fastened together into a one-piece frame and lowered into a fangfall by use of a rope, which is left in place (concealed, of course) for hauling the frame out again later for repairs and easy removal of bodies and captured items.

Fangfalls are clustered heavily in two spots of note: in a cleared area at the base of the Bone Dance known as "the Throat" (an obvious assembly area for groups of intruders to gather and plan an assault on the hill) and around a false altar (crude stone table) where the Malarites often leave the bodies of intruders they've slain—to lure would-be rescuers or avengers to their dooms.

The Rauthtor

The Bone Dance is the central worshiping-place of the tribe of the People of the Black Blood that inhabits the southernmost Border Forest (other Malarites dwell in its northernmost two-thirds). This tribe of Malar worshipers calls itself the Rauthtor, and it consists of folk who live wild in the forest itself, foresters, and subsistence farmers from the Tesh valley.

The name of the tribe comes from a long-dead brute of a man named Rauthtor, a crazed farmer who lost his family to raiding orcs. Rauthtor, gifted with unusual strength, did not rest until he'd hunted down all of those orcs and personally slain them. He lived the life of a prowling hunter in the Border Forest thereafter, seldom emerging save to sell owlbear pelts when he needed new supplies and blades.

Rauthtor hunted monsters, game for food, and those who crossed him with the same cunning and fearlessness, and although he probably never venerated Malar, he inspired some Malar worshipers who fled Zhentil Keep when Manshoon came to power and that city fell ever more firmly into the grip of Bane.

They founded a tribe of the People of the Black Blood in the Tesh valley, retreating north into the Border Forest in response to hostile treatment from Teshen farmers. The band stayed in the trees to avoid foraging bands of orc mercenaries employed by the Zhents.

Members of the Rauthtor make several beast-masks for themselves. They typically conceal these masks in coffers or old helms lightly buried or perched inside hollow trees well away from their dwellings to avoid discovery. These are typically shaped with some skill (senior members of the tribe aid the stumble-thumbed) and always have fur, ears, fangs, and the like attached, so wearers look like they have the heads of wolves, bears, or other forest beasts grafted onto their own.

Such masks must be worn for rituals, when hunting or fighting for the tribe, and during sentinel duty. Duties of the Rauthtor include participation in rituals (including the usual High Hunts celebrated by all Malar cultists), defending the Bone Dance against intrusion (both by active fighting and keeping watch over the Bone Dance as sentinels, a duty typically performed when lying concealed on high tree branches), maintaining its fangfalls and trails, and capturing snakes for use in the pit traps.

The bones kept beneath the altar are holy regalia, to be dipped in the blood of sacrifices and brandished during prayer-dances around the altar such as the Blood Chant.

In Your Campaign

Although the names mentioned in the column all apply to the FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign, transporting the ideas and elements into a different campaign is relatively easy.

A haunted forest is a location ripe for adventure, and getting the PCs interested is as easy as giving them a connection to an individual or group such as the Brave Blade that has fallen in the region.

Although not every campaign has a god of the hunt like Malar of the FORGOTTEN REALMS, other evil deities serve just as well as patrons of the clever cult.

The beast cult is a popular idea in movies and fiction, and including a strange cult without a particular god is quite feasible.

Adapting the cultists who plague the area around the Bone Dance to your campaign might be as easy as assigning them a motivation. The cultists could be in the area because they were driven from a previous stronghold, much like their conflict with the Zhents in this article. They could also be searching for some powerful artifact important to their patron, attempting to finish some great ritual, or waiting for the arrival of a new prophet promised by their god.

The Bone Dance

In game terms, a typical fangfall is a 20-foot deep spiked pit trap. Rules for traps can be found in both the *Dungeon Master's Guide* and *Song and Silence*.

Spiked Pit Trap: CR 3; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; Reflex save (DC 20) avoids; 20 ft. deep (2d6, fall); multiple targets (first target in two adjacent 5-ft. squares); pit spikes (Atk +10 melee, 1d4 spikes per target for 1d4+2 each); Search (DC 21); Disable Device (DC 20).

Creatures in the pit can make a Search check (DC 20) to find the ropes hidden along the pit's well.

The snakes all have the same statistics as a Small viper.

Snake, Small Viper: hp 4, see *Monster Manual* page 202.

Rauthtor cache beneath rocks: These stashes hold weapons, coins, and valuables.

THE HAUNTED BRIDGE

by Ed Greenwood · illustrated by David Day

North of Westbridge and south of Triboar, a wide stone bridge carries the Long Road across a sucking bog centered around the wandering waters of the stream known as Huntinghorn Water. The bridge stands in isolated, bugbear-populated terrain and for years has been known to mapmakers as "Ilikur's Bridge," To those in the north, however, it is simply called the "Haunted Bridge."

This latter nickname derives from an eerie property of the structure: From time to time, the stones of the bridge speak. Their utterances are loud, clear, and always delivered in the same calm male-pitched voice.

What Meets the Eye

Ilikur's Bridge is built of tightly fitted irregular blocks of local granite that rise in a gentle arch about four feet at its center from the level of the road at its ends. A huge slab of rock resting atop two gigantic stones bridges the Black Maw Bog and carries the road atop its back. This cross-slab is 100 feet in length, half that in width, and 12 feet thick. The two leg blocks are 40 feet tall (with the bottom 10 feet buried in the soil), sixty feet across (east-west), and over 20 feet wide (north-south). Behind each leg block is a wall of fitted stone filled with rubble that carries the road up and down from the height above the cross-slab.

Gravel and river rock have been built up over the cross-slab to make a smooth roadbed, and then finished with cobblestones. The bridge's road runs for 300 feet and is 40 feet wide at all points, allowing the largest laden wagons to pass each other with ease.

On either side of the cobbled roadbed, high walls of dressed and fitted stone topped by sloped, smooth capstone rails protect users of the bridge from accidental plunges over its sides.

The nowforgotten builders of the bridge—who might or might not have had anything to do with Ilikur, whoever or whatever "Ilikur" was—were either dwarves or persons whose stonemasonry skills equaled that of the dwarves of elder times. Although no visible drains pierce the sides or bed of the bridge, the builders chose the type and arrangement of stones so carefully that water seeps through the structure, drains away, and leaves the bridge unharmed by the ravages of winter ice.

The Haunted Bridge is known to have stood at this site, without recorded repairs, for at least eight hundred years and probably for at least a century or two before that, given that its earliest mention in journals and guides all describe it as "old". It might well precede the Long Road by many years, and perhaps once had a purely local use—in a settled land now long vanished beneath the ravages of the northern wilds and weather.

The Black Maw Bog has moved and grown in size over the years, expanding to the east at least as far as a person standing at the height of Ilikur's Bridge can see. Overlain by the wide, slow-moving waters of the Huntinghorn, the Bog is hard to see. Over the years it has swallowed many reckless or ignorant travelers—and their beasts and wagons, too. The Bog consists of thick mud at least 20 feet deep in most places (and almost twice that beneath the midpoint of the bridge). Crabgrass and many small plants grow atop the bog, hiding its true size.

It's considered bad luck to camp or even tarry upon the bridge, a belief fostered both by its haunted reputation and by the practice of several local bugbear raiding bands of attacking all travelers who try to spend the night on the bridge.

What Lurks Unseen

Popular belief refuses to accept reports attesting to the truth about Ilikur's Bridge, but many wizards and sages have investigated the structure thoroughly, and almost all have reported (accurately) that the bridge isn't haunted at all. Instead, it was enspelled with many variant elder versions of *magic mouth* spells that cause it to "speak" under certain conditions (the visible mouths almost all appearing underneath the bridge).

Dozens of the bridge's stone blocks can be removed once the proper "trigger-stones" have been found and manipulated, revealing clever hiding places—one of them a chamber large enough for up to eight humans to hide in. These features are no doubt the source of legends that insist hidden treasure can be found in the vicinity of the bridge. The loaded wagons and coaches of wealthy merchants and nobles sucked into the bog have added to such legends over the years. Most of the sunken wagons and carriages lie to the east of the bridge, from 60 to 100 feet away from it. Some intrepid adventurers using ropes, harnesses, and magic have recovered valuables from inside these coaches, but drownings regularly occur during such attempts.

There are also ancient tales of a dragon that often landed on the bridge and then just as suddenly vanished, and a ring of glowing wizards seen standing in solemn meeting on the bridge by night, but if any of these sightings actually occurred, they've left no mark.

Legends say that death will swiftly strike down anyone who tries to shatter or carry off stones of Ilikur's Bridge—such as the treasure seekers who once dug away at the roadbed at the center of the bridge's span and uncovered a smooth-carved stone giant lying on its back. According to the tales, the stone golem sat up and blasted those who uncovered it with lightning bolts, cooking them alive and hurling them far from the bridge. It then collected all the disturbed stones, laid itself down, and reburied itself, waiting for some momentous occasion before rising again. What this occasion is has caused great debate, and no one can say for sure.

What the Stones Say

Here are some of the recorded utterances of the bridge, along with their known "trigger" conditions. These have been determined by experimentation; the bridge says many other things when conditions that have not yet been precisely defined occur. Even Elminster won't venture an opinion on the meanings of any of these sayings.

- When three or more elves are on or touching any part of the bridge at the same time and no goblinkin (orcs, goblins, hobgoblins, half-orcs, and so on) are within 10 feet of any part of the bridge: "Seek Elrodel in the hidden place, where waits the Crown of Winds for the one worthy to rule."
- When a lone walking creature reaches the midpoint of the bridge: "Be changed, for there are always too few to do the great deeds that are needful."
- When any creature flies within sixty feet of any part of the bridge: "Strike not the work that pleased Ilikur."
- When any flying creature lands on or strikes any part of the bridge: "The dead watch, and mark what you do."
- When any object or carrion (but not undead) strikes any part of the bridge: "To the earth, all returns—but not unheeded."
- When any dwarf touches any part of the bridge: "Built in pride, rooted in power, six stones here point the way to anvils made to forge great magic but hidden elsewhere. Dismantle and destroy not, or suffer Baraurin's curse."
- When any flame or light is kindled or taken onto the bridge: "Beware! Foolishness is seen even here, and responses prepared!"
- When any spell that reveals or analyzes magic is cast on any part of the bridge: "That is not the way. Awaken deeper power at peril."
- When any magic weapon is drawn or any magical power of an item is awakened by a being in contact with any part of the bridge: "The hammer awakens and heeds. Seek it in the old place."

The Black Maw Bog

The Black Maw Bog is a serious danger that has killed many unsuspecting travelers and adventure seekers. It has varying depths but is 30 feet deep at its deepest point. If a creature suspects the bog is there or is especially alert for quicksand, poor footing, or a possible trap, a Wilderness Lore check (DC 15) enables the creature to feel or notice the edge of the bog and move freely to avoid it.

At the shallow edges of the bog (no more than 5 feet from the edge), creatures unable to levitate, fly, or otherwise free themselves from the mud sink until hip- or chest-deep, reducing their speed to 5 feet and giving them a -2 penalty on attack rolls and AC. Brush thrown atop the mud can support creatures able to climb on top of it. Creatures large enough to walk on the bottom can wade through the area at a speed of 5 feet. Creatures can also be pulled free of the mud with a successful Strength check (DC 20).

As creatures reach deeper areas of the bog, it becomes more dangerous, threatening total immersion. A creature over a "bottomless" area of bog sinks hip- or chest-deep with the same effects listed above. After 4 minutes, the creature sinks shoulder-deep, it cannot move, and the penalty on attack rolls and AC rises to -4. After 5 minutes, the creature sinks chin-deep, it is unable to make attacks, the penalty to AC rises to -6, and all spellcasting that requires a somatic component becomes impossible. Total immersion occurs after 6 minutes.

A creature sucked completely under the thick mud of the bog can hold its breath for a number of rounds equal to twice its Constitution score. After this period of time, the creature must make a Constitution check (DC 10) every round in order to continue holding its breath. Each round, the DC increases by 1. When the creature finally fails its Constitution check, it begins to drown (see The Drowning Rule in chapter 3 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).

"Bogged" individuals who remain absolutely motionless delay their sinking by 2 minutes. Creatures who plunge or fall into the bog also hasten their sinking by 2 minutes.

Elminster's Notes

Know ye that the tales of vanishing dragons are the result of a two-way portal located at the south end of the bridge. The portal once connected to a dragon's lair but has now either been sealed or destroyed. I've read varying reports that the lair's owner was a large red or black dragon, but I have no idea where the lair is located, nor do I know its contents or if it is currently occupied. When functioning, a creature can make the portal appear by touching the correct two bridge stones—one on the east wall and one on the roadbed—simultaneously.

As for the tale of the golem, there I can be more specific. There is a carved stone figure buried face-up beneath the center of the bridge, but as far as I know, this statue has never been enchanted in any way and was in fact salvaged from a monument that once stood nearby (along with all the other stones of that edifice) to provide stones for the bridge. Dwarves repaired the bridge after the statue was dug up and spread the tale of the statue reburying itself to discourage anyone else from similar excavations. The lightning bolts, however, were real—and there are several more, still-buried stones that yet lie within the bridge, waiting to discharge various deadly electrical spells at those who disturb them. Be warned that some of these stones contain more than a single use of such spells.

There are many things in Faerûn better left undisturbed, and this bridge is one of them. Pass over it, admire it—and leave its stones be. Unless, of course, a swift grave is thy goal.

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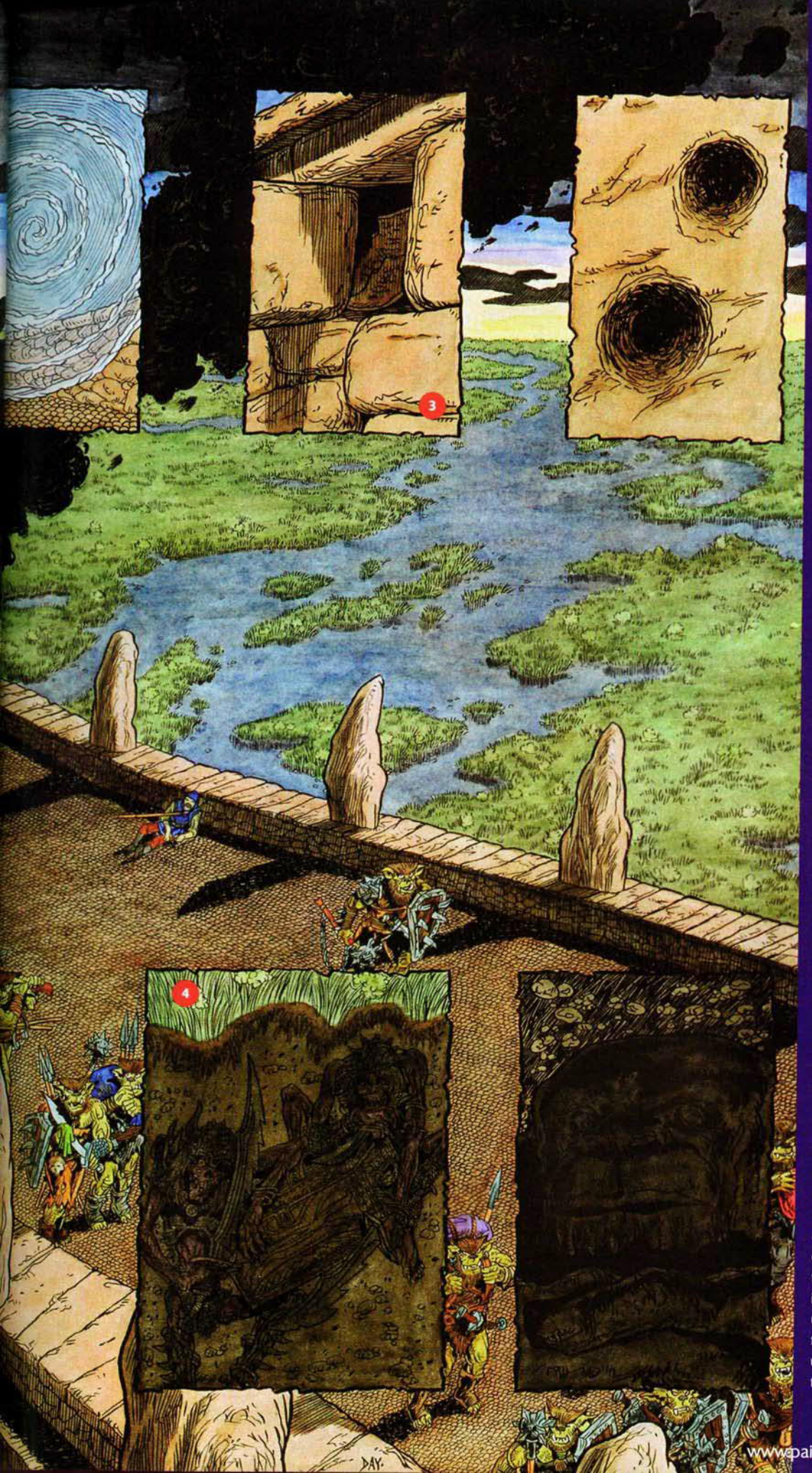


THE HAUNTED BRIDGE

1. Touching three stones here in the correct sequence causes a "cold" sensation to occur for 2 minutes. Advancing into the coldness during this time allows entry into an extra-dimensional space similar in all ways to the space created by a *rope trick* spell. The correct stones are marked with tiny crossed swords, but the correct sequence is not recorded. Incorrect sequences of touching "turns off" the stones for unknown periods of time.

2. A road bed cobblestone here bears a deeply-graven mark that looks like a "W" with a "V" beneath it. No one knows the meaning of these markings. The stone has been pried loose and lifted—revealing nothing beneath but layer upon layer of other stones, and gravel.

3. An unmarked stone in the bridge sidewall here pivots if one end is pushed in, to reveal a small storage niche within the thickness of the wall. Sometimes cryptic messages can be found here, scratched on scraps of leather or shards of pottery.

4. At least two legends say a cache of stolen coins and gems is buried somewhere near the north end of the bridge—a certain (but unknown) distance from the end of the east bridge sidewall, in a precise (and also unknown) direction. One tale says guardian undead are buried with the chest of treasure.

THE HIGH FLAGON

by Ed Greenwood · illustrated by David Day

The High Flagon stands about two miles outside the north gate of Waterdeep, on the east side of Long Road, which runs to Rassalantar and on up the valley of the Dessarin to Triboar.

In construction, the Flagon is a typical country gambling house, gaudy where it isn't rustic, but lacking the luxury (and haughty airs) of a city gambling establishment. Like most country gaming houses, the Watch stays away, leaving policing of the establishment to a private force of hired guards. Brawls, prostitution, and shady business meetings are the norm, and both drinks and food are overpriced.

WHAT MEETS THE EYE

The Flagon is a rambling, many-gabled wooden structure that resembles an old house. Owned over the years by a variety of people with very different tastes who all built additions onto the existing structure, the resulting building is a riot of wings, bay windows, and turrets, with a roofed-over porch running along the front and around to the side (to give some relief from the muddy yard and cover in wet weather when one needs to dash to the stables that lie behind the Flagon).

Fire-barrels of water stand everywhere, inside and out ("handy for drownings," as one merchant sourly commented), and the rooms are dingy, though they strain for an air of luxury with many cheap tapestries hung on the walls and black-painted tables and chairs. None of the furniture matches, but they've been made to look as if they do—uniform arched wooden backs having been attached to the chairs and circular or oval tabletops of roughly the same size attached to all the tables.

The Flagon's yard is fenced to keep out thieves, and hired mercenaries patrol all areas of the Flagon, including the stables. There are over thirty "house hands" on duty during the evenings and half that by day, most of them warriors of 1st or 2nd level.

A patron entering the Flagon will see two guards flanking the outer doors, pass through a lobby to a gleaming copper-sheathed inner double door flanked by another two guards, and then enter the dim interior where a gowned hostess awaits (with two guards of her own) to guide the patron to whichever table he desires. All three guard posts have alarm-gongs; striking one rings a central gong in the kitchens, where the owner then swiftly sends out reinforcements.

LIFE IN THE FLAGON

The Flagon is owned by the Harbright family, all of whom tend to be handsome. They are of middling height, seldom run to fat, and have strong features, including hair that goes silver at the temples as they age. One of the elder uncles of the family, Drengar (LN male human Exp6/Rog1), has taken his family away from daily work and life in Waterdeep (largely—and vainly—to protect his daughters from corruption and early marriage to undesirables). He now runs the Flagon, which is rapidly proving far more prosperous than the steady family textile business.

Drengar, who is addressed as "Master" by his staff, is stern but fair, and well regarded by all who work for him. Two shifts (dawn to dusk and vice versa) work the Flagon. The total roster of Flagon employees consists of twenty kitchen staff (Harbrights and local women), three exceptionally beautiful female hostesses, sixteen "tablemasters" (attractive men and women of Waterdeep who administer the games and provide cards, dice, markers, and banking services), twenty-odd stable hands (the Flagon boards mounts and stores coaches for some city folk as well as tending to guests' horses), and forty-six guards.

Travelers setting forth from Waterdeep often arrange to meet at the Flagon (to join a caravan or form a large armed group for travel safety), and this practice is becoming more popular with laborers and merchants of middling fortunes—especially since the game of High Dragon started gaining popularity and Drengar Harbright started "sweetening the winner's pot" with cash prizes.

By day, the Flagon is quiet, sporting only a handful of die-hard gamblers and other folk who desire to meet and do business in private (for 3 sp, one can rent a private, secure room until dusk).

The same rooms, with spartan furnishings and no services but a chamberpot, a blanket, and a bowl of wash-water, can be rented for the night for 2 gp each, but don't expect much quiet. The Flagon staff neither advertises nor encourages rental of their rooms as overnight accommodations for travelers.

It is possible to eavesdrop on the goings-on in many of the Flagon's upper rooms by the use of spy-passages with peepholes, but Harbright doesn't advertise this fact—the extra coin some might pay to "listen in" isn't worth the loss of business (or revenge that might be taken) once word gets around.

House rules at the Flagon include expulsion for those who willfully and repeatedly taunt, cheat, start a fight, draw a weapon, or cause a death.

Fire is the chief fear, and anyone caught deliberately starting or aiding in any conflagration (throwing a lit lamp, for instance, or any act that spills or breaks a lit lamp or lantern) is beaten and expelled. Use of magic is also forbidden in the Flagon. Those caught using magic to cheat are quickly expelled from

the Flagon and banned from returning, while the use of dangerous or violent magic is rewarded with a beating and confiscation of all personal property on hand, or death (depending on the severity of the offense and how dangerous or influential the offender).

BELLY AND GULLET

A vast array of drinks can be had in the Flagon, all served in battered soft metal goblets (glass is too prone to breakage in a place where drinkers are so apt to become either excited or murderous). Prices are as follows: 3 sp per goblet of ale, small beer, herb cordial, beefsimmer broth, or stout, and 1 gp per goblet for all wines, zzar, and spirits (aside from a few rare and fine substances, which start at 7 gp per goblet and go up to whatever the proprietor thinks he can get away with).

Food offerings come without cutlery (to be eaten with one's fingers) and are limited to hot tarts, skewer-fowl, and fryplates. Savory tarts (usually rabbit or game fowl) are 3 sp each. Sweetberry tarts go for 2 sp each and are filled with gooseberries, blueberries, blackberries, raspberries, cranberries, or a mixture of any or all of these. Skewer-fowl are roasted whole fowl served on wooden skewers, and most tend to be chickens or ducks, often tough, ancient, domesticated birds that have been marinated in the wine-dregs. A fryplate is a small wooden plate containing a pair of small, thick oval slices of bread that have been fried in the drippings from the skewer-fowl, overlaid by four or five "frystrips" of peppery seasoned beef, venison, and hog.

GAMING AT THE FLAGON

The Flagon offers only card games. Until recently it also offered dice games and "live" games, but the numerous brawls that arose as a result of these games convinced Drengar to ban them at the Flagon. The most dominant game at the Flagon is High Dragon, although Archers and Swords are also popular games. It should be noted that some card games involve the use of dice in play, but these are hosted at the Flagon.

Archers

This 4-8 player game uses the same deck as High Dragon (described below), with the same card rankings. Each player is dealt a card face down (which they can't examine), and then 2 cards into their hand.

One player begins by "shooting an arrow" (presenting an attacking card to a target player of her choice). The defender shows a defending card, and the highest card wins.

If the attacker wins, she gets the defender's face-down card. She is then allowed to examine the card—other players are not—shuffle her hand, and choose either to keep the same card face down or replace it with a new card.

If the defender wins, the attacker withdraws the attacking card, and the defender becomes the archer, free to attack the same or another player by "shooting an arrow."

If attacking and defending cards are of the same rank, the attacker and defender exchange face-down cards without displaying them to other players.

The first player to have six face-down cards is the winner (hands must remain 2 cards in size, and only one face-down card is hazarded in battle; the others remain as booty, so this represents 5 wins over any losses). In multiple-player games, it's common to wager on the second, third, and even fourth winners as well as the first.

High Dragon

This three-player card game has recently soared in popularity, to the extent that fanciful and beautifully illustrated decks of cards are now being made for it and bought avidly by people from all walks of life.

High Dragon is played with three courts (suits) of cards: Blue Shield, Green Tree, and Silver Sword. In descending order, each suit has the following cards: King Dragon, Death Dragon, Queen Dragon, Young Dragon, Dragonslayer, Hero, Knight, Minstrel, Wandering Wizard, Warrior of the 11th, Warrior of the 10th, Warrior of the 9th, Warrior of the 8th, Warrior of the 7th, Warrior of the 6th, Warrior of the 5th, Squire, Knave, Stone, and Well.

The object of the game is to win "battles" (tricks) by playing the highest total card score into a battle. First, the deck is shuffled and a Silent Hand (dummy) is dealt face down and set aside, to be kept out of play for the game. Then, 7 cards are dealt face down to each player, for their examination, and the top remaining card of the deck is turned up to become the battle card. This card serves no other purpose in the game except to determine, by its own court, which is the ranking court for a particular battle (to break ties).

A battle begins with the dealer (or the winner of the last battle) playing a face-down card. Then the second and third players also play face-down cards. The first player then plays a second card face-up, followed by the second and third players. Only then are the face-down cards turned over to resolve the winner of the battle. The highest score wins, and when scores match, the player who played the most battle court cards wins; if there's still a tie, then the rank of battle court cards is referred to.

Following this, another card of the deck is turned over to reveal the new battle court, and another battle is played. After every two battles, all cards except the Silent Hand are collected, shuffled, and dealt out again.

Betting is permitted on each battle or on the majority winner of a "war" of 12 battles. If a war has a three-way tie, there's no winner, and another war is played. If there's a two-way tie, the loser drops out and the two remaining players continue with 9-card hands (and two 9-card Silent Hands), and battles become 3-card affairs: a card face down, then a card face up, and then the third card face down again.

Smashcastle

This is a "quiet" bettors game, often used to pass the time in a friendly, non-wagering manner while gossip or business dealings are completed. It's played with two identical High Dragon decks and consists of various forms of solitaire (each player in a game of Smashcastle must play the same form of solitaire) in which players draw, play, and discard in unison—but their discards go to the other player.

Most of the solitaire games used in the Roaring Dragon, according to Elminster, are what we would call "Klondike" or "Can-can."

Wealthy Waterdhavian matrons often play Smashcastle with servants or when calling on each other by day, and it's apt to be sneered at by the younger crowd.

Swords

Elminster tell us that this card game is essentially euchre, with the addition of an Emperor card that outranks the Ace (known as a Throne or Castle card). D

THE HIGH
FLAGON
4

1 To guard against robberies and staff thefts, the Flagon has several "pour chutes" built into doorframes: little doors that pull out to form a spout into a vertical pipe to the cellars. Coins poured down these chutes pile up inside cavities in hollow walls and can be reached by concealed doors (Search check, DC 30). Keys to those doors are kept in a drawer-safe (Open Lock, DC 35) to which only Drengar has access. A successful Search check (DC 30) locates a loose floorboard under one of Drengar's bedchamber walls. To reach the safe, one must lift the right floorboard and reach sideways, out of sight.

2 Between the ground-floor game room and the rentable upper rooms is a crawl-space with peepholes sited above every gaming table. These are used, albeit rarely, by the Flagon staff to catch persistent cheaters. A person standing in the game room can locate the peepholes with a successful Spot check (DC 30).

3 Spyholes overlook most upper rooms (Spot check, DC 20). All rooms have lockable doorbars from the inside (Open Lock, DC 30).

4 Staff-access closets on every floor contain weapons, small sandbags for hurling at fighting guests, large blankets for bundling up and disposing corpses and other "messes," and mop-buckets. The ground-floor closet has a hidden foot-lever (Search DC, 23) that swings the floor aside so that items can quickly be dropped into the cellars for hiding.

THE LEANING TREE

by Ed Greenwood · Illustrated by David Day

In the backlands of the Forgotten Realms, travelers depend on landmarks but often come to fear them—for any place familiar enough for them to use as a landmark also sees enough passing traffic to make it a good lookout or prowling-place for hungry monsters.

Leaning Tree is a typical trailside camp, controlled and inhabited by no one but used as an overnight resting-place by many. This traders' crossroads is located where the Northride (the traderoad west out of Shadowdale) meets the Tethyamar Trail (known locally as "the Daggerdale road") southeast of Spiderhaunt Wood.

It was named for a huge shadowtop tree that for years jutted out of the earth at an angle that made every passerby believe that it must soon topple over. Some two hundred years after the spot acquired its name, they were proven right. The forest giant reportedly crushed a small cottage in its fall (some tales insist that gruesome loss of life was involved), though all traces of both tree and building are now gone.

This waymoot stands in an area of gently rolling terrain broken by occasional rock outcrops and deep, narrow ravines overgrown by a thick forest. Water is plentiful, and mists are common at dawn and dusk throughout much of the year.

The soil is rich and dark, but it lies in a thin layer over bedrock, and both treeroot tangles and loose stones are plentiful. As a result, both trade routes at the crossroads are of hard-packed dirt studded with small stones.

Leaning Tree boasts a horsepond, a ramshackle pavilion, a few hollow-tree hiding places, several dry wells now used for contraband storage, and a small rock pinnacle that can be used as a lookout and as a site for beacon fires. Drinking water can be found in the woods behind the pavilion, where a small spring rises among rocks. Even in winter, folk who can shatter a foot or so of ice should be able to take buckets of water from "Alath's Hole," a small but deep pool that the spring empties into before trickling on through the forest to join other rivulets and form what eventually becomes Daggerstill Stream. No one can remember who Alath was or why the hole is named for him, but the most popular tale is that he hastily buried a cauldron of coins very near the pool during an orc raid—and was then slain. No one, local rumors add, has found his hoard since.

There are other rumors about Leaning Tree: that it has been the site of murders, spell-battles between wizards, pitched battles, and that it is haunted by beautiful women who sing sad songs and even by a "ghost dragon."

Beacon Fang

The most striking feature of Leaning Tree is this spar of bare rock. It stands amid thick trees and creepers some distance back from the crossroads, in the northeast angle of the two trails. Rising some eighty feet off the ground at its tip (which is large enough for three humans to stand on), it stands higher than most of the surrounding trees by a dozen feet or more, and it usually offers a view along the Northride for three miles or more and vistas in other directions of perhaps a mile.

Beacon Fang is a sheer drop to the south, southwest, and southeast, but it is easily climbed on its other sides. Harpers keep its top crowned by an unlit beacon fire (and check on this every four days or so, replenishing it whenever necessary).

The beacon fire consists of a tree branches laid in rectangular layers, each layer of boughs laid at a go-degree angle to the layers above and below it, to form a "log cabin" roughly six feet high. An old, cracked greathelm laid at the heart of the log cabin is kept stuffed with dry kindling; its scorched and blackened state attests to how often lazy folk have ignited the tinder without even bothering to take them out of their protective container.

The Horsepond

The second prominent feature of Leaning Tree is a long, narrow, and stagnant pond in one angle of the meeting of the roads. It's typical of what some folk call "drovers' ditches" and others term "drive-through troughs," found at many wayside inns.

It has bogged down many wagons in the dark or under the guidance of weary or tipsy drovers—because both of its ends are mud-ramps, allowing horses to be driven or towed by their reins down into the water from one end, thence through the water, to then be brought up and out the other end in the same manner.

Small personal items might well lie buried deep in the hoof-churned muck at the bottom of the pond, but larger items are found and removed by travelers who care for their mounts and probe with wooden poles. The fastidious who'd rather skip this aromatic, often splatteringly dirty step are warned that when troubles over the rulership of Daggerdale first erupted decades ago,

the local phrase for someone having been murdered was that he'd "been to visit a horsepond." (It's not uncommon for corpses weighted with stones to be found in wayside ponds wherever roads traverse wilderness in the Realms.)

Peddler's Palace

The pavilion at Leaning Tree is known as "Peddler's Palace" to old drovers. Today it's little more than a leak-prone shelter from driving winds, rain, and snow.

Standing just northeast of the waymoot in the shelter of Beacon Fang, the ramshackle pavilion is little more than the standing trunks of two old, dead trees cut off and then top-notched to hold a third trunk laid across them as a crossbar.

The southwest side, facing the roads, stands open, but many tree trunks of various sorts and sizes have been leaned on angles against the northeast side of the crossbar, rising up diagonally from the ground to form a sloping back wall. Most are long enough to protrude up into the air, overhanging the crossbar a trifle, but the term "Palace" was obviously bestowed with sarcasm.

In front of the pavilion is a firepit of scorched rocks overhung by a fire-blackened iron cooking-hook of massive size. Many folk have tried to remove this over the years, but they found it too firmly anchored to carry off; thrice it has been severely damaged and repaired by the Harpers.

A cauldron hung on the end of this jutting hook is suspended not far above the firepit; the hook is part of its pole, originally dwarf-forged as one piece. Dwarves drilled deep into bedrock beneath the pit to anchor the pole, which has rusted slowly and so remains both secure and very heavy.

Hideyholes

Leaning Tree has almost as many real, oft-used hiding places as it does legends of unclaimed valuables hidden in its environs. The heat of cookfires makes the firepit less than ideal for storing buried treasure that can't take severe heat (thanks to the bedrock not far beneath), but several hollow trees (one beside the pavilion, and two flanking the horsepond) offer cavities large enough to conceal coffers, carrychests, and even dwarves or smaller creatures. A human can crouch in one of the horsepond trees, though immobility and drab clothing might be necessary to escape being spotted.

Unfortunately, these hiding places are clearly visible and thus obvious to any passerby. Only slightly less obvious are the two old wells that date from a time when an unusually dim-witted human family tried to settle on the spot and farm.

Wooden covers for these wells have been made and renewed many times over the years, and mud, stones, and dead leaves have found their ways into the shafts to block them both at a depth of about seven feet. The eastern well is lined with stone and surrounded by a pile of broken rocks, and both often see use for overnight food storage and as temporary homes for more long-lasting valuables. The wells retain their wooden covers to this day, rocks and deadfall tree boughs anchoring them.

The Snarling Dwarf

Buried a few feet beneath the trodden and weed-choked earth of the pavilion floor is a huge slab of flat stone, probably from the immediate area, the uppermost face of which has been skillfully sculpted into a relief carving of a snarling bearded face with strong brows and a large nose. Who carved it, and why, are mysteries—several times it has been dug up and examined in vain for spells or treasure beneath it. It's said to be a fearsome sight when laid bare, causing most who reveal it to decide not to sleep in the pavilion thereafter, but for some reason (probably suspicions of curses) no one has ever shattered it, tried to move it away from the spot, or taken it. It remains a mystery that might have nothing at all to do with dwarves.

Old Writings

Some rocks around Beacon Fang, when disturbed, have been found to be deeply graven with old runes. Some are mere symbols whose meaning is now lost, and others are but fragments, but messages have been found, and some of these (their rocks long ago carried off) are reported here:

- "The hidden ways hold more Art than has been lost."
- "Seek you Authelass of the Dripping Eye. He has mastered . . ."
- "Nathurr has the Hidden Stone. It now commands the other . . ."

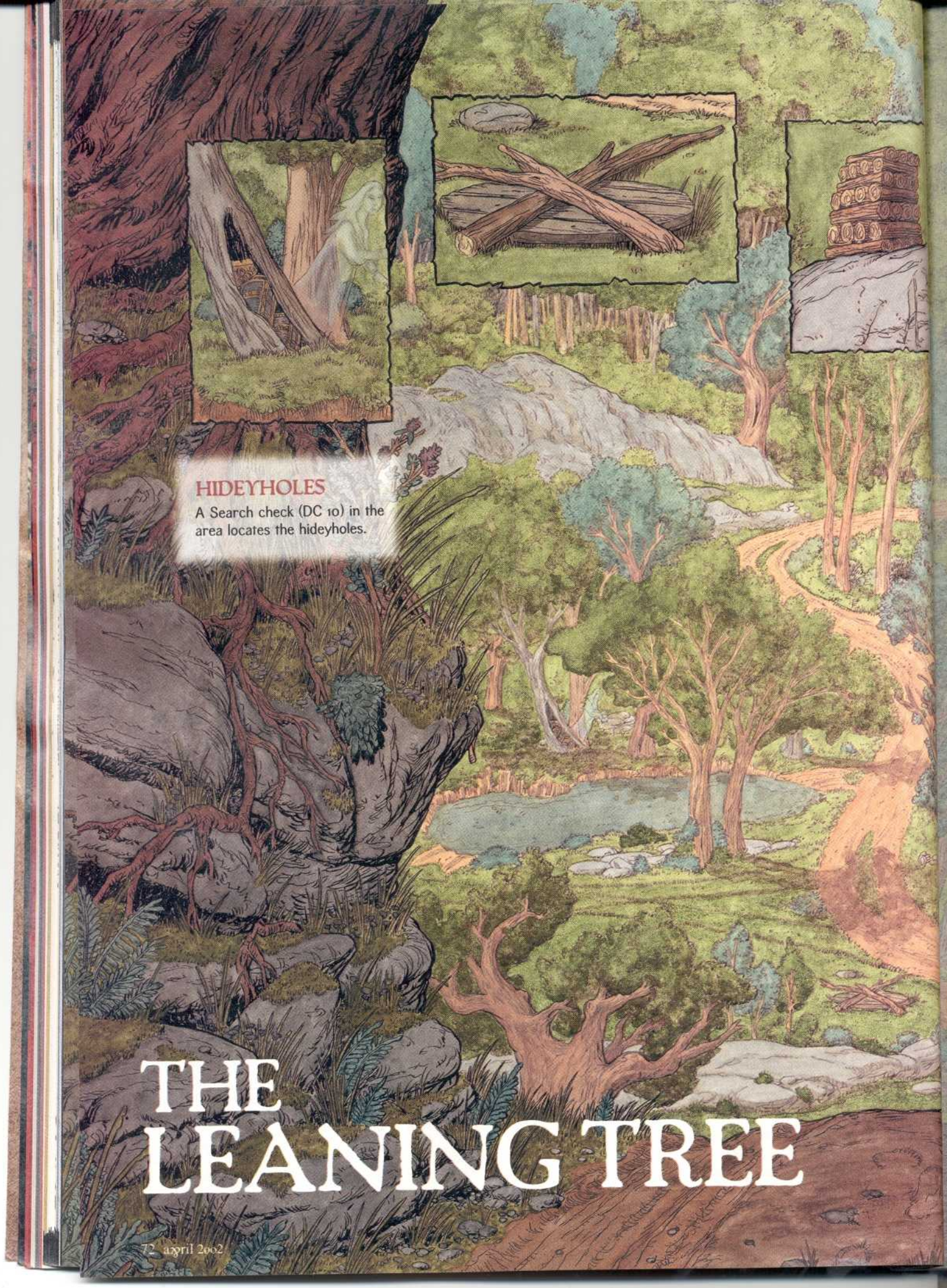
Elminster's Notes

Know ye that the tales of a "Watching Spirit" lurking about Leaning Tree are true: a spectral harpist (in life, the half-elf sorceress Thelaerle Mounshraun, a gentle healer and singer who served the Harpers well) can manifest anywhere within a mile of Beacon Fang.

In life she could take the shape of a tiny flying dragon, and she often does so in phantom form when she doesn't want living creatures to see her true likeness, which is that of a beautiful, fair-haired maiden with very large, dark eyes set in a bony face. From this come the tales of a "ghost dragon" lurking about Leaning Tree. Thelaerle Mounshraun is a kindly soul, easily moved to pity or to aid weary or stricken travelers. She's been known to guide folk, bring Harpers and other helpful folk to them, retrieve lost and fallen items, rouse folk to face impending attack, and even try to frighten predators. Apt to be lonely, Thelaerle loves to hear fireside tales or even to dance around, above, or through the crackling flames of a campfire. She reports to certain Harpers, who regularly seek her out and bring word to me in Shadowdale of brigands or other folk who seek to settle in "the Tree" or establish ambushes there.

As for the Snarling Dwarf: I, too, know nothing of how the carving came to be here or what purpose it might have or have once had. I can confirm that it is ancient, and that no magic whatsoever clings to it. No treasure lies beneath it, right down to the bedrock, which was examined for messages, openings, or hiding-cavities—for some dozen feet in all directions. This examination occurred some three decades back, when the pavilion collapsed and had to be rebuilt.

As to the writings: all that I have seen bespeak use of the area as a message-drop in the time after Netheril fell. None of them are tomb, treasure, or way-marker inscriptions. Many have been taken away by wizards hungry for old lore, but many more lie buried in the woods east of the waymoot, along the Northride.



HIDEYHOLES

A Search check (DC 10) in the area locates the hideyholes.

THE LEANING TREE

BEACON FANG

It takes Climb checks (DC 25) to climb the southern side. All the other sides require an easier Climb check (DC 10).

SNARLING DWARF

This non-magic stone slab was once a door in a dwarf stronghold far away. Casting *legend lore* gives the caster a clear enough image of the stronghold to *teleport* to the area as if it were studied carefully. Possible adventure links include *The Forge of Fury* standalone adventure and "The Swarm" from *Dungeon Magazine* issue #92.

PEDDLER'S PALACE

The lean-to provides a +2 circumstance bonus to Wilderness Lore checks made to gain a Fortitude save bonus against severe weather.

The Missing MINOTAUR

by Ed Greenwood · Illustrated by David Day

The Missing Minotaur of western Everlund is a newly built tavern catering to adventurers, mercenaries, treasure-hunters, explorers, and other rough folk not welcome elsewhere. Such folk eat hard, drink hard, and play hard; openly-worn weapons are the rule in the "Map House," and so are knife-throwing games and open talk of planned lawlessness and butchery.

The Minotaur acquired its "Map House" nickname thanks to the hobby of its proprietor, a weatherbeaten retired adventurer by the name of Elsk Thavarask. "Squarejaw Thavarask" is a mapmaker—not a skilled cartographer, but simply a man who loves maps—and is slowly crafting a huge, as-detailed-as-he-can-make-it map of the known North behind his bar. Folk come in to give or sell him little scraps of map (snatches of city streets in Silverymoon and Sundabar, sketches of woodland trails and traplines, and even written notes of landmarks, water sources, and ruins), and he tacks them up beside his slowly-growing master map. Sometimes he trades away or sells pieces of these maps, but none of them ever go on display until he's made two painstaking copies and hidden them elsewhere.

The Minotaur is a rough, late-night-roaring place, specializing in potent brews (Thavarask doesn't hesitate to slip "knockout" poison into flagons when patrons become too rowdy or aggressive) and in becoming useful to half a dozen upstart merchant cabals and shady organizations seeking to take advantage of the developing North.

Naturally, the Harpers are busily planting agents here to keep watch over the goings-on, and it seems the Arcane Brotherhood of Luskan is also interested in keeping a presence in this "opening eye on Everlund."

Besides the aforementioned organizations, a few local cabals and shady alliances have spies among the regular patrons of the Minotaur; interesting things said and done in the taproom will be passed on to any and all of the following:

The Black Buckler: This is a loose confederacy of mercenary warriors and rogues who help each other gain employment by paying close attention to the needs of travelers and locals alike. In Everlund, active rogues are considered to make excellent guards, because among locals active in such professions, "loyalty to the patron who hired you" is absolute.

Sarthun's Shield: This semi-retired adventuring band of some fourteen aging human men and women love to parade, do bodyguard duty, and do work not likely to be deadly or to take them away from the environs of Everlund. They often help search for runaways or stolen goods, put on uniforms to help visiting merchants give the appearance of having large bodyguards or cadres of servants, bolster wedding or funeral processions, or help the overly timid go out at night by surrounding them with formidable personal protection. Their ranks include some capable rogues, and they're always alert for news of treasure they can acquire to live on in their graying days—particularly if they can swindle it from unscrupulous passing merchants.

Tathtard's Rose: This cold-blooded cabal of merchants is spreading with the growth of the Silver Marches. Its dozen or so members employ their most trusted personal servants as spies and agents to further the work of the Rose—which is to make its members rich, by fair means and foul. Tathtard is a furniture-maker of Silverymoon and a ruthlessly brilliant man; he prefers to work within the law whenever possible and to be secretive and subtle, simply to avoid reprisals. Long ago he decided that if a small, elite group of merchants worked together to arrange goods shortages, fix prices, direct business opportunities to each other, and share inside information they should all profit handsomely—yet never see short-term personal gain enough to be worth betraying each other. Neviol Tathtard himself, however, has secretly arranged the death of one rival in the Rose, poisoning the man's entire household and sweeping in with his most trusted agents to plunder the rival's hidden coinage before anyone else discovered the disaster—and he plans to serve other members of the Rose in the same way, if circumstances ever make it profitable enough.

The Master of the House

Elsk Thavarask was born in Neverwinter but spent much of his youth in Waterdeep (where his parents ran a now-vanished laundry and seamstress shop in the Castle Ward "as far away from the Palace as it's possible to get, an' still be in Castle Ward"). At an early age he discovered he loved coins, gems, and danger, and that he was both swift and strong. He soon joined an adventuring band and fell into a life of Sword Coast piracy—staying alive by sensing when to flee or drop out of sight (as fellows who didn't tangled with foes beyond their handling and died).

After years of this, Thavarask grew tired of the cold, of pain, of always

needing to be alert for danger, and of not having time to sit and drink in a place he was welcome in for more than his coins. Harboring a lifelong fascination with the "wild, unspoiled North" and an enjoyment of boar and deer hunts, he dissolved his last and most famous adventuring band, The Men of the Mask, came to Everlund with some friends he suspects were Harpers who'd been keeping an eye on him, and opened the Minotaur—which is named for the first monster he ever slew.

Elsk is a brown-haired, green-eyed, weatherbeaten man who likes people, often senses danger before it erupts, and is slow to anger. He dislikes untended fires and folk who hurl magic about carelessly. Thavarask has a covert agreement with a local Harper; as long as he maintains one private sleeping-chamber at the Minotaur that has its own well-hidden entrance, and feeds and houses therein without charge anyone who arrives and gives the right password, he'll be paid 500 gold pieces annually.

Elsk Thavarask, Male Human Ftr8: CR 8; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 4 in. tall); HD 8d10+16; hp 60; Init +7; Spd 20 ft.; AC 22 (touch 13, flat-footed 19); Atk +12/+7 melee (1d8+5/crit 19-20, +1 longsword) or +12/+7 ranged (1d10/crit 19-20, heavy crossbow); AL NG; SV Fort +8, Ref +5, Will +2; Str 15, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 15, Wis 11, Cha 13.

Skills: Climb +7, Hide +3, Jump +5, Listen +4, Move Silently +3, Ride +12, Spot +4, Swim -5. Feats: Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Expertise, Improved Initiative, Improved Disarm, Leadership, Mobility, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longsword).

Possessions: *+2 scale mail, +1 large wooden shield, +1 longsword, boots of speed,* masterwork heavy crossbow with 10 bolts, 340 gp and 1d8 gems (worth 2,800 gp) hidden around the Minotaur.

Thavarask's Sleep Venoms

The Master of the Minotaur employs at least three rare and expensive venoms to prepare sleep-inducing drinks. He acquires these from traders who buy them covertly in Waterdeep and Skullport from pirates of the Nelanther (who in turn get them by milking poisonous fanged fish and island vipers). All of these are cloudy white liquids of faintly sweet taste and viscous consistency that can be diluted in either water or alcohol and still be effective. Typical prices are for one dose of the poison. It is not effective to apply the poison in any quality smaller than one dose. Thavarask has been known to sell poison to trusted friends, but he is insulted when other would-be purchasers approach him.

Slarkfish—*Type:* Ingested DC 14; *Initial Damage:* 1d4 Dex; *Secondary Damage:* Unconsciousness; *Price:* 100 gp.

Nightviper—*Type:* Ingested or injury DC 14; *Initial Damage:* 0; *Secondary Damage:* 3d6 Wis; *Price:* 600 gp.

Saldruth's Viper Venom—*Type:* Ingested or injury DC 16; *Initial Damage:* 2d12 hp (subdual); *Secondary Damage:* 1d6 Con; *Price:* 300 gp.

Udderfish—*Type:* Ingested DC 12; *Initial Damage:* 1d4 hp (subdual); *Secondary Damage:* 2d12 hp (subdual); *Price:* 400 gp.

Numbfish Jelly—*Type:* Ingested or contact DC 16; *Initial Damage:* 3d6 Dex; *Secondary Damage:* 1d6 Dex + 1d2 Wis; *Price:* 300 gp.

Pauper's Poison—*Type:* Ingested DC 12; *Initial Damage:* 0; *Secondary Damage:* 2d6 hp (subdual); *Price:* 40 gp.

Elminster's Notes

Not much, know ye; I'd just as soon ye not know who's a Harper and who serves the Arcane Brotherhood, and out swords or start whispering plots the moment ye sit down! But, if ye must, know this: Asking Thavarask or the tavern-maid Elanthra to meet with "Old Thammas" means ye want to talk privately with a Harper; telling them you need to see "Larlaun" means ye need the aid of several armed Harpers, in haste. Try not to look surprised at who appears.

If ye espy a slender, darkly handsome man with eyes the hue of old honey, who can't seem to stop smiling, 'tis likely ye look upon Thold Ramaeras (NE male human Rog4/Ftr7), an Arcane Brotherhood agent who trades in wines in Everlund and is forever sponsoring novice adventuring bands to explore this or that nearby tomb or ruin. Another Brotherhood agent betimes seen in the Minotaur is a slender young man with snow-white hair, Selth Dorlanneir (CE male human Ftr 3/Wiz 9), who works as a guide and caravan guard locally—when he's not out murdering people on the sly.

In Your Campaign

Adapting "Elminster's Guide to the Realms" for your campaign might seem daunting to you, but it's as easy as importing any other element from the magazine. Although the article contains many references to particular personalities and power groups in the Forgotten Realms setting, you can simply change them to suit your game.

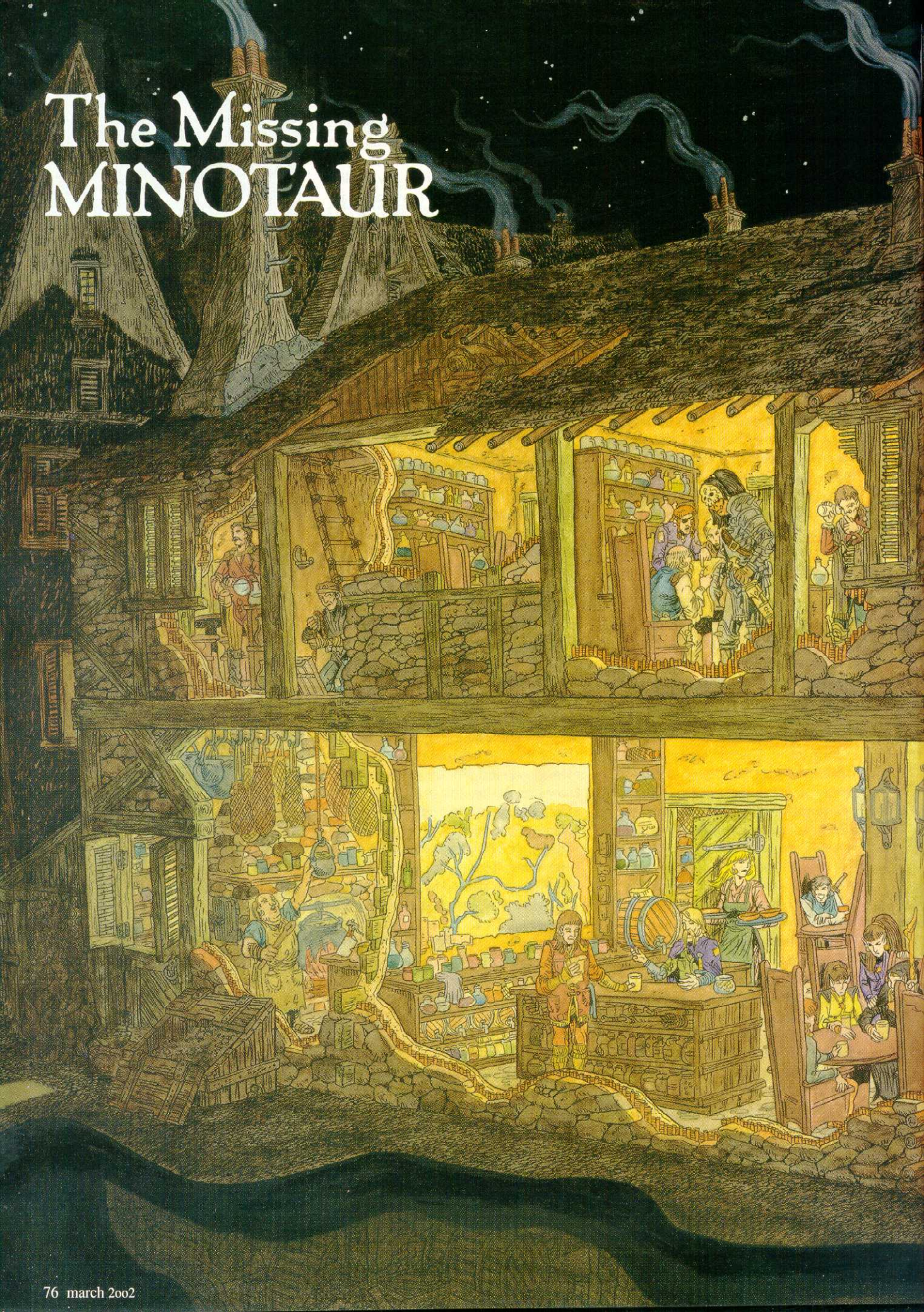
For instance, without any knowledge of the Forgotten Realms, it should be clear that the Harpers are a large and well-informed group of secretive do-gooders, and that the Arcane Brotherhood is a similarly secretive group of evil spellcasters. Just change the names, and in your campaign, the Harpers could be a group of paladins working secretly in an evil empire and the Arcane Brotherhood could be a cult of snake worshippers hoping to usurp control of the evil empire while fending off the paladins. Alternatively, maybe the power groups are rival thieves' guilds, both as evil and underhanded as they come.

Thavarask is a powerful NPC and a simple alignment change can make him a deadly villain. Perhaps the bar is run by a far friendlier (and less powerful) sort, and Thavarask exacts "protection money" from the proprietor. This evil Thavarask also forces the tavernkeeper to post false maps that lead the unwary into his traps. Or perhaps you don't want to use the Missing Minotaur at all; in that case, Thavarask makes an excellent captain of the city guard or henchman to an evil sorcerer.

The poisons can be used in any game as is or with a simple name change. Changing the poisons from ingested to injury or contact poisons shouldn't greatly affect their value, but it does increase the likelihood that player characters and NPCs will find a use for them in your game.

The map makes a great player handout when the players make the classic trip to the tavern to check on local rumors and possible employment. It's also a fine way to show players the lay of the land before they get in the almost inevitable barroom brawl.

The Missing MINOTAUR



THE MOONWYVERN

Inns are vital in the Sword Coast North. Civilization is meager and wide-scattered, the weather is harsh, and the predators are harsher. Here, a known refuge often means the difference between life and death. Yet inns are themselves immobile targets, and tend not to last long. Many stretches of road sport the scattered, fire-scarred stones of a vanished hostelry. Often, these ruins become the home of some fearsome beast using the crumbling, overgrown cellar as a lair.

One roadhouse that has thus far defied the odds is the Moonwyvern Inn. It's a ramshackle roadhouse on the road between Silverymoon and Everlund, within an easy day's ride of the Moonbridge. It stands in the forest without benefit of neighboring farms or settlements and has offered shelter to travelers for some sixty years.

Who built and first ran the Moonwyvern is forgotten, but the present staff remembers that the place was named for a long-since-slain local wyvern often seen silhouetted against the moon.

The Moonwyvern is an dimly-lit place of rambling floors, stout pillars, and thick crossbeams. Those who expect fawning servants or cleanliness should go elsewhere. The worn-down but cozy atmosphere in the Moonwyvern is the pride of the Moonwyvern's staff and regular patrons.

Many folk in Silverymoon and Everlund have heard the Moonwyvern described as a place of plots and secret meetings. But seasoned travelers know that it's not the roaring place it once was. Some gossips credit the decline in scandalous activity to the current owner, and rumors that she is a harper abound.

The layout of the Moonwyvern changes often, as rotten parts collapse and demand replacement.

Clarshee Taraghe is "the ugly old woman who owns and runs the place." She's not a Harper although she sympathizes with many of their aims. She does follow a policy of keeping everyone's secrets, aiding those she likes, nursing the sick for days or even months, extending credit to the needy, and providing help to the desperate. Many patrons—even ruthless, brutal folk—love her like the mothers they once had and rush to her aid and defense if need be.

Not that Clarshee often needs such help. She stumps around her inn grumbling out constant mutterings of complaint spiced with colorful oaths like, "By the blasted blue danglepipe of Longjaws the dragon!" or "Cesspits of Waterdeep!" Despite her aging appearance, Clarshee is fearless and quite competent with axe, sledgehammer, pie-knife, or tar-brush. She runs the inn with the aid of Horokh and

HIDDEN MESSAGES

Each room in the inn is a potential repository for some forgotten note or message. There is a 30% chance that a room contains some hidden message. Finding a message requires a Search check (DC 30). To determine the content of written messages found in the inn, choose or roll **1d8** on this table (when a duplicate result turns up, substitute a variant of Message 1 or a DM's special):

1. "Meet at the usual place at moonrise, battle-ready. He's dead, but what we seek is missing."
2. "Tell the courtier with the long side-whiskers but no beard that Thauber seeks to buy more wine. The price he gives will be the room number. Go after dark, on the night after the day you get the courtier's answer. Weapons aren't allowed, but they can do nothing about spells or things of wood or strangle-cords carried concealed. Beware the tall one, who can change shape into a winged beast with claws and fangs. Their supply seems endless, but all who've tried to follow and learn whence it comes have been slain."
3. "Look for Maelra 'Moneyfingers' at The Blue Door, or Lassalan the Bowman at Gulorma's Roost of Gargoyles. Maelra's short, black hair, clever tongue, usually wears blue, corner table; Lassalan's tall, thin, usually plays at darts, and is missing the tips of the last two fingers on his right hand. They know who to send you to—but it'll be the wrong place unless you make sure to mention 'the black birds who tear up our gardens.'"
4. "Three magic rings and a sword that spits lightning—its commands and other powers we don't yet know. Hidden in the usual place, but the fourth statue this time."
5. "Down a broken drainpipe on Sanger Street, third door down from the cobbler's shop. The place is watched."
6. "Her name is Aladorna, she owes me 3,000 gold, and the knife she wears in her bodice is poisoned with something that paralyzes. Look for the house with the white turret, and tell the guard that you've come for the 'wheel that needs fixing.' Don't try to go back out the way he'll let you in unless you like wearing crossbow bolts in your back."
7. "Blackbrows is the one. Beware: he has the magic already, and knows how to use it."
8. "Tansin and Gulder can show you where. The dragon must be dead by now. There's one trap on the well, but below it, the rest is filled up with gold."

BY ED GREENWOOD
ILLUSTRATED BY DAVID DAY

INN

Beelbraeth, two monstrous athachs. (The athachs are lawful neutral, intensely loyal to Clarshee, speak Common, love to cook exotic foods, and sport long, shaggy fur and three horns.)

Clarshee also has at least one shield guardian in a closet that she can call on if guests get out of hand—and some means of calling on a friendly wizard to fight for her or protect the Moonwyvern.

The Moonwyvern itself is protected by flickering, sometimes-failing wards that protect it against fire (the structure is protected as if by an *endure elements (fire)* spell) and prying (*clairaudience/clairvoyance, scry*, and similar magic cannot penetrate the building).

Unscrupulous folk of all sorts use the Moonwyvern for meetings, hirings, and business not tolerated in Silverymoon or other settlements of the Silver Marches. As a result, the inn hides six decades worth of maps, messages, and items.

Its kitchens produce good, hearty fare—notably lovely fiddlehead soup and fried mushrooms (in season), roast venison, and fernwort bread.

The Moonwyvern sports at least one hidden room where guests can hide, a crawl-tunnel to the stables, and three tunnels to the nearby forest. The inn has two deep, clear wells in its cellars and a chest in which Clarshee keeps 14 crawling claws (see *Monsters of Faerûn*) that she can unleash to fight for her if need be. She often uses them to hunt down vermin in the inn. These claws hate pickling-juice, and Clarshee can 'herd' them by splashing it, when it comes time to return them to their chest.

CLARSHEE TARAGHE

Female human Sor8; CR8; Medium-size humanoid; HD 8d4+16; hp 36; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+2 Dex, *+1 ring of protection*); Atk +6 melee (1d4+2/19-20, *+2 dagger*), or +8 ranged (1d4+2/19-20 *+2 dagger*), or +7 ranged (1d8/19-20, light crossbow); SA Spells; AL CN; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +7; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 16. Height: 5'3".

Skills and Feats

Concentration +15, Hide +9, Knowledge (local) +7, Spellcraft +10; Combat Casting, Run, Skill Focus (Concentration), Skill Focus (Spellcraft).

Possessions

light crossbow with 20 bolts, *+2 dagger*, 3 *potions of cure light wounds* and 2 *potions of cure critical wounds*, *+1 ring of protection.*

Spells Known (6/7/7/6/3)

0—*daze, detect magic, detect poison, light, mage hand, mending, prestidigitation, read magic*
1st—*color spray, mage armor, magic missile, spider climb, unseen servant*
2nd—*arcane lock, darkvision, detect thoughts*
3rd—*dispel magic, hold person*
4th—*wall of ice*

FOUND ITEMS

Strange items abound in the Moonwyvern. Players have a 20% chance to find a hidden item every time they succeed at a DC 25 Search check. Possible hidden items include:

- Dagger with sheath and belt.
- Length of dark waxed cord (masterwork quality), affixed to grappling hook; cord length d12x10 feet
- Written message (create one or refer to "Found Messages" sidebar)
- Set of lockpicks in dark cloth carry-roll with many straps and buckles (for wearing around legs or arms under clothing)
- Spell scroll containing a single 1st-level spell of the DM's choice.
- Leather purse or wooden coffer containing 2d8 gp, 3d6 sp, 3d4 cp, plus a key, ring (plain), and a merchant's claim-token.
- Ring of keys
- Map to treasure or a meeting-place. The map is crude with a simple 'follow the lines' route plus warnings like "falling-blade trap, use pole," "key under sixth skeleton," "third step lifts up, door release lever under it."

HIDING PLACES

Interesting items are hidden throughout the inn. Possible hiding places include:

- Hollow chair legs, above-bed canopies, or other pieces of furniture.
- Floorboards pull up to reveal storage below.
- Lintels above doors pull out to reveal hidden nooks.
- Ceiling-panels lift up into a cavity above and can be slid sideways.
- Concealed doors offer access to long, narrow storage niches.
- Door frames are hinged to swing open, offering ready access to stacked pull-out 'drawers' inside the wall.
- The trim above a door slides off to reveal thin hollows inside the door's top.
- Window-sills lift out to reveal storage cavities beneath.

All the chimneys sport upward-pointing sharp metal spikes to discourage beasts.
The shutters can be barred from within at the top and bottom (every room has a spare bar) to keep out beasts.
Clarshee's homemade candles smell of blackberries; unexpectedly sweet, but pleasant.
Rainwater is collected for all washing tasks.
DAY.

THE MOONWYVERN INN

There are water buckets to quench fires in every room. Crushed mint and parsley keep the water smelling fresh.

This trail leads to a bathing and swimming hole in the forest.

ELMINSTER'S NOTES:

A nice den of rogues, to be sure. I felt right at home.

Many times down the years I've enjoyed the Moonwyvern's comforts. Smugglers and thieves looking to lighten themselves of something too hot to be fenced elsewhere have always gathered there—and all too often I've felt a pressing need to do business with them, before what they've liberated is used to plunge half of Faerûn into cataclysm, or start a major war, or set wild magic to raging like storm-fire across the North.

They come because they're made welcome, aye, and because of where the inn stands—but they also come, know ye, because those who can part with 75 gold coins a head (more, usually 100 at least, if they're lugging along the whole or parts of a monster, alive or dead, or someone they've kidnapped or murdered) will be allowed access to a portal hidden inside a certain closet. Touch its back wall and thy next step will be on a hilltop nigh the Sea of Swords, just northwest of Leilon.

One other thing: the magic that foils scrying is a combination of three spells better left mysterious. It clings to certain hand-sized focal stones hidden in many places around the inn, and it's possible to gain such protection for a few days (ere it fades utterly) by carrying such stones off. Best do so only in the most dire of emergencies, for if she catches ye at it, Clarshee will exact a high price in either coins, or belongings, or some handy part of thy anatomy.

I've always liked the Moonwyvern, but watch thy step. Old secrets are everywhere, and some guests are swift to react to anyone showing too much interest in another's business.

THE ROARING DRAGON HOUSE

by Ed Greenwood · illustrated by David Day

The Roaring Dragon House is a new establishment, opened by the proprietor of The High Flagon gambling house, that stands about a mile and a half outside Waterdeep. Meant to "restrict the rowdy-blades to their own place," the Dragon is a center for gambling games that's built to be suited to brawling and the rampages of any escaped fighting beasts.

The Roaring Dragon House offers a paltry selection of drinkables, overpricing them outrageously, but has no rooms for rent and sells no food. As a result, there's a steady flow of traffic between the two sister establishments. Drunken, timid, wounded, and unprepared travelers are warned that footpads and thieves frequently take notice of this ready source of coins—particularly after dark.

WHAT MEETS THE EYE

The Roaring Dragon is solidly built of stone, with an entry arch resembling the fanged upper jaw of a gape-mouthed dragon. It has only a ground floor (although the ceiling is 20 feet aloft), bare stone walls, and a flagstone floor. This main room is apt to be both cold and noisy.

Its yard is surrounded by a high stone wall constructed to discourage thieves, and it is heavily patrolled by hired mercenaries. Over forty guards watch from dusk to dawn, lightening to a mere twenty by day. Almost all are lawful neutral male humans (War1 or War2), most with experience in controlling out-of-control gamblers.

Anyone approaching the Dragon is challenged at the yard-gates by two guards in impressive full plate (complete with gleaming dragon-form helms). Two reinforcements sit in gatehouses right behind them, and all four are armed with longswords, daggers, glaives, and loaded hand crossbows. Known troublemakers, drunkards, and persons who look like they'll be trouble are often denied entry. If a guest passes within, four more guards await at the stables, and another four attend the Dragon's entry doors.

From here, the main entry doors open into a passage that runs along one end of the large, barnlike gaming room, and ends in a greeting gate. Most of the time, this third gate stands open, with two guards just outside of it, and two just inside, standing with an alluringly clad but hard-bitten hostess. All a would-be patron must do is get past her questions before being allowed into the gaming room, as admission is free.

The gaming room opens out to the left of an arrived guest who's admitted through the gate. At its far end is a bar (with more guards), and beside that is a teller's cage for money changing and the deposit of coins earned by the house. Down the right side of the room, a wide space is kept clear of tables to allow easy circulation.

The cage has floor-to-ceiling bars and more guards inside and out (some with leveled hand crossbows). For security, funds are dropped through small holes in the floor into a strongroom beneath (so the cage never contains much money). When more coins are needed, a slender bucket is lowered on a line with a scrawled request in it; the strongroom counting clerk exchanges the note for funds and taps on the bucket to signal that it can be pulled back up.

The strongroom has its own guards, inside and out (by the door of the cellar passage leading to it, which is reached from a "ready room" behind the bar). The other cellar-rooms are an armory, a wine cellar, and a storage room for chairs, tables, and gaming equipment.

Staff entering and leaving the strongroom do so naked. They disrobe, passing clothes, arms, and armor to the proprietor and other guards for inspection, dressing again when passed through.

Waterdhavian bankers send their own heavily-guarded wagons to the Dragon to pick up tallied takings. These are signed for and taken straight to vaults in the city for recounting under the scrutiny of a Harbright family trade-agent.

DOINGS AT THE DRAGON

The Roaring Dragon House is owned by the Harbright family. Drengar Harbright installed his nephew Thoalur (LN male human Exp3/War1) and niece Brarindra (CN female human Exp4) to run the Dragon. They take shifts in turn, occasionally relieved by other Harbrights.

By day, the Roaring Dragon House is fairly quiet, holding a few diehard gamblers and folk meeting to talk business. Nights are apt to be "roaring."

House rules include expulsion for cheats and persons who "willfully and repeatedly taunt," start a fight or fire, draw a weapon, or cause a death. Magic use is forbidden and earns beatings, confiscation of property, or

even death (depending on the severity of the use and how dangerous or influential the offender seems).

The most popular dice game at the Roaring Dragon currently is Over the Hurdles. Live games usually consist of betting on, or participating in and betting on, beast fights, duels, throwknife, and zzar wrestling.

Belly and Gullet

A few drinkables can be had in the Dragon, all served in clay cups that crumble if struck and that are too light to throw far (once their contents spill, they catch air and tumble). Ale and stout are 4 sp per cup; zzar and a poor se-lection of wine and spirts are 2 gp per cup.

Over The Hurdles

This game is played by two to ten folk, each using a pair of dice. They sit around a table covered by a cloth marked with "the course" (a track of joined squares), and move small carved tokens, pebbles, or bones to represent themselves as a knight spurring his charger. The game is won by being the first to reach the end square; advancement is by rolling precise numbers.

All knights begin in the stables; to ride onto the course (the first square), they must roll a 4. Each square of the course is marked by the number needed to enter it, and these are as follows: Stable-4-3-4-4-4-5-4-6-4-7-4-8-4-9-4-10-4-11-4-12 (the last square, known variously as "Glory" or "Home Again").

Players begin by placing their marker in the stables, taking two dice, and rolling one. Highest roll goes first (for the rest of the game), next highest second, and so on (ties re-roll, to determine precedence just between the tied players).

The first player then rolls both dice once, but can only advance onto the course by a roll of 4. Any other result means he sits in the stables and his turn is done. After all players have rolled, and then passed the dice left, a second round of rolling commences. In this way the game passes until one player reaches Glory and becomes the winner.

Every player is allowed an extra roll once during the game; declaring "taking the extra" aloud before doing so. This roll may only be made right after the player has rolled.

Wagering can be conducted throughout the game: on outcome, results of rolls, which of two or more players will reach a particular square first, and so on—but no wager or response can be uttered as a player is rolling or while the dice are still tumbling, or the rolling player gets a free replacement roll and any offenders have their knights put back a square.

In the grandest gaming estab-lishments (and even in the Dragon) dice rolls are made along a leather chute (a long wooden and leather-lined triangle with side-walls several inches high and the sharp point filled in so no dice can become wedged in the angle), and the course is permanently marked into the top of a playing-table.

Beast Fights

Cockfights, dogfights, and ferret-fights were once popular, but they were supplanted by monster battles. These have largely died out due to lack of combatants, leading Brarindra Harbright to post a standing offer of 600 gp, payable to anyone willing to sell a healthy, unintelligent combatant to the Roaring Dragon House.

Duels

Intelligent combatants can fight to earn money or to settle disputes, but the guards allow struggles only to last until surrender, unconsciousness, or first blood—often with combatants stripped down and wearing leather hoods that protect the eyes but force them to fight blind. Permitted weapons are wooden switches and leather paddles sporting a single metal fang at the end.

Hardriders

This game is played on a long, smooth-polished table with raised sides. Above the table and halfway down it, two uprights support a bar with a flat pan affixed to it. Four carved wooden "hazard" pieces are placed on this pan.

Players take turn shooting their "riders" down the table, winning by getting their riders the farthest. Riders are round, smooth-polished wooden, bone, or metal disks like large, thick coins. They must all be of approx-imately the same size and weight.

Riders are "shot" by placing them partially overhanging one end of the table, and then striking them with a player's hand, heel, fingers, or whole-hand slap, but no other body parts or striking aids can be used, and the table can't be shifted by the shooting motion. Shots are made separately, down a clear table (other riders and hazards removed). The moment a player shoots, the coin keeper (judge and bet holder for the game) twists the bar to flip the hazard pan, spilling the hazards onto the table to bounce at random, as obstacles to the moving rider. A player is allowed to observe the arrangement of hazards on the pan before placing and shooting his rider.

A hardrider table of less than six feet long is rare, and twelve-foot tables are popular. The Dragon's tables are all ten feet long.

Throwknife

Essentially darts played with thrown knives, participants must throw from a marked circle at a well-lit target on the wall, and they are only allowed to draw their weapons while in the circle. Most matches are "best strike" or "forty-four" (reaching a scoring total of forty-four points by hitting areas marked as worth a particular number of points).

Zzar Wrestling

As the name suggests, this often-amusing sport is wrestling wherein all participants and the bowl they fight in are coated with sticky zzar (a strong alcoholic beverage that tastes of almonds). The scantily-clad combatants are often males and females hired for their looks. Matches are fought in a smooth-finished stone bowl about ten feet across. The object is to force the opponent's hand to touch a brightly-painted circle. Faces (and long hair) are protected inside war-helms. Matches might be first-touch, best of three, or in teams to be the first to score a total (usually nine).

ELMINSTER'S NOTES

Know ye that the Waterdeep Watch is very reluctant to allow beast-fights since several evil wizards magically forced humans into beast-shape, their crimes being discovered only after death in the cage-ring. Oh, aye, one more thing: I won at zzar wrestling once. It took days to get it out of my beard, but Storm's hair was worse for far longer. I "surprised her," she said.

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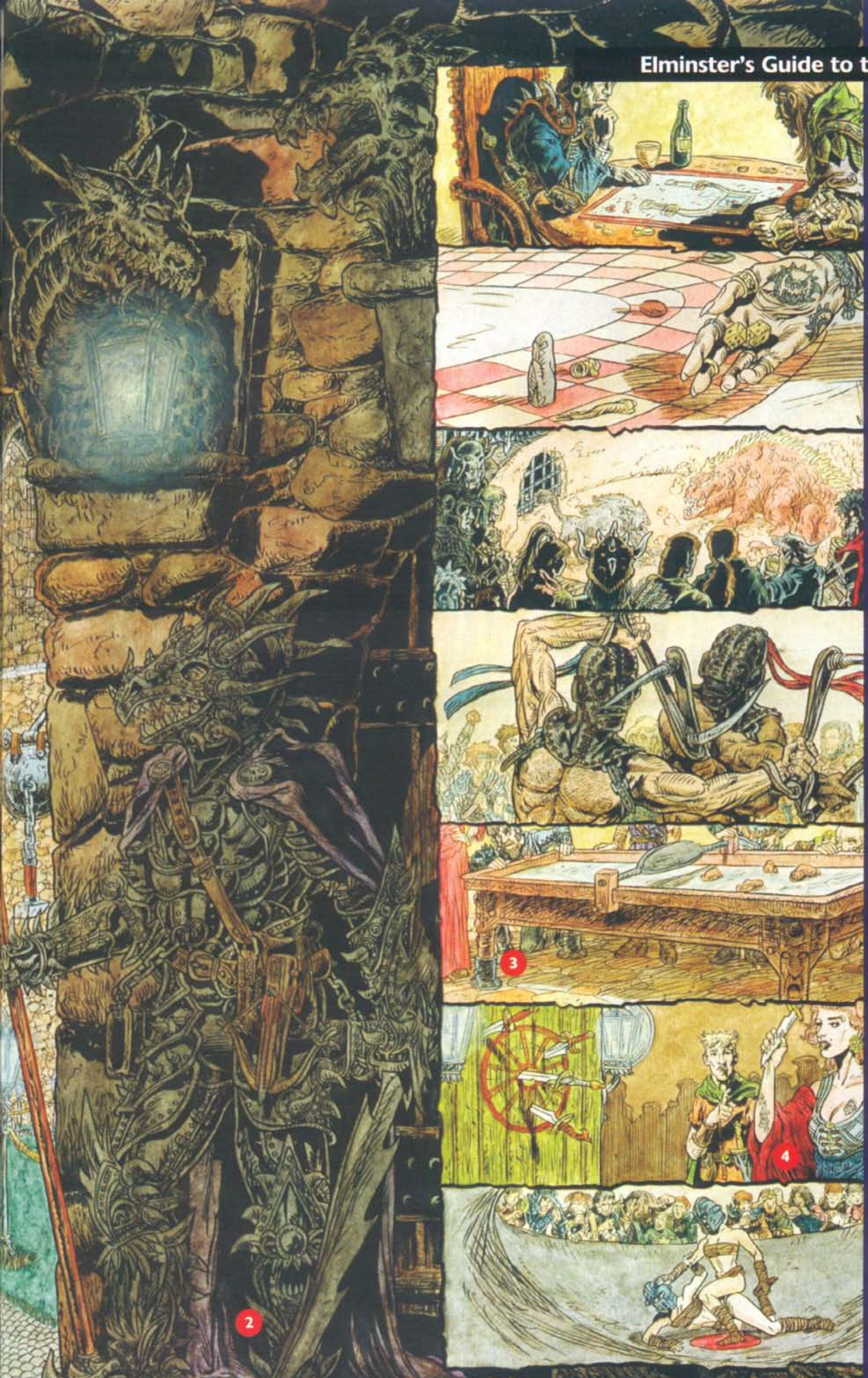


THE ROARING DRAGON HOUSE

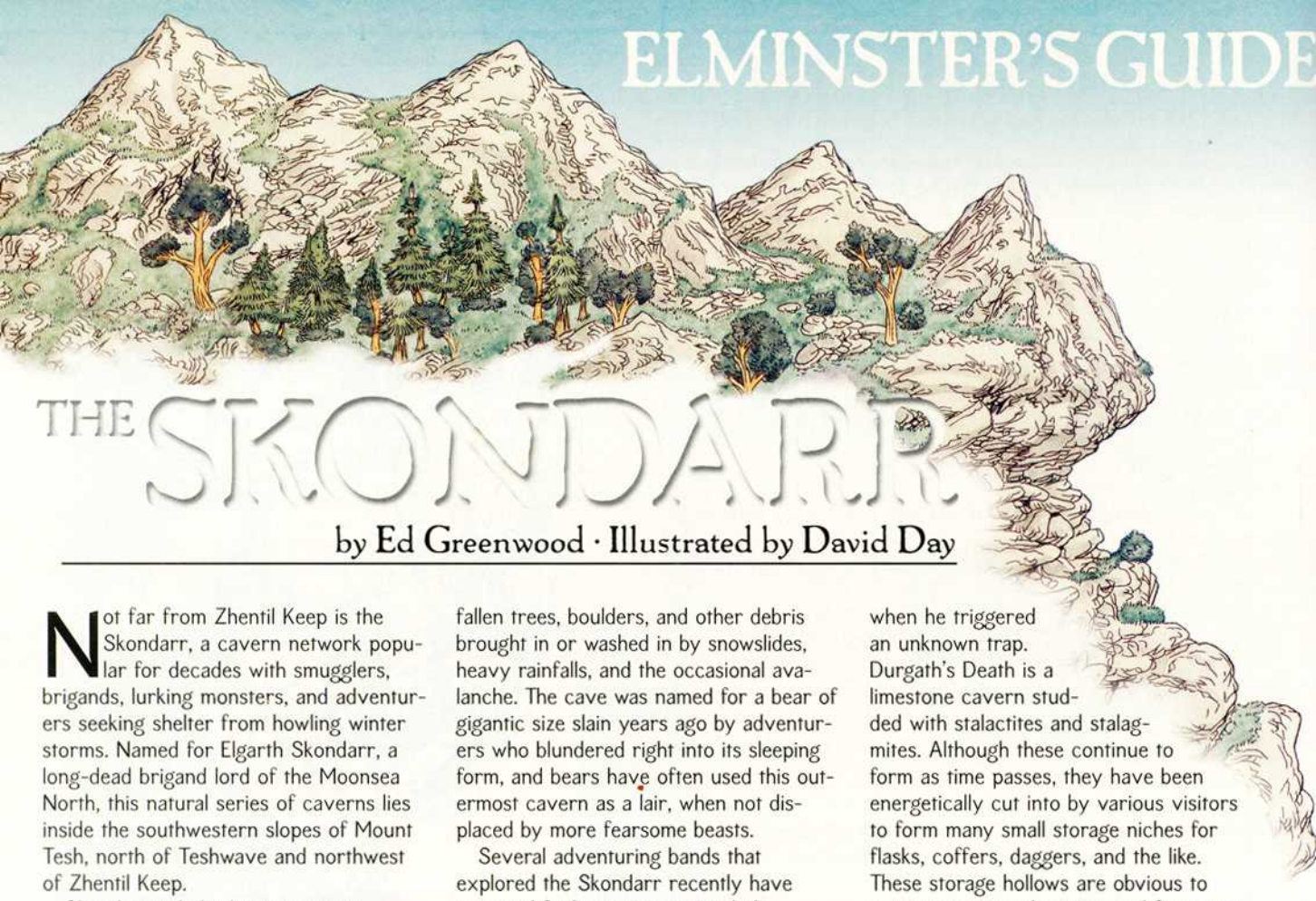
1. All regular guardposts in the Roaring Dragon have pull-ropes that ring alarm-gongs in the ready-room, where the on-duty proprietor oversees the house's operation. The proprietor typically carries tanglefoot bags to deal nonlethally with minor troublemakers.

2. A lever set into the floor under the boots of the guards at the greeting-gate operates a wooden treadle that can dump a load of rubble down on the heads of persons in the front half of the entry-passage. Those in this area when the trap is activated suffer a +12 melee attack that causes 2d6 points of damage from falling bricks. A DC 20 Search check reveals this trap, while a DC 20 Disable Device check renders it inoperable.

3. Most gaming-tables latch into floor sockets (with cross-pins) to prevent tables being tipped over or snatched up in a fight or to disrupt a game. This also helps prevent more enthusiastic hardriders players from being disqualified.

4. Hired escorts entertain experienced players, but they teach novice gamblers game rules for free.

These escorts know the price and potency of the Dragon's drinks and typically push their patrons toward excess, both to increase the escort's own tips and to increase a gambler's wagers (and losses).



THE SKONDARR

by Ed Greenwood · Illustrated by David Day

Not far from Zhentil Keep is the Skondarr, a cavern network popular for decades with smugglers, brigands, lurking monsters, and adventurers seeking shelter from howling winter storms. Named for Elgarth Skondarr, a long-dead brigand lord of the Moonsea North, this natural series of caverns lies inside the southwestern slopes of Mount Tesh, north of Teshwave and northwest of Zhentil Keep.

Skondarr ruled a large territory, roaming with his band of hardened warriors from stronghold to stronghold, and the caverns that now bear his surname composed one of his larger holds. Just who or what is inhabiting the Skondarr varies over time, as do particular traps and treasures, but a tour of its salient features follows.

As one descends from its mountainside entrance, the Skondarr begins with Dead Bear Cave, a cavern usually choked with fallen trees, boulders, and other debris brought in or washed in by snowslides, heavy rainfalls, and the occasional avalanche. The cave was named for a bear of gigantic size slain years ago by adventurers who blundered right into its sleeping form, and bears have often used this outermost cavern as a lair, when not displaced by more fearsome beasts.

Several adventuring bands that explored the Skondarr recently have reported finding runes or symbols scratched in the sand of particular ledges on the walls of Dead Bear Cave. These are simple markings made with fingers, sticks, or blades, and they change from time to time, seeming to be an active, ongoing means of communication.

The next cavern in from Dead Bear is Durgath's Death, so-called because a garrulous, wild-bearded prospector and adventurer by the name of Durgath met his doom therein over half a century ago when he triggered an unknown trap. Durgath's Death is a limestone cavern studded with stalactites and stalagmites. Although these continue to form as time passes, they have been energetically cut into by various visitors to form many small storage niches for flasks, coffers, daggers, and the like. These storage hollows are obvious to anyone entering the cave, and from time to time some of them have born cryptic labels, such as "Berith" and "Hooks" and "The Best." The containers in Durgath's Death have been found to contain kindling, nails, coils of fine wire from Calimshan, rings, keys, and scrolls.

Beyond Durgath's Death lies another, larger limestone cavern known as The Altar. So far as is commonly known, no formal consecration to any faith has ever been made in this cave, although

ELMINSTER'S NOTES

Dead Bear Cave

The sand-scratched symbols are signals from one thief to another. Although the code is constantly changing, I know five of them, thus:

- A triangle with a single dot in its center means "mission accomplished; meet at the usual place."
- A triangle with two dots in its midst means "complication with mission; use fallback plan."
- A circle with a triangle in it means "we have been found out; use full passwords."
- A circle with a dot in it means "we have been found out; break off mission."
- A circle with two dots in it means "great peril or opportunity; meet at the agreed-upon place as swiftly as possible."

If these symbols are accompanied by a second symbol, it usually identifies a meeting-place or rendezvous, often by a simple pictograph like a single tree, a cave mouth, a well, a candle to denote a particular building, a horse to denote a stable, or a wavy line topped by a straight horizontal line to denote a bridge.

Durgath's Death

Among the treasures lying in the hollows of this cavern are a complete set of keys to the Royal Palace in Suzail. Last time I looked, there were also scrolls for the arcane spells *spectral hand, charm monster,* and *eyebite,* but these things seem to disappear swiftly when adventurers happen by.

The Altar

This cavern was often used for the worship of Malar, but these blood-sacrifice rituals ceased when the wizard Tharaundarr of Calaunt, enraged by the loss of his favorite hunting cat, slew all the cult members. There's seldom anything of interest to be found here today, but individual Malarites occasionally slaughter beasts here in the name of their god, a practice that attracts carrion crawlers and worse monsters.

The Hidehole

The symbols scratched on the ledge are the sigils of long-ago mages: two triangles touching points within a circle belonged to Thamburkh of Athkatla, and the staring eye trailing three tears was the mark of Dathlarra of Iriaebor. Once, they were sigils of power that allowed those who touched them properly to teleport to the home of the wizard who taught both mages, but now the magic has faded.

Coronal's Doom

The name of this cavern was indeed born of its use by a cabal plotting the death of someone—but their intended victim was the head of a Zhent human family known as "Coronal" (a human surname borrowed, with the arrogance typical of the human species, from the elf rulers of Cormanthor). The cabal succeeded not only in slaughtering their quarry, but his entire family, looting his cache of wealth before burning his grand mansion in Zhentil Keep. The cache was all gems, which they brought to the Skondarr—and then slew each other in squabbles over; it's thought that many of the stones still lie hidden elsewhere on the Tesh mountainside, not far from these caverns.

Horthal's Neck

The holes in this shaft contain many traps, which are constantly changed over time as various individuals

the reason for its name is clear enough. A huge, flat-topped boulder (suitable for use as an altar or feasting table) lies in the center of the cavern. It is a dark rock, not limestone, and its presence is a mystery.

A cramped but readily climbable, rough-walled fissure in the ceiling of The Altar leads up into the Hidehole. The Hidehole has been used by many as a defensible sleeping and storage area, and it often contains both guards and treasure; it's easy for someone waiting up here to inflict slaughter on climbers with stones or crossbow bolts. This small, rough-walled cavern contains two features of interest: a water seep that drips drinkable (but horribly mineral-tainted) water into a hollow that can serve as a drinking bowl or washbasin and a ledge high up on the wall, where a man of average height (or any smaller being) who lies flat can rest unseen by persons entering the Hidehole. This ledge has often been used to launch deadly attacks on intruders, and it bears two curious symbols scratched in the rock at one end.

Less agile intruders typically pass on from The Altar to another cavern, reached through a gap in one wall. This third limestone cavern is Coronal's Doom—a curious name because (so far as is known) no Coronal has ever been slain by any creature having anything to do with the Skondarr. Perhaps "Coronal's Doom" was the name of a renegade elf band from Cormanthor that opposed the rule of the Coronals and left messages or items for each other in this cavern.

The walls of Coronal's Doom are lined with many narrow cracks and fissures, most far too small to hide anything but insects and creeping worms. A few have, however, held scrolls and maps from time to time. The floor of Coronal's Doom holds its most prominent feature: the shaft known as Horthal's Neck that leads on to the lower caverns of the Skondarr.

Horthal's Neck earned its name because the once-notorious adventurer Horthal died here some eighty summers ago, breaking his neck in a fall from a rope partway down the shaft. Some say he was the victim of treachery, but others say he fell victim to a trap. The walls of the Neck are studded with scores of storage holes and niches—but many hold deadly traps that await the unwary.

From the floor of Coronal's Doom, the Neck descends over eighty feet before it opens out into the ceiling of Wyvernbone Pit.

The Wyvernbone Pit might once have contained the bones of a wyvern, but humans provided the bones that it's strewn with now. (Some tales insist these remains sometimes whirl up to form flying skeletons that attack intruders.) A long, low-ceilinged cavern rather than a pit, Wyvernbone descends to the short, aptly-named passage of Dunsral's Stair (whose floor consists of a series of step-like ledges, and which is often home to clouds of small, harmless black bats), which in turn leads down into The Vault of the Crown.

The Vault is a tall, upright-egg-shaped cavern bristling with stalactites and stalagmites, with a floor of wet sand. It's named for a curious apparition that appears in it from time to time: a glowing crown of white light—a radiance that takes the shape of a circlet topped with many slender upswept spires of irregular lengths. This phantom crown is intangible, and it moves about the Vault as if someone of about six feet in height is wearing it and taking an interest in intruders and their deeds. The crown or its unseen wearer seem to have no hostile or malicious intent. On rare occasions, many small, star-like motes of twinkling white light emerge from the spires of the crown and drift around the Vault, only to fade away again. These pinpoints of light never leave the Vault and have no effect on magic or creatures they touch (they pass through solid objects, and living creatures feel no sensation from such contacts).

The Vault opens—via a short, nameless chute—into Darkpool Delve. This half-flooded cavern was thought by many to be a flooded dwarven mine, with riches waiting for those who dared to venture beneath the inky waters into water-filled passages below, but in truth it has never been more than a natural sump, and no dwarven hammers have ever touched its bottom or the surrounding stone.

The water is cold and a menacing inky black in hue—thanks to a harmless algae that grows there—but quite drinkable. Even in its shallowest spots, the water is deep enough to hide an upright human. Although creatures are seldom encountered in these lightless depths, all manner of items—from treasure and useful items to drowned corpses and refuse—are often found here. It most often serves as a dumping-ground for items folk desire to remain hidden.

and groups use the Skondarr as a hideout. Many contain poison needle traps for searching hands to find, but traps of poison gas and even spells triggered by intrusion have been encountered.

Typical items stored in the Neck's holes include wands, potions, stolen purses full of coins, and rarer things, such as maps, spell scrolls, and deeds to valuable properties in Suzail, Selgaunt, and Yhaunn.

Wyvernbone Pit

The bones won't animate without the usual sort of spells being cast on them, but skeletons have been animated here in the past. There's seldom anything of interest in the Pit except whatever items a corpse might be wearing or carrying; this tends to be the part of the Skondarr where refuse of all sorts ends up. There are rumors—which I believe—of a portal to the Underdark that opens here at random times.

Dunsral's Stair

Named for a gnome adventurer who was famous in his day, this passage once contained a stair crafted by Dunsral himself. Nowadays, all traces of Dunsral's construction are gone, and rough, crumbling steps have been hewn here and there out of the rock. The bats are harmless (bitter-tasting if fried on skewers, by the way), but on more than one occasion, powerful magic-using creatures have hidden among them by taking bat shape—so beware any bat that is larger than the rest, no matter how much care they take to stay hidden.

The Vault of the Crown

The crown apparition is very old and, I believe, divinely powered. It defied my attempts to probe its origin and properties. It seldom appears on more than four occasions during a month, never for more than two hours at a time. Casting or unleashing powerful magic in the Vault seems to be the only trigger that causes the crown to appear, and it remains less than reliable. The appearance of the stars seems to herald the appearance of a magic item or spontaneous magical manifestation in the cavern (from what source, and for what reasons, remain mysterious). In the presence of the crown, spells seem to be boosted in damage or efficacy. Treasures are often buried in the wet sand floor. Unless someone very persistent has spent hours digging, I know of at least three stolen chests full of Sembian coins that lie there.

Darkpool Delve

The waters of the Delve can hold just about anything—and usually do, from small, lurking monsters to rich treasures. Among these, unless someone's found it and carried it off, is a throne that can be commanded to fly by anyone sitting on it.

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THE SKONDAR

1 **Dead Bear Cave:** Often difficult to see from the outside, PCs within 5 feet of Dead Bear cave must make a Spot or Search check (DC 10) to discover the entrance. The Difficulty Class of the Spot check increases by +1 per 10 feet of distance between the PC and the caves.

2 **Durgath's Death:** The trap that killed Durgath still exists. An empty hollow, high on the south wall, still contains a flame jet trap (see the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 115) that activates when someone is unfortunate enough to reach inside. Once activated, the trap magically rearms itself one minute later.

3 **The Altar:** The fissure in the ceiling of The Altar is difficult to spot (Spot check, DC 15) and nearly impossible to reach (Climb check, DC 30) without a rope hanging from above or magical aid.

4 **The Hidehole:** Climbing the fissure is relatively easy (Climb check, DC 10). The symbols in the back of the cave no longer have their original powers, but spiteful spellcasters have been known to cast spells there, such as *glyph of warding*, to harm the curious.

5 **The Coronal's Doom:** Some of the gems mentioned in Elminster's notes remain here. Time has made them difficult to find (Search check, DC 30), but three small rubies (worth 40 gp each) lie hidden in a dirt-filled crevice near the floor.

6 **Horthal's Neck:** The many niches in the shaft make Horthal's Neck relatively easy to climb (Climb check, DC 15), but doing so puts the climber at risk of encountering one of the many magic and mechanical traps set there over the years.

7 **Wyvernbone Pit:** An invisible, two-way *portal* to the Underdark opens here for 1 hour every 1d6 days, its opening heralded by a 15-foot swirl of light. Once used by Illithids from a now-ruined mindflayer city, now it is simply a hazard for those exploring the caves. For more information on *portals*, see the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting*.

8 **Dunsral's Stair:** Rivulets of water run down the Stair, making footing on the slippery limestone treacherous. A creature moving down the passage must make a Balance check (DC 17) or be unable to proceed that round. A failure by 5 or more results in the creature falling prone. A creature that succeeds can move at half speed. Creatures can choose to move faster (up to their normal speed), but suffer a -5 penalty to Balance checks.

9 **The Vault of the Crown:** The chests of Sembian coins each contain about 200 gp in copper, silver, and gold pieces.

10 **Darkpool Delve:** The water in the pool is too clouded and dark for any creature to see through. The throne hidden at the bottom functions exactly like a 3 foot by 5 foot *carpet of flying*.

THE SHUNNED STREET

BY ED GREENWOOD · ILLUSTRATED BY DAVID DAY

Long before they began establishing trading enclaves outside of Thay, the Red Wizards maintained a web of undercover agents throughout Faerûn. Such local eyes and ears aided the Thayans by assisting with their slaving operations, finding and seizing powerful magic, and gathering information. They still do.

Although open trading enclaves ultimately proved more effective, the Red Wizards initially used these agents to establish hidden locations in many cities. Secretly, they meet, work shady deeds, and store goods and currency. The alley in the Sembian port Urmlaspyr known as "The Shunned Street" exemplifies these hidden Thayan safe houses. Despite the recent establishment of open enclaves, these safe houses still exist.

The Red Wizards hide their safe houses in plain sight. Many are stables and other utilitarian buildings, a few are ruins, some are warehouses, and a surprising number are alleys like The Shunned Street.

To establish such a place, the Red Wizards find an alley or lightly used street lined with buildings—one that has a bend or two in it. They purchase the buildings adjacent to the bend, eliminating or driving out owners who refuse to sell.

One building has a well-oiled, extra-wide door (that opens inward, away from the alley) in its back wall. This door is usually locked and concealed from prying eyes by an *illusory wall*. The door opens into a long, shallow room that runs along the back of a warehouse. This room is separated from the rest of the building's interior by a solid wall. The left-hand end of this area is for storing captives (a crate equipped with gags and manacles is chained to the wall), and its central expanse is for storing contraband and supplies.

A support pillar in this secret room sports a concealed drawer that holds a small cache of items. The cache includes three *potions of cure moderate wounds* and arcane scrolls of *magic missile, obscuring mist, rope trick, screen,* and *wall of stone.*

A few paces to the right of the pillar stand two 5-foot-tall stout wooden crates, firmly bolted shut (but not locked). They contain undead—skeletons that will attack anyone opening the crates.

Medium Skeletons (8): hp 6 each; *Monster Manual* page 165.

Beyond the crates, the right-hand end of the room terminates in what looks like a filthy, cobweb-shrouded stone wall. In truth, it's another *illusory wall.*

Behind the *illusory wall* is the true right-hand end of the secret room. Its wall sports a portal that allows access to Thardaunleiyar, a citadel in the Thayan countryside. Thardaunleiyar is typical of such portal keeps. It's co-owned by several Zulkirs and staffed by crossbow-armed guards, low-ranking wizards, and caged monsters. These defenders are ready to battle invaders who might appear through the portal. Their main function is to aid traveling Red Wizards.

The active area of the portal is 1 foot deep and looks much like a normal open doorway. This is a two-way portal, requiring no key to operate from the Thayan side, but operating from the Sembian side only for persons who hold or carry a piece of green glass (there's a tiny pile of green glass shards in the corner at the other end of the wall where the portal stands).

The building on the other side of the alley also has an alley-access door concealed by an *illusory wall.* This one isn't locked and opens into a 10-foot-square cubicle with another door in its back wall.

The door frame of the first, outer door contains several rust-hued (but not really rusted) metal door stops in the shape of stylized spiders, with a long, flexible chain joining each to a second spider.

Such objects are common in Calimshan, Tharsult, and other Shining Sea areas, and they are becoming increasingly popular in ports everywhere. They're used to prop open

doors for loading and unloading, the varying "widths" between legs used to catch a door-edge between them, or jammed into the hinge angle of an open door to keep it open. A single person can take a door-spider away (allowing a door to slam shut) by kicking or pulling at its second spider. Double doors can be propped open with a pair of these. Rather than carefully stepping over the chain stretched between, the last person through drags a foot to catch the chain and drag both spiders away from the doors; doors constructed with weights so that they'll swing closed unless held open by some means are common in the warmer, more insect-infested realms.

These door-spiders have been enchanted into animated constructs that obey the commands of any Red Wizard.

Animated Door Spiders (Tiny animated object) (6): hp 2 each; *Monster Manual* page 17.

The second door, at the back of the cubicle, is false (the wall is solid), as is the floor of the cubicle (it's another *illusory wall*, covering the open top of a 10-foot-square, 60-foot-deep spiked pit trap).

Illusion over Spiked Pit Trap (60 ft. Deep): CR 4; no attack roll necessary (6d6), +10 melee (1d4 spikes for 1d4+5 points of damage per successful hit); Reflex save (DC 20) avoids; Search (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 20).

A pace farther along the alley from the illusion-hidden door (in the back alley wall of the same building) is a quite visible, broken door that opens into a wall, where a former opening into rooms beyond has been bricked-over.

The door, although made to look broken, is actually made of very stout metal. The door is fashioned so that it seems stuck to the wall, and opening it is difficult. Releasing the door requires a successful Search check (DC 20) followed by a successful Disable Device check (DC 20). The door can be simply forced open with a successful Strength check (DC 30). The door is actually a false door, and once opened it reveals a powerful magical trap. The wall behind the false door bears a carefully inscribed *symbol* of death. The symbol is triggered whenever anyone opens the door and reads it.

***Symbol* (death) Trap:** CR 10; death to 150 hit points worth of creatures; Fortitude save (DC 22) negates; Search (DC 33); Disable Device (DC 33).

The Shunned Street has a final defense—a network of *arcane mark wards*. In their dealings with others in the city, the Red Wizards always attempt to place an object marked with an *arcane mark* into the hands of those they're dealing with. Items from Red Wizard trading enclaves are so marked, as are most of a Red Wizard's personal belongings. The Thayans are firmly dedicated to getting marked objects into the hands of their foes. So much so that they will often sell such items for less than they are worth.

All Red Wizards in the city are required to maintain an *arcane mark ward* in or near the Shunned Street. This network of wards at least partially ensures that the Thayans are apprised of the movements of powerful individuals near the alley. Any time a marked object or person gets too close to the Shunned Street, one of the Thayan wizards in the city alerts his fellows of the intrusion. The mages maintain the arcane foci necessary to cast *scrying* on those who have brought their marked objects too close to the hidden alley.

Between the Thayans dedicated distribution of objects bearing *arcane marks*, the *arcane mark wards*, and diligent use of *scrying*, the Red Wizards are rarely surprised in their hideout.

ARCANE MARK WARD

Abjuration
Level: Sor/Wiz 2
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 10 minutes
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./level)
Area: 25-ft. radius emanation centered on a point in space
Duration: 1 day/level
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

A sophisticated and long-lasting version of the *alarm* spell, *arcane mark ward* responds only to objects or creatures bearing the caster's *arcane mark*.

As long as he remains within one mile of the warded area, the caster is alerted each time a creature or object bearing his *arcane mark* enters or leaves the area. In all other respects, this alert functions exactly like the mental alarm version of the *alarm* spell.

Marked Ethereal or Astral creatures and objects do not trigger the *arcane mark ward* unless they become material while in the warded area.

ELMINSTER'S NOTES

Know ye that this particular street gained its name among beggars and street thieves first, undoubtedly because of the high probability that folk sleeping or lurking in it often disappear.

It represents the most basic of the Red Wizards' covert rendezvous points (little more than portal defenses, in truth); many I've seen are far more elaborate than this one. Yet the simpler and lower-profile installations seemed to work the best; others allowed their Red Wizard users to indulge their love of nasty traps and grand defenses, but these were inevitably discovered and disposed of. Passing unnoticed is always the best armor. I've heard of angered local thieves driving Red Wizards out of alleys like the Shunned Street by firing crossbows from one direction while sending burning carts crashing into the alley from the other direction. If the Thayans retreat into their hidden warehouse rather than giving battle, the thieves stop the carts by the illusion-concealed doors, smoking the Red Wizards out of hiding. Once the Thayans retreat through their portal, the thieves hastily strip the area of valuables and flee, leaving traps behind.

For obvious personal reasons, I cannot endorse the general populace's low opinion of wizards, but in the case of the Red Wizards, I understand the feeling all too well.

When I discover one of these secret areas, I switch the portal to a more appropriate destination (like ten or more feet above the poisoned blades of their own pit trap, for example). Life should be rich in such simple amusements.

Red Wizards know which natural wall markings denote spell area of effect borders or nearby features (such as keys buried directly beneath stains).

THE SHUNNED STREET

Cobblestones different in hue from others surrounding them may mark the locations of hiding places beneath or the perimeter of Thayan spell effects.

Many alleys chosen by Red Wizards have (or are given) wheel-breaking bumps or jagged rocks near their mouths to discourage travel or wagon-parking.

The Sleeping Dragon

by Ed Greenwood · Illustrated by David Day

The Evermoors of Faerûn's Sword Coast North are studded with countless fissures: narrow, winding vertical-sided "rock cuts" carved through the rock by flowing water over many years (and widened by winter ice). Caverns among the fissures serve as shelter for trolls, giants, and other moor denizens. Most Evermoor fissures have small, shallow springs running along their bottoms—or at the very least, stagnant rainwater pools. Only a handful of these "hidden ways" of the Evermoors are wider than twenty feet or so—and almost all such clefts are permanently inhabited.

One notable exception is a wooded ravine due west of Everlund (five days' travel, some say, but moor perils and rough terrain make many journeys hard and long). It's a thick, gloomy forest of shadowtops and duskwoods, inhabited by many small birds and scuttling furred creatures. Predators larger than a fox seem absent from this winding, three-mile-long ravine, and this might be due to the presence of an unknown guardian magic. This has given the isolated valley a reputation for being haunted and kept it from becoming the abode of trolls or giants.

Called "Dragon Wood" by those that know of it, the forest has one area bare of trees at its midpoint, where rocks rise in a ridge that resembles the curved, spiny back of some giant earth-burrowing serpent. The center of Dragon Wood also holds one of the oddities of the modern-day Sword Coast North: the Sleeping Dragon.

Despite its name, this feature isn't a dragon at all, but an egg-shaped stone that floats in the air, unmoved by winds and all spells that have yet been tried against it. It was long thought to be an unhatched dragon's egg, a belief still common in the North.

The Sleeping Dragon is shaped like a large, long potato: a rough ovoid with its long axis horizontal, approximately twenty feet long and a little less than ten feet thick. It floats in a fixed spot as the years pass, its lowest point about ten feet off the ground (various persons investigating the Dragon have piled up rocks beneath it so as to reach it, without apparent harm—winter winds, snows, and runoff invariably scatter such piles in a season or so).

A little moss grows on the Dragon, and years of harsh winters have caused it to crumble in small ways here and there, but it exhibits no large cracks or breaks, and it seems to be protected against the full fury of the elements.

The Dragon is fashioned from a single piece of unidentified dark stone (the stone does not match any surrounding Evermoor stone). Its exterior was carved long ago into a seemingly abstract design of sweeping curves and flourishes, sculptings that in some places reach a depth of a foot or so and cover most of the rock's exterior. These carvings help to conceal at least three hatch-like "doors" in the stone: oval stone domes that can be shifted sideways to release cunningly carved stone catches and then swung open to allow access to hollows in the interior of the floating stone.

Over the years, the most distinctive features of the Dragon's carvings have acquired names: the Splendor refers to the axis of a pinwheel of whirling flames or lines of force atop one end of the floating stone, and the three doors, in ascending order of size, are known as the Wink, Darkhole, and the Wizard's Door.

The Splendor

No one has yet discovered the purpose of this dimple in the Dragon. Over the years, some folk have reported that touching a magic item to it caused the item to erupt with strange, wondrous discharges of random effect, to be drained, or to be infused with great power—or, more often, that nothing at all occurred.

A few insist that touching the Splendor when the right words were uttered, or with a magic item, caused a faintly glowing field of tingling magical force to appear between the floating stone and the rocks beneath it, which lasted 24 hours from its initial appearance and combined the effects of a *ring of sustenance* and a *ring of warmth*—a field that couldn't be called up again on that visit to the Dragon no matter what means were tried.

The Wink

This smallest of the Sleeping Dragon's doors is perhaps three feet long and half that across. If slid up and to the right, it clicks outward as a catch is released. The Wink has a concave interior surface; in this hollow is a crossbar of stone sporting ten cylindrical storage cavities. Four of these are customarily empty, but the other six hold wood-stoppered, sealed vials of frosted glass. The seals and the wood are magically preserved, and the vials contents are assumed to be magic potions, although their types are unknown.

Several adventuring bands report taking all of the vials, so either magic or an entity replaces vials from time to time. There seems no agreement among reports of vials occupying particular storage holes always having the same effects—or even that vial contents gained on one occasion share any properties at all with those acquired on another.

All explorers of the Dragon agree that considerable time seems to elapse between vial appearances. This seems particularly true if an individual or band lingers in the vicinity of the Dragon, checking the Wink repeatedly. In at least two instances, an adventuring band arrived while observed by a group that had already gained potions—and found potions in the door that had definitely been empty only a short time before.

The Wink opens into a small, rounded cavity three feet wide, a bit more than a

foot high, and a little more than four feet deep. It's usually filled by a chest (if taken away by plundering adventurers, the chest—or its duplicate—magically returns after two tendays or so). This rectangular, heavy duskwood chest seems new and is tarred to seal against moisture. All of its corners are bound with iron strips, and its arch-topped wooden lid bears similar protections. Two large, comfortable carry-handles are affixed on swivel-sockets on either end of the chest, and it's held closed with three large claw-locks whose keys are almost always found projecting from the keyholes.

The contents of this chest, judging by reports, can be just about anything, but certain items seem more common. How the chest gets refilled and where the items come from remain mysteries.

Darkhole

This Dragon door measures four feet horizontally and just over two feet in height. If slid to the opener's left, it can be swung open to the left, turning in a loose socket (that allows it to be removed entirely). Although supported on a massive lip that's part of the surrounding carving, this door has been dropped to the rocks below many times. If anyone has broken it, magic or a mysterious attendant repairs and replaces it. The inside surface of this door is smooth, featureless stone.

The "Darkhole" behind the door is so named because this word is an old slang term for a burial cavity in a tomb wall or catacomb, and the cavity behind this door is admirably sized for such purposes: just under four feet wide and two feet high, it stretches six-and-a-half feet back into the stone: just room enough to hold a tall human body close-wrapped in a shroud.

On several occasions, explorers have found it to have been used for such purposes. At other times, bones have been found here—and even intact, undead skeletons with magical powers that attacked adventurers disturbing them!

The Wizard's Door

This largest of the Sleeping Dragon's doors is three feet across and seven feet along its longest axis. If pushed inward in the proper two places simultaneously, a complicated series of catches swivel aside, allowing it to be pushed in along one edge, and so swung open along the opposing edge.

The cavity beyond is a small, cramped room in the heart of the Dragon, shaped to form a tall-human-sized reclining couch with a small open footspace at its end. Above the couch, two shelves have been carved out of the sloping stone ceiling. One customarily sports an array of bottles and decanters of various sizes and shapes (drinking water and wines). The other holds three fat tomes lying on their sides and a lantern.

The lantern is a tiny, squat, flat-topped iron cylinder with a rooftop hanging-loop and three embossed iron feet. A door in its pierced sides allows access to the interior—which holds not a candle, but a magical glowing sphere (a tiny globe-shaped region of always-luminescent air).

The books are impressive affairs that sport locks, ribbon bookmarks, and metal corner-caps. Their pages are parchment and are sometimes found to be blank. At other times, they bear (often rare or hitherto-unknown) wizard spells. One wizard reported finding a useful spell in each book and spending hours copying them—a wise tactic, because these books always vanish some short time after being taken away from Dragon Wood, only to reappear on their shelf, with different contents.

Many explorers have reported seeing a single, disembodied human eye floating alone in the air above the couch, glowing with a faint, pale white radiance, and staring at approaching creatures. It's insubstantial, seems unaffected by measures against undead, and usually vanishes soon after being seen—but folk who've run their hands through where it floats sometimes report receiving visions or whispered messages (and in at least one instance, gained a fell sentience that "rode" their mind for years, suggesting that they do certain things, and whispering to them in their dreams). D

Elminster's Notes

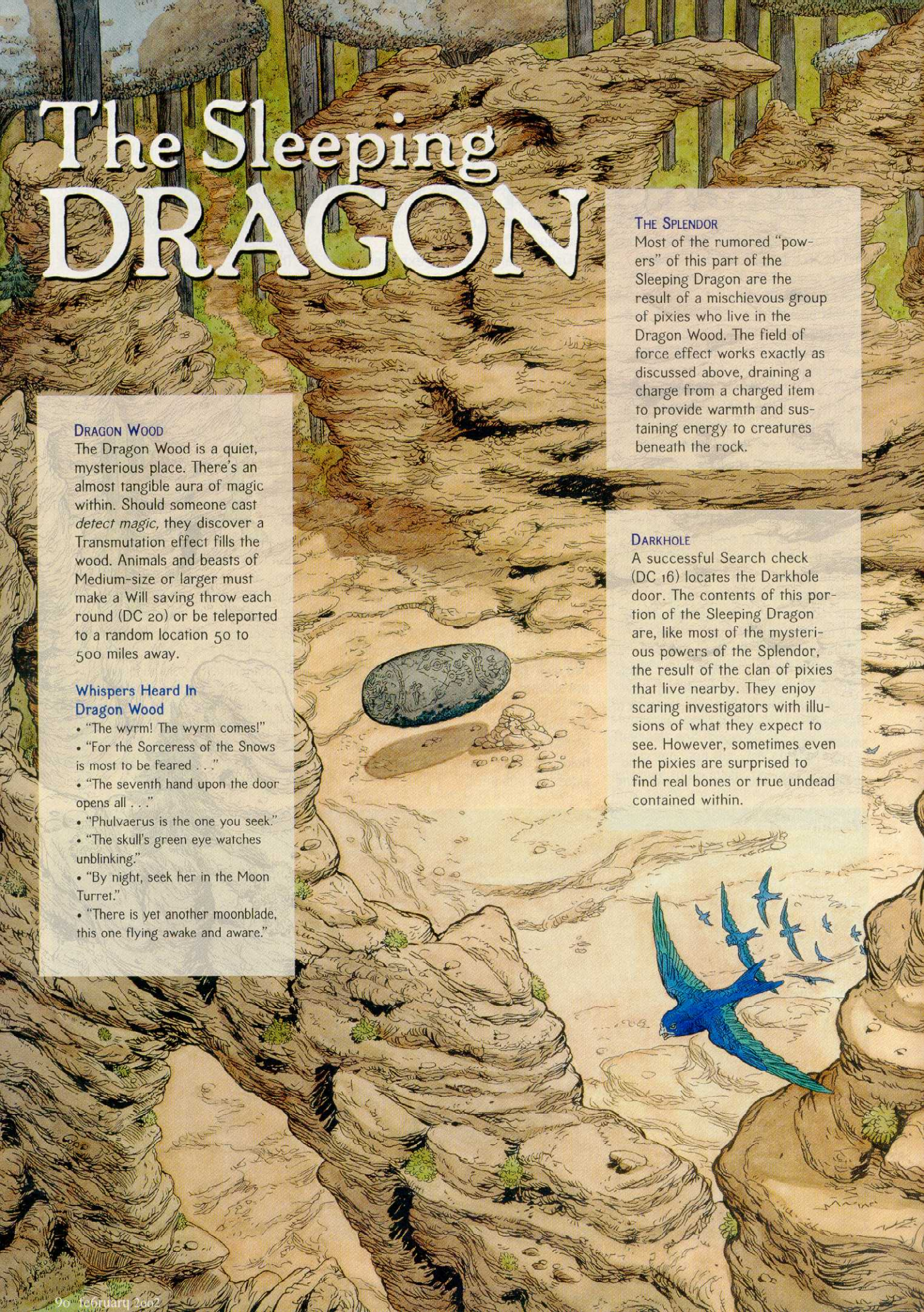
Tharauvon Embril, know ye, was born in what's now Toralth in Tethyr some 1200 years ago. A vigorous, handsome sort, he disappeared near Ascore thirty-some years later. His symbol, a circle with a shallow "V" to the upper left and another to the lower right (two birds a-wing around the sun), can still be found scratched on rocks in wilderland lookouts and passes all o'er the Sword Coast North. There are the usual tales of great treasure amassed by him and hidden away in the wilds after a few thefts, but what I recall most being told by an old elf who knew him was that Tharauvon lost the two smallest fingers of his left hand and had a dwarf fashion an elaborate gauntlet, two fingers of which were enspelled to serve as wands. What sort of wands, now, the elf—Raulivyl Larathryl, by name, gone to Evermeet long ago—knew not, and cared less. He said that Tharauvon was less than sane toward the end, and sought "a beast that could join with a man, two bodies becoming one, and so cheat the ravages of time to live forever."

The looks of the rock ridge underlying the floating stone do resemble the petrified body of some gigantic burrowing worm, but many folk have taken the trouble to dig and hew rock over the years to see if this is indeed their origin. Much as it pains me to dash minstrels' hopes, it must be said this much has been clearly learned: the curving ridge is simply rock, not a creature—petrified or otherwise—at all. Nor is the floating stone a dragon's egg, or ever was.

Large animals do not live near the place because they are whisked away by some teleportation magic. 'Tis my belief that both the teleport effect active in Dragon Wood and the Sleeping Dragon itself are the creation of the same long-ago spellcaster or cabal of mages who fashioned the floating stone as a refuge of sorts for secluded study, a hide-away, as a place to rest in stasis, or as a tomb. The carver and enchanter is that famous, tirelessly-energetic individual known to lore as "Unknown Hands," and 'tis my belief that he, she, it, or the collection of entities who fashioned this floating stone also gave it some as-yet-unrevealed destiny, future purpose, or still-hidden power. Betimes the ravine glows from end to end with dangerous witchfire—or thrums with unearthly song.

What I can tell ye is that anyone who strikes the rock hard, or directs magic of any sort against it, is instantly "snatched" elsewhere (some folk refer to this as "being grabbed by the ghost," but the only hauntings I've ever encountered in Dragon Wood are "weave whispers:" snatches of ghostly voices from elsewhere (and usually elsewhen) that speak intriguing fragments to passing ears.

The Sleeping DRAGON



Dragon Wood

The Dragon Wood is a quiet, mysterious place. There's an almost tangible aura of magic within. Should someone cast *detect magic,* they discover a Transmutation effect fills the wood. Animals and beasts of Medium-size or larger must make a Will saving throw each round (DC 20) or be teleported to a random location 50 to 500 miles away.

Whispers Heard In Dragon Wood

- "The wyrm! The wyrm comes!"
- "For the Sorceress of the Snows is most to be feared . . ."
- "The seventh hand upon the door opens all . . ."
- "Phulvaerus is the one you seek."
- "The skull's green eye watches unblinking."
- "By night, seek her in the Moon Turret."
- "There is yet another moonblade, this one flying awake and aware."

The Splendor

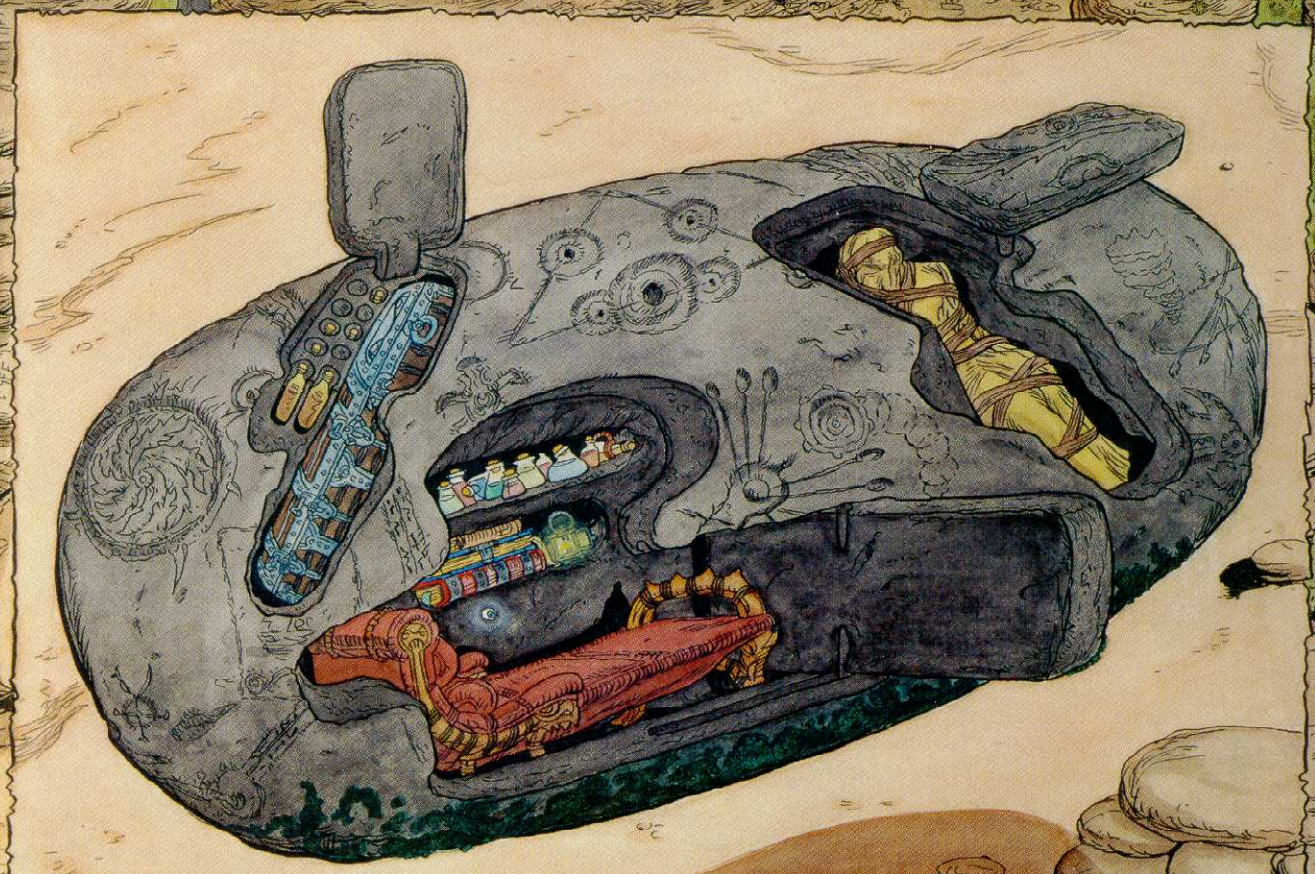
Most of the rumored "powers" of this part of the Sleeping Dragon are the result of a mischievous group of pixies who live in the Dragon Wood. The field of force effect works exactly as discussed above, draining a charge from a charged item to provide warmth and sustaining energy to creatures beneath the rock.

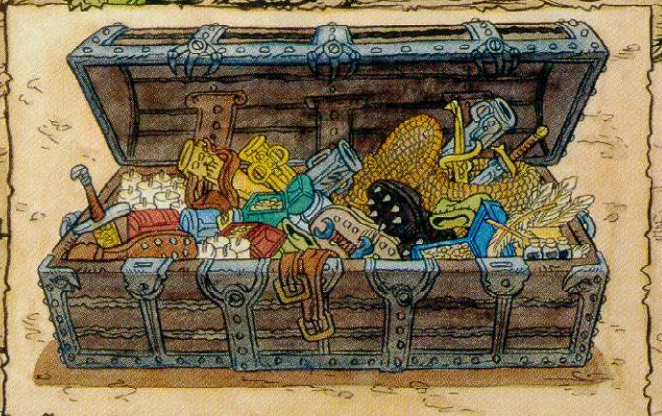
Darkhole

A successful Search check (DC 16) locates the Darkhole door. The contents of this portion of the Sleeping Dragon are, like most of the mysterious powers of the Splendor, the result of the clan of pixies that live nearby. They enjoy scaring investigators with illusions of what they expect to see. However, sometimes even the pixies are surprised to find real bones or true undead contained within.

The Wizard's Door

A successful Search check (DC 14) locates the Wizard's Door. The lantern is simply a normal lantern with a *continual flame* spell cast inside. It returns to the hole by mysterious means 1d4 days after being taken or destroyed. The spells contained in the books (if they are there at all) are randomly chosen by whatever mysterious force created the Sleeping Dragon. The glowing eye that appears is a manifestation of the god Savras, master of Divination. He checks the room behind the Wizard's Door from time to time, looking for worthy and willing wizards to be his servants in Faerûn.





The Wink

A successful Search check (DC 17) locates the Wink's door. Roll on Table 8-18 Potions in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* to find out which potions are available when the door is first opened.

Common Contents of the Wink Chest (roll 1d8)

1. Three 60-foot lengths of waxed hemp rope
2. About 100 split "kindling slivers" of dry, seasoned duskwood
3. Two dozen scabbards, belts, and baldrics
4. Six pairs of stout, high, hard leather hobnailed boots
5. Three bottles of ink, five feather quills, and 40 sheets of parchment
6. About 3,000 bone buttons, varying sizes and styles
7. Sixteen steel daggers, sharp and free of rust, in their own scabbards
8. About three dozen thick, slow-burning tallow candles

Lost places, familiar haunts,
and strange sites in the lands of Faerûn

The Talntower

by Ed Greenwood · Illustrated by David Day

One is seldom far from drinkable water in the Sword Coast North—though that water might often be frozen. Phaeraeze, an ancient elven dialect of the Sword Coast lands, gave the lands north of the River Delimbiyr a name that translates as "land of water, rock, and tree." There are, however, places in the North where water is scarce or seeking it (in goblin-haunted rock clefts or deep woods) might prove perilous.

In several such locales, ancient but still-operating dwarven works aid travelers. At Axe Rock (a prominent, uninhabited crag that serves as a wayfarer's landmark on the north side of the Evermoor Way, two days' travel west of Everlund), a spring is guided down from high rocks along smooth, carved channels to fill a roadside pond. In scores of places across the North, small basins have been hollowed out of roadside boulders to hold rainwater or spring melt water for easy use of passersby.

At least one far grander dwarven water-work remains: the Talntower, a trail-side water storage tower that stands on the west side of a back-country trail two days north of Beliard.

How the Talntower gained its name or precisely which dwarves built it is lore now lost to passing time (one can hear many competing tales about the origins of the tower, but nothing definite). Some say "Taln" was a dwarf or even a dwarven king. Some claim he was an infamous stone giant slain by dwarves at the site; others say he was a gargantuan creature turned to stone to form some of the cliffs. Other tales say "Taln" is simply a remnant of the name of a dwarf clan or kingdom.

What Meets The Eye

The Talntower stands among vine-cloaked, scrub-covered rocks. More substantial and rugged hills rise behind it to the west. It looks like what it is: a jutting prow of natural stone that forms a cliff some 70 feet high—a prow that's been roofed over with a huge slab of rock.

This roof slab slopes down enough to the east to shed water, and it overlies a huge bowl the dwarves scooped out of the solid stone promontory. This bowl is an oval, perhaps 70 feet across at its widest extent and half that high. The bottom of the bowl is usually filled with 8 to 10 feet of water. The upper reaches of its sides are cracked in several places, some of these fissures being large enough for humans to climb through. Their presence means the bowl can't fill much more than 12 feet deep without spilling water out through some of the fissures; stains on the cliff's sides suggest that this has occurred more than once in the past.

Cold, drinkable spring water wells up through fissures in the bottom of the dwarf-sculpted bowl. It's obvious the builders dug down into the cliff around an existing spring to make a basin and then somehow transported a huge slab of hard local rock into place to roof their basin.

Except in the places where the natural fissures pierce them, the eastern arc of the bowl's walls are 8 to 12 feet thick. To its north, south, and west, the solid stone continues for at least a quarter of a mile. At one point in this arc, as close to the trail as the Talntower gets, the dwarves hollowed out two drains or cylindrical tunnels within the thickness of the walls. These drains run from inlets 4 to 6 feet up the basin walls and descend to a ground-level chamber inside the base of the cliff.

This small cave is cool enough to preserve food in summer and icy in winter, although its shelter is preferable to braving the howling snows of a winter blizzard.

Most of the cave's floor is taken up by a pool into which the water seeps before running away through another natural fissure in the ground. The pool is perhaps 16 feet long, 3 to 4 feet wide, and 4 feet deep. It usually holds a foot or more of water. Except in the coldest months of winter, when everything is frozen solid, spring water seeps continuously up through the fissures, down the drains, and into this pool.

This seepage can be increased to a torrent by moving one or both "plug stones" to open the drains. These plug stones are two huge slabs of stone, each roughly the size of a human's burial casket and about a foot thick. Fashioned with projecting handles, they are laid on smooth beds with walkways on either side for the use of persons seeking to move the stones.

The beds and walkways are reached by climbing broad stone steps cut into the walls of the cave (one up each wall, about 20 feet above the pool). In freezing conditions, the plugs are usually immobile, but at other times they can be readily moved. Although very heavy, they can be pulled forth by roughly the combined strength of three strong men and pushed back into place by four such men. So good were the dwarven stonecutters that the plugs can almost entirely shut off the water flow.

Even if the plug stones are left out, the bowl retains at least 4 feet of water, and the natural flow from the Underdark brings water down the open drains at about the rate of a small mountain spring.

No one guards or inhabits the Talntower, though travelers are warned that goblins, orcs, and sometimes more fearsome predatory monsters often lurk in the vicinity, watching for prey. Useful to generations of travelers, the water tower would remain no more than a little-known curiosity if it wasn't haunted.

The Rasping Spirit

For at least the last 120 years, the cave in the base of the ancient dwarven water tower has been haunted by a rasping voice that many folk consult as an oracle.

If offerings are left on the floor of the cave or on two flat seating areas that bulge out from the wall of the pool—but not in the pool itself—the Rasping Spirit often speaks, in a hissing whisper that echoes around the cave, answering questions put to it. When offerings are given but no queries are uttered, it almost always speaks on topics of its own choosing rather than remaining silent.

The Spirit Speaks

Here are some recently recorded oracular utterances. No comments or attempts at explanation or to identify recipients are provided here. It should be noted that many who consult the oracle keep its replies (and even their visits) secret, so these sayings might by no means be representative. For the same reasons, it's not known if the Rasping Spirit has ever said the same thing to different petitioners. Those who make additional offerings and ask for explanations of earlier utterances always receive very cryptic explanations.

- "The blade shall be taken up, a throne overthrown, and the son shall scorn the father."
- "Through rains of blood the falcon rises, fighting storms of arrows and swooping dragons, to perch at last atop the tower."
- "The sword shall be found but the ring lost."
- "A new king comes, and his badge shall be an axe in flames, and blood will run in rivers in a city of the north. Dragons will awaken and fight each other in the skies, and long-hidden magic will take fire and shake thrones."
- "Two dragons shall have daughters who pass among men and seem as human as babes born of women, and of their blood shall come in time a clan of humans who fly and take no harm from dragon breath or dragon spell. They shall seek thrones, and Faerûn shall be changed."
- "Kingdoms shall arise where only the bones of realms lie now, new crowns shall glitter, and red war shall rule many lands. Dwarves and elves shall have new realms of their own, but a great land shall fall."
- "A sorceress shall arise in Luskan to shake the many-turreted tower and make her own way. Adventurers shall flock to her banner, and she shall go down from the sun to claim a buried city long left to crawling things."
- "The hand of the loremaster will find the hidden way when all other remedies fail."
- "Forged in fire, hidden in tombs, it waits yet. When the sun pierces the dark dome, look for its awakening. Those not armed against it will fall swiftly."
- "Beware the black flame. It burns but consumes not, watches and sleeps not, and those who bear its mark are your foes forever."
- "Halamar is the one to watch. His sword shall strike the forge when the dragon falls from the sky and the waves overwhelm an abandoned ship." D

In Your Campaign

Using an "Elminster's Guide" article in your game is easy. Simply switch the names of groups and individuals so they suit your campaign or come up with some new scenarios for how the elements of the article work together. Here are some ideas:

- Perhaps in your campaign the Rasping Spirit is a true ghost. In life this tortured soul was an oracle who used her knowledge of the future for personal gain. Now she is forced to reveal hints of future disasters until someone uses her prediction to stop the events.
- The creatures responsible for the Rasping Spirit could be any other race or monster. Maybe the Talntower is inhabited by a mischievous demon that makes dire predictions of misfortune and then causes them to come true; thus, it proves its worth and causes more creatures to bring it offerings.
- In your campaign, there might not be a Rasping Spirit. Perhaps the Talntower is famous for its healing waters, or maybe it is rumored to hide the tomb complex of the dwarves who built it.

Elminster's Notes

Many folk of the North (even Harpers and other worldly folk who should know better) trust in the Rasping Spirit of the Talntower. Some believe it's a wizard bound beyond death, or the voice of one god or other, and others care not what's behind it, nor want to know—but seek out and heed its utterances.

It falls to me here to spoil their faith in the guiding oracle: It's no wise or divine guide at all, but a fraud perpetrated by a resident gnome family who take care to keep themselves hidden.

For generations the hardy Elhaembroe have dwelt in extensive chambers cut by the dwarves inside the rocky promontory that contains the water-tower. The bulk of these chambers lie a good quarter-mile westward of the cave and the water-bowl above it, but a long passage (that rises and falls several times to guard against being flooded if the bowl should shatter or the spring water be redirected) joins them to a spy chamber low in the walls of the cave. Anyone sitting in the spy chamber can see and hear beings in the cave through a few tiny spy holes, and they can speak through a curving tunnel cut through the rock to join with these spy holes in a way that magnifies speech. Various elder Elhaembroe steal into this chamber when the cave has visitors, and if they see offerings being left, will "play oracle" for a time.

Offerings, of course, become the property of the gnomes after the visitors depart. The rugged hills west of the Talntower sport several well-concealed entrances to the Elhaembroe complex. The doors closing these entrances are large roll-stones set in carved grooves, and the thresholds within are guarded by snares and traps designed to prevent snakes, skunks, and other small wild creatures from readily roaming the gnomes' caverns. Their home consists of at least six large granary chambers, ten isolated prison caverns walled off from the rest of the complex by stout iron bars, a kitchen with an entrance out into a small hole in the rocks where an outdoor stone oven can handle cooking and the smoking of meats, and dozens of small sleeping-chambers and nooks with high, hidden storage or ambush ledges.

When not pretending to be the Rasping Spirit, Elhaembroe gnomes hunt and forage in the nearby countryside, snaring beasts via extensive traplines and whittling scrounged wood into trade goods and novelties for sale in Beliard. They have been raised to be quiet and covert at all times, frequently looking around to see if they are observed. So far as I know, none of them have become adventurers or achieved any prominence in skills beyond archery, knowledge of nature, and whittling. They take care not to sell or barter recognizable offerings in Beliard, storing them in their extensive caves or trading them to certain gnome peddlers for sale in Waterdeep.

While none of the Elhaembroe are guilty of copying and modifying prophecies and predictions set forth by other sources, they have, down the years, become adept at crafting utterances that sound both perceptive and plausible. So far as I'm aware, none of them feels divine inspiration or influence when devising what the Rasping Spirit says.

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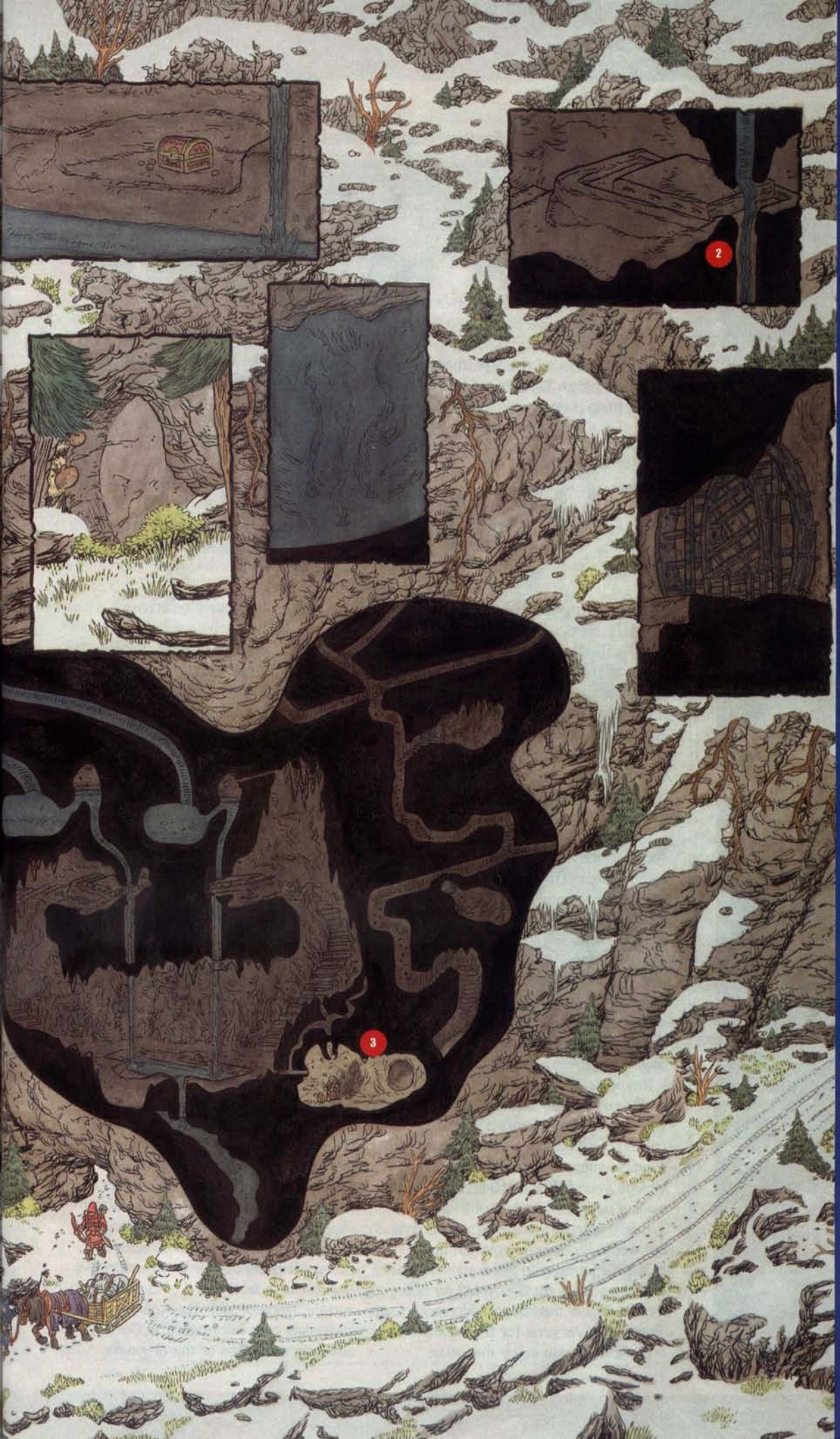

The Talntower

1. Natural fissures, widened by ice expansion each winter, are large enough to permit humans and smaller creatures to climb into and out of the water-bowl. Doing so requires a Climb check (DC 10).

2. The stone plugs can be pulled out with a successful Strength check (DC 16) and pushed back in with another Strength check (DC 18). In winter, the plugs are impossible for most humans to move without aid (Strength check, DC 27), and doing so releases only a small stream of water.

3. The spy holes that permit hidden beings to masquerade as the Rasping Spirit can be discovered with a successful Search check (DC 30), but they are not necessarily revealed as the source of the whispering unless the searcher happens to have an ear to the spy holes while a gnome is speaking. A successful Listen check while the Rasping Spirit is speaking (DC 35) reveals the spy holes as the true source of the noise.

THE WYRMWORKS
A HORDE OF DRAGONS

by Ed Greenwood · illustrated by David Day

The fair city of Silverymoon bristles with small, eccentric, poorly publicized boutiques that sell fascinating wares. Front parlors host some of these, and many have no street sign, or only the most discreet advertising. One of the most fascinating of these shops is "the Wyrmworks," an establishment that's been open for barely a year on Many Cats Lane in Northbank (the older part of the city north of the River Rauvin).

The Wyrmworks specializes in sales of dragon fangs, scales, blood, and preserved eyes, tails, talons, and pieces of wing. Its proprietors also sell maps to (and of) known dragon lairs and rent out a magically preserved and animated red dragon head.

WHAT MEETS THE EYE

The shop is one of the more spectacular in the Forgotten Realms. The huge preserved wing of a blue dragon dominates the windowless chamber whose vaulted stone ceiling wouldn't be out of place in a temple. The wing stretches out in a grand curve from the door to the stairs on the right (a landing from which the cellar stairs go down and the steps to the living quarters of the owners and their guards ascend) around the back of the room to the door to the workshops on the left.

Beneath the sheltering magnificence of this great wing, the back wall of the shop contains a dozen maps to dragon lairs—colorful items of pure fancy painted for their looks, with small round scenes of points along the way superimposed on a verdant landscape marked with the trail to the lair. Smaller copies of each of these maps—sans most of the painting—are for sale, stored in rothé-horn tubes in racks beneath each map. The top of each rack supports a small, mirrored lamp whose angled panes serve to reflect and throw all of the lamplight up onto the map above.

The back room holds more expensive and detailed maps, available only to those who ask for them. Dragon blood and organs are handled in the same way. It should be noted that the seller never leaves customers alone in the shop and rings a bell to summon other staff to fetch such items.

The central counter is surrounded by an open aisleway that allows customers to freely walk about and view wares, a ring-shaped affair whose wooden walls are split, just below the countertops, by shallow glass display cases containing small pieces of dragon remains (mainly fangs) and trophies of rusty treasure and broken weaponry, skulls, and the like from victims or failed adventurers brought back from dragon lairs. Any dragon skulls available for sale hang suspended from the ceiling (like the lamps that illuminate the shop), usually directly above the central sales counter.

Considered trade secrets at the Wyrmworks, cleansers and preservatives for dragon remains—mostly a variety of plant oils—are never offered for sale or identification. The sales staff tells persistent customers who want to know such things, "We leave such matters to experts who desire to keep their work a mystery, and we dare not offend them lest we lose access to their services."

The usual centerpiece of the shop display is Old Roaring Rage, the famous preserved red dragon head. It's usually mounted on its own glossy, carved wooden stand off to one side (the owners discovered that placing it front and center to confront buyers caused a lot of folk to promptly turn around and leave). If the dragon head is rented out, the splendid snarling head of some fanciful, unknown sort of dragon, crafted of shining electrum by Uraerik Thaurongol (a dwarven craftsmith of Everlund), is displayed in its place. Neither head is for sale, but smaller and less ornate metal replicas (made by lesser dwarven smiths of Silverymoon) are sold for 200 to 400 gp each, depending on size and

appearance. They're kept in a back room until requested.

The two floors of living quarters above the shop sport balconies, bay windows, and slate roofs. Levers at various places in their floors allow persons above to drop down portcullislike bars to wall off all doorways in the shop below—something done at any time of night or day when suspicious noises are heard from the shop, during deliveries, or whenever the shop is closed and the owners' bodyguards are unavailable.

TRADE AT THE WYRMWORKS

Business at the shop began slowly—prices for dragon remains tend to be high, and the number of persons able to use them for more than decorative ornaments is relatively low—but has become so brisk in the last few months that the owners are contemplating opening a branch office in Waterdeep.

Dragon remains are rare and dangerous to obtain: There's the trifling matter of slaying a dragon, the minor annoyance of butchering a cottage-sized carcass before something hungry comes along to devour it, and then transporting what you've carved off before it rots—usually through difficult terrain in remote areas. Prices rise and fall with availability of desired dragon parts, but haggling determines all sale prices.

The owners of the Wyrmworks sharply raise prices if they think a potential buyer is apt to become a danger to them or the wider Realms once furnished with dragon remains. A Red Wizard of Thay or member of the Arcane Brotherhood is charged far more than a mage of Silverymoon whose character is known to the sellers, for example. Scarcity in the face of demand also raises prices.

When buying such materials from adventurers, the Wyrmworks typically pays 50% to 75% of current sale prices, with 60% being the norm.

RORYK AND DELGRATH

The owners of The Wyrmworks are two white-haired, paunchy, gruff, and successful old adventurers who are crazy about dragons. They love to hear tales of dragon sightings, hunts, slayings, and battles—and try to keep abreast of which dragons are currently lairing and hunting where. Constant companions and firm business partners, the two men live above the shop and staff it in shifts, their bodyguards acting as fetch-and-carry assistants.

Roryk (CG male human Ftr9) is slightly kinder and Delgrath (CN male human Sorn) more irascible, but both are worldwise veterans who keep abreast of news and possible perils. Roryk and Delgrath employ a maid—a trusted, sharp-tongued, and attentive human woman named Alrue. This tall and rangy, dusky-skinned beauty hails from Calimshan, and assists "the Old Boys" in preparation of materials, seeing to customers, and keeping all floors of the Wyrmworks clean. In a stainless steel flask, Alrue always carries a *potion of invisibility* they've given her, and is under orders to use it if she ever observes a theft or break-in (to try to identify and follow the culprits, and then report as soon as possible to Roryk and Delgrath).

OLD ROARING RAGE

During their adventuring days, the owners of The Wyrmworks found this magically-preserved and animated red dragon head among the furnishings of an abandoned wizard's tower. They have no idea what magic powers keep it supple and looking lifelike, and couldn't repair or replace it if anything happened to it. Roryk gave the head its present nickname.

Old Roaring Rage is about the size of six human heads and appears to have come from a young adult red dragon. The head has the same features today as when found; its crafters and original purpose remain mysteries.

Old Roaring Rage has been hollowed out inside and fitted with a headband and shoulder-rest harness so a strong human can wear it. The neck turns, and the scales and skin shift when such movements occur, as if living muscles moved beneath. The jaw articulates, the tongue moves and looks damp, and the lips can draw back from the teeth in an expression of rage (although the nostrils don't flare). The dragon eyes are artificial—although they look real—and move in tandem to follow the direction of the wearer's head or a lever.

Another lever works the jaws to move in time with speech. Words said into a short speaking-tube inside the head are magically deepened, amplified, and made to sound wet and hissing in character.

Two faintly-glowing words are graven inside the head: "Raulithus" and "Torthar." Saying the former causes the head to seem awake and alive, even when unattended. It appears to breathe, it yawns slightly from time to time, it turns from side to side and the eyes seem to peer about—although of course it doesn't respond to events or movements around it. Saying "Torthar" causes the head to seem asleep; the eyes sag closed and stay that way, it breathes slowly and deeply, and it occasionally growls softly in its throat and shifts position slightly. Saying either word a second time ends its magical animation.

The Wyrmworks rents out Old Roaring Rage for 100 gp per day.

Faint illusion and necromancy; CL 5th; Craft Wondrous Item, *gentle repose, major image;* Price 2,600 gp; Weight 60 lb.

ELMINSTER'S NOTES

Ah, the ironies of life pile swift and deep when one talks of the Wyrmworks! Know ye what Roryk and Delgrath do not: that Alrue Crownshield is no Calishite at all, but a song dragon! (An "adult" of that species, I believe.)

Although Alrue loves her employers, she covertly works to foil depredations against dragonkind by drawing deliberately incorrect dragon-lair maps, which she sells (through intermediaries) back to her employers. Alrue's maps omit traps and warning telltales she knows of, or misdirect adventurers following them into other perils along the way. She's careful to employ different styles of mapping, varying inks and the materials she draws on, and is careful never to supply too many maps and so dominate the stock at the Wyrmworks.

We've spoken together, and she told me she's content with her life—whenever she grows restless or angry, she takes dragon form when she can do so unobserved and dives down to give the Old Boys from the shop a fright. Once, desiring a little vacation, she invented a theft and spent some days wandering Silverymoon "investigating it" (really seeing who was in town, hearing gossip, and looking at all the latest shops, goods, goings-on, and fashions).

THE
WYRMWORKS
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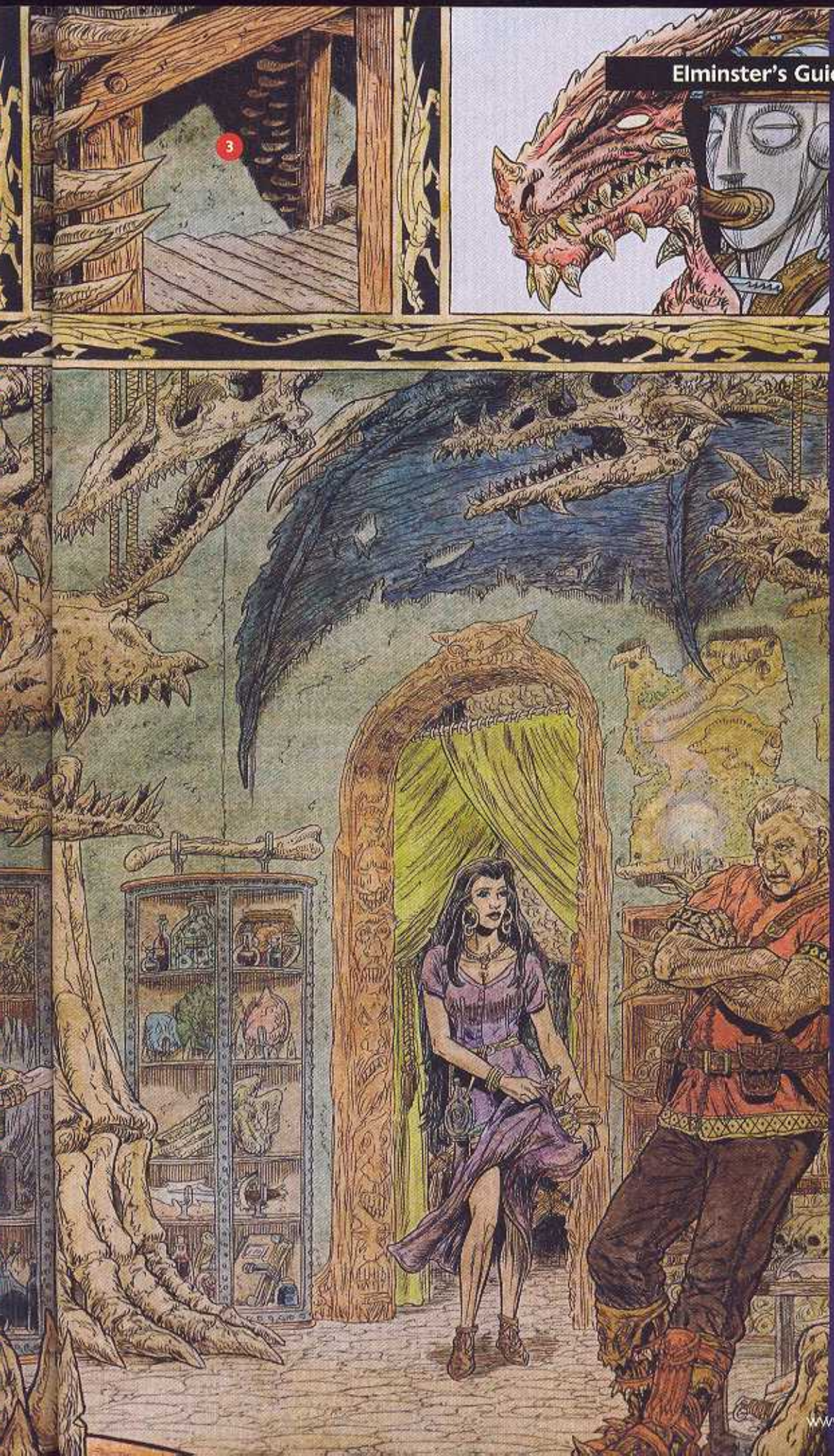

THE WYRMWORKS

1. The lowest reaches of the roof have loose slates that dangle askew. These are traps: If anyone or anything slides a slate out of the way and reaches into the revealed cavity beneath, a wire noose snaps about the intruding object, hand, or creature, ringing a bell inside the guardroom above the shop.

Wire Alarm Trap: CR 1/2; mechanical; touch trigger; manual reset; Atk +16 melee touch attack (to establish grapple), grapple check +14 (alarm sounds on successful hold attempt); Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 18. *Market Price:* 1,000 gp.

2. A foot-treadle alarm behind the central counter rings a small bell beside a bench across the street. Youths paid by the Old Boys loiter there and follow any non-Wyrmworks staff they see leaving the shop after the bell rings. Their orders are to see where such persons go and what they do (without being detected).

3. To discourage unauthorized entry onto these stairs (and give ignorant thieves something worthless to steal), false "dragon claws" fashioned of rothé horn, reptile skin, and modeling clay are positioned around the insides of all doorframes leading off the stairs.

4. One step of the cellar stairs lifts (when the correct nearby wall-stone is removed and a revealed lever is pulled) to permit access to a hidden coin storage cavity under the steps. A DC 20 Search check reveals the existence of this storage area.

LEGACIES OF ANCIENT EMPIRES

PLANETOUCHED OF FAERÛN

by Eric L. Boyd • illustrated by Tomas Giorello

All manner of creatures make Faerûn their home: some strange and magical, others terrifying and fierce, and still others from planes beyond the mortal world. Collectively, these creatures of the distant planes are called planetouched. While most planetouched are aasimar (a mixture of human and celestial bloodlines), genasi (a mixture of human and elemental bloodlines), or tieflings (a mixture of human and fiendish bloodlines), other varieties exist. Many of the other planetouched races found in the FORGOTTEN REALMS do not have dominant human bloodlines, resulting instead from a mixture of some other humanoid race and a specific outsider race. Baphitaurs (from *Underdark*), commonly found in the Labyrinth of the Northdark, magically combine minotaur, human, ghour, and goristro bloodlines and owe their existence to Netherese arcanists in what is now the Dungeon of the Ruins. Fey'ri (from *Races of Faerûn*), sometimes found in the High Forest of the North, are the descendants of Siluvanedenn gold elves consorting with succubi and incubi. Tanarruk (from *Races of Faerûn*), commonly found in the Greypeaks and Nether Mountains of the North, are a race of deliberately created demon-orc warriors.

Some of the most prominent examples of variant planetouched races found on Faerûn are the fruit of ancient empires that dabbled in magic, explored other planes, or served under immigrants from distant worlds. This article presents four new planetouched races—legacies of Faerûn's ancient empires: azerbloods, celadrins, d'hin, and worghests.

PLANETOUCHED, AZERBLOOD

This creature resembles a dwarf in height and build but lacks a beard or body hair. His skin looks like brass and even has a metallic sheen, his unkempt flame-red hair dances like real fire, and his red irises flicker like candles. He wears a highly polished brass kilt.

Azerblood, 1st-level warrior **CR 1**
Usually LN Medium outsider (native)
Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +1, Spot +1
Languages Common, Dwarven, Ignan

AC 16, touch 10, flat-footed 16
(+4 armor, +2 shield)
hp 6 (1 HD)
Resist fire resistance 10
Fort +4, **Ref** +0, **Will** –1 (+1 against heat and fire; +2 against poison; +2 against spells and spell-like abilities)

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee dwarven waraxe +4 (1d10+2/×3)
Ranged spear +1 (1d8+2)
Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.
Base Atk +1; **Grp** +3
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 1st):
1/day—*heat metal* (DC 10)

Abilities Str 15, Dex 11, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 6
SQ azerblood traits, forged
Feats Weapon Focus (dwarven waraxe)

Skills Appraise +2 (+4 for fire, stone, and metal items), Craft (metalworking) +2 (+4 for fire, stone, and metal items), Listen +1, Spot +1

Possessions dwarven waraxe, large steel shield, scale mail

Forged (Ex) An azerblood gains a +1 bonus on all saving throws against heat and fire spells and effects. This bonus increases by +1 for every five additional levels the azerblood attains.

Heat Metal (Sp) An azerblood can cast *heat metal* (DC 10) once per day. Caster level equal to character level. The save is Charisma-based.

Descended from shield dwarves and azers, azerbloods are generally unfriendly and taciturn, proud and unafraid to take action.

Most azerbloods encountered away from their homes are warriors; the information in the statistics block is for one of 1st level.

The azerblood presented here had the following ability scores before racial adjustments: Str 13, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 8.

Strategy and Tactics

Azerbloods are experts in combat, effectively using their environment and executing well-planned group attacks. They often use fire magic in fights, particularly if one or more of their number is a cleric or sorcerer. If they have time to prepare, they might build fire pits or other traps involving burning oil. In addition to the dwarven waraxe and thrown hammer, azerbloods also use warhammers, picks, and spears.

Ecology

Azerbloods live in small communities, often by themselves in otherwise deserted cave complexes or within larger dwarven cities and enclaves. Azerbloods speak Dwarven and Ignan. Most who travel outside dwarven lands (as traders, mercenaries, or adventurers) also know the Common tongue.

While they favor Gorm Gulthyn or Dumathoin, azerbloods revere the entire dwarven pantheon.

Environment: Azerbloods tend to live with dwarves, often in temperate mountains.

Typical Physical Characteristics: Azerbloods vary widely in their appearance, although in general form they resemble shield dwarves with metallic brass-colored skin, flame-red hair, and irises that appear to dance like tiny flames. They favor little clothing other than azer kilts of brass, bronze, or copper, but they don heavier armor when they expect combat.

Alignment: Like their dwarven cousins, azerbloods strongly favor the rule of law and the predictability it provides. From their azer ancestors they gain a level of detachment from the debate of good versus evil.

Treasure: Azerbloods tend to keep their wealth in coins and—especially—trade goods.

In the Realms

Azerbloods are most common in the Small Teeth mountains of western Amn, as most are members of the remnants of Clan Azerkyn, which once ruled the southern caverns of the Adamant Kingdom of Xothaerin. Individual azerbloods can also be found in shield dwarf clans dwelling in the mountain ranges that lie near the Lake of Steam.

Azerbloods are treated as shield dwarves for purposes of determining available regions, as discussed in the *Player's Guide to Faerûn*. They may also take the Bloodline of Fire feat (detailed in the *Player's Guide to Faerûn*).

Azerbloods as Characters

Azerbloods possess the following racial traits.

— +2 Strength, +2 Constitution, –2 Charisma.

— Medium size.

— Azerblood base land speed is 30 feet.

— Dwarven Blood: For all special abilities and effects, an azerblood is considered a dwarf.

— Darkvision out to 60 feet.

— Fire resistance 10.

— Weapon Familiarity: Azerbloods may treat dwarven waraxes and dwarven urgroshes as martial weapons, rather than exotic weapons.

— Stability: An azerblood gains a +4 bonus on ability checks made to resist being bull rushed or tripped when standing on the ground (but not when climbing, flying, riding, or otherwise not standing firmly on the ground).

— +2 racial bonus on saving throws against poison.

— +2 racial bonus on saving throws against spells and spell-like abilities.

— +1 racial bonus on attack rolls against mephits (fire, magma, and steam only) and salamanders.

— +4 dodge bonus to Armor Class against monsters of the giant type.

— Racial Skills: +2 racial bonus on Appraise checks that are related to fire, stone, or metal items. +2 racial bonus on Craft checks that are related to fire, stone, or metal.

—*Heat metal*: An azerblood can cast *heat metal* once per day. Caster level equal to character level. The save is Charisma-based.

— Forged: An azerblood gains a +1 bonus on all saving throws against heat and fire spells and effects. This bonus increases by +1 for every five additional levels the azerblood attains.

— Automatic Languages: Common, Dwarven, Ignan. Bonus Languages: Giant, Gnome, Goblin, Orc, Undercommon.

— Favored Class: Fighter.

— Level Adjustment: +1.

PLANETOUCHED, CELADRIN

This creature looks like an elf with flame-red hair, bronze skin, and golden eyes. She wears light, breezy silk garments interlaced with silver and gold.

Celadrin, 1st-level Warrior **CR 1**
Usually CG Medium outsider (native)
Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +3, Spot +3
Languages Celestial, Common, Elven

AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 14 (+1 Dex, +3 armor, +1 shield)
hp 4 (1 HD)
Resist fire resistance 10
Fort +2, **Ref** +1, **Will** –1; (+2 bonus against enchantment spells or effects)

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee longsword +0 (1d8–1/19–20)
Ranged longbow +3 (1d8–1/×3)
Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.
Base Atk +1; **Grp** +0
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 1st):
1/day—*scorching ray* (ranged touch +1)

Abilities Str 9, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 15
SQ Celadrin traits, melodious voice
Feats Weapon Focus (longbow)
Skills Craft (any) +2, Listen +3, Perform (sing) +8, Search +2, Spot +3
Possessions longsword, large wood shield, studded leather

Fiery Gaze (Sp) A celadrin can cast *scorching ray* once per day. Caster level equals class levels.

Melodious Voice (Su) A celadrin has a captivating voice, capable of influencing NPC attitudes. Celadrins receive a +1 racial bonus on Diplomacy checks made to influence the attitude of a nonplayer character or on wild empathy checks made to influence the attitude of an animal or magical beast. This bonus rises to +2 at 5th level, +3 at 10th level, +4 at 15th level, and +5 at 20th level.

Skills A celadrin has a +4 racial bonus on Perform (sing) checks and a +2 racial bonus on Listen, Search, and Spot checks.

Celadrins are a race of planetouched descended from the unions of elven worshipers of Hanali Celanil and eladrins (usually firre) consummated during summer solstice revels. Most celadrins encountered away from their homes are warriors; the information in the statistics block is for one of 1st level.

The celadrin presented here had the following ability scores before racial adjustments: Str 9, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 13.

STRATEGY AND TACTICS

Celadrins are cautious warriors who take time to analyze their opponents and the location of the fight if at all possible, maximizing their advantages by using ambushes, snipers, and camouflage. They prefer to fire from cover and retreat before they are found, repeating this maneuver until all of their enemies lay dead.

They prefer longbows, shortbows, rapiers, and longswords. In melee, celadrins are graceful and deadly, using complex maneuvers beautiful to observe. Their wizards often use *sleep* spells during combat because

such magic does not affect other elves or celadrins.

ECOLOGY AND SOCIETY

Celadrins typically live among gold elves, although some wander the world a few decades before settling down with other types of elves. They speak Celestial and Elven. Most celadrins who travel outside their temples (as guardians or wandering troubadours) learn the Common tongue.

Celadrins prefer to live in elven communities with prominent temples of Lady Goldheart. Most celadrins venerate Hanali Celanil and honor the rest of the Seldarine.

Environment: Celadrins typically live in the temperate forests of their elven kin.

Typical Physical Characteristics: Celadrins usually resemble gold elves with flame-red hair, bronze skin, and gold eyes. They favor radiant garments, often diaphanous silks woven with threads of silver and gold.

Alignment: Like full-blooded elves, celadrins enjoy the gentler aspects of freedom and chaos, as represented by the alignment chaotic good.

Treasure: In addition to their gear, celadrins carry the standard amount of gear for their challenge rating. They tend to carry their wealth in elaborately carved jewelry and bright gemstones rather than coins.

IN THE REALMS

Not uncommon in the forests of Cormanthor, most celadrins trace their ancestry back to the height of Myth Drannor. Since the Weeping War, many celadrins have settled in Deepingdale and the forests surrounding Lake Sember. Celadrins are found in other elven communities where the church of Hanali Celanil plays a prominent role, including Evereska and Evermeet. They are usually strongly associated with the arts, either as craftsmen, performers, or guardians thereof.

Celadrins are treated as gold elves for purposes of determining available regions, as discussed in the *Player's Guide to Faerûn*.

CELADRINS AS CHARACTERS

Celadrins possess the following racial traits.

—+2 Dexterity, –2 Constitution, +2 Charisma.

— Medium size.

— Celadrin base land speed is 30 feet.

— Elven Blood: For all special abilities and effects, a celadrin is considered an elf. Celadrins, for example, can use elven weapons and magic items with racially specific elven powers as if they were elves.

— Darkvision out to 60 feet.

— Fire resistance 10.

— Immunity to *sleep* spells and effects.

— Weapon Proficiency: Celadrins are automatically proficient with the longsword, rapier, longbow, composite longbow, shortbow, and composite shortbow.

— Racial Skills: Celadrins have a +4 racial bonus on Perform (sing) checks and a +2 racial bonus on Listen, Search, and Spot checks. A celadrin who merely passes within 5 feet of a secret or concealed door is entitled to a Search check to notice it as if she were actively looking for it.

—Fiery gaze: A celadrin can cast *scorching ray* once per day. Caster level equals class level.

—Melodious voice: A celadrin has a captivating voice, capable of influencing NPC attitudes. A celadrin receives a +1 racial bonus on Diplomacy checks made to influence the attitude of a nonplayer character or on wild empathy checks made to influence the attitude of an animal or magical beast. This bonus rises to +2 at 5th level, +3 at 10th level, +4 at 15th level, and +5 at 20th level.

— Automatic Languages: Celestial, Common, Elven. Bonus Languages: Draconic, Gnoll, Gnome, Goblin, Orc, Sylvan.

— Favored Class: Bard.

— Level Adjustment: +1.

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PLANETOUCHED, D'HIN'NI

This bald creature looks like a tall halfling with darker skin. He wears loose-fitting clothes made of cotton and silk with multiple earrings hanging from his ears. He bears a stern and disapproving look.

D'hin'ni, 1st-level Warrior **CR 1**
Usually CN Small outsider (native)
Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +3, Spot –1
Languages Auran, Common, Halfling

AC 17, touch 15, flat-footed 13 (+1 size, +2 Dex, +3 armor, +1 shield)
hp 3 (1 HD)
Resist acid 5, electricity 5
Fort +2, **Ref** +3, **Will** +0

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee scimitar +1 (1d4–1/18–20/x2)
Ranged sling +6 (1d3–1)
Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.
Base Atk +1; **Grp** –5
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 1st):
At will—*prestidigitation*
1/day—*gust of wind* or *whispering wind* or *wind wall* (DC 14)

Abilities Str 9, Dex 15, Con 8, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 14
SQ air mastery, d'hin'ni traits
Feats Weapon Focus (sling)
Skills Climb +2, Hide +3, Jump +2, Listen +3, Move Silently +3
Equipment scimitar, large wooden shield, studded leather

Air Mastery (Ex) Airborne creatures take a –1 penalty on attack and damage rolls against a d'hin'ni.

D'hin (singular d'hin'ni) are a race of planetouched descended from lightfoot halflings and djinn. They are generally impulsive and somewhat flighty, unable to concentrate on a single task for more than a moment. Most d'hin encountered away from their homes are warriors; the information in the statistics block is for one of 1st level.

The d'hin'ni presented here had the following ability scores before racial adjustments: Str 9, Dex 13, Con 8, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 12.

STRATEGY AND TACTICS

D'hin prefer to fight defensively, usually sniping with ranged attacks as a foe approaches. They rely heavily on hit-and-run tactics, very much like those of halflings, but they place more emphasis on mobility and less on cover and concealment.

ECOLOGY AND SOCIETY

D'hin live among halflings and fill all the myriad roles of their pureblooded kin, although they do tend more toward the study of magic than true halflings. D'hin speak Auran and Halfling, while those who travel outside halfling lands (as traders, mercenaries, or adventurers) also learn the Common tongue.

Most venerate Brandobaris or Shaundakul, although the entire halfling pantheon (including Tymora) is revered.

Environment: As they tend to live among halflings, d'hin usually make their homes on warm plains.

Typical Physical Characteristics: D'hin vary widely in their appearance, but adult males are universally bald and females wear their dark hair long. They tend to stand a little taller than halflings, but not so tall as to be mistaken as dwarves. Most favor comfortable, loose-fitting clothes made of cotton or silk.

Alignment: From their halfling ancestors d'hin retain a certain amount of disinterest in moral or ethical debates, but from the djinn they keep a level of capricious unpredictability. Most, then, are represented by the chaotic neutral alignment.

Treasure: D'hin possess the finest scimitars, curved daggers, and ornate clothing they can afford. Jewelry, especially earrings, figures prominently in their personal possessions as well. D'hin carry the standard amount of wealth for their challenge rating.

IN THE REALMS

D'hin trace their ancestry back to halfling slaves of the Calim Empire and their djinn overseers. Persecuted by the genie-hating humans of early Coramshan, the d'hin fled northward into the Calishar Emirates as part of the great halfling migration. Today, d'hin are most common along the Sword Coast, concentrated in halfling communities in Calimshan, the Purple Hills of Tethyr, the eastern shore of Lake Esmel, the Sunset Vale, and in the vicinity of Secomber.

D'hin are treated as lightfoot halflings for purposes of determining available regions, as discussed in the *Player's Guide to Faerûn*.

D'HIN AS CHARACTERS

D'hin possess the following racial traits.

— +2 Dexterity, +2 Charisma, –2 Wisdom.

— Small size. +1 bonus to Armor Class, +1 bonus to attack rolls, +4 bonus to Hide checks, –4 penalty on grapple checks, lifting and carrying limits 3/4 those of Medium characters.

— D'hin'ni base land speed is 20 feet.

— Halfling Blood: For all special abilities and effects, a d'hin'ni is considered a halfling.

— Darkvision out to 60 feet.

— +1 racial bonus on all saving throws.

— +2 racial bonus on attack rolls with thrown weapons and slings.

— Racial Skills: +2 racial bonus on Climb, Jump, Listen, and Move Silently checks.

— Air mastery: Airborne creatures take a –1 penalty on attack and damage rolls against a d'hin'ni.

— Spell-like Abilities: D'hin can cast *prestidigitation* at will. They can also cast *gust of wind*, *whispering wind*, or *wind wall*, once per day. Caster level equal to character level. The save is Charisma-based.

— Automatic Languages: Common, Halfling, Auran. Bonus Languages: Dwarven, Elven, Gnome, Goblin, Orc.

— Favored Class: Sorcerer.

— Level Adjustment: +1.

PLANETOUCHED, WORGHEST

This blue-gray creature resembles a hirsute goblin with a short lupine snout, sharp teeth, and blue-hued hair. Its orange eyes glow with unconcealed fury. The being wears a ragged leather loincloth and a rough hide cloak.

Worghest, 1st-level Warrior **CR 1**
Usually LE Medium outsider (native, shapechanger)
Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., scent; Listen +3, Spot –1
Languages Common, Infernal, Worg

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14 (+2 Dex, +3 armor, +1 shield)
hp 4 (1 HD)
Resist acid 5, electricity 5
Fort +2, **Ref** +2, **Will** +0

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee morningstar +3 (1d8+2)
Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.
Base Atk +1; **Grp** +3

Abilities Str 15, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 9, Wis 11, Cha 6
SQ change shape, feed
Feats Track[B], Weapon Focus (bite)
Skills Hide +1, Listen +1, Move Silently +3, Spot +1, Survival +0
Equipment Morningstar, hide armor, light wooden shield

Change Shape (Su) A worghest can assume the shape of a wolf as a standard action. In wolf form, a worghest gains a bite attack. Worghests may also take feats requiring the druid's wild shape ability as a prerequisite.

Feed (Su) When a worghest slays a humanoid opponent, it can feed on the corpse, devouring both flesh and life force, as a full-round action. Feeding destroys the victim's body and prevents any form of raising or resurrection that requires part of the corpse. There is a 50% chance that a *wish*, *miracle*, or *true resurrection* spell can restore a devoured victim to life. Check once for each destroyed creature. If the check fails, the creature cannot be brought back to life by mortal magic. A worghest gains the effects of a *death knell* when it feeds in this manner, using the creature's HD as the caster level.

Skills A worghest has a +4 racial bonus on Move Silently checks and Track checks made to track by scent in wolf form.

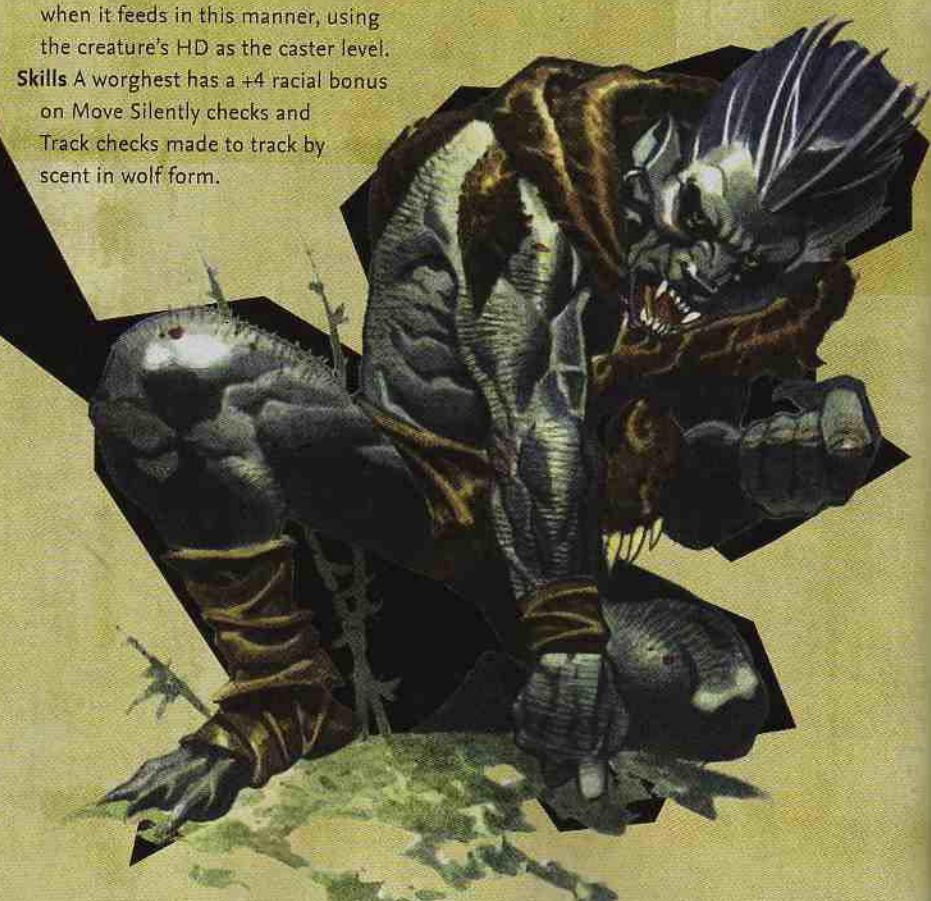
When in wolf form, a worghest has the following changed statistics:
AC 12, touch 12, flat-footed 10 (+2 Dex)
Speed 50 ft. (10 squares)
Melee bite +4 (1d6+2)
Atk Options trip
SQ low-light vision
Skills Survival +0 (+4 to follow tracks)

Worghests are a race of planetouched descended from barghests and goblins. They are generally cowardly, finding courage only in packs and when attacking from ambush. Most worghests encountered away from their homes are warriors; the information in the statistics block is for one of 1st level.

The worghest presented here had the following ability scores before racial adjustments: Str 13, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 9, Wis 11, Cha 8.

STRATEGY AND TACTICS

Worghests can bite in wolf form. Although they love killing, they have little stomach for direct combat and attack from ambush when possible.



Ecology and Society

Living among orcs and goblinoids, worghests demand—and receive—respect and fear from their pure-blooded cousins. Despite often being the most powerful warriors in a tribe, worghests rarely attempt to become leaders—they prefer to live more freely than leadership positions allow. Worghests speak Infernal and Worg. Most who travel outside their packs (as raiders, mercenaries, or adventurers) know the Common tongue.

Most worghests venerate Malar or deities of the goblin pantheon.

Environment: Worghests live with their surface-dwelling kin on wide temperate plains or within safely hidden confines among equally temperate hills.

Typical Physical Characteristics: Worghests vary widely in their appearance, although in general form they resemble hairy goblinoids with sharp teeth within wolflike snouts and hair of any blue shade. Worghests' eyes glow orange when they become excited. They favor hides as clothing, but often wear loincloths or nothing at all.

Alignment: Barghests typically possess powerful personalities—particularly when compared to orcs and goblinoids. As such, their descendants take on many of their personality traits, including a penchant for advancing within a group by playing within the rules and laws of the area.

Treasure: In addition to their armor and their weapons, worghests carry the standard amount for creatures of their CR, usually in coins and gems.

In the Realms

Worghests are most common around the Mines of Tethyamar—north and west of the Desertmouth Mountains—as many descend from the barghests that overran these dwarven holdings. Individual worghests also appear in goblin tribes across Faerûn that were led by barghests in generations past.

Worghests are treated as goblins for purposes of determining available regions, as discussed in the *Player's Guide to Faerûn*.

Worghests as Characters

Worghests possess the following racial traits.

— +2 Strength, +2 Dexterity, –2 Charisma.

— Medium size.

— Worghest base land speed is 30 feet. In wolf form, base land speed is 50 feet.

— Darkvision out to 60 feet.

— Low-light vision.

— Scent.

— Racial Skills: Worghests have a +4 racial bonus on Move Silently checks.

— Racial Feat: A worghest gains Track as a bonus feat.

— Change Shape: A worghest can assume the shape of a wolf as a standard action. In wolf form, a worghest gains a bite attack. Worghests may also take feats requiring the druid's wild shape ability as a prerequisite.

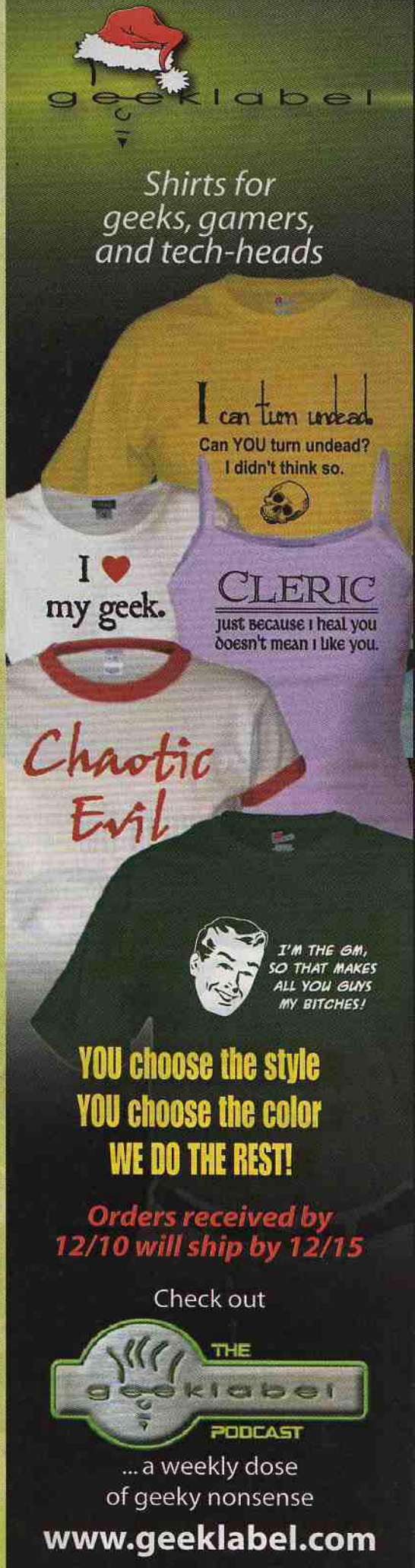
— Feed: When a worghest slays a humanoid opponent, it can feed on the corpse, devouring both flesh and life force, as a full-round action. Feeding destroys the victim's body and prevents any form of raising or resurrection that requires part of the corpse. There is a 50% chance that a *wish*, *miracle*, or *true resurrection* spell can restore a devoured victim to life. Check once for each destroyed creature. If the check fails, the creature cannot be brought back to life by mortal magic. A worghest gains the effects of a *death knell* when it feeds in this manner, using the creature's HD as the caster level.

—Trip (in wolf form only): A worghest in wolf form that hits with a bite attack can attempt to trip the opponent as a free action without making a touch attack or provoking an attack of opportunity. If the attempt fails, the opponent cannot react to trip the wolf.

— Automatic Languages: Common, Infernal, Worg. Bonus Languages: Giant, Goblin, Ogre, Orc.

— Favored Class: Ranger.

— Level Adjustment: +2.



by Thomas M. Costa · illustrated by Todd Harris

HEROES OF CORMYR

Adventuring in the Forest Kingdom

The gods do not grant to us all the shining mantle of the hero. Do what you can, and it will be enough.
—Baerauble, Royal Magician of Cormyr (-116 DR -429 DR)

The Forest Kingdom of Cormyr is one of Faerûn's most prominent kingdoms, filled with sturdy citizenry and a beloved monarchy. The kingdom is perhaps most famous for its recently deceased king, Azoun IV, and its mighty army of soldiers, the Purple Dragons, and War Wizards. One reason for this fame is the professionalism and skill of the Forest Kingdom's soldiers. However, Cormyr is a rich nation with many exceptional people. The Purple Dragons are buttressed by battlepriests and the Royal Scouts. The most senior War Wizards often join the Council of Mages, the nation's magical armorers and key advisors to both the Royal Magician and the Crown. Noble adventurers seek the Crown's favor by freeing its lands from orcs and goblins, all the while maintaining their holdings and estates, and in the Farsea Marshes of Cormyr's frontier, stout humans worship Bright Nydra, Goddess of the Winter Moon, while raising catoblepas and making the Torilian-famous (or perhaps infamous) Death Cheese.

Five new prestige classes are detailed below. In addition to these prestige classes, Cormyr's Purple Dragon knights are detailed in the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting*, the select Purple Dragon Highknights in *Dragon Magazine Annual #5*, and war wizards in *Magic of Faerûn*. DMs might also consider adapting the excellent herald prestige class found in the *Dragon Magazine Annual #5* for use by Cormyr's existing heralds and the Crown's proposed spy network (as noted in the article, "After the Dragon," also in the *Dragon Magazine Annual #5*).

BATTLEPRIEST OF CORMYR

Cormyr's War Wizards might be more famous and respected, but the Forest Kingdom's battlepriests have always been an integral part of the Purple Dragons. Their magic kept the Purple Dragons moving quickly during the Crusade of 1360 DR and during the recent war against the goblin and orc hordes of Nalavara the Red's army.

Most battlepriests of Cormyr are clerics of Helm, Lathander, Selûne, Tempus, Torm, Tymora, or Tyr, although a few multiclassed paladins have also joined the order. The Steel Regent, Princess Alusair, a follower of Torm, is known to consider several Torm-worshiping battlepriests close friends.

Cormyr's battlepriests are fully integrated into the Purple Dragons, sharing rank and quarters with their battle-ready companions, unlike the War Wizards who retain a special status. Consequently, battlepriests are well appreciated by their Purple Dragon comrades, and the War Wizards are always on watch to ensure their unique position with the Crown is never threatened by emerging battlepriests, who they sometimes and quietly deride as spellbeggars. The battlepriests constantly work to bolster their companions with rallying cries to war, healing magics, and the benefits of their wisdom, all the while praying for the peace Cormyr so dearly needs to recover.

THE BATTLEPRIESTS CONSTANTLY WORK TO BOLSTER THEIR COMPANIONS WITH RALLYING CRIES AND MAGIC HEALING.

Battlepriest Class Features

All of the following are class features of the battlepriest of Cormyr.

Weapons and Armor Proficiency: Battlepriests are proficient with all simple and martial weapons, and with all types of armor and shields.

Spells Per Day: A battlepriest's training focuses on magic that will aid him in his duties to the Purple Dragons. Thus, when a character gains an odd level of battlepriest, he gains new spells per day as if he had also gained a level in whatever divine spellcasting class he belonged to before he added the prestige class. He does not, however gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained (improved chance of turning undead, for example).

If a character had more than one divine spellcasting class before he became a battlepriest, he must decide to which class he adds each level of battlepriest for purposes of determining spells per day when he adds the new level.

Brew Potion: The Purple Dragons treasure the battlepriests of Cormyr for their devoted brewing of curative potions. This ability grants the battlepriest the Brew Potion feat.

Rally (Ex): A battlepriest not suffering from a fear effect can use this ability as a standard action a number of times per day equal to his battlepriest level. Allies within 60 feet who are suffering from any fear effect and who can hear the battlepriest are allowed an immediate Will save against the fear effect, with a +1 morale bonus per battlepriest level. Success has the same effect as if the ally succeeded at the initial Will save against the fear effect.

Healing Circle (Sp): At 2nd level, the battlepriest can cast *healing circle* once per day as a caster of the battlepriest's character level.

Healing Domain: At 2nd level, a battlepriest gains access to the Healing domain, including its granted power (cast healing spells at +1 caster level).

Inflame (Ex): Beginning at 3rd level, by giving a stirring speech for at least 5 minutes, the battlepriest grants those who listen a +1 morale bonus per battlepriest level to Will saves. This effect lasts for 5 minutes after the speech ends, plus 1 minute per level of the battlepriest. The battlepriest gains the benefits of this effect. This ability can be used up to 3 times per day.

Heroes' Feast (Sp): At 4th level, the battlepriest can cast *heroes' feast* once per day as a caster of the battlepriest's character level.

Planning Domain: At 4th level, a battlepriest gains access to the Planning domain (originally from the *FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting*, see the Reprinted Domains sidebar), including its granted power (free Extend Spell feat).

FOR YOUR CAMPAIGN

You can use these prestige classes if you don't play in the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting or your campaign in the FORGOTTEN REALMS doesn't touch upon Cormyr. Think of these possibilities to add these prestige classes to your game:

- One or more of these prestige classes can be associated with another great kingdom from your campaign.
- By changing the alignment requirements of the prestige classes, you could use these prestige classes to create many great villainous NPCs from an evil kingdom.
- These prestige classes might not be associated with any kingdom. Any could be adapted for use by a guild or organization in your game, or they could be unique to specific NPCs.
- The moon drover prestige class could be associated with a different type of monster. For instance, the abilities the prestige class gains in regards to a catoblepas could instead be applied to the basilisk, with the resistance to death effects and the death gaze of the catoblepas instead granting resistance to petrification and the basilisk's gaze.

FOR YOUR CHARACTER

Consider these prestige classes even if you don't play in a FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign or your FORGOTTEN REALMS character is not from Cormyr. By using one of the suggestions provided in the For Your Campaign sidebar, you or your DM can alter any one of these prestige classes to better suit your character or your DM's campaign. Such collaboration can be a great way for you to have a hand in creating the world you play in, and it can help your DM add detail and interest that makes you more excited to play.

Battlepriest of Cormyr

Battlepriest Requirements

HIT DIE D8

To qualify to become a battlepriest of Cormyr, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Alignment: Any nonevil and nonchaotic.
Base Attack Bonus: +5.
Concentration: 5 ranks.
Diplomacy: 5 ranks.
Heal: 3 ranks.
Feats: Combat Casting, Leadership.
Spells: Ability to cast divine spells and access to at least one of the following spell domains: Nobility, Protection, Strength, or War.

Battlepriest Class Skills

The battlepriest of Cormyr class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are:

Str: –
Dex: Ride.
Con: Concentration.
Int: Craft, Knowledge (religion), Scry, Spellcraft.
Wis: Heal, Sense Motive.
Cha: Diplomacy, Handle Animal, Wilderness Lore.

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

Battlepriest Advancement

Level	Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special	Spells/Day
1st	+1	+2	+0	+2	Brew Potion, rally	+1 level of existing class
2nd	+2	+3	+0	+3	*Healing circle*, Healing domain	–
3rd	+3	+3	+1	+3	Inflame	+1 level of existing class
4th	+4	+4	+1	+4	*Heroes' feast*, Planning domain	–
5th	+5	+4	+1	+4	Easy march, frightful presence	+1 level of existing class

Easy March (Su): At 5th level, a battlepriest can enable all allies, including mounts and the battlepriest, within a 20-ft.-radius burst centered on the battlepriest, to hustle (double standard speed) for up to 5 days. Using this ability is a standard action. Allies within the initial burst retain the benefits for the entire duration for so long as they remain on the same plane. Affected allies are fatigued as if they are merely walking and not hustling. In addition, allies may also make any forced march (see Chapter 9: Adventuring in the *Player's Handbook*) at a hustle during the 5 days; the Constitution check for the forced march is only DC 5 + 1 per extra hour. This power may be used once every ten days.

Frightful Presence (Ex): At 5th level, a battlepriest can strike fear into the hearts of foes. Enemies within 30 feet who see the battlepriest kill a foe or render an enemy helpless must succeed at a Will save (DC 10 + half the battlepriest's HD + Charisma modifier) or become shaken for 1 minute. Success indicates that the creature is immune to the battlepriest's frightful presence for 1 day.

Council Mage of Cormyr

Cormyr's famous Council of Mages is a group of arcane spellcasters that advises the Crown on matters pertaining to magic and magical threats, crafts many of the Crown's magic defenses and magic items, and hunts down particularly powerful renegade spellcasters.

The Council of Mages had its start sometime around 70 DR, during the beginnings of Cormyr. Suzail and nearby communities were just beginning to establish themselves as a nation. However, constant attacks from all manner of creatures coming out of what is now known as the King's Forest hampered the efforts of Suzail's king, Rhiiman the Glorious. Men-at-arms were not sufficient protection. The nascent Cormyr needed the help of magic

to combat these beasts. Rhiiman ordered Baerauble Etharr, Royal Magician of Cormyr, to assemble all known wizards. Together, the spellcasters devised a plan of attack using only magic and no soldiers at all. Their efforts, which included the destruction of several portals, were successful, and the group of mages became known as the War Wizards. For centuries, the War Wizards' responsibilities and esteem grew.

In 1284 DR, Salember, the Rebel Prince, refused to abdicate the throne of his regency to the rightful king, the young Rhigaerd II. The War Wizards were split. In the end, Salember was slain by Jorunhast, then Royal Magician of Cormyr. However, in slaying a royal, Jorunhast was exiled, and for two decades thereafter, the power of the War Wizards waned. In 1306 DR, Rhigaerd reinstated the post of Royal Magician, naming Vangerdahast. Recognizing the damaged stature of the War Wizards could become a threat to the Forest Kingdom, Vangerdahast reorganized and reinvigorated the War Wizards, splitting the collection of spellcasters into two formally organized groups, the Council of Mages and the War Wizards. The former was made up of elite War Wizards and crafters of magic items, all dedicated to Cormyr and her Crown, while the latter was made up mostly of wizards serving alongside the Purple Dragons.

Most council mages of Cormyr are wizards, although a few sorcerers also join the Council. Very few bards find the authoritarian structure of the Council to their liking.

Today, Caladnei, the current Royal Magician, and her aides are known as the Council of Mages because they rarely fight anything directly other than rogue mages or supremely powerful threats. They are looked up to and feared by the commoners of Cormyr and accorded the utmost respect by Cormyr's War Wizards and nobility.

Council Mage Class Features

All of the following are class features of the council mage.

Weapons and Armor Proficiency: A council mage gains no additional proficiency in any weapons or armor.

Spells Per Day: A council mage's training focuses on magic that will aid

Council Mage of Cormyr

COUNCIL MAGE REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a council mage of Cormyr, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

HIT DIE D4

Alignment: Any nonevil and nonchaotic.

Gather Information: 2 ranks.

Knowledge (arcana): 6 ranks.

Scry: 6 ranks.

Spellcraft: 12 ranks.

Feats: Skill Focus (Spellcraft), any metamagic feat, any item creation feat.

Spellcasting: Ability to cast 5th-level arcane spells, knowledge of spells from at least five schools.

Special: Membership on Cormyr's Council of Mages through invitation and the willing submission to a blood vow to never do harm to Cormyr or her Crown (in that order).

COUNCIL MAGE CLASS SKILLS

The council mage's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are:

Str: –

Dex: –

Con: Concentration.

Int: Alchemy, Craft, Knowledge (any), Scry, Search, Spellcraft.

Wis: Profession, Sense Motive.

Cha: Bluff, Diplomacy, Gather Information.

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

COUNCIL MAGE ADVANCEMENT

Level	Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special	Spells/Day
1st	+0	+0	+0	+2	Cooperative casting, Improved spell acquisition	+1 level of existing class
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+3	Bonus item creation feat	+1 level of existing class
3rd	+1	+1	+1	+3	Focused dispel, *sending* spell	+1 level of existing class

her in her responsibilities to the Crown. Thus, when a character gains a new level of council mage, she gains new spells per day as if she had also gained a level in whatever arcane spellcasting class she belonged to before she added the prestige class. She does not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained (improved familiar powers, for example).

If a character had more than one arcane spellcasting class before she became a council mage, she must decide to which class she adds each level of council mage for purposes of determining spells per day when she adds the new level.

Cooperative Casting (Ex): Due to their close working relationship with one another, 1st-level council mages learn how to empower their spells through teamwork. You and another willing spellcaster can simultaneously cast the same spell (at the same time in the round). You must be adjacent to one another when casting cooperatively. Add +2 to the save DC against cooperatively cast spells and +1 to caster level checks to beat the target's spell resistance (if any). Use the base DC and level check of the better caster.

For each additional caster cooperating with you and casting the same spell simultaneously, the spell's save DC and caster level check both increase by +1. When more than two spellcasters cooperatively cast a spell, each must be adjacent to at least two other casters.

For example, four spellcasters (two wizards, one sorcerer, and one council mage) stand in a circle planning to cast *fireball*. Three of them ready an action to cast *fireball* when the member with the lowest initiative takes her action, also casting *fireball*. The base DC of the Reflex save is equal to the highest individual save DC among the cooperating casters, as determined by their relevant ability scores or other feats (such as Spell Focus), special abilities, or items. In this case, one wizard has Intelligence 18, which ties with a sorcerer's Charisma 18, so the base DC is 17 (10 + 3 for the spell level + 4 for the ability score modifier). The final save DC of the cooperatively cast *fireball* is 17 + 2 + 1 + 1 or 21. Whoever has the highest caster level determines the base caster level check, which gains a +4 modifier.

This ability is similar to the

Noble Adventurer of Cormyr

NOBLE ADVENTURER REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a noble adventurer, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

HIT DIE D8

Base Attack Bonus: +4.

Diplomacy: 4 ranks.

Knowledge (nobility and royalty): 4 ranks

Ride: 4 ranks.

Special: Must have equipment and treasure with a value greater than the starting equipment for a PC of their level, as determined by Table 2-24 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. Must be literate.

NOBLE ADVENTURER CLASS SKILLS

The noble adventurer's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are:

Str: Climb, Jump, Swim.

Dex: Ride, Use Rope.

Con: –

Int: Appraise, Craft, Forgery, Knowledge (nobility and royalty), Search.

Wis: Innuendo, Intimidate, Listen, Profession, Read Lips, Sense Motive, Speak Language, Spot.

Cha: Bluff, Diplomacy, Disguise, Gather Information, Perform.

Skill Points at Each Level: 6 + Int modifier.

NOBLE ADVENTURER ADVANCEMENT

Level	Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+1	+2	+0	+2	Courtier
2nd	+2	+3	+0	+3	Bonus feat
3rd	+3	+3	+1	+3	Valiant
4th	+4	+4	+1	+4	Bonus feat

Cooperative Spell feat that appeared in *Tome and Blood,* except that it does not require all the spellcasters to have the Cooperative Spell feat or the cooperative casting ability. The benefits provided by spellcasters with the Cooperative Spell feat do not stack with the benefits of cooperative casting.

Improved Spell Acquisition: At each level of advancement in the council mage prestige class, a character gains three (instead of two) spells of her choice of any level she can cast to add to her spellbook. If the character does not use a spellbook, this ability grants no benefit.

Bonus Item Creation Feat: Council mages are the armorers of the Purple Dragons and War Wizards. At 2nd level, council mages may select a bonus item creation feat; she must still meet the prerequisites for gaining the feat.

Focused Dispel (Ex): Council mages must deal with lingering magical effects such as the Helmlands created during the Time of Troubles or even magical traps laid down centuries ago by the Witch-Lords of the Wyvernwater. Over the years, council members have developed more effective dispelling skills. At 3rd level, they may add a +2 bonus on any caster level checks made to dispel magic.

***Sending* Spell:** At 3rd level, a council mage learns the *sending* spell automatically. The council mage learns this spell despite any limit on spells known, but this ability does not supercede any restrictions the character might have as a specialist wizard. If the character uses a spellbook, she may scribe the spell in the spellbook.

NOBLE ADVENTURER

The civilized nations of Amn, Cormyr, Damara, Impiltur, Lantan, Sembia, Silverymoon, Tethyr, and Waterdeep are all known for their aristocratic warriors, the gentlemen and lady adventurers. Noble adventurers are educated, wealthy, and politically influential dilettantes often born into high position. Unlike aristocrats, however, noble adventurers are not necessarily real nobility; they might be wealthy merchants, adventurers who have earned or bought their way into the circles of power, or the scions of the same. With access to the best goods and opportunities, many noble adventurers become formidable individuals.

Most noble adventurers are single-classed or multiclassed aristocrats, with an ample number of bards, experts, fighters, paladins, rangers, rogues, and warriors also represented among the class. These men and women see adventure as a calling, a necessity, a way to prove themselves, or a lark. Some are more civic-minded and use their skills to protect those less privileged. Whatever their initial motivations, however, noble adventurers often wind up living for the thrill of danger.

> WHATEVER THEIR INITIAL MOTIVATIONS, HOWEVER, NOBLE ADVENTURERS OFTEN WIND UP LIVING FOR THE THRILL OF DANGER.

In Cormyr, independent adventurers are frowned upon. Cormyreans see adventurers as eccentrics, and to them the notion of adventuring for profit or fame is a throwback to more barbarous days. However, a warrior who fights to right wrongs and brings a civilizing influence to others is accepted. Many of these warriors become noble adventurers of unquestionable principles with grace and skill enough to silence critics. Even if they are not all paragons of virtue, noble adventurers conduct themselves with honor, pride, and style, which includes knowledge of social etiquette to serve them in any social or political situation. Indeed, many members of Suzail's famed Society of Stalwart Adventurers, particularly noble-born members, have become noble adventurers. Unfortunately, Cormyrean warriors also tend to be arrogant, talking down to those who they consider less refined or civilized. Oftentimes, this arrogance is unintentional and not meant as an insult.

Noble Adventurer Class Features

All of the following are class features of the noble adventurer.

Weapons and Armor Proficiency: A noble adventurer is proficient with all simple and martial weapons and with light armor.

Courtier (Ex): To the versatile and daring noble adventurer, the ways of court come naturally. At 1st level, a noble adventurer gains a +2 insight bonus on all Bluff, Diplomacy, Knowledge (nobility and royalty), and Sense Motive checks.

Bonus Feat (Ex): At 2nd level and again at 4th level, a noble adventurer gains a bonus feat of his choice. This feat may be any feat for which the character has met the necessary prerequisites.

Valiant (Ex): Bold, dashing, and resolute, noble adventurers unflinchingly hurl themselves into battle to great acclaim. At 3rd level, a noble adventurer gains a +4 morale bonus on Will saves against fear effects and, if he has the Leadership feat or takes it later, a +2 bonus to his Leadership score.

MOON DROVER

Winters are a particularly harsh season for the humans and animals of the Farsea Marshes. On a midwinter night a millennium ago, legend claims Bright Nydra fell to Faerûn from the trailing lights of the Tears of Selûne in the form of a falling star. She is the winter moon that brings the Marsh Drovers hope and strength as they await the arrival of spring. She claimed to be the daughter of Selûne and Shaundakul and a goddess of hope and renewal. Although this might well have been true long ago, today Bright Nydra is but an aspect of Selûne, Lady of Silver and goddess of the moon.

The Marsh Drovers of the Farsea Marshes, all of whom are considered "One with the Winter Moon," worship Bright Nydra. She is loved for her wisdom and kindness and venerated as the head of a pantheon that includes Eldath, Lathander, Mielikki, and Chauntea, among others. Clerics of Bright Nydra are identical to the clerics of Selûne, except their favored weapon is the wooden club. Druids of Bright Nydra are identical to druids in the *Player's Handbook*. Most moon drovers are multiclassed human cleric/druids known as Moon Maidens, although some men, known as Moon Guards, also become moon drovers.

Moon drovers spend their days providing counsel and wisdom to the

Moon Drover of Cormyr

MOON DROVER REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a moon drover, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Patron: Bright Nydra (Selûne)

Alignment: Chaotic good.

Base Fortitude Save: +5.

Base Will Save: +5.

Handle Animal: 3 ranks.

Knowledge (nature): 5 ranks.

Wilderness Lore: 3 ranks.

Spellcasting: Ability to cast 2nd-level divine spells and access to at least one of the following domains: Good, Protection, Travel, or Chaos domain.

Special: Must have the ability or power to identify plants and animals with perfect accuracy and tell whether water is safe to drink or dangerous.

HIT DIE D8

MOON DROVER CLASS SKILLS

The moon drover's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are:

Str: Swim.

Dex: Ride.

Con: Concentration.

Int: Craft, Knowledge (nature), Scry, Spellcraft.

Wis: Intuit Direction, Heal, Listen, Profession, Spot.

Cha: Animal Empathy, Diplomacy, Handle Animal, Wilderness Lore.

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

MOON DROVER ADVANCEMENT

Level	Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special	Spells/Day
1st	+0	+2	+0	+2	Catoblepas lore, lunar sight	+1 level of existing class
2nd	+1	+3	+0	+3	Resistance to death effects	+1 level of existing class
3rd	+2	+3	+1	+3	Renewal domain	+1 level of existing class

Marsh Drovers. They teach their people how to become one with the catoblepas herds, thus allowing them to milk the magical beasts for the precious liquid they churn into the delectable Death Cheese. They favor bright-colored clothing made from natural fibers, all of which are harvested from the Farsea Marshes.

Moon Drover Class Features

All of the following are class features of the moon drover.

Weapons and Armor Proficiency: A moon drover is proficient with all simple weapons. They are proficient with light and medium armors, and they are proficient with shields.

Spells per Day: When a character gains a new level of moon drover, she gains new spells per day as if she had also gained a level in whatever divine spellcasting class she belonged to before she added the prestige class. She does not, however gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained (improved chance of controlling undead, improved wildshape, and so on).

If a character had more than one divine spellcasting class before she became a moon drover, she must decide to which class she adds each level of moon drover for purposes of determining spells per day when she adds the new level.

Catoblepas Lore (Ex): Due to their special affinity for and work with catoblepas, moon drovers may apply their Animal Empathy, Handle Animal, and Knowledge (nature) skills to catoblepas with no penalties, treating them as if they were domesticated animals instead of wild magical beasts. Moreover, moon drovers receive a +2 circumstance bonus on these skill checks when applying them to the catoblepas and a +4 insight bonus on saves against a catoblepas's death glare.

Lunar Sight (Ex): Moon drovers gain low-light vision.

Resistance to Death Effects (Ex): A 2nd-level moon drover gains a +4

bonus to saves against death effects and becomes immune to a catoblepas's death gaze.

Renewal Domain and Spells: At 3rd level, a moon drover gains access to the Renewal domain (originally from the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting*, see the Reprinted Domains sidebar), including its granted power (the ability to regain 1d8 + Charisma modifier in hit points if you fall below 0 hit points 1/day). In addition, the moon drover may pray for and receive any Renewal domain spell as if it were on her divine spell lists.

ROYAL SCOUT OF CORMYR

The Royal Scouts of Cormyr are an elite order of Purple Dragon scouts in service to the Crown. They serve with their fellow Purple Dragons in patrols across the Forest Kingdom and as the Crown's elite messengers. However, the Royal Scouts are more famous for their work roaming alone or in small adventuring parties among the Stonelands and Goblin Marches spying on goblinoid tribes, spotting secret Zhentarim outposts, and disrupting the operations of Cormyr's enemies.

These dogged heroes learn to avoid danger without losing sight of their duty. Stealth and survival skills are critical to the Royal Scouts' success. Consequently, most royal scouts are rangers, although several aristocrats, fighters, and rogues have also become members of the Royal Scouts.

Royal Scouts can be encountered anywhere in the Dragonreach and along the Dragon Coast, but they are most likely to be found in Cormyr proper, especially the Forest Kingdom's frontier lands—the Plains of Tun, the Goblin Marches, and the Stonelands.

Royal Scout Class Features

All of the following are class features of the royal scout of Cormyr.

Weapons and Armor Proficiency: A royal scout is proficient with all simple and martial weapons, and with light armor.

Reliable Messenger (Ex): Royal scouts are the Crown's swiftest and most dependable messengers. This ability grants the Royal Scout a +2 bonus on all Innuendo and Ride checks.

Pride of Purpose (Ex): The Royal Scouts are so committed to Cormyr that at 2nd level they gain a +2 bonus on Will saves against fear (magical or otherwise) and other mind-affecting spells and effects.

Uncanny Dodge (Ex): As the rogue ability (see Chapter 3: Classes in the *Player's Handbook*). At 2nd level, the royal scout does not lose her Dexterity bonus to AC from being flat-footed. At 4th level, opponents do not gain any attack bonuses for flanking the royal scout.

If the character already had uncanny dodge from one or more previous classes, levels of those classes stack with royal scout levels for the purpose of determining the benefits, but the scout continues to progress in the ability along whichever track she was originally using for the ability. For example, if a rogue becomes a royal scout, add together her levels of royal scout and rogue, then refer to Table 3-15: the Rogue in the

REPRINTED DOMAINS

Planning Domain
Granted Power: Free Extend Spell feat.

Planning Domain Spells
1. *Deathwatch*
2. *Augury*
3. *Clairaudience/clairvoyance*
4. *Status*
5. *Detect scrying*
6. *Heroes' feast*
7. *Greater scrying*
8. *Discern location*
9. *Time stop*

Renewal Domain
Granted Power: If you fall below 0 hit points, you regain a number of hit points equal to 1d8 + your Charisma modifier. This supernatural ability functions once per day. If an attack brings you to -10 hit points or less, you die before this power takes effect.

Renewal Domain Spells
1. *Charm person*
2. *Lesser restoration*
3. *Remove disease*
4. *Reincarnate*
5. *Atonement*
6. *Heroes' feast*
7. *Greater restoration*
8. *Polymorph any object*
9. *Freedom*

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Royal Scout of Cormyr

ROYAL SCOUT REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a Royal Scout of Cormyr, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Alignment: Any nonevil and nonchaotic.
Base Attack Bonus: +5.
Hide: 3 ranks.
Innuendo: 1 rank.
Intuit Direction: 1 ranks.
Move Silently: 3 ranks.
Ride: 5 ranks.
Spot: 3 rank.
Wilderness Lore: 5 ranks.
Feats: Alertness, Track.
Special: Membership in the Purple Dragons. Must be literate.

HIT DIE D8

ROYAL SCOUT CLASS SKILLS

The royal scout's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are:

Str: Climb, Jump, Swim.
Dex: Hide, Move Silently, Ride, Tumble, Use Rope.
Con: —
Int: Craft, Knowledge (nature), Search.
Wis: Heal, Intuit Direction, Innuendo, Listen, Profession, Spot.
Cha: Animal Empathy, Handle Animal, Wilderness Lore.

Skill Points at Each Level: 6 + Int modifier.

ROYAL SCOUT ADVANCEMENT

Level	Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+1	+0	+2	+0	Reliable messenger
2nd	+2	+0	+3	+0	Pride of purpose, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus)
3rd	+3	+1	+3	+1	Forester
4th	+4	+1	+4	+1	Evasion, uncanny dodge (can't be flanked)
5th	+5	+1	+4	+1	Voices of the Wolf Woods

Player's Handbook to determine the benefits of uncanny dodge at his new combined level.

Forester (Ex): Royal scouts are constantly afield, patrolling Cormyr's frontier and learning the ways of the land. This ability grants the royal scout a +2 bonus on all Heal and Wilderness Lore checks.

Evasion (Ex): At 4th level, a royal scout gains evasion. If exposed to any effect that normally allows a character to attempt a Reflex saving throw for half damage (such as a *fireball*), she takes no damage with a successful saving throw. Evasion can only be used if the royal scout is wearing light armor or no armor.

Voices of the Wolf Woods (Su): In days of yore, when Cormyr was still in the mighty talons of dragons and the delicate hands of and elves, the great forest that covered the Forest Country was known as the Wolf Woods. Although the dragons and elves are mostly gone from the land, they have left their mark on the land they loved.

At 5th level, a royal scout of Cormyr, having traveled the breadth of Cormyr, has become attuned to some of the place magic of Cormyr and gains the power to *detect evil* (as the spell) at will. In addition, the scout gains the power to sense evil that enters the Forest Kingdom's borders (not those already within its borders). This power detects evil outsiders of at least CR 5, evil elementals and undead of at least CR 10, and other evil beings of at least CR 15 who plan to do harm to the land or people of Cormyr. The power does not give the scout the exact location of the evil, but with successful Intuit Direction checks (DC 15), the scout can make his way toward the creature or creatures, whereupon he gains a +10 insight bonus on all Wilderness Lore checks to track the evil down. D

FORGOTTEN REALMS

Sin Eaters of Eilistraee

by James Jacobs

The faithful of Eilistraee are known throughout the Realms for their devotion to the arts of dancing and song, to the moonlit hunt, and to various graceful styles of sword fighting. Yet one aspect of the Dark Maiden's faith that is often overlooked by outsiders is her stance against the unsaved drow of the Underdark. Whereas the worshipers of Lolth, Vhaeraun, and the other drow deities view the clergy of Eilistraee as bitter enemies and hated rivals, the faithful of the Dark Maiden are taught not to hate their deep-dwelling kin but to pity them and offer them mercy and sanctuary when they are encountered.

One sect of worshipers have taken this dogma a step further. These are the silverhair knights, selfless and merciful priests who seek out evil drow and use their sins against them in an attempt to show them the errors of their ways. Most silverhair knights fight these drow only with nonlethal attacks, offering them mercy even when none is sought. The most powerful silverhair knights are capable of pulling a drow's sins from his body and absorbing them with her own strength of faith. This is a dangerous ritual, but its effects cannot be dismissed. The silverhair knights might just be the redemption of the drow race, if they can only withstand the terrible despair of the sins they release from their tortured hosts.

Silverhair Knight

Silverhair knights, also known as "sin eaters," train to aid in the conversion and subsequent protection of drow who have come to the surface of Faerûn. The silverhair knights are most active in regions where drow attempt to establish a foothold on the surface; at this point, most of the knights in this relatively new order are based in Cormanthor. Silverhair knights avoid killing drow if at all possible. Their theory is that if other drow see that silverhair knights do not advocate the slaughter of their "enemies," they themselves can feel safer about abandoning the teachings of Lolth and her kin. Only when the death of a drow would directly result in saving the life of others is lethal force permitted, and even then, the silverhair knight must seek atonement for her dreadful deed.

Multiclass clerics with some levels of fighter, ranger, bard, or even barbarian have the greatest ease becoming silverhair knights. Although most silverhair knights are female drow or half-drow, any worshiper of Eilistraee that can meet the requirements, regardless of race or gender, is welcome to join the order. When a silverhair knight finds an encampment of drow, she is expected to observe the group from hiding for some time, learning their ways and personalities from afar, so that she can identify members of the group who might wish to convert. Eventually, she is expected to infiltrate the group, identify and approach possible converts, and organize their escape to a safe location.

Silverhair knights dwell in out-of-the-way areas and generally avoid cities or other large metropolitan areas unless they are guiding a reformed drow to some sanctuary within. NPC silverhair knights are thus most often encountered in the wilds, especially in areas with heavy drow activity.

HIT DIE D6

SILVERHAIR KNIGHT Advancement

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per Day
1st	+1	+2	+0	+2	*Awaken sins* 1/day, merciful edge	+1 level in existing class
2nd	+2	+3	+0	+3	Blade of compassion +1d6	—
3rd	+3	+3	+1	+3	*Awaken sins* 2/day, voice of serenity	+1 level in existing class
4th	+4	+4	+1	+4	Blade of compassion +2d6	—
5th	+5	+4	+1	+4	*Awaken sins* 3/day, consume sins	+1 level in existing class

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the silverhair knight prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Silverhair knights gain no proficiency with any weapon or armor.

Spellcasting: A silverhair knight continues training in divine magic while practicing her other skills and abilities. When a new odd-numbered silverhair knight level is gained, the character increases her spellcasting ability as if she had also gained a level in a divine spellcasting class she belonged to before she added the prestige class. She does not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained (improved chance of turning or destroying undead, bonus feats, and so on). This essentially means that she adds the level of silverhair knight to the level of some other divine spellcasting class the character has, then determines spells per day and caster level accordingly. If a character had more than one divine spellcasting class before she became a silverhair knight, she must decide to which class she adds each level of silverhair knight for purposes of determining spellcasting when she adds the new level.

Awaken Sins (Su): A silverhair knight may cast *awaken sins* once per day as a supernatural ability. At third level, she may use this ability twice per day, and at fifth level she may do so three times a day.

Drow are particularly susceptible to this spell-like ability and suffer a -2 penalty on saving throws made to resist its effects.

Merciful Edge (Ex): A silverhair knight who opts to deal nonlethal damage with any sword she has the Weapon Focus feat in does not suffer the standard -4 penalty on the attack roll for striking to subdue with a lethal weapon.

Blade of Compassion (Ex): If a silverhair knight attacks an opponent with a sword she has selected for the Weapon Focus feat and she strikes to deal nonlethal damage, she can strike a vital spot for extra nonlethal damage. If the silverhair knight possesses the sneak attack ability, she can deal nonlethal sneak attack damage with the sword she has selected for the Weapon Focus feat (a character normally cannot deal nonlethal sneak attack damage with a weapon that deals lethal damage), and additional nonlethal damage gained from this ability stacks with any additional nonlethal damage done with a sneak attack. Using the blade of compassion attack requires concentration and focus; the silverhair knight cannot wield a weapon in her off hand or use a shield when attacking in this manner, although she can use both hands to attack if the sword can be wielded two-handed. This attack is subject to all the restrictions of a rogue's sneak attack, and it is only effective against creatures that can suffer nonlethal damage.

SILVERHAIR KNIGHTS
Requirements

To qualify to become a silverhair knight, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Base Attack: +6.

Alignment: Chaotic good.

Bluff: 8 ranks.

Diplomacy: 8 ranks.

Knowledge (religion): 8 ranks.

Sense Motive: 8 ranks.

Feats: Combat Expertise, Skill Focus (Diplomacy), Weapon Focus (any sword).

Spells: Ability to cast 2nd-level divine spells.

Patron: Eilistraee.

Special: A character who wishes to become a silverhair knight cannot have slain or caused the death of a drow of any alignment at any time in her past. If the character cannot meet this requirement, she must receive an *atonement* from a cleric of Eilistraee before being accepted into the order; payment for this *atonement* usually requires going on a quest for the church.

SILVERHAIR KNIGHTS
Class Skills

The silverhair knight's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are:

Dex: Hide, Move Silently.

Con: Concentration.

Int: Knowledge (history), Knowledge (local), Knowledge (religion).

Wis: Heal, Listen, Sense Motive, Spot.

Cha: Bluff, Diplomacy, Disguise, Gather Information, Intimidate, Perform.

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

THE CREATION OF FORGOTTEN REALMS

by Stan!

In 1986, TSR was looking for a new product line. "The fact is," says Jeff Grubb, "the company had a big hit with DRAGONLANCE, but they had no idea how long it could last. They were afraid the audience was going to start looking for something new, and they wanted to have it ready for them."

As the company started looking for a new idea to build from the ground up, Grubb pondered a series of articles that had been running in *DRAGON*. Written by a Canadian librarian name Ed Greenwood, the articles bit by bit described a fantasy world that was rich in history and culture—one that was practically perfect for TSR.

"So I called Ed," Grubb recalls. "I asked him if he had more written about this setting, or if he was just making it up as the articles went along."

When Greenwood said that he had a significant amount of material prepared for the game world, Grubb asked if he would be interested in selling the setting to TSR.

"Well," Greenwood reportedly answered, "I figured that since it's being published in *DRAGON*, you guys just owned it all already."

Grubb paused for a moment. "I'm not going to tell *anyone* you just said that. Let me see what sort of deal we can work out."

The deal that eventually was struck gave TSR ownership of the FORGOTTEN REALMS in exchange for a modest sum of money, an Apple Macintosh computer, and a promise of future work.

"Then the packages started arriving," Grubb recalls. "The first one had a bunch of 8.5 x 11 sheets of paper that, when taped together, made the first map of the Realms." Also included was a stack of notes that Ed had taken on life in the setting. "I thought, 'This is great!' Then the second package arrived. And the third. And the fourth. And not just any old packages—Ed's special air-tight packages."

Anyone who has worked on the FORGOTTEN REALMS or *DRAGON* knows about Ed's packages. "First they're thick, padded envelopes," Grubb explains. "Inside is an extra layer of bubble wrap sealed inside a sheet of tin foil. Inside that, each item—floppy disks, CDs, print-outs . . . *everything*—is sealed in its own individual tinfoil wrapper, and some are also covered in cellophane."

Voice of Serenity (Su): At 3rd level, a silverhair knight's voice takes on a strangely trustworthy and friendly lilt that soothes the suspicions and doubts of those with whom she interacts. She gains a +2 sacred bonus on Bluff and Diplomacy checks. Additionally, all enchantment spells she casts that have a verbal component gain a +1 sacred bonus to their save DC.

Consume Sins (Su): A 5th-level silverhair knight can perform a mysterious ritual to attempt to change the alignment of an evil fey, giant, humanoid, or monstrous humanoid to neutral. The silverhair knight must maintain unbroken physical contact with the target for a number of minutes equal to the target's Hit Dice. The target must be conscious for the duration, but need not be willing; usually such a target is kept tightly bound for the duration, but a silverhair knight can disguise what she is doing by making a Bluff check (opposed by the target's Sense Motive check). A new Bluff check must be made each minute. At the end of this duration, the target suffers 10d6 points of nonlethal damage as the full weight of sins on his conscience overwhelms him. Additionally, he must make a Will saving throw (DC = 10 + the knight's class level + the knight's Charisma modifier) to resist having his alignment changed to neutral.

If the target makes the Will save to avoid alignment change, his alignment remains the same, but his sins overwhelm the caster and fill her with rage, sadness, and despair. The silverhair knight immediately gains a number of negative levels equal to half the target's Hit Dice plus the target's Charisma modifier. If this reduces the silverhair knight's level to 0 or less, she immediately dies and rises within 24 hours as a ghost with the same alignment as the creature whose sins she last consumed. If the negative levels do not slay the knight, she instead lapses into a coma for 24 hours, at the end of which she awakens and must make Fortitude saving throws to keep the negative levels from becoming permanent (as normal with negative levels—see the *Dungeon Master's Guide* page 293).

Negative levels gained through a failed use of consume sins can be removed normally with a *restoration* spell, but doing so frees these "undigested" sins and grants the original target a +1 profane bonus per negated negative level to skill checks, attack rolls, and Will saves for the next 24 hours. Once the 24-hour coma has passed, any negative levels that have become permanent can be restored with a *greater restoration* spell without effect on either the silverhair knight or the target.

If the target fails the Will save to avoid alignment change, the sins are absorbed by the silverhair knight's soul and obliterated by her purity and devotion to Eilistraee. The target's alignment immediately changes to neutral, and the silverhair knight gains a +4 sacred bonus to her Charisma and a +1 sacred bonus to her caster level when casting spells with the Good descriptor. These bonuses persist for a number of hours equal to half the target's Hit Dice plus the target's Charisma modifier.

A creature whose alignment is changed to neutral by this supernatural ability is free to make its own choices regarding future actions. Most creatures see the error of their evil ways and do not return to their evil patterns of behavior. Many switch alignments to match that of the silverhair knight out of gratitude for the service provided.

Consume sins is a mind-affecting supernatural ability and a fear effect. A silverhair knight may consume sins once per week. Drow are particularly susceptible to this ability and suffer a -2 penalty to saving throws made to resist alignment change. A single target can only be affected by an attempt to consume sins once per year.

Ex-Silverhair Knights: A silverhair knight who willingly causes the death of a drow (directly or indirectly) must seek out *atonement* for her deed within 24 hours; this *atonement* must come from a cleric of Eilistraee. If the silverhair knight does not atone in this time, if she acts grossly out of accordance with the teachings of the Dark Maiden, or if she becomes any alignment other than chaotic good, she looses all special abilities and granted spells from her silverhair knight levels. She may regain these abilities at a later date by accomplishing a major quest for the church and then receiving an *atonement* spell from a priest of Eilistraee of equal or higher level than her character level.

Spells of the Silverhair Knights

The following spells were developed by the order of the Silverhair Knights to aid in their mission to redeem the drow, but they can just as easily be used by other good-aligned spellcasters who seek to forgive and save the wicked from their destructive lives.

Awaken Sin

Enchantment (Compulsion) [Fear, Good, Mind-Affecting]
Level: Clr 3, Pal 3
Components: V, S, DF
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Target: One evil fey, giant, humanoid, or monstrous humanoid
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: Will partial
Spell Resistance: Yes

Silverhair knights use this dramatic and somewhat unsettling spell to show evil individuals (particularly drow) the errors of their nefarious ways. If the target manages to resist the effects of this spell, the sudden upwelling of sinful memories cause a momentary distraction that imparts a -1 penalty on skill checks and attack rolls for 1 round. Failure indicates that the various acts of cruelty and hatred the target has inflicted throughout his life suddenly weigh down upon its mind, causing it to suffer the pains and torments of all those it has tormented and wounded. The target immediately takes 1d6 points of nonlethal damage per caster level (maximum 10d6) and is stunned for 1 round. If this knocks the target unconscious, it also takes 1d6 points of Wisdom damage.

This spell is rapidly gaining a foothold amongst other religions who sponsor sin eaters; in particular, paladins of Ilmater have taken a particular liking to the spell.

Eilistraee's Grace

Transmutation [Good]
Level: Brd 4, Clr 5
Components: V
Casting Time: 1 free action
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

With a single word, you call upon the might and grace of Eilistraee, bathing

your body with divine energy. Your body glows with silvery light, providing illumination to a radius of 60 feet. You gain a -20 circumstance penalty on Hide checks made while under the effect of this spell.

For the duration of the spell, you gain a +2 sacred bonus to your Dexterity, and your base land speed increases by +10 feet.

Your touch attacks and any melee weapons you wield become infused with this power as well. They are treated as good-aligned weapons for the purposes of overcoming damage reduction.

Casting this spell is a free action. Casting this spell counts toward the limit of one quickened spell per round.

Moon Bolt
Evocation
Level: Clr 3, Drd 3
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Long (400 ft. + 40 ft./level)
Target: One living or undead creature, or two living or undead creatures, no two of which can be more than 15 ft. apart (see text)
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: Fortitude half (living target) or Will negates (undead target)
Spell Resistance: Yes

You create a bolt of shimmering moonlight that streaks from your outstretched hand to strike any living or undead creature in range. *Moon bolts* strike targets unerringly.

A living creature struck by a *moon bolt* takes 1d4 points of Strength damage per three caster levels (maximum 5d4). If the target makes a successful Fortitude saving throw, the Strength damage is halved.

An undead creature struck by a *moon bolt* must make a Will saving throw or fall prone and remain motionless and helpless for 1d4 rounds, after which time it is no longer helpless and can stand upright, but it suffers a -2 penalty to attack rolls and Will saving throws for 1 additional minute.

If you cast this spell outdoors at night, you can generate a second *moon bolt* that can be directed at the same target or a second target within 15 feet of the first target.

Moon Lust
Enchantment (Compulsion) [Mind-Affecting]
Level: Clr 1
Components: V, S, F
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)
Target: One living creature
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell instills in the target an obsessive fascination with the moon. If the target fails its save, it fixates on the moon and is considered fascinated for the duration of the spell (see the *Dungeon Master's Guide* page 300-301).

If the moon is not visible at the time the spell is cast and the target fails its save, it grows worried and distracted, and is not fascinated. However, the creature instead takes a -1 penalty on all attack rolls and skill checks for the duration of the spell.

Sightless creatures are not affected by this spell.

Focus: A silver ingot worth 5 gp.

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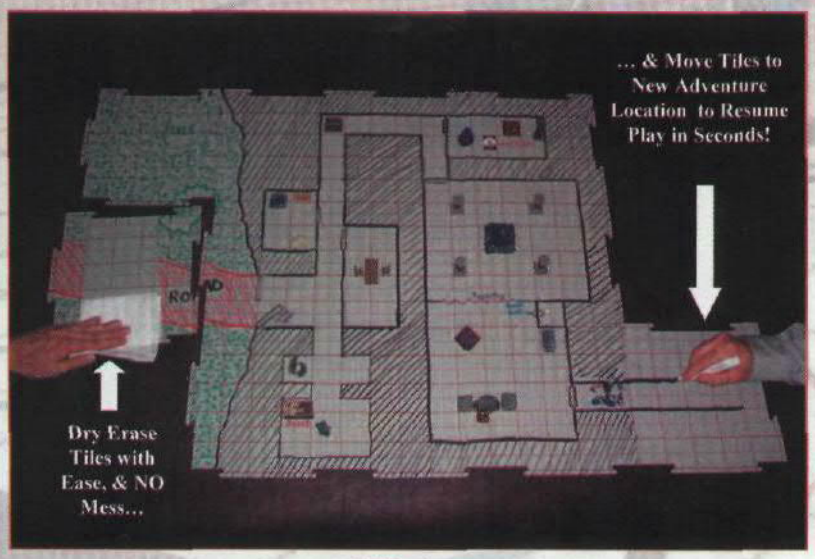

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MAZTICA

The New (Fantasy) World

by David Schwartz · illustrated by Dave McClellan

Far across the ocean lies a nation few have ever seen. In some ways, this nation is like most others with which adventurers are familiar. A ruler dressed in gilded finery lives in a spacious palace, surrounded by courtiers and bards. He has knights whom he can send to war against other nations. Countless peasants toil in the fields to produce food for the populace. Temples dedicated to the gods dot the landscape.

Yet each of these features differs from the average D&D character's past experience in some important way. The ruler is known as the Revered Councilor, and his palace is built of clay brick. The crops that the peasants tend—mayz, avocados, peppers, cocoa, and tomatoes—are unknown across the ocean. Horses do not exist there, so the knights take the forms of eagles and jaguars when they wish to move quickly. Their weapons are made of wood and volcanic glass, and their armor of hide and feathers. The temples here are built on the tops of pyramids, and a worship service is a bloody massacre rather than an austere ceremony.

Welcome to MAZTICA!

ORDERS OF KNIGHTHOOD

Two orders of knighthood exist to serve the Reverend Councilor—the Eagle Knights and the Jaguar Knights. The proven warriors who belong to these orders lead regiments into battle, serve as guards at sacred temples, and use their specialized talents to scout for enemy troops. In addition, they act as teachers for aspiring young warriors.

To become a knight of either order, a character must apprentice at the appropriate lodge. Generally, only career fighters become knights, and then only after they have proven themselves in battle (by capturing many opponents, slaying terrible monsters, or the like). Barbarians and rangers can become knights, although the lifestyle requires more structure and discipline than that to which they are accustomed. It is unheard of (although not impossible) for members of other classes to become knights.

In addition to their military prowess, knights gain considerable respect and political power in MAZTICA. High-ranking government officials are often retired or active knights, and one order or the other usually counts the Revered Counselor himself as a member.

REAL MEN DO DANCE

Dance is an important part of nearly any religious ritual in MAZTICA. The clergy use dance to tell parables or to reach an ecstatic state through which they can commune with their gods. Furthermore, dance and martial arts are related in many cultures, and MAZTICA is no exception. The eagle and jaguar knights use dance to teach their apprentices the intricate movements of an experienced warrior. Only by mastering these ritual dances can a young warrior hope to excel as a knight.

THE CREATION OF MAZTICA

by Stan!

"Doing a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS world based on Mezoamerica did not get immediate support from the management at TSR," says Douglas Niles, designer of the MAZTICA boxed set. "It didn't seem like a natural step, but I'd always thought that the conquistadors were the closest thing to a real-life D&D story. I just wanted to give the story a better ending. After a year or two, I convinced enough people that the project got put on the schedule."

MAZTICA had equivalents for both the Maya and the Aztecs. It introduced game rules based on actual indigenous practices and items, such as "plume magic" and "jaguar knives." This is all thanks to Niles's dedication to the historical record.

"Before I wrote the product," Niles recalls, "I went to Mexico and visited all sorts of ancient sites." He traveled to the Pyramids of the Sun and the Moon, Tchitchin Itza, and Uxmal, "which was about the coolest place on the planet I've ever seen."

Niles also visited some less-well-known sites—such as Tulum—and spent a number of days exploring Mexico's National Museum of Anthropology. It all added up to one of the most thoroughly researched and historically accurate D&D boxed sets ever.

"It's kind of a niche product," Niles admits, "but it has a very devoted audience. Every year at Gen Con I still get people coming up to me to say how much they enjoy the setting and tell me about their ongoing campaigns."

FOR YOUR CAMPAIGN

For more background on the MAZTICA setting, check out the original boxed set, which is available for free download at the Wizards of the Coast website: www.wizards.com.

Adding MAZTICA to an existing campaign is simply a matter of allowing the PCs to "discover" the new land in an uncharted region of your world (perhaps deep in a forbidding jungle or across a trackless sea). There are many reasons that player characters might want to travel to MAZTICA. They could seek it out as explorers, merchants, missionaries, or conquistadors, or even soldiers or sailors in the service of such individuals.

Adventures in MAZTICA should emphasize the exotic over the mundane. Your PCs have probably never seen knights dressed as animals and wielding obsidian-edged weapons. Conversely, the Mazticans have never seen knights clad in metal and riding strange beasts. This clash of culture challenges both the players and the DM to reconsider what defines such an entrenched concept as a knight or a cleric.

NEW FEATS

The two feats provided below are particularly well-suited for use with Matican characters and the prestige classes presented in this article.

ARMOR DANCE [GENERAL]

Maztican armor is highly decorated with bright paints, animal skins, and dyed feathers. You are trained to use your armor to its best advantage, and you distract and misdirect your opponents with its flurry of decorations and movement.

Prerequisites: Base attack bonus +1, Perform (dance) 1 rank.

Benefit: Whenever you are wearing a suit of Maztican light armor (or similarly decorated light armor) with which you are proficient, and you make a full attack, you gain a +2 dodge bonus to Armor Class that lasts until your next action.

Special: A fighter may select Armor Dance as one of his fighter bonus feats.

IMPROVED ARMOR DANCE [GENERAL]

You are an expert at using armor to its best advantage.

Prerequisites: Base attack bonus +2, Armor Dance, Perform (dance) 2 ranks.

Benefit: You may gain the dodge bonus provided by the Armor Dance feat while wearing Maztican medium armor (or similarly decorated medium armor). If you are wearing hide armor, the dodge bonus provided by the Armor Dance feat increases to +4.

Special: A fighter may select Improved Armor Dance as one of his fighter bonus feats.

COMBAT TECHNIQUES

In MAZTICA, a warrior is judged not by how many enemies she slays, but by how many she captures. Most captured enemies are enslaved, but the victors usually retain a few for sacrifices. In a post-battle ritual, the hearts of the selected captives are cut out of their chests and offered to the gods. Such a death is considered a noble end for any warrior.

Because of this emphasis on capturing enemies alive, Maztican weapons are generally designed to be equally effective for either killing or capturing foes. The maca (stone-edged longsword), with its sharp edges and wide, flat blade, is particularly effective for either use.

Maztican Weapons

Maztican characters are limited to the following weapons: battleaxe*, blowgun (described in *Masters of the Wild* and *Oriental Adventures*), club, composite shortbow, dagger*, dart, handaxe*, maca* (longsword), morningstar*, net, quarterstaff, shortbow, shortspear*, and sling.

Weapons marked with an asterisk (*) are stone-edged. Mazticans do not forge hard metals, so they must construct their weapons out of wood and stone (generally flint or obsidian). Stone-edged weapons are just as effective as metal ones (obsidian in particular holds a wicked edge), but they are more prone to wear and tear. A natural 1 result on an attack roll means the character has not only missed but also blunted his weapon (if standard) or lost the +1 bonus (if masterwork). A second natural 1 result blunts a formerly masterwork weapon. Subsequent natural 1 results have no further effect on a blunted weapon. A blunted weapon imposes a -1 penalty on damage rolls until repaired with a successful Craft (weaponsmithing) check (see Repairing Items in the Craft skill description).

The blowgun is an exotic weapon, but any native Maztican may treat it as a martial weapon.

MAZTICAN ARMOR

Even if the Mazticans could make metal armor, the tropical heat that pervades the area makes such protection impractical. Most Maztican characters wear either padded armor or stiffened fiber armor (treat as leather). Eagle and jaguar knights (see above) have earned the right to wear heavier armor specific to their orders. Knight armor comes in two varieties, one for each type of Maztican knight. The two armors have the statistics of masterwork hide armor but differ in appearance and construction. Both types cover nearly all of the wearer's body, exposing only the face, hands, and feet. Each suit of knight armor is fitted to the wearer by a master armorsmith. Only a knight of the appropriate order is allowed to wear knight armor. The punishment for wearing armor one is not entitled to is death.

Eagle Knight Armor: This armor consists of cloth woven with eagle feathers and placed over multiple layers of padding. The coif, which is decorated as an eagle's head, frames the knight's face with a beaklike visor. The leggings are often fashioned with decorative talons.

Jaguar Knight Armor: Jaguar knight armor is made from the pelts of one or more jaguars placed over layers of padding. The coif, which is actually made from the skull of a jaguar, frames the knight's face in the great cat's jaws.

EAGLE KNIGHT

Eagle knights are associated with the temple of Qotal, god of the sky. Although this temple is opposed to that of the jaguar knights in philosophy, the two knightly orders are generally friendly. To the knights, nationality is more important than religion.

Eagle Knight Class Features

All of the following are class features of the eagle knight prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Eagle knights are proficient with all simple and martial weapons, as well as with light armor, hide armor, and all types of shields. Additionally, an eagle knight has the right to buy and wear eagle knight armor (see Maztican Armor).

***Pluma Spells* (Sp):** At each eagle knight level, the character chooses one pluma spell (see the Pluma Spells List) that he can use once per day as a spell-like ability. If he chooses the same spell more than once, he can use it one additional time per day. His spell choices are limited according to his level, as indicated on the Eagle Knight Advancement table. Thus, an 8th-level eagle knight can use eight pluma spells as spell-like abilities per day, one up to 3rd level, four up to 2nd level, and three of 1st level. His caster level is equal to his eagle knight class level. The save DCs are Wisdom-based.

Eagle Form (Su): An eagle knight can assume the form of an eagle while wearing eagle knight armor. This ability functions like the *polymorph* spell, except that the eagle knight is limited to the form of an eagle (or a giant eagle at higher level). This ability is usable once per day at 1st level, and one additional time per day every two eagle knight levels thereafter (at 3rd, 5th, 7th, and 9th levels). At 5th level and above, the eagle knight can choose to take the form of a giant eagle.

Fast Movement (Ex): When the eagle knight attains 2nd level, his speed increases by +10 feet when he is wearing no armor, light armor, or medium armor and not carrying a heavy load. This increase stacks with fast movement from other classes.

Eagle Eyes: (Ex) At 4th level, an eagle knight can see as well as a raptor. He gains a +8 bonus on Spot checks.

Spell Resistance: At 6th level, an eagle knight gains spell resistance equal to 10 + his Charisma modifier. At 10th level, his spell resistance increases to 15 + his Charisma modifier. If he already has spell resistance, the benefits do not stack, and he uses this value or his other spell resistance value, whichever is higher.

Swoop (Ex): At 8th level, an eagle knight gains Spring Attack and Flyby Attack as bonus feats if he does not already have them. He need not meet the prerequisites for these feats. See the *Monster Manual* for details of the Flyby Attack feat.

Pluma Spell List

Eagle knights choose their spell-like abilities from this list.

1st-Level: *Alarm, calm animals, delay poison, detect animals or plants, detect snares and pits, endure elements, expeditious retreat, faerie fire, feather fall, hypnotism, identify, mage armor, magic stone, magic weapon, message, obscuring mist, pass without trace, protection from evil, sanctuary, sleep, summon nature's ally I, true strike.*

2nd-Level: *Animal messenger, animal trance, blur, calm emotions, cat's grace, charm animal, charm person, daylight, gust of wind, hold animal, levitate, mirror image, obscure object, protection from arrows, resist energy, silence, speak with animals, spiritual weapon, summon nature's ally II, whispering wind.*

3rd-Level: *Clairaudience/clairvoyance, confusion, dispel magic, fly, gaseous form, greater magic weapon, haste, helping hand, keen edge, Leomund's tiny hut, magic vestment, protection from energy, scrying, slow, snare, speak with plants, summon nature's ally III, water walk.*

EAGLE KNIGHT Requirements

HIT DIE D10

To qualify to become an eagle knight, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Alignment: Any nonevil.

Base Attack Bonus: +5.

Perform (dance): 1 rank.

Spot: 1 rank.

Survival: 2 ranks.

Feats: Proficiency with composite shortbow, maca (longsword), shortbow, and shortspear.

Special: An aspiring eagle knight must apprentice at a lodge. He functions as a normal soldier, although he receives special training and possibly special treatment. A character cannot actually become a knight until the leaders of the order feel that he has proven himself in battle.

EAGLE KNIGHT Class Skills

The eagle knight's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are:

Str: Climb, Jump, Swim.

Dex: Use Rope.

Con: Concentration.

Int: Craft, Knowledge (arcana), Spellcraft.

Wis: Sense Motive, Spot, Survival.

Cha: Handle Animal, Intimidate, Perform.

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

EAGLE KNIGHT Advancement

Class Level	Base Attack	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special	Pluma Spells
1st	+1	+2	+0	+0	Eagle form 1/day	+1 1st-level or lower pluma spell
2nd	+2	+3	+0	+0	Fast movement	+1 1st-level or lower pluma spell
3rd	+3	+3	+1	+1	Eagle form 2/day	+1 1st-level or lower pluma spell
4th	+4	+4	+1	+1	Eagle eyes	+1 2nd-level or lower pluma spell
5th	+5	+4	+1	+1	Eagle form 3/day (giant eagle)	+1 2nd-level or lower pluma spell
6th	+6	+5	+2	+2	Spell resistance (10 + Cha modifier)	+1 2nd-level or lower pluma spell
7th	+7	+5	+2	+2	Eagle form 4/day	+1 2nd-level or lower pluma spell
8th	+8	+6	+2	+2	Swoop	+1 3rd-level or lower pluma spell
9th	+9	+6	+3	+3	Eagle form 5/day	+1 3rd-level or lower pluma spell
10th	+10	+7	+3	+3	Spell resistance (15 + Cha modifier)	+1 3rd-level or lower pluma spell

JAGUAR KNIGHT

Jaguar knights are associated with the temple of Zaltec, god of war. Although this temple is opposed to that of the eagle knights in philosophy, the two knightly orders are generally friendly. To the knights, nationality is more important than religion.

Jaguar Knight Class Features

All of the following are class features of the jaguar knight prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Jaguar knights are proficient with all simple and martial weapons, as well as with light armor, hide armor, and all types of shields. Additionally, a jaguar knight has the right to buy and wear jaguar knight armor (see Maztican Armor).

Hishna Spells: At each jaguar knight level, the character chooses one hishna spell (see the Hishna Spell List), which she can use once per day as a spell-like ability. If she chooses the same spell more than once, she can use it one additional time per day. Her spell choices are limited according to her level, as indicated on the Jaguar Knight Advancement table. Thus, an 8th-level jaguar knight can use eight hishna spells per day as spell-like abilities, one up to 3rd level, four up to 2nd level, and three of 1st level. Her caster level is equal to her eagle knight class level. The save DCs are Wisdom-based.

Jaguar Form (Su): A jaguar knight can assume the form of a jaguar (use leopard statistics) while wearing jaguar knight armor. This ability functions like the *polymorph* spell, except that the jaguar knight is limited to the form of a jaguar (or a dire jaguar at higher level). This ability is usable once per day at 1st level, and one additional time per day every two jaguar knight levels thereafter (at 3rd, 5th, 7th, and 9th levels). At 5th level and above, the jaguar knight can choose to take the form of a dire jaguar (use tiger statistics).

Poison Use (Ex): At 2nd level, a jaguar knight is trained in the use of poison and never risks accidentally poisoning herself when applying poison to a blade.

Cat Eyes (Ex): At 4th level, a jaguar knight gains darkvision to a range of 60 feet and low-light vision.

Spell Resistance: At 6th level, a jaguar knight gains spell resistance equal to 10 + her Charisma modifier. At 10th level, her spell resistance increases to 15 + her Charisma modifier. If she already has spell resistance, the benefits do not stack, and she uses this value or her other spell resistance value, whichever is higher.

Pounce (Ex): At 8th level, a jaguar knight can make a full attack after a charge, even though she has moved.

Hishna Spell List

Jaguar knights choose their spell-like abilities from this list.

1st-Level: *Alarm, animate rope, calm animals, cause fear, death watch, detect animals or plants, detect snares and pits, disguise self, hypnotism, identify, magic fang, magic weapon, message, pass without trace, protection from good, silent image, spider climb, summon nature's ally I, true strike.*

2nd-Level: *Alter self, animal messenger, animal trance, barkskin, cat's grace, charm animal, charm person, bull's strength, darkness, hold animal, invisibility, minor image, mirror image, misdirection, scare, silence, speak with animals, spiritual weapon, summon nature's ally II, summon swarm, web.*

3rd-Level: *Bestow curse, charm monster, deeper darkness, dominate animal, displacement, fear, greater magic fang, greater magic weapon, haste, invisibility sphere, Leomund's tiny hut, magic vestment, major image, poison, scrying, sculpt sound, slow, snare, speak with plants, summon nature's ally III.* D

JAGUAR KNIGHT Requirements

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To qualify to become a jaguar knight, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Alignment: Any nongood.

Base Attack Bonus: +5.

Perform (dance): 1 rank.

Survival: 3 ranks.

Feat: Proficiency with composite shortbow, maca (longsword), shortbow, and spearcaster.

Special: An aspiring jaguar knight must apprentice at a lodge. She acts as a normal soldier, although she receives special training and possibly special treatment. A character cannot actually become a knight until the leaders of the order feel that she has proven herself in battle.

JAGUAR KNIGHT Class Skills

The jaguar knight's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are:

Str: Climb, Jump, Swim.

Dex: Balance, Hide, Move Silently, Use Rope.

Con: Concentration.

Int: Craft, Knowledge (arcana), Spellcraft.

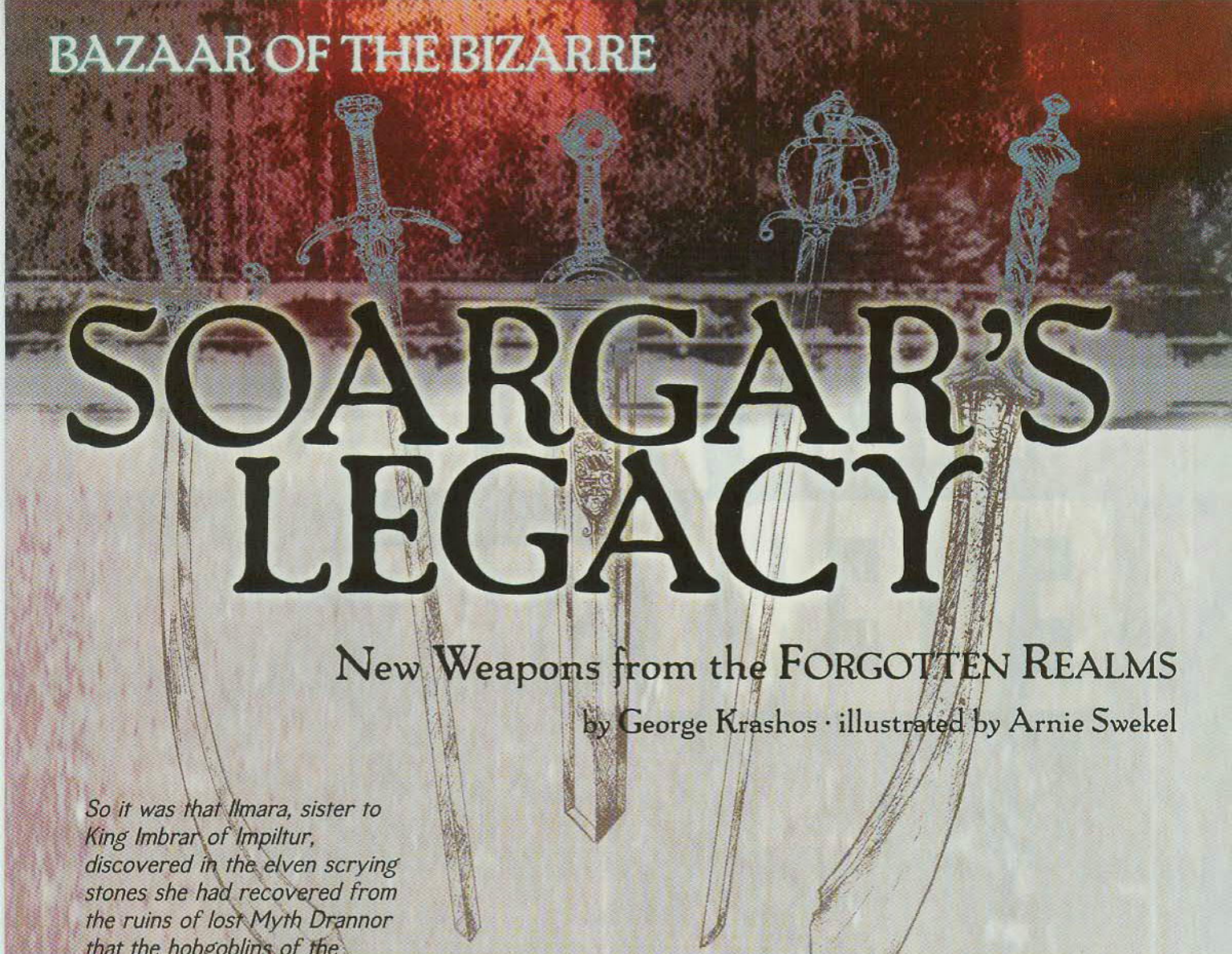
Wis: Survival.

Cha: Handle Animal, Intimidate, Perform.

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

JAGUAR KNIGHT Advancement

Class Level	Base Attack	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special	Hishna Spells
1st	+1	+2	+0	+0	Jaguar form 1/day	+1 1st-level or lower hishna spell
2nd	+2	+3	+0	+0	Poison use	+1 1st-level or lower hishna spell
3rd	+3	+3	+1	+1	Jaguar form 2/day	+1 1st-level or lower hishna spell
4th	+4	+4	+1	+1	Cat eyes	+1 2nd-level or lower hishna spell
5th	+5	+4	+1	+1	Jaguar form 3/day (dire jaguar)	+1 2nd-level or lower hishna spell
6th	+6	+5	+2	+2	Spell resistance (10 + Cha modifier)	+1 2nd-level or lower hishna spell
7th	+7	+5	+2	+2	Jaguar form 4/day	+1 2nd-level or lower hishna spell
8th	+8	+6	+2	+2	Pounce	+1 3rd-level or lower hishna spell
9th	+9	+6	+3	+3	Jaguar form 5/day	+1 3rd-level or lower hishna spell
10th	+10	+7	+3	+3	Spell resistance (15 + Cha modifier)	+1 3rd-level or lower hishna spell



SOARGAR'S LEGACY

New Weapons from the FORGOTTEN REALMS

by George Krashos · illustrated by Arnie Swekel

So it was that Ilmara, sister to King Imbrar of Impiltur, discovered in the elven scrying stones she had recovered from the ruins of lost Myth Drannor that the hobgoblins of the Giantspire Mountains were stirring. Swift and sure, Imbrar led his Royal Guard and a host of armsmen north into the mountains seeking to eliminate the hobgoblin menace once and for all. He was never seen again, but neither were the hobgoblins, and the magical swords that he and his guard wore, the legacy of Soargar, were lost.

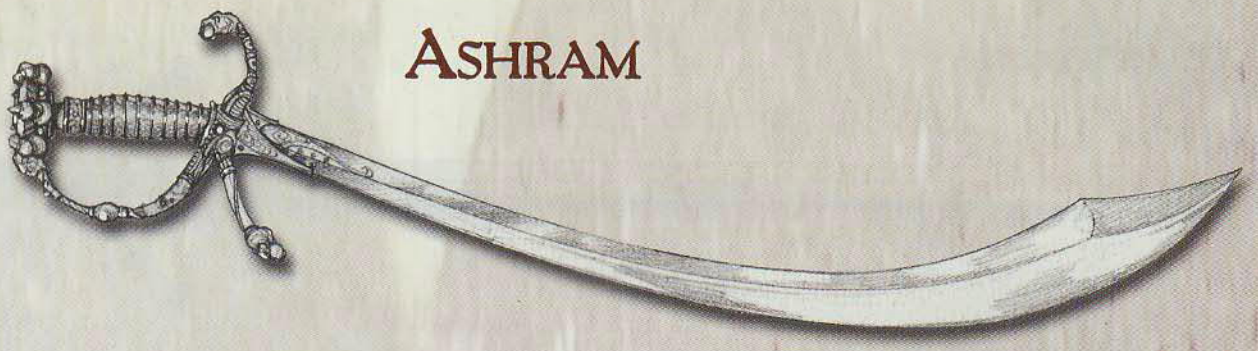
—Amphyr the Venerable
The High History of Impiltur,
The Year of the Moonlight Tapestry (1170 DR)

When the nation of Impiltur rose anew in the Year of the Gleaming Crown (1097 DR), it heralded the end of the dynastic squabbling that had torn apart the kingdom of Old Impiltur. The disappearance at sea of Princess Aliia in the Year of the Cracked Turtle (924 DR), the last survivor of her plague-decimated royal family, fractured the realm into a cauldron of seething turmoil, as noble families sought to gather enough strength and support to place one of their own on the vacant throne. The archmage Soargar was Mage Royal of Old Impiltur when that realm began to fragment in the Year of the Fearless Peasant (926 DR), and he saw to the safeguarding of many of the kingdom's treasures for the day when it would once again stand united.

When Soargar breathed his last in the Year of the Dawndance (1095 DR), he bade Imphras go to his tower in Lyrabar and claim the legacy of Old Impiltur. In this way, Imphras the Great, first monarch of reborn Impiltur, discovered the wondrous Crown of Narfell and more than five score magic blades believed lost by sages and historians alike. The swords were given to Imphras's loyal battle companions (who became his Royal Guard in time) and were subsequently lost with King Imbrar and his warriors in the Year of the Luminar Procession (1127 DR).

The sage Othiiyr Velthrann of Tsurlagol has made the study of the swords of Imbrar's Royal Guard his life's work. Othiiyr has recorded the rumors and tales surrounding the lost blades of Imbrar, and specifically noted the histories and last known whereabouts of five magic swords known to have been brought out of the Giantspires by diverse means and persons. He corresponds regularly with Elminster of Shadowdale, and it is only through the generosity of the sage Elminster that these five swords are detailed below.

Ashram



Ashram

Ashram was forged more than two thousand years ago at the behest of priests of the war god Anhur for use by Senusret, champion of the armies of Mulhorand. Senusret wielded Ashram valiantly in the Orcgate Wars, and upon his death the blade passed to other war leaders of the God Kings. When Narfell launched a seaborne invasion of Mulhorand in the Year of the Clipped Wings (623 DR), Ashram fell into the hands of an unnamed Narfelli warrior who bore it north. Years later, the blade was buried with him in a barrow somewhere in the Great Dale.

The blade next appeared in the "Grand Muster," a huge military inventory and catalogue ordered by the warlike King Thorodil of Impiltur in the Year of the Sunless Passage (576 DR). The scimitar was noted as being borne by Duke Calthos of House Orbil, a minor noble possessed of a reputation for daring adventures and dark intrigues. House Orbil was declared outlaw some fifty winters afterward, and Ashram fell into the hands of the royal family of Impiltur. It was seldom borne by the rulers of Impiltur (due to an inability or unwillingness to master the nuances of wielding its curved blade) and languished for hundreds of years in the Royal Vaults until the Mage Royal Soargar brought it and many other swords to his tower in Lyrabar.

Some sixty winters after Ashram was lost with King Imbrar in the Giantspires, the Red Wizard Sarros presented the sword to then Zulkir of Divination, Elzarr of the Crimson Eye. Sarros had led an expedition into the Giantspires to recover the fabled Watch Crystal of Alathas, one of the magic scrying stones discovered by Ilmara in ruined Myth Drannor that was subsequently carried and lost by King Imbrar and his Royal Guard. The Red Wizards are thought to have added enchantments to the scimitar at this time, and Ashram was subsequently given to the Biting Blade of Thay, Daryn Mellas. (The Biting Blade of Thay is the formal title used by the weapons tutor of the Hands, the elite agents of the Council of Zulkirs.)

Ashram is now believed to be in the possession of Thoroun, a weapons master and one of the senior Hands who has held that rank for over thirty winters. Thoroun is known to be active in the Inner Sea region, coordinating the activities of the Hands and working against the Harpers at every opportunity. The last confirmed sighting of Thoroun, a stocky, much-scarred human in gray leathers, was in the town of Proskur, west of Cormyr in Uktar in the Year of the Tankard (1370 DR). After slaying a handful of local toughs in a tavern brawl, he was seen taking the east road out of town.

Ashram is a *+2 scimitar* of bronze that exhibits the strength of the highest quality steel. Its guard is also made of bronze, and the weapon's grip is wrapped with strips of fire-lizard hide. The scimitar's pommel is a claw clutching a gem that flickers with a red flame that some sages postulate is a sliver of elemental fire.

Ashram gives its user a +4 bonus to initiative while it is wielded in battle. (This bonus stacks with that provided by the Improved Initiative feat.) The wielder is made aware of this "quick-strike" ability through a slight tingling sensation that the weapon transmits to the hand that grasps it.

The scimitar also holds a rare type of spirit that no sage has ever been able to identify. However, these scholars have managed to attribute certain powers of the item to this creature. Anyone struck by Ashram takes +1d6 points of bonus fire damage. In addition, whenever the wielder strikes with a successful critical hit, she can elect to have the spirit of the blade release a stunning flaming burst attack. This attack deals an additional +1d10 points of bonus fire damage. Humanoids who survive this damage must then make a successful Fortitude saving throw (DC 16) or be stunned for 1d4 rounds.

The presence of the spirit renders Ashram immune to any damage from fire, heat, or electricity. Similarly, all physical attacks upon the scimitar do not harm it. If someone should discover a way to eject the spirit, another automatically returns and binds itself to Ashram after 24 hours have passed. During those 24 hours, Ashram loses all its special abilities and immunities and functions as a normal *+2 scimitar.*

Caster Level: 14th; ***Prerequisites:*** Craft Magic Arms and Armor; *magic jar;* and *flame blade, flame strike,* or *fireball;* ***Market Price:*** 128,315 gp; ***Cost to Create:*** 64,315 gp + 5,120 XP.

Ellendrin, the Weeping Blade

Ellendrin is a blade of high renown that is mentioned repeatedly in the tales and legends of the human settlements of the Inner Sea. Its maker is unknown, although the priesthood of Tyr has claimed that their deity had a hand in its creation. The Weeping Blade has seen a bewildering array of wielders over the years, and its history is as rich and colorful as that of any nation in the region of the Sea of Fallen Stars.

The Weeping Blade first came to the lands of Impiltur in the Year of the Reaching Hand (803 DR) when the paladin Mellethos, the "Old Lion of Tyr," gave it to King Nord of Old Impiltur. King Nord had lost his elder brothers Essys and Araln when together they fought and banished an army of fiends led by the balor Ndulu at the Battle of Moaning Gorge (786 DR). It was for this valiant deed and many others that Mellethos deemed Nord worthy of wielding Ellendrin. King Nord kept Ellendrin at his side throughout his

Ellendrin

reign, but upon his death, his successor King Halanter II gave the Weeping Blade to his childhood companion, the knight Jondar Tallmane.

Jondar wielded Ellendrin with honor for many years against such enemies as the orcs of the Earthfast Mountains and the pirates of the Inner Sea (who raided the inland settlements and coast of Impiltur without mercy during the reign of Halanter II). In his declining years, Jondar retired to the Abbey of Grimjaws, a fortified seminary of Tyr on the western shore of Bluefang Water. There he gave up the Blade and commanded that Ellendrin be borne by a different paladin of the Abbey every year. The sole duty of the chosen holy warrior would be to guard and protect the monarch of Impiltur from all evil and wrongdoing. This tradition continued as Jondar had commanded until the waning days of Old Impiltur, when the paladin Darbrett "Bloodspurs" Tallim was slain in the intrigues that preceded the fall of the realm. The archmage Soargar pried the sword from Darbrett's dead hand and kept it safe until the time when the kingdom of Impiltur rose anew.

After the disappearance of King Imbrar and his Royal Guard, Ellendrin was thought lost forever, but in the Year of the Behir (1342 DR), it was identified by the sage Othiiyr for the daring thief Gort of Tsurlagol. Gort was notorious prior to the Time of Troubles for his brazen larcenous activities, and he was known to have acted as a highly paid "retriever of lost items" during this time. The thief refused to sell Ellendrin to Othiiyr, stating obliquely that interests in the Moonsea had already contracted for the Blade, and that he was travelling there immediately. After departing Othiiyr's house, the rogue was never seen again, and neither was Ellendrin or any of the other booty Gort carried.

Ellendrin is a *+3 longsword* forged of star metal and hilted with mithral in a slightly upward curving cross-piece. The hilt is wrapped with silver wire, and a large, cabochon-cut diamond (worth 5,000 gp) is embedded in the pommel. This longsword confers the benefits of a *bless* spell (as if cast by a 9th-level cleric), by touch, upon any creature chosen by the wielder. This power can be used three times each day.

The Weeping Blade is so named because it constantly drips holy water along the length of its blade when unsheathed. Any creature struck in combat that is susceptible to holy water suffers an additional +2d4 points of damage from the sword. Creatures susceptible to holy water damage in adjacent areas (within 5 feet of the wielder's target) take 1 point of splash damage from the weapon. This damage cannot be regenerated and must be healed normally.

Caster Level: 9th; ***Prerequisites:*** Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *bless, bless water;* ***Market Price:*** 50,315 gp; ***Cost to Create:*** 25,315 gp + 2,000 XP.

Galathos

Galathos

Galathos was forged sometime during the height of the ancient realm of Raumathar. The warrior Erbass of Raumathar claimed the blade in the final climactic battles that saw the mutual destruction of that realm and Narfell, and he was seen fleeing west into the trackless depths of the Yuirwood.

Erbass was never seen again, but Galathos reappeared many centuries later when the infamous pirate Urthag the Knife was forced to abandon the sword in the city of Tsurlagol, known then as Chessagol. Urthag had brazenly spent several hours of revelry in the Bloated Gargoyle Inn before the Royal Constabulary became aware of his identity and sought to apprehend him. In his hurried flight across the rooftops of Chessagol, Urthag and the blade were parted, and it was delivered to King Lamoth of that royal city-state.

King Lamoth of Chessagol was famous throughout the Sea of Fallen Stars for his gigantic family (he had some eight sons and six daughters) and his continual attempts to marry into the established royal bloodlines of the Inner Sea. Seeking to lend some legitimacy to his family's fledgling monarchical rule, Lamoth was always sending this son or that daughter to the royal courts of Cormyr, Westgate, or Milvarn in the hope that a suitable royal marriage could be arranged. Eventually, King Lamoth succeeded, marrying his daughter Elthia to Prince Bellodar of Impiltur, who eventually became King Bellodar III in the Year of the Sifting Sands (642 DR).

Galathos accompanied the Princess Elthia to Lyrabar as a part of her dowry, and in time it became the sword traditionally borne by the son and heir of the reigning monarch of Old Impiltur. When the Crown Prince Amarkos succumbed to plague, Galathos was placed in the Royal Vaults to await a suitable heir to the throne. The disappearance of Princess Aliia two years later, however, saw Galathos retrieved by the archmage Soargar for safekeeping.

Galathos remained lost for over two centuries until the warrior Graldor "One-Hand," leader of the adventuring band known as the Company of the Collar, ran afoul of the Red Wizard Kelnar the Etched and a host of his gnoll minions in Spearsmouth Dale. The people of Telflamm still talk of the morning that a weeping Graldor entered their city and proceeded to the great Tower of Tempus, temple to the Lord of Battles, cradling the corpse of the swordmaid Evlanna in his arms. There, Graldor handed over the blade Galathos as payment for a prayer that would see his love returned to life. Galathos remained in Telflamm until it was stolen—along with the fabled Red Book of War and other valuable items—by the local thieves' guild, known as the Shadowmasters, in the Year of the Arch (1353 DR). In the tumult that followed, the sword was erroneously thought recovered along with other temple treasures. It is known that the aged Taeron, Champion Rampant of Tempus in Telflamm, continues to actively search for Galathos and has offered a reward of 15,000 pieces of gold for its recovery. Its whereabouts remain a mystery.

Galathos is a *+2 rapier* made of a steel and silver alloy, demonstrably as effective as silver against creatures that suffer negative effects from contact with that metal. The blade has been treated with everbright, and its hilt is bound in soft blue leather. The sword sheds a bright silver radiance that provides illumination equivalent to a *light* spell when drawn from its scabbard.

Arguably the most valuable of Galathos's abilities is that three times each day, the sword can reflect any hostile spells that target it or its wielder back upon the spellcaster (as the spell *spell turning*). This function is automatic and operates without the impetus of the weapon's wielder. Unused spell reflections cannot be "saved up" for later use.

Caster Level: 13th; ***Prerequisites:*** Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *spell turning;* ***Market Price:*** 98,335 gp; ***Cost to Create:*** 49,335 gp + 3,920 XP.

Malagar, "the Burnfang"

Malagar was crafted in the Year of Rampaging Raaserpents (699 DR) to commemorate the slaying of the great red wyrm Malagarthaul "Flaming Claws" by King Amarkos II of Impiltur and a host of mounted archers. Malagarthaul had awoken from centuries of slumber in his Earthfast Mountains lair and swooped down upon the hamlets of Greentrail and Karvan's Oak, north and east of Lyrabar, seeking prey to assuage his raging hunger. King Amarkos and his men rode swiftly out of the Impilturian capital to face the dragon and bring him down.

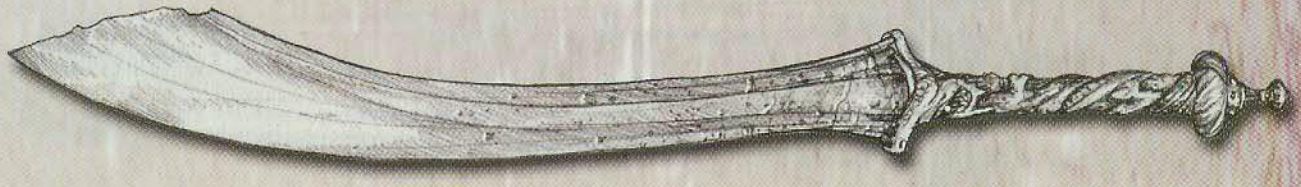
Enchanted by a cabal of mages led by the Mage Royal Ranerth Bentash, Malagar was wielded proudly by several kings and princes of the realm as a symbol of the might and battle prowess of Old Impiltur. It is thought that when the kingdom began to disintegrate, Soargar whisked the blade away by means of his Art from its place of honor within the Hall of Kings in the now-destroyed royal palace of Blackrock Castle, west of Hlammach.

In the years after King Imbrar's disastrous foray into the Giantspire Mountains, many expeditions were sent into that region by the rulers of Impiltur to solve the mystery of Imbrar's disappearance. In the Year of the Blade (1275 DR), the mercenary captain Delros Parander and his band of hireswords, the Gauntlet of Doom, were commissioned by the aged King Lashilmbrar of Impiltur to explore the area around Redfang Peak in the southern Giantspires. Delros and his company never returned to Impiltur but were recruited some ten winters later in Cormyr by King Salember "the Rebel Prince" to scour the Western Marches of that realm and free it from the influence of the young Crown Prince Rhigaerd. The Gauntlet of Doom won great notoriety in a single short season as Delros, openly wielding the blade Malagar, led his mercenaries against the various nobles who supported the young prince.

In the waning days of Salember's reign, Delros and the Gauntlet of Doom vanished from Cormyr's Western Marches as the canny mercenary realized that the steady stream of riches from the coffers of "the Rebel Prince" would soon come to an end. This small mercenary company is thought to have taken ship across the Dragonmere to Westgate, but there is no record of their arrival at this port. However, it is known that the increasingly desperate Salember used the infamous Fire Knives to make an example of many of his disloyal, erstwhile supporters in the final days of his rule. The fate of Delros, the Gauntlet of Doom, and Malagar "the Burnfang," remains unknown, but the sage Elminster believes it will undoubtedly be reclaimed by some brave adventuring band in winters to come.

Malagar is a blade of strange composition, being the carved tooth of a red dragon affixed to a hilt of adamantine. The "Burnfang" is a *+2 keen falchion*, and while it is held unsheathed, the bearer receives all the benefits associated with wearing a *ring of warmth*.

On a successful critical hit, Malagar shows its true potential, as a creature struck by the blade must immediately make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 18).



If the save is unsuccessful, the creature suffers a fiery bleeding wound, which transforms the target's blood into flame at the wound's location. Each round for 3 rounds after the critical hit damage is inflicted, the affected creature takes 2d6 points of fire damage as blood seeps from the wound, burning the target inside and out.

Obviously, a creature must have blood for Malagar to affect it in this fashion. (Elementals, undead, oozes, and constructs are some examples of creatures that are immune, as are all creatures immune or even resistant to fire damage.)

Caster Level: 13th; ***Prerequisites:*** Craft Magic Arms and Armor, ***Mordenkainen's sword,*** and ***flame blade, flame strike,*** or ***fireball;*** ***Market Price:*** 72,315 gp; ***Cost to Create:*** 36,315 gp + 2,880 XP.

Sarghathuld, "Orcbane"

Sarghathuld was forged in the Year of Many Serpents (605 DR) by the dwarven Master Smith Fyrfar Smokebeard. The High Old One Turbaern, the Blood Axe of Clangeddin, then enchanted the sword with the aid of the human wizard Beldossan the Short (who was rumored to have dwarven blood) and Alerathla "Rubytresses" Ilnatar, an elf sorceress of Ylraphon. This group toiled to produce more than a thousand "orcslayer" blades over a handful of years at the behest of the dwarf lord Tuir Stonebeard, who sought to destroy the Vastar of the orcs and begin his own kingdom. Sarghathuld was given to the warrior Ulnorn, blood of Jalabar, who wielded it with great valor in the battles that saw the dwarves of the Vast shatter the rule of the orc chieftain Grimmerfang and found Roldilar, the Realm of Glittering Swords.

Ulnorn is known to have traveled to fabled Myth Drannor, and it is believed that Sarghathuld had further enchantments bound into it by dwarven craftsmen and elven mages of the City of Songs. With the fall of Myth Drannor to the Army of Darkness in the Year of Doom (714 DR), Sarghathuld disappeared for nigh on twenty winters before it was given by the Ironlord of Earthfast, Barundar mac Idrin, as a gift to the young King Halanter I of Impiltur on his coronation. King Halanter was the first monarch of Impiltur to forge a pact with the dwarves of Earthfast and is still known to them as *Arausamman,* the "Great Friend." The blade remained in the Royal Vaults until it came into the possession of the archmage Soargar as Old Impiltur splintered apart.

Sarghathuld reappeared some 150 winters after King Imbrar's ill-fated expedition into the Giantspires when the warrior Kesten "Steelglance" Orthalin brought it to the sage Athylmas of Saerloon for identification. Kesten was the leader of the Grimblades adventuring band, a group said to have plundered many a ruin in the Inner Sea lands east of the Vast. He and his comrades are known to have perished a scant three seasons later beneath the talons of the venerable green dragon Urnalithorgathla, who had her lair in the dim and treacherous depths of the Spiderhaunt Wood. Sarghathuld and the bones of the Grimblades lay for over ninety winters amidst the piled treasures of this mighty dragon until she was slain by dwarves under the leadership of Borlin, blood of Ghellin, Axe of the Iron House.

Borlin wielded Sarghathuld in battle thereafter, and he is known to have whelmed a large band of dwarven warriors, the Mithril Legion, in the hope of reclaiming the long lost Mines of Tethyamar. Borlin and his army marched north and west out of Tilverton in the Year of the Wave (1364 DR) and disappeared. Borlin is thought to have sent word via magic to King Ghellin of the Iron House that his expedition had succeeded in reclaiming some of lost Tethyamar, but this is only rumor and conjecture. When the mystery of Borlin and the Mithril Legion is unraveled, it is likely that the blade Sarghathuld will be claimed once again.

Sarghathuld is a *+1 short sword* of dull gray metal, known to sages as "orcslayer" metal. On one side of the blade, the word "Sarghathuld" is etched in dethek runes, and "Orcbane" can be found on the other face. Embedded in the pommel is a glowing stone.

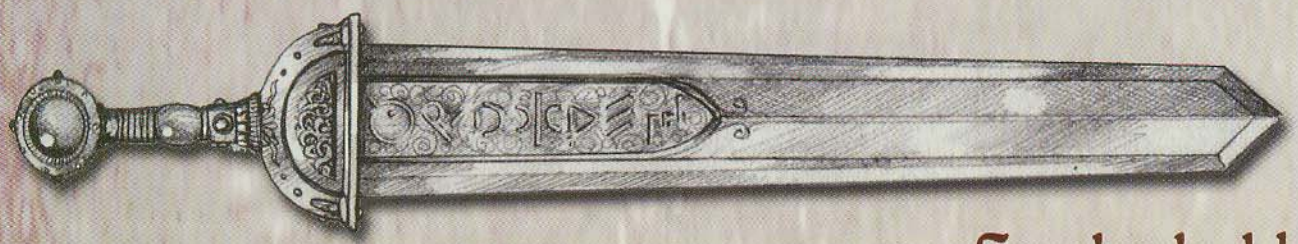
Sarghathuld's touch is deadly to orcs, half-orcs, and other orc-kin. When the blade is used against any such creature, it is treated as a *+3 bane short sword vs. orcs* that inflicts +2d6 points of bonus damage.

The final powers of Sarghathuld come from the glowing stone in its pommel. The stone constantly emits light equal to a *daylight* spell. This light negates and dispels any *darkness* effect. Covering the pommel with an opaque container blocks the light.

The wielder of Sarghathuld can also release a beam of power from the stone as a full-round action. This beam is a ray up to 90 feet long that inflicts 6d6 points of damage to any creature it touches if the wielder makes a successful ranged touch attack. The wielder can will the stone to continually attack the same target with the ray for up to 3 rounds at a time, but doing so prevents the wielder from using the beam power for 3 rounds following this extended use of the power. Use in this manner does not require three separate ranged touch attacks, but the beam can be broken if the target manages to find half cover or better within the 3 round period. The ray inflicts full damage to objects.

It is unknown what effect the removal of the stone from Sarghathuld would have, but sages agree that the stone's nature makes it likely that both the gem and the blade would lose all of their powers if this was even attempted.

Caster Level: 15th; ***Prerequisites:*** Craft Magic Arms and Armor, ***daylight, summon monster I;*** ***Market Price:*** 72,310 gp; ***Cost to Create:*** 36,310 gp + 2,880 XP.



Sarghathuld

by Mike Mearls and the DRAGON *staff • illustrated by Attila Adorjany*

Songsabers of Waterdeep

From impetuous noble scions to the light-fingered youths of the streets, Waterdeep's younger generations are weaned on tales of daring heroes, quick-tongued rogues, and high magic. In recent months, the reopening of New Olamn bard college has attracted many of these thrill seekers, uniting groups of the most unlikely companions in their shared love of art and desire for adventure. From among these collections of brash and bold students one troupe has distinguished itself not just for its exceptional skill in the bardic arts, but for unmatched bravado and a penchant for disruption. Members of this fraternity call themselves Songsabers.

The Songsabers are a coed organization of New Olamn's students dedicated to their studies, each other, and their collective desires to one day feature as heroes in the tales they were raised on. To this end, these aspiring adventurers embrace the theatrical and indulge in extracurricular—and often impromptu—competitions of spellcasting and swordsmanship, usually in highly visible public areas. Such displays often interrupt the practice and performances of other students—not to mention the public lives of Waterdeep's citizenry—and have caused many members of New Olamn's faculty to condemn the group as upstarts scuffing the college's still fragile name. Secretly, though, several of the college's teachers lend approving winks and nods to the Songsabers, seeing them as the most ambitious of their peers. This encouragement is perhaps best evidenced by the rare magic and unique weapons gifted to—or stolen by—the fraternity, from which they take their name: *songsabers*.

Animate Instrument

Abjuration
Level: Brd 2
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Touch
Target: One instrument touched
Duration: 1 minute/level
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

You imbue a musical instrument with the ability to play at your command. This instrument can play a tune on your behalf even while you are busy with other actions. As long as this spell is in effect you can cause the affected instrument to begin playing as a free action, effectively mimicking and continuing your performance (at the same Perform result as yours, if one has been made). Once the animated instrument picks up the performance, you do not have to continue concentrating to maintain its effect. Thus, you do not need to concentrate to continue a performance or bardic music effect (that relies on the use of a musical instrument) and may cast spells or activate magic items. You may not, however, make further use of bardic music while an animated instrument continues a bardic music effect.

You can animate any nonmagical musical instrument, such as a piano, fiddle, or harp. If the instrument must be carried or held while played, it floats in the air in the square in which you cast the spell. The animated instrument cannot move. The instrument continues to play until the spell expires or a creature succeeds at a touch attack to ruin its tune. An animated instrument's AC is 10 plus any relevant size modifiers (most handheld instruments are Small, giving them a +1 size bonus to AC).

Songsabers

Aside from being a group of particularly reckless students at New Olamn bard college (see page 24 of this issue), *songsabers* are also rare magic weapons that grow in power as their bard wielders' skills increase. To most characters, *songsabers* are nothing more than wooden cutlasses, longswords, rapiers, or sabers (see page 97 of the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting*). Those using wooden weapons take a –2 penalty on attack rolls and such weapons only deal nonlethal damage. In the hands of a bard, however, these weapons become far more potent.

Constructed as educational tools, not actual weapons, *songsabers* are repositories of bardic lore. Upon the blades of these artfully crafted practice weapons run various complex runes. When wielded by a bard, however, these runes lose their mundane appearance, with one rune glowing brightly for every spell level the bard is capable of casting (thus a 5th-level bard, capable of casting 0-, 1st-, and 2nd-level spells, would cause three runes to glow). These glowing runes (regardless of number) shed shadowy illumination to a radius of 5 feet. A bard who studies one of a *songsaber's* glowing runes for a full day and succeeds at a Spellcraft check (DC 15 + 1 per spell level of the spell held by the rune), reveals a spell from the bard spell list of a level he is capable of casting. Only the spells contained within glowing runes can be revealed. If a bard wielder chooses, he may replace a spell he knows of the same level with the newly revealed spell. This replacement is permanent and the old spell known is lost (although it can be relearned normally). Usually flashy, martial, or heroic in theme, spells held within a *spellsaber's* runes are fixed at the time of a *songsaber's* creation and do not change, regardless of its wielder. A sample *songsaber* might hold the following spells (one from each spell level, 0 to 6th): *dancing lights, expeditious retreat, tune of the dancing weapon, ever armed, rainbow pattern, greater heroism, mass cat's grace.* Some of these spells are uncommon bard spells seeing renewed use due to their recent appearances upon *songsabers.* These spells are detailed in this article.

Lesser songsabers also exist, which are the same as normal *songsabers* but only hold spells from 0 to 3rd level.

Songsaber: Moderate (all schools of the spells held within the *songsaber*, most commonly conjuration, evocation, illusion, and transmutation); CL 16th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, creator must be a bard, seven spells of differing levels from the bard spell list to be held by the *songsaber*; Price 12,000; Weight 4 lb.

Lesser songsaber: Faint (all schools of the spells held within the *songsaber*, most commonly conjuration, evocation, illusion, and transmutation); CL 7th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, creator must be a bard, four spells of differing levels from the bard spell list to be held by the *songsaber*; Price 4,000; Weight 4 lb.

Ever Armed

Conjuration (Creation)
Level: Brd 3
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: 0 ft.
Effect: Rapier and dueling cloak
Duration: 1 minute/level
Saving Throw: None
Resistance: Yes

Upon casting this spell a well-balanced *+1 rapier* and brightly colored dueling cloak (see the Dueling Cloaks sidebar) appear in your hands. For the duration of the spell you can use these armaments as normal equipment. The rapier created by this spell gains a +1 enhancement bonus for every three levels you possess above 7th, up to a maximum of +5. Thus, a 7th-level caster would call a *+1 rapier* into existence, while a 10th-level caster would summon a *+2 rapier.* The dueling cloak gains no additional enhancement bonus. Casting this spell does not grant you proficiency with either of these items if you do not already possess it. The rapier appears in your main hand and the dueling cloak in your off hand.

If either item leaves your possession, it vanishes. At the end of the spell's duration both the rapier and the cloak vanish.

Harmonic Void

Abjuration
Level: Brd 5
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: 60 ft.
Area: 60-ft.-radius-emanation, centered on you
Duration: Concentration, up to 1 round/level
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

You create a zone of murmuring, disrupting, arcane harmonies that

New Spells of the Songsabers

A mystery to many among the faculty of New Olamn college are the spells frequently put into use in the pranks, forays, and performances conducted by the Songsabers. Obscure, far-flung, ancient, or new, many of the spells Songsaber bards so flippantly cast are uncommon to even master bards. Many believe that one of the college's senior instructors provides the group with their magic through specially made songsabers. Others fear that these spells might be provided by a more sinister source, however, tempting the Songsabers to perform foolhardy deeds and bring about consequences for which they're totally unprepared.

Bard Spells

1st-Level Bard Spell

Loresong: You gain a bonus with one skill and can use it untrained.

2nd-Level Bard Spells

Animate Instrument: Instrument carries a tune for you, allowing you to take other actions.

Tune of the Dancing Weapon: Sword animates and fights for you.

3rd-Level Bard Spell

Ever Armed: A rapier and dueling cloak appear in your hands.

5th-Level Bard Spell

Harmonic Void: Creates a dead zone that makes spellcasting difficult.

Sorcerer/Wizard Spells

1st-Level Sorcerer/Wizard Spell

Loresong: You gain a bonus with one skill and can use it untrained.

2nd-Level Sorcerer/Wizard Spell

Tune of the Dancing Weapon: Sword animates and fights for you.

makes it difficult to cast spells with verbal components. Wizards, clerics, and other spellcasters find that their spells' spoken words become warped, twisted, and blurred, disrupting their efforts. A creature that attempts to cast a spell with verbal components in this area must make a Concentration check (DC 20 + your Charisma modifier + the spell's level). On a failed check, the *harmonic void* ruins the spell's spoken component. The spell fails to function, although the caster expends a spell slot as normal.

This spell has no effect on supernatural abilities, magic items, and other magical effects. It only affects spells with verbal components.

Loresong

Divination
Level: Brd 1, Sor/Wiz 1
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 minute
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: 1 round/level

You gain temporary mastery in a skill, even one that you have never studied before. When you complete this spell,

Dueling Cloaks

The Songsabers of New Olamn make regular use of the heavy dueling cloaks predictably featured in daring romances of nimble swordsmen and cavalier swashbucklers. Favored by members of Waterdeep's elite who also feel the need to arm themselves, these short cloaks sling over one shoulder and might be taken in the hand to parry attacks.

A dueling cloak is specially made for combat and is woven of material thick enough to defend a wearer in battle. A dueling cloak is held in your off hand and provides a +1 shield bonus, as its heavy fabric turns aside blows. If you are proficient with light armor you are proficient with a dueling cloak. Although masterwork dueling cloaks can be crafted, these items cannot be enhanced using Craft Magic Arms and Armor. Some rumors suggest, however, that some dueling cloaks (created through the use of the Craft Wondrous Item feat) exist with a variety of flashy and particularly theatrical effects.

Disarm Attacks: By using it as an off-hand weapon, you can use a dueling cloak to disarm an opponent. When using a dueling cloak in this manner, you get a +2 bonus on opposed attack rolls made to disarm opponents (including the roll to avoid being disarmed if such an attack fails). For the purpose of penalties on your attack roll, treat a dueling cloak as a light weapon. If you use a dueling cloak to make a disarm attempt, you lose its AC bonus until your next action (usually the next round).

Armor	Cost	Armor/ Shield Bonus	Maximum Dex Bonus	Armor Check Penalty	Arcane Spell Failure Chance	Weight
Dueling Cloak	15 gp	+1	—	–1	10%	3 lb.

select a single skill (other than Speak Language). You gain a +4 competence bonus on all checks with it, with an additional +1 bonus for every 2 caster levels, and you may use it untrained.

Tune of the Dancing Weapon

Transmutation
Level: Brd 2, Sor/Wiz 2
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Touch
Target: Weapon touched
Duration: 4 rounds
Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless, object)
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless, object)

You imbue a single weapon with the dancing special ability (described on page 224 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*) for the duration of this spell. The affected weapon immediately begins attacking on its own. After 4 rounds, the weapon drops, as normal for the dancing special ability.

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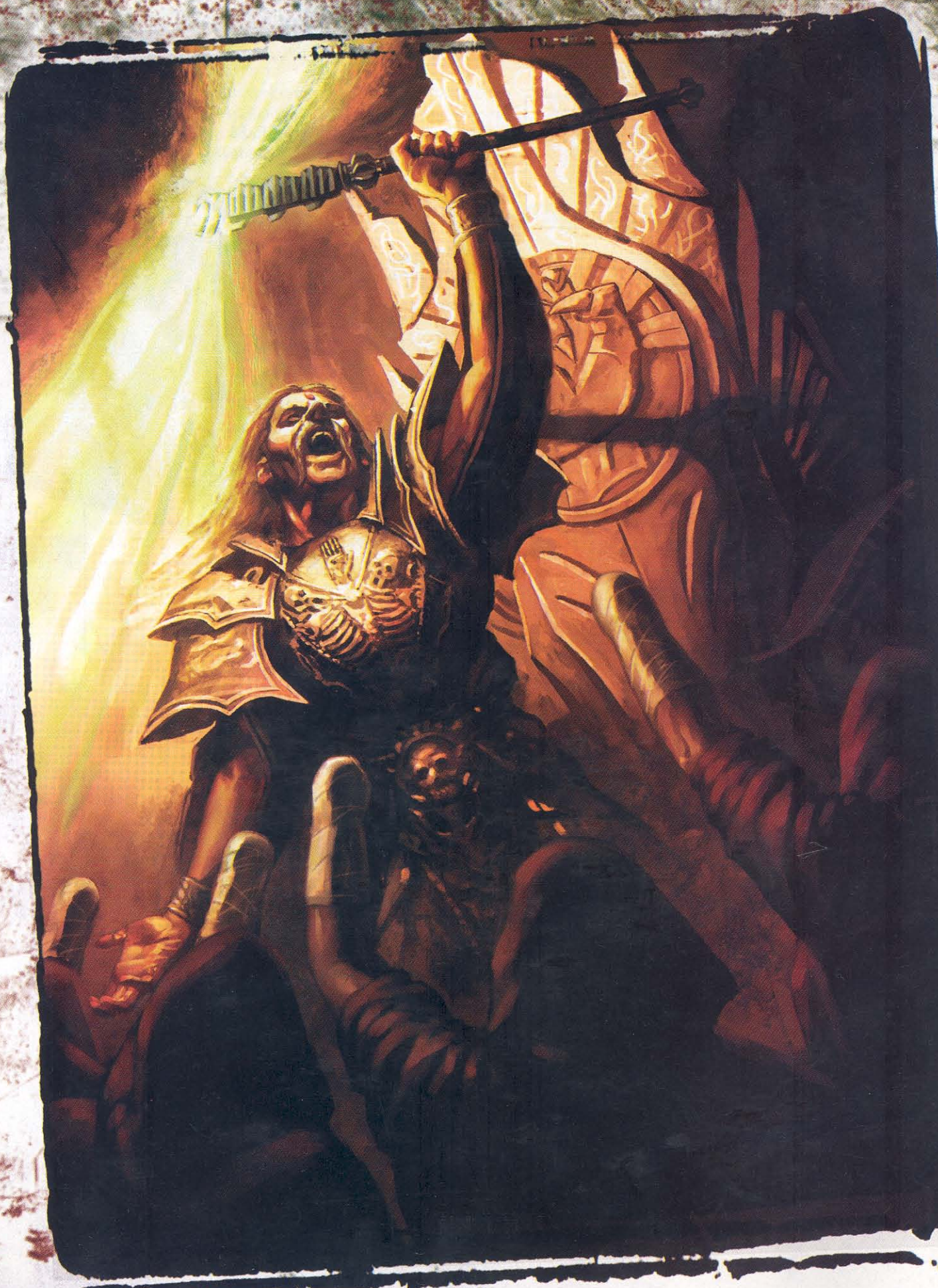


by George Swan • illustrated by Eric Deschamps and Jonathan Wayshak

THE RELICS OF FAERÛN

GIFTS FROM THE GODS

During the Time of Troubles, faiths were tested and convictions renewed. In the wake of those dark times, the deities rewarded the true believers who unerringly served them. Many of the gifts bestowed upon the faithful were relics, items empowered by a connection to a deity's divine energy. The following collection presents merely a handful of the relics that have appeared since the Time of Troubles, which supplement those found in Chapter 3 of the *Book of Exalted Deeds* and Chapter 4 of *Complete Divine.*

BANE: ROD OF CLENCHED FISTS

This hefty rod is crowned by four clenched fists stacked on top of one another. It looks to be made of coal, but it bears the unmistakable coldness of metal when wielded. Fzoul Chembryl gave many of these rods—as well as the secret of their creation—to followers of Bane who kept the faith during the god's "absence." Forging such a rod requires finding three good-aligned humanoids willing to sacrifice their fists to the rod with full knowledge of its use. Duress is often necessary to force such capitulation. For the capstone to the rod, a greater sacrifice is required—the creator's own fist. The original bearers of the *rods of clenchec fists* have since moved into positions of power in the governments of Faerûn, either directly or covertly.

The *rod of clenched fists* strikes as a *+2 light mace* and utilizes the following spell-like abilities as a 9th-level caster. Only one of these abilities can be used in a round.

- *Bane* at will as per the spell. A DC 11 Will save resists this effect.
- *Vampiric touch* 3/day as per the spell. This ability can be activated on a successful attack as a free action, dealing an additional 4d6 points of damage and healing the wielder by the same amount.
- Once per day, the rod can be used to cast *dominate person* on a creature touched. A DC 17 Will save resists this effect. Each day that the dominated creature is touched by the rod extends the duration of the domination by one day without a new saving throw. Touching a dominated creature in this manner uses the *dominate person* ability of the rod for that day.

To use this relic, you must worship Bane and either sacrifice a 5th-level divine spell slot or have the True Believer feat and at least 9 Hit Dice.

Moderate enchantment; CL 9th; Craft Rod, Sanctify Relic, *bane, dominate person, vampiric touch,* creator must worship Bane and sever a hand to power the rod (which cannot be regenerated unless the rod is destroyed); Price 42,500; Weight 5 lb.

GOND: POUCH OF BLACK ESSENCE

When Gond came to Lantan during the Time of Troubles, he unveiled the secrets of that most powerful and dangerous of materials known as *smokepowder*. The Wonderbringer knew that the gnomes there would not misuse the technology—but accidents would sometimes happen. In order to protect his treasured innovators in their studies of the technology, Gond crafted special pouches that contained an unlimited supply of the explosive black powder. Eventually, the gnomes of Lantan made copies of the pouches and spread them through their trusted channels to other bastions of invention across Faerûn.

The *pouch of black essence* is stained with Gond's holy symbol, as if the material was once a piece of cloth that bore the symbol before being wrapped up around its contents to form a container. No drawstring seals the pouch, but it is watertight and opens easily when a hand or finger probes inside. The bearer can bring forth 5 pounds (80 ounces) worth of *smokepowder* per tenday (1 ounce is needed for muskets, and at least 5 ounces are needed for a *smokepowder* bomb). *Smokepowder* created in this way must be used within 1 hour of being removed from the pouch, after which time the powder vanishes. Additionally, the bearer of the *pouch of black essence* gains resistance to fire 20, but only when a *smokepowder* explosion causes the damage.

TRUE BELIEVER [GENERAL]

Your deity rewards your unquestioning faith and dedication.

Prerequisites: Must choose a single deity to worship. Must be within one step of that god's alignment.

Benefit: Once per day when you are about to make a saving throw you may declare that you are using this feat to gain a +2 insight bonus on that saving throw.

This feat also allows you to use a relic.

This feat originally appeared in *Complete Divine.*

To use this relic, you must worship Gond and either sacrifice a 3rd-level divine spell slot or have the True Believer feat and at least 5 Hit Dice.

Moderate conjuration; CL 7th; Craft Wondrous Item, Sanctify Relic, *Leomund's secret chest, resist energy,* ability to create *smokepowder,* creator must worship Gond; Price 6,500; Weight 2 lb.

ILMATER: RIBBONS OF THE TWICE-MARTYRED

Daltrond Rica was considered one of the greatest healers in Sembia. When the Shaking Plague stretched like a deathveil over nearby Scardale, he journeyed there without thought of his safety. Daltrond followed the trail of rotting bodies, giving the blessing of the Broken God to both the dead and to survivors who had lost their loved ones to the disease.

By the time he reached the Sembian garrison in Scardale, the Ilmatari trembled with fevered chills. He had caught the Shaking Plague. Half of the garrison was dead, and the other half bedridden. Daltrond worked until he could stand no more, knowing that to cure himself might mean that one of his charges would die. His final breath was a prayer to Ilmater.

One of the soldiers saw the miracle. Daltrond's bloody ribbon accoutrements that bound his wrists and ankles expanded and wrapped around him like snakes, mummifying him instantly. Just as quickly, the ribbons faded and fell apart. Daltrond awoke, alive and free of the disease and its debilitating effects.

Still wanting to help others, the Ilmatari pressed farther into the infected lands and eventually once again fell ill with the plague that so many people had survived because of him. A shrine to the Broken God was built on the site where he at last succumbed to the disease.

These relics appear as ordinary ribbons that Ilmatari often adorn themselves with, until the Broken God has deemed the wearer worthy of his blessing (as determined by the DM). Many of these relics have revealed themselves to dying Ilmatari in recent years, through need or accident. The ribbons are wrapped loosely around the wrists and ankles (although bracers and boots can be worn under them without penalty). If the wearer dies suffering for the sake of others, the ribbons wrap around the body in 1 round, completely encasing it. The following round, the ribbons unwrap and the Ilmatari is completely healed, as per the spell *resurrection.* The normal loss of level penalty for dying still applies. Once the relic is used, it will not function for that same person again.

To use this relic, you must worship Ilmater and either sacrifice a 3th-level divine spell slot or have the True Believer feat and at least 5 Hit Dice.

Strong conjuration; CL 13th; Craft Wondrous Item, Sanctify Relic, *resurrection,* creator must worship Ilmater; Price 11,000; Weight 1 lb.

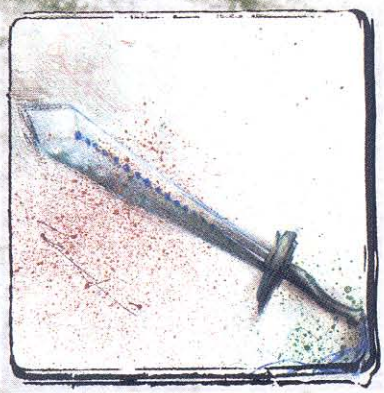
KELEMVOR: ASHEN STAFF OF INEVITABILITY

Kelemvor gave the knowledge of creating these smoke-colored staves of petrified wood shortly after the god understood his position as the Lord of the Dead. The sole purpose of these relics is to identify those without a patron deity (known as the Faithless) and "cleanse" them of their misunderstanding.

When the staff is within 20 feet of a Faithless, it begins to drone softly. If the relic ever strikes a Faithless, the power of the staff shows the target that his death is inevitable—and when it does occur he will writhe in agony, trapped in the Wall of the Faithless forever. The vision can be resisted with a successful DC 13 Will save. Failure means that the creature is stunned for 1d4 rounds while forced to confront his lack of a patron deity. Whether or not the creature undergoes an epiphany as a result of this forced introspection is up to the player of the stricken creature (or the DM). The power only works on intelligent, sentient creatures native to the Material Plane and capable of having a patron deity. Whether or not the save is successful, a creature cannot be affected again by this power for 24 hours. DMs should not automatically assume that creatures have no patron deity: they should consult the charts on pages 221–223 in *Faiths and Pantheons*. In all other ways, the *ashen staff of inevitability* strikes foes as a *+1 ghost touch/+1 ghost touch quarterstaff*.

To use this relic, you must worship Kelemvor and either sacrifice a 3rd-level divine spell slot or have the True Believer feat and at least 5 Hit Dice.

Moderate enchantment; CL 8th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Sanctify Relic, *augury, cause fear*; creator must worship Kelemvor; Price 16,600; Weight 10 lb; Cost 8,600 gp + 640 XP.



OGHMA: LEGENDMAKER

In recent years, fledgling Ohgmanyte bards, clerics, and others with wanderlust have carried a truly remarkable weapon—at least in the weapon's opinion. This weapon, called *legendmaker*, has a voice all its own and is not afraid to use it to form an opinion, a song, or an overly intricate plan. *Legendmaker* was forged by Ohgma himself (a fact that the weapon reinforces on occasion) and exists to experience and retell the epics surrounding the bearer and her companions. It is most likely found in the hands of an introvert, or someone unwilling or unable to tell of the tales of her life.

Legendmaker is a longsword and gives the bearer the Martial Weapon Proficiency (longsword) feat if she does not have it already. Its abilities depend on the character level of the bearer—as the legend of the bearer grows, so does the weapon's power. The relic's enhancement bonus depends on the character level of the wielder (+1 at 1st level, with an additional +1 for every four levels up to +5 at 16th level).

AL neutral; Int 19, Wis 10, Cha 19; Speech, telepathy, 120 ft. darkvision, blindsense, and hearing; Ego 24. *Legendmaker* has the following skills: Appraise +14, Perform (song) +14, and Spellcraft +14, as well as the bardic knowledge ability at +9. *Legendmaker* loves erudition and so gladly gives advice on any topic (although it tends to give much more information than is desired). As Oghma is the god of bards as well as knowledge, *legendmaker* can utilize bardic music as a 4th-level bard, however it must be held to use this ability and it ceases singing should it be used to attack. It can speak (but not read) Common, Dwarven, Elven, Gnome, and Halfling.

To use this relic, you must worship Oghma and either sacrifice a 4th-level divine spell slot or have the True Believer feat and at least 7 Hit Dice.

Strong enchantment; CL 20th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Sanctify Relic, *legend lore, miracle*; creator must worship Oghma; Price 124,115 gp; Weight 4 lb; Cost 62,215 gp + 4,952 XP.

SHAR: AMULET OF PERFECT NIGHT

After Shar killed Ibrandul and assumed his identity, she basked in the Underdark—a place where the cursed rays of daylight never touch. It reminded her of the primeval darkness that existed before the world began. In commemoration of the eternal blackness that exists in the deep places of Faerûn, she created the first of the *amulets of perfect night* over the body of the fallen god of the Underdark. The amulets are flat black metal disks surrounded by a shadowy amethyst ring and are often confused with a simple holy symbol of Shar (and can be used as such).

As a standard action, the relic may emit a shadowy illumination (as the *darkness* spell) in a 20-foot radius around the bearer of the amulet. This effect cannot be countered by *daylight* or similar spells, as it is tied directly

HAND OF TORM

Abjuration [see text]
Level: Clr 4, Pal 4
Components: V, S, DF
Casting Time: 1 minute
Range: 10 ft.
Area: 10-ft. radius emanation centered on you
Duration: 1 hour/level
Saving Throw: Fortitude negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

You create an immobile zone of warding that is permeable to those of your religion but repels all others. The warded area has a shimmering visible border, above which is a ghostly image of a giant hand (the appearance of the hand depends upon your patron, so Torm's clerics have a shining metal gauntlet, while those of Bane have a black clawed gauntlet and those of Malar have a great beast's claw).

Creatures that have the same patron as you, or are wearing a holy symbol of your patron, can enter and move within the warded area unhindered. Other creatures that try to enter or move within the area must make Fortitude saves or be stunned for 1 round. If a creature's only action is to try to move completely out of the area, the ward does not hinder it.

Clerics and paladins of deities other than Torm name this spell after their own deity—*hand of Ilmater*, for example. This spell has the alignment components of your patron, so if your patron is Torm, this is a lawful and good spell.

This spell originally appeared in *Magic of Faerûn*.

and continuously to the perpetual night of the Underdark (although it would be extinguished in an *antimagic field* or similar effect). The bearer of the relic gains darkvision out to 60 feet (if she does not already have it) and can see through magical *darkness* perfectly. Also, those within the area of *darkness* created by this relic take a –2 penalty on saves against Shadow Weave magic. Finally, the wielder can cause *blindness*, as per the spell, in any one target within 210 feet once per day as a standard action. A DC 13 Fortitude save resists this effect.

To use this relic, you must worship Shar and either sacrifice a 3rd-level spell slot or have the True Believer feat and at least 5 Hit Dice.

Strong evocation; CL 11th; Craft Wondrous Item, Sanctify Relic, *blindness/deafness, darkvision, deeper darkness*, creator must worship Shar, the item must be made in an unlit portion of the Underdark; Price 40,000 gp; Weight 2 lb.

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SUNE: RING OF FIREHAIR

During the Time of Troubles, Sune rescued Sharess, goddess of sensual fulfillment, from her darkly hedonistic passions and near subsumption by Shar. In their escape from the Dark Goddess' grasp, threads of Sune's hair fell to the Material Plane and formed into perfectly braided bands. While only five of these rings are currently known to exist, one or two more come into the possession of Sune's faithful every decade.

Wearing the goddess' ring gives the bearer a pronounced confidence in his interactions with others, granting a +2 sacred bonus to Charisma. Furthermore, others see this confidence, making initial NPC attitudes one level higher than they normally would be (making indifferent NPCs become friendly and so on). Note that this ability only affects the wearer of the *ring of fairhair*, and a creature or individual who might be only unfriendly to the ring's wearer might still be hostile toward other members of her group. Also, any hostile action taken by the Sunite breaks the power of the ring over the creatures or individual affected. Many would see an attack as the deepest of betrayals, and might pursue the Sunite above all others. This power cannot be turned off but does take 24 hours to take effect and remains with the wearer for 24 hours after taking off the ring.

To use this relic, you must worship Sune and either sacrifice a 4th-level divine spell slot or have the True Believer feat and at least 7 Hit Dice.

Moderate Enchantment; CL 7th; Forge Ring, Sanctify Relic, *calm emotions, eagle's splendor*, creator must worship Sune; Price 22,800; Weight 1 lb.

TEMPUS: THE WAR WIDOW

This curious relic is a battered warhammer with a haft partially covered by tattered black sackcloth. Recent legend has it that during the invasion of the Tuigan Horde, the battle-hardened clerics of the Order of the Steel Fang were being slowly eradicated by poison and other underhanded methods. They prayed to the Lord of Battles for a blessing that would protect them from unethical tactics, yet would still preserve the brutal fairness of war. Copies of this weapon appeared in their armories the next morning. Since then, the veteran warriors of Tempus have wielded the relic to make sure that they die gloriously in battle, and not from diseased rations or tripwires.

While carrying (but not necessarily wielding) *war widow*, it grants a +3 luck bonus on all saving throws made against disease, poison, and the effects of traps. The weapon otherwise functions as a +2 *anarchic warhammer*. The bearer must participate in a combat once a tenday or the relic ceases to function until the next combat (even the enhancement bonus fades). While it does not necessarily have to be a war in order for the combat to count, there must always be a chance of death. For example, gladiatorial battles count (even if they are voluntary), but butchering sheep does not.

To use this relic, you must worship Tempus and either sacrifice a 5th-level divine spell slot or have the True Believer feat and at least 9 Hit Dice.

Moderate conjuration; CL 9th; Craft Arms and Armor, Sanctify Relic, *align weapon, resistance*, creator must worship Tempus; Price 36,812; Weight 1 lb; Cost 18,562 gp + 1,460 XP.

TORM: TRUEWORD BUCKLER

One of the greatest sacrifices in the Time of Troubles took place in the harbor of Tantras. Torm the True, bolstered to towering size, killed Bane—only to die himself from the struggle. His sacrifice was coupled with those of thousands of faithful, who willingly gave their lives so that Torm could prevail. Since the True One was restored to life by the overgod Ao, these shields have appeared on the forearms of the Martyr's Progeny, a group of devout adolescents orphaned by the crisis in Tantras. To a follower of Torm, the True God, the item's material is immediately apparent: it is Torm's own skin. While the unenlightened sees only a leather clad buckler, a follower of Torm sees, burned into the flesh, the word "truth" written in ten different languages.

The relic acts as a *+4 darkwood buckler*, and grants the wearer two additional powers. Once per tenday, the wearer can *discern lies*, like the spell heightened to 5th level. A DC 17 Will save resists this effect. Additionally, the buckler can activate the spell *hand of Torm* (presented in *Magic of Faerûn*) once per day. A DC 16 Fortitude save resists this effect. Both effects are cast at 9th-level.

To use this relic, you must worship Torm and either sacrifice a 5th-level divine spell slot or have the True Believer feat and at least 9 Hit Dice. At the DM's discretion, the Hit Die restriction can be lowered if you are one of the Martyr's Progeny.

Strong abjuration; CL 13th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Sanctify Relic, *discern lies, hand of Torm*, creator must worship Torm; Price 27,415 gp; Weight 3 lb; Cost 13,815 gp + 1,088 XP.

LOOKING OUT FOR THE LITTLE GUY

Arvoreen's KEEPERS

by Thomas M. Costa · illustrated by Jeff Carlisle

Throughout the Forgotten Realms, the deity Arvoreen watches over halfling communities and individuals, wherever they may wander. Stern and practical for a halfling deity, Arvoreen has instructed his likeminded flock to protect and look after others as he does them. Thus, the religious orders of Arvoreen's keepers and Arvoreen's warders were born, road and village marshals of the halfling god of vigilance.

ARVOREEN'S KEEPERS

Arvoreen's keepers, also known as Keepers of the Vigilant Guardian, are halflings of that rare breed that crave action. They are the defenders of their communities. They believe in an active defense, much like their patron god, Arvoreen the Defender, who promises them a glorious afterlife at his side. Consequently, keepers aggressively prepare for incursions into halfling lands and are always ready to repulse hostile invaders at the first sign of trouble. They construct defensive barriers, signaling systems, beacons, and traps to protect their charges. They patrol the community and surrounding areas, driving away or killing monsters and intruders. They also keep the peace and lead village militias when invaders attack.

Arvoreen's keepers are dogged and determined to give a good account of themselves, but they are also—like most halflings—extremely practical. They follow a code of ethics, but understand that it is only a set of guidelines that cannot cover every situation. Keepers might make questionable alliances, even steal at times, if such extremes are required to defend their charges. Similarly, they might ignore a petty theft if no one was injured.

Most of Arvoreen's keepers are clerics or ranger/paladins, although almost all single-class or multiclass combinations of paladin, ranger, and cleric are known. Very few barbarians or arcane spellcasters opt to become Arvoreen's keepers. Those keepers without any divine supernatural or spellcasting abilities are commonly known as warders.

In times of war, Arvoreen's keepers are commanders of halfling soldiers, elite warriors, and scouts. In times of peace, they are sentinels and troubleshooters, often serving as local constables, sheriffs, wardens, magistrates, or marshals, being politely nosy, maintaining order, and enforcing the law. However, even when they do not hold these positions, the local sheriff and halfling clergy know they can always call on keepers for assistance. For these reasons, keepers command the fidelity and respect of halflings everywhere, who love the keepers for keeping them safe. Keepers are common in many halfling communities, notably the fallen halfling realm of Meiritin (now part of Amn), the Purple Hills of Tethyr, and the halfling nation of Luiren, as well as among many of Arvoreen's military orders, notably Arvoreen's Marchers of Tethyr. A few keepers choose to wander, becoming deputy-rangers or road sheriffs—law officers given authority by local officials to wander afar in search of those who commit crimes against halfling communities.

Avoreen's Keeper Class Features

All the following are class features of the Arvoreen's keeper prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Arvoreen's keepers are proficient with all simple and martial weapons, light and medium armor, and shields.

ARVOREEN
The Defender, the Wary Sword

Intermediate Halfling Deity	
Symbol:	Two crossed short swords
Home Plane:	Green Fields
Alignment:	Lawful good
Portfolio:	Defense, war, vigilance, halfling warriors, duty
Worshippers:	Halflings, fighters, paladins, rangers, soldiers, warriors
Cleric Alignments:	LG, LN, NG
Domains:	Good, Halfling (from the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting*), Law, Protection, War
Favored Weapon:	"Aegisheart" (short sword)

When invaders threaten halfling communities, residents send prays to Arvoreen, whose worshippers follow a doctrine of guardianship, stern defense, and aggressive watchfulness. Arvoreen remains ever aware of dangers facing halfling communities but prefers a reactive rather than proactive agenda. When an enemy strikes, his halfling servants strike back with precision and decisiveness born of a strict, almost unhalflinglike regimen of martial training. More information on Arvoreen can be found on page 137 of *Faiths and Pantheons*.

Arvoreen defends halflings in the Forgotten Realms, but elsewhere Fharlanghn or Heironeous might fulfill a similar role as patron of the keepers. If you're using Eberron deities, Boldrei might sponsor keepers and warders.

Spells per Day: Arvoreen's keepers continue their devotion to Arvoreen. Thus, whenever the keeper gains a new level, he may gain new spells per day as if he had gained a level in a divine spellcasting class he belonged to before adding the prestige class. He does not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained (increased turning abilities, animal companions, and so on). This means he adds his new level of Arvoreen's keeper to the level of some other spellcasting class he has, then determines spells per day and caster level accordingly. (If the character had more than one divine spellcasting class before becoming an Arvoreen's keeper, he must decide to which class he adds each level of Arvoreen's keeper for purposes of spells per day).

Trapfinding: Arvoreen's keepers have the trapfinding skill just as rogues do (see page 50 of the *Player's Handbook*). With this ability, keepers can use the Search skill to locate magic traps and mundane traps with DCs higher than 20.

Uncanny Dodge (Ex): At 3rd level, an Arvoreen's keeper gains uncanny dodge, just as a 4th-level rogue (see page 50 of the *Player's Handbook*). This ability allows the character to retain his Dexterity bonus to Armor Class (if any) even if he is caught flat-footed or struck by an invisible attacker.

Defensive Parry (Ex): At 5th level, Arvoreen's keepers have truly mastered the defensive maneuvers of combat. When executing the fight defensively standard or full-round action, the keeper gains an additional +1 dodge bonus to his Armor Class (see Fighting Defensively on

page 140 and 143 of the *Player's Handbook*). In addition, when executing the total defense standard action, the keeper gains an additional +2 dodge bonus to his Armor Class (see Total Defense on page 142 of the *Player's Handbook*).

Subduing Strikes (Ex): Arvoreen's keepers often serve as local sheriffs charged with capturing criminals. At 7th level, the keeper can deal nonlethal damage with a weapon that deals normal damage without suffering a -4 penalty on the attack.

HIT DIE D8

ARVOREEN'S KEEPER REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become an Arvoreen's keeper, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Race: Halfling.

Religion: Arvoreen.

Alignment: Lawful good, neutral good, or lawful neutral.

Base Attack Bonus: +4.

Skills: Craft (trapmaking) 4 ranks, Listen 4 ranks, Sense Motive 4 ranks, Spot 4 ranks, Survival 4 ranks.

Feats: Alertness, Martial Weapon Proficiency (short sword), Simple Weapon Proficiency (sling) or Martial Weapon Proficiency (shortbow), Track.

Spells: Must be able to cast divine spells.

Special: Must be accepted for training and be judged worthy by a cleric of Arvoreen.

ARVOREEN'S KEEPER CLASS SKILLS

The keeper's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Appraise (Int), Climb (Str), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Disable Device (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Handle Animal (Cha), Heal (Wis), Hide (Dex), Jump (Str), Knowledge (local) (Int), Knowledge (nature) (Int), Knowledge (religion) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Profession (Wis), Ride (Dex), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Spot (Wis), Survival (Wis), and Use Rope (Dex).

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

Team Player (Ex): Arvoreen's keepers support, as well as lead, their communities. At 9th level, a keeper has learned how to pool his prowess most effectively with his allies. When using the aid another action, the keeper grants a +4 bonus instead of the usual +2 bonus.

Defensive Roll (Ex): At 10th level, Arvoreen's keepers can roll with a potentially lethal blow to take less damage from it. Once per day, when a keeper would be reduced to 0 hit points or less by damage in combat (from a weapon or other blow, not a spell or special ability), he can attempt a Reflex saving throw (DC equals the damage dealt) to take only half damage from the blow.

Code of Conduct: Arvoreen's keepers must be lawful good, neutral good, or lawful neutral. Additionally, the keepers' code requires they never attack first (although preemptive strikes against known raiders or invaders—who are considered to have attacked first—are generally acceptable), aid and protect those in their charge or their community, never flee from an enemy unless all those under their protection have safely escaped (even if it means the keeper's own death), defend the honor of their god and race, and respect and obey the clergy of the halfling gods.

Multiclass Arvoreen's Keepers: Arvoreen's keepers are allowed to multiclass freely as paladins.

Ex-Keepers: Arvoreen's keepers who cease to be lawful good, neutral good, or lawful neutral, or who grossly violate their codes of conduct, lose spellcasting granted by Arvoreen's keeper levels and the ability to progress as Arvoreen's keepers. An offending keeper regains his abilities and his ability to progress as an Arvoreen's keeper if he atones for his violations (see the *atonement* spell description on page 201 of the *Player's Handbook*).

ARVOREEN'S WARDER

The more militaristic branch of Arvoreen's favored, Arvoreen's warders lack the spellcasting abilities of their keeper brethren, but they make up for this limitation with sheer tenacity. Skilled trackers and warriors, warders often serve as scouts, man hunters, and commanders of halfling militias and military regiments.

ARVOREEN'S KEEPER ADVANCEMENT

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per Day
1st	+0	+0	+2	+2	Trapfinding	+1 level of existing class
2nd	+1	+0	+3	+3		+1 level of existing class
3rd	+2	+1	+3	+3	Uncanny dodge	+1 level of existing class
4th	+3	+1	+4	+4		+1 level of existing class
5th	+3	+1	+4	+4	Defensive parry	+1 level of existing class
6th	+4	+2	+5	+5		+1 level of existing class
7th	+5	+2	+5	+5	Subduing strikes	+1 level of existing class
8th	+6	+2	+6	+6		+1 level of existing class
9th	+6	+3	+6	+6	Team player	+1 level of existing class
10th	+7	+3	+7	+7	Defensive roll	+1 level of existing class

Where keepers tend to take a more deductive route in most of their pursuits, warders are willing to let their blades loosen the tongues of the guilty. Sometimes more brash than Arvoreen's keepers, both orders follow the same code of conduct, although warders also believe that it takes a sharp sword to cut through the world's injustices.

Arvoreen's Warder Class Features

Arvoreen's warders have the same abilities, gained at the same levels, as the Arvoreen's keeper prestige class. However, warders are far more adept in combat than keepers and have the following benefits.

Bonus Feats: At 2nd level, Arvoreen's warders gain Weapon Focus (short sword) as a bonus feat. Their use of the short sword becomes more deadly at 4th level, granting them Weapon Specialization (short sword) as a bonus feat. At 6th level, warders get the Greater Weapon Focus (short sword) as a bonus feat. Finally, at 8th level, warders master the short sword, gaining Greater Weapon Specialization (short sword) as a bonus feat.

Code of Conduct: Arvoreen's warders must be lawful good, neutral good, or lawful neutral. Additionally, they adhere to the same code of conduct as Arvoreen's keepers.

Multiclass Arvoreen's Warders: Arvoreen's warders are allowed to multiclass freely as paladins.

Ex-Warders: Arvoreen's warders who cease to be lawful good, neutral good, or lawful neutral, or who grossly violate their codes of conduct lose all supernatural, spell-like, and spellcasting abilities (regardless of class) and the ability to progress as Arvoreen's warders. An offending warder regains her abilities and her ability to progress as an Arvoreen's warder if she atones for her violations (see the *atonement* spell description on page 201 of the *Player's Handbook*).

HIT DIE D8

ARVOREEN'S WARDER REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become an Arvoreen's warder, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Race: Halfling.

Religion: Arvoreen.

Alignment: Lawful good, neutral good, or lawful neutral.

Base Attack Bonus: +4.

Skills: Craft (trapmaking) 4 ranks, Listen 4 ranks, Sense Motive 4 ranks, Spot 4 ranks, Survival 4 ranks.

Feats: Alertness, Martial Weapon Proficiency (short sword), Simple Weapon Proficiency (sling) or Martial Weapon Proficiency (shortbow), Track.

Special: Must be accepted for training and be judged worthy by a cleric of Arvoreen.

ARVOREEN'S WARDER CLASS SKILLS

The warder's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Appraise (Int), Climb (Str), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Disable Device (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Handle Animal (Cha), Heal (Wis), Hide (Dex), Jump (Str), Knowledge (local) (Int), Knowledge (nature) (Int), Knowledge (religion) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Profession (Wis), Ride (Dex), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Spot (Wis), Survival (Wis), and Use Rope (Dex).

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

ARVOREEN'S WARDER ADVANCEMENT

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+1	+0	+2	+0	Trapfinding
2nd	+2	+0	+3	+0	Weapon Focus (short sword)
3rd	+3	+1	+3	+1	Uncanny dodge
4th	+4	+1	+4	+1	Weapon Specialization (short sword)
5th	+5	+1	+4	+1	Defensive parry
6th	+6	+2	+5	+2	Greater Weapon Focus (short sword)
7th	+7	+2	+5	+2	Subduing strikes
8th	+8	+2	+6	+2	Greater Weapon Specialization (short sword)
9th	+9	+3	+6	+3	Team player
10th	+10	+3	+7	+3	Defensive roll

BATTLEGUARD OF TEMPUS

Soldier-Saints of the Lord of Battle

by Thomas M. Costa · illustrated by Jason Engle

Battleguards are formidable soldier-priests of Tempus who specialize in every aspect of military affairs. Strategists and tacticians, their knowledge and guile can sway the tide of battles before they are even fought. Battle smiths and logisticians, they devotedly craft the arms of the faithful and speed even the most grueling marches. Harsh drill sergeants and exacting taskmasters, they understand the strength of recognizing and rewarding heroism and easily win their troops' unwavering loyalty. Battle rousers and holy champions, they inspire their followers to epic feats of courage and daring, all to glorify Tempus's name.

Whenever possible, battleguards take steps to prepare their companions for forthcoming battles and make use of healing magic to assist those who fall in valiant combat. These holy warriors are often organized into a military hierarchy. Common ranks in ascending order include: Warpriest, Swung Sword, Terrible Sword, Lance of the Lord, Shield of the God, Swordmistress/Swordmaster, Battlelady/Battlelord, and Lady/Lord of the Field—but these are often superseded by titles that go with a position, such as Battle Chaplain of a shrine or Trusted Sword (seneschal) of a temple. Church authorities assign ranks in light of service, needs, and situation. Brevet (or temporary) commands are common in desperate situations.

Most battleguards are clerics of Tempus, although many are multiclassed as barbarians, divine champions, or fighters. They regularly serve in fighting forces across the Realms, notably among the Flaming Fists of Baldur's Gate.

Class Features

All the following are class features of the battleguard of Tempus.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A battleguard is proficient with all simple and martial weapons, and all types of armor and shields. They prefer to wield axes and swords and to wear the best armor they can afford. Battleguards of high rank often wear a spiked gauntlet as a badge of office, especially when leading an army into battle, although it is rarely a weapon of choice.

Spells per Day: At each indicated battleguard level, the character gains new spells per day as if he had also gained a level in a divine spellcasting class to which he belonged before adding the prestige class level. He does not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained (such as improved chance of turning or destroying undead, additional favored enemies, and so on). If the character had more than one divine spellcasting class before becoming a battleguard, the player must decide which class to add each battleguard level to for the purpose of determining spells per day.

Army Domain: At 1st level, a battleguard gains access to the Army domain. The battleguard receives the Army domain's granted power, and if a cleric, may choose from the domain's spell list when choosing domain spells each day.

Arms Lore (Ex): At 1st level, a battleguard develops a wealth of knowledge about weapons and armor (including shields, helmets, and gauntlets). This ability works exactly like the bardic knowledge ability of the bard class, but only to facts relating to arms and armor. The knowledge check bonus is equal the character's battleguard level + his Intelligence modifier. If a battleguard has bard levels (or levels in another class with a similar ability, such as loremaster), his battleguard levels and his levels in the other appropriate class stack for the purposes of using bardic knowledge in matters involving armor and weapons.

Weapon of Choice (Ex): At 1st level, the battleguard must choose a weapon with which he has the Weapon Focus feat. The battleguard must then consecrate the weapon to Tempus in a lengthy ceremony of meditation and fasting, which takes a tenday. Should the battleguard's weapon of choice be lost, stolen, or destroyed, the battleguard must reconsecrate another weapon. A ranged weapon cannot be chosen as a weapon of choice.

Enchant Weapon (Su): At 2nd level, a battleguard can temporarily enhance his weapon of choice (see above) to achieve a specific effect. The effect lasts for 1 minute per level, and the battleguard can create the effect once per day. The battleguard can choose from any special ability (including an enhancement bonus) with a +1 equivalent market price modifier. The effect ends if the weapon leaves the battleguard's grasp.

This ability improves at 6th level and 10th level, allowing the battleguard to choose weapon special abilities equivalent to a +2 or +3 modifier respectively.

Battleforger (Ex): Battleguards are master smiths and, beginning at 3rd level, receive a +2 competence bonus to all Craft (armorsmithing) and Craft (weaponsmithing) checks.

***Identify Arms* (Sp):** At 5th level, a battleguard can determine the single most basic function of any weapon or piece of armor, as per the *identify* spell, a number of times per day equal to the battleguard's Charisma bonus (minimum 1 per day).

Diehard (Ex): Battleguards are often the last standing. At 7th level, battleguards gain the Diehard feat as a bonus feat, regardless of whether or not they meet it's prerequisites.

***Analyze Arms Dweomer* (Sp):** At 9th level, a battleguard can discern the magical properties of any piece of

BATTLEGUARD OF TEMPUS

HIT DIE: D10

Requirements

To qualify to become a battleguard of Tempus, a character must fulfill the following criteria.

Patron: Tempus.

Alignment: Any nonlawful.

Base Attack Bonus: +4.

Skills: Craft (armorsmithing) 5 ranks, Craft (weaponsmithing) 5 ranks, Handle Animal 3 ranks, Ride 3 ranks.

Feats: Combat Casting, Leadership, Weapon Focus (any).

Spells: Ability to cast 2nd-level divine spells. Clerics must have access to the War domain.

Special: Must have been in at least five battles, and on the winning side of at least three battles involving fifty or more combatants.

BATTLEGUARD OF TEMPUS

Class Skills

The battleguard's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Handle Animal (Cha), Heal (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (history) (Int), Knowledge (religion) (Int), Ride (Dex), Spellcraft (Int), Survival (Wis).

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

THE BATTLEGUARD OF TEMPUS ADVANCEMENT

Level	Base Attack	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per Day
1st	+1	+2	+0	+0	Army domain, arms lore, weapon of choice	
2nd	+2	+3	+0	+0	Enchant weapon +1	+1 level of existing class
3rd	+3	+3	+1	+1	Battleforger	
4th	+4	+4	+1	+1		+1 level of existing class
5th	+5	+4	+1	+1	*Identify arms*	
6th	+6	+5	+2	+2	Enchant weapon +2	+1 level of existing class
7th	+7	+5	+2	+2	Diehard	
8th	+8	+6	+2	+2		+1 level of existing class
9th	+9	+6	+3	+3	*Analyze arms dweomer*	
10th	+10	+7	+3	+3	Enchant weapon +3	+1 level of existing class

armor (including shields, helms, and gauntlets) or weapon, as per the *analyze dweomer* spell, a number of times per day equal to the battleguard's Charisma bonus (minimum 1 per day).

Ex-Battleguards

Like clerics, a battleguard who grossly violates the dogma of Tempus loses all spells and class features and cannot gain levels as a battleguard of Tempus until he atones (see the *atonement* spell description).

ARMY DOMAIN

Granted Power: You have the spell-like ability to inspire allies within 30 feet, giving them a +2 morale bonus on saving throws, attack rolls, ability checks, skill checks, and weapon damage rolls. Allies must be able to hear you speak for 1 round. Using this ability is a full-round action. It lasts a number of rounds equal to your Charisma bonus and can be used once per day.

ARMY DOMAIN SPELLS

1. *Bless*
2. *Lighten load**
3. *Prayer*
4. *Divination*
5. *Easy march**
6. *Heroes' feast*
7. *Greater scrying*
8. *Mass heal*
9. *Teleportation circle*

An asterisk (*) following a spell name signifies a new spell described below.

EASY MARCH

Transmutation
Level: Clr 5, Army 5
Components: V, S, DF
Casting Time: 10 minutes
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5ft./2 levels)
Area: 30-ft.-radius spread
Duration: 1 day/level (D)
Saving Throw: Fortitude negates (harmless)
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

You enable all creatures making local or overland movements (as per Table 9-3 on page 162 of the *Players Handbook*), including mounts, to move swiftly overland without suffering the tiring effects of prolonged travel. Creatures hustling under the effects of this spell are treated as though they are merely walking, ignoring the potential to take damage or become fatigued from hustling. In addition, forced march movements are easier to sustain, requiring only a DC 5 (+ 1 per extra hour) Constitution check each hour after a day's initial 8 hours of travel.

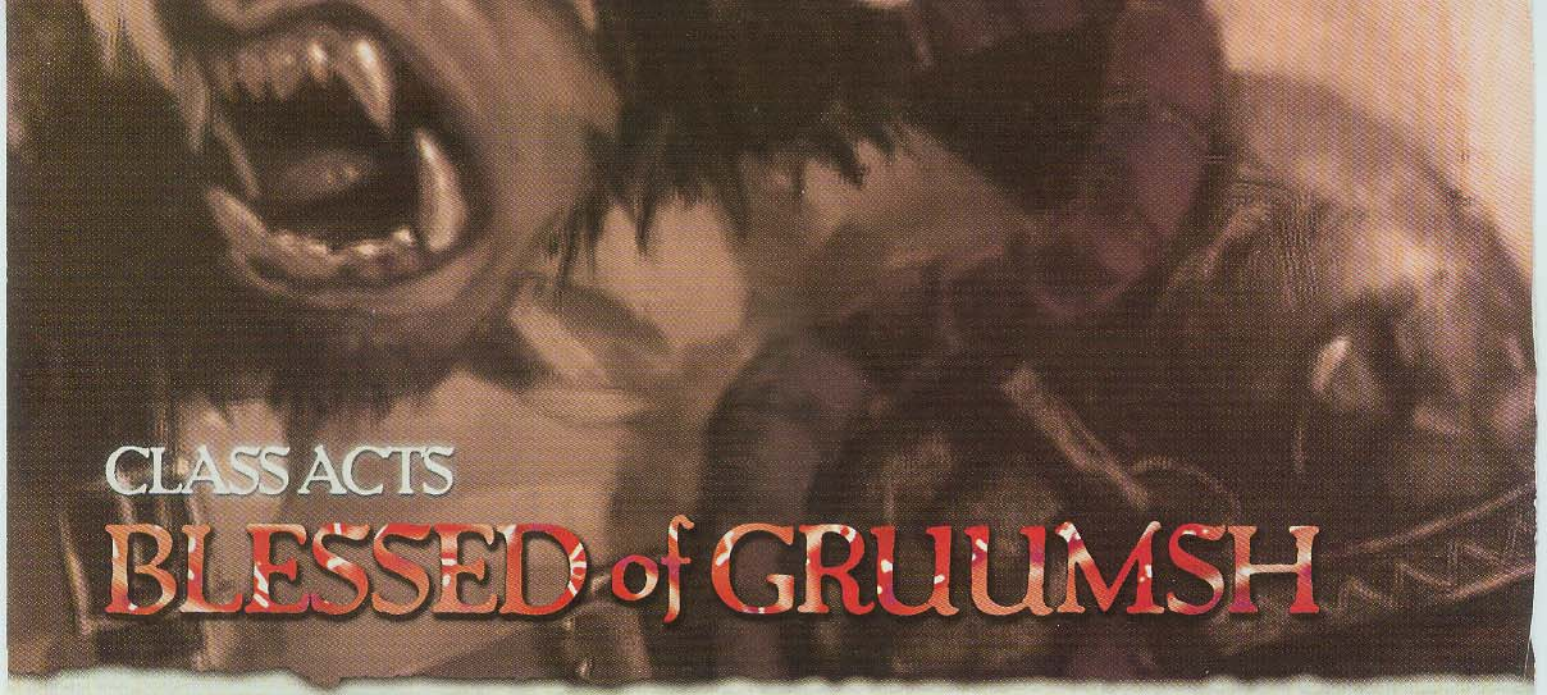
For example, a troop (all of which have a speed of 30 feet) marching under the effects of this spell could hustle for an entire day's travel (8 hours), moving 48 miles, without making any checks for fatigue. If the troop wanted to make a forced march by traveling for longer than 8 hours, it must make a DC 5 Constitution check (+1 per every hour it continues on after its first additional hour) per continued hour of travel, moving another 6 miles each hour.

The spell has no effect on round to round (tactical) movement or to modifiers to speed due to terrain, fatigue, weather, or other factors.

LIGHTEN LOAD

Transmutation
Level: Clr 2, Army 2
Components: V, S, DF
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Target: Creature touched
Duration: 1 hour/level
Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

You are capable of carrying a greater load than your Strength might allow. While affected by this spell, your carrying capacity (as per Table 9-1 on page 162 of the *Players Handbook)* is improved as if you had gained 1 point of Strength per caster level, to a maximum of +10. This virtual Strength is only useful for calculating carrying capacities and determining the effects of carrying loads (as per Table 9-2 on page 162 of the *Players Handbook).* The Strength bestowed by this spell offers no benefit to combat rolls, skill checks, or other activities moving a grappled creature; the bonus should not be interpreted as a bonus to any other situation except to those noted above. Thus, if a 6th level cleric were to cast this spell upon a character with a 12 Strength, the target's Strength score remains the same, yet his maximum heavy load increases to 300 lb. as if he had a Strength of 18. D



CLASS ACTS
BLESSED of GRUUMSH

by Monte Cook · illustrated by Scott Fischer

In a world of great magic and heroic deeds, even those more bestial humanoids have champions that wield great power. Witness the blessed of Gruumsh, the one-eyed god of the orcs.

A blessed of Gruumsh is an orc or half-orc that enjoys the favor of his dark-tempered god. Each exemplifies all that is orc. He is always true to the ways of his race and lives by the words of his god. Masters of combat and intimidation, each is feared—and rightfully so.

Blessed of Gruumsh are most often fighters or barbarians, but they are clerics almost as often. Rogues and rangers also make good members of this elite group.

NPC blessed of Gruumsh are usually leaders among their people or lone, wandering champions fighting for their god's causes. Occasionally they work in very small, tight-knit groups, fighting surprisingly well together.

Class Features

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A blessed of Gruumsh is proficient with all simple and martial weapons, all types of armor, and with shields.

Divine Blessing: Gruumsh, it is said, watches over his blessed ones. Thus, each has a luck bonus to AC based on his blessed of Gruumsh class level. This is an extraordinary ability.

Fist of Gruumsh: At 2nd level, once per day, the blessed of Gruumsh can inflict additional damage with any single attack. The amount of damage inflicted is +1d6 for levels 2-4, +2d6 for levels 5-7, and +3d6 for levels 8-10. Use of this supernatural ability must be declared before the attack roll is made. If the attack misses, that use of the fist of Gruumsh is wasted.

Evil Eye (eye of disdain): Once per day, as a spell-like ability, the 3rd-level blessed of Gruumsh can make a gaze attack as an attack action with a range of 30 feet. A Will save resists the effect (DC 10 + blessed of Gruumsh class levels + Charisma modifier), and those that fail suffer a -1 morale penalty on attacks, saves, and skill checks for 1 round per blessed of Gruumsh level.

Keen Eye of Gruumsh: At 5th level, once per day, the blessed of Gruumsh can add a luck bonus to an attack roll for any single attack. The bonus is equal to the class level of the blessed of Gruumsh. Use of this supernatural ability must be declared before the attack roll is made. If the attack misses, the keen eye of Gruumsh is wasted.

Evil Eye (eye of fear): Once per day, as a spell-like ability, the 6th-level blessed of Gruumsh can make a gaze attack as an attack action with a range of 30 feet. A Will save resists the effect (DC 10 + blessed of Gruumsh class levels + Charisma modifier), and those that fail

THE BLESSED OF GRUUMSH

HIT DIE D10

Level	Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special
1	+1	+2	+0	+0	Divine blessing +1
2	+2	+3	+0	+0	Fist of Gruumsh
3	+3	+3	+1	+1	*Evil eye (eye of disdain)*
4	+4	+4	+1	+1	Divine blessing +2
5	+5	+4	+1	+1	Keen eye of Gruumsh
6	+6	+5	+2	+2	*Evil eye (eye of fear)*
7	+7	+5	+2	+2	Divine blessing +3
8	+8	+6	+2	+2	Thunderous roar of Gruumsh
9	+9	+6	+3	+3	*Evil eye (eye of curses)*
10	+10	+7	+3	+3	Divine blessing +4, true orc

must run in fear as if affected by a *fear* spell cast by a sorcerer with levels equal to the blessed of Gruumsh's class level.

Thunderous Roar of Gruumsh: At 8th level, once per day, the blessed of Gruumsh can double the number of attacks that he makes in a given round while he bellows an incredible roar. If a character normally attacks with his orc double axe at +16/+11/+6 with an off-hand attack at +16, he instead makes six attacks at +16/+16/+11/+11/+6/+6 and two off-hand attacks at +16 each. The blessed of Gruumsh must be able to roar for this to work—it will not work within the area affected by a *silence* spell, for example. This is an extraordinary ability.

Evil Eye (eye of curses): Once per day, as a spell-like ability, the 9th-level blessed of Gruumsh can make a gaze attack as an attack action with his single eye with a range of 30 feet. A Fortitude save resists the effect (DC 10 + blessed of Gruumsh class levels + Charisma modifier), and those that fail are cursed as if *bestow curse* had been cast upon them.

True Orc: At 10th level, the blessed of Gruumsh can call upon his deity's might and speak in a commanding voice, uttering words in the true language of orcs—the very language that Gruumsh used to give birth to his children. These words inspire all orcs within 100 feet that can hear the words (including the blessed of Gruumsh), granting them +4 morale bonuses to attacks, saves, and skill checks for 1 minute per level of the blessed of Gruumsh. The character can use this spell-like ability once per week. D

CLASS SKILLS

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier

The blessed of Gruumsh's class skills (organized by key ability) are:

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
Climb			Craft	Profession	Bluff
Jump			Knowledge (religion)	Spot	Intimidate

REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a blessed of Gruumsh, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Alignment: Any non-good
Racial: Must be orc or half-orc
Base Attack Bonus: +6
Knowledge (religion) Ranks: 3
Feats: Weapon Proficiency (orc double-axe), Power Attack, Cleave
Special: In a ritual dedicated to Gruumsh, a character seeking to become a blessed of Gruumsh must remove one of his own eyes (to further embody the one-eyed god).

CHAMPIONS OF VIRTUE

New Prestige Classes for Clerics

by James Wyatt • illustrated by Mike May

Heironeous, Pelor, Ehlonna, and Kord might be among the most popular deities worshiped by clerics in the D&D game, as they are the four deities of good alignment not tied to a specific race. At the same time, these deities vividly demonstrate that there is nothing boring or homogeneous about good, as four deities more different from each other would be hard to find. Accordingly, the clerics of these four deities—while they all share access to the Good domain—follow widely divergent paths and often arrive at very different destinations.

The churches of these four deities all have prestige classes associated with their greatest champions—often clerics, but sometimes paladins or other characters. The shining blade of Heironeous, the radiant servant of Pelor, the fleet runner of Ehlonna, and the mighty contender of Kord illustrate better than anything the differences among the churches of these deities, not to mention the deities themselves.

The Shining Blade of Heironeous

Heironeous's teachings focus on promoting good through the use of armed force. Those among Heironeous's servants, both clerics and paladins, who aspire to become mighty weapons in their deity's unending war against evil hope one day to enter the shining blades. The shining blades of Heironeous is an order of knights dedicated to prowess in melee combat, which is achieved through prayer, devotion, and asceticism. Members of the shining blades have an austere and simple lifestyle, forsaking all worldly wealth and many earthly pleasures in their quest to become but a blade in the hand of Heironeous.

Most shining blades of Heironeous are clerics or paladins. Some members of the order believe that a minimum of training as a cleric, combined with the intense martial discipline of the fighter, is ideal to achieve the goal the shining blades seek, while others follow a single class exclusively. Very few multiclass arcane spellcasters, rogues, or monks feel drawn to the shining blades.

NPC members of the shining blades are probably the most devout, single-minded, and driven crusaders in the world. Consumed with passion for the path they have chosen, they have little patience for those who are "blinded" by desire for material goods or personal power. All that matters, they believe and preach, is the fight against evil; as long as evil remains strong there is important work to be done.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the shining blade of Heironeous prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Shining blades are proficient with all simple and martial weapons, with all armor, and with shields.

Detect Evil: A shining blade of Heironeous can *detect evil* as a spell-like ability.

Smite Evil: Once per day, a shining blade of Heironeous can attempt to smite evil with one normal melee attack. He adds his Charisma modifier (if positive) to his attack roll and deals 1 extra point of damage per shining blade level. If the shining blade accidentally smites a creature that is not evil, the smite

THE SHINING BLADE OF HEIRONEOUS

HIT DIE D10

Level	Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per Day
1st	+0	+2	+0	+2	*Detect evil*, smite evil 1/day	
2nd	+1	+3	+0	+3	Shock blade 1/day	+1 level of existing class
3rd	+2	+3	+1	+3		
4th	+3	+4	+1	+4	Smite evil 2/day	+1 level of existing class
5th	+3	+4	+1	+4	Holy blade 2/day	
6th	+4	+5	+2	+5		+1 level of existing class
7th	+5	+5	+2	+5	Smite evil 3/day	
8th	+6	+6	+2	+6		+1 level of existing class
9th	+6	+6	+3	+6	Radiant blade 3/day	
10th	+7	+7	+3	+7	Celestial transformation, smite evil 4/day	+1 level of existing class

has no effect but it is still used up for that day.

At 4th level, the shining blade can smite evil twice per day. At 7th level, the shining blade can smite evil three times per day. At 10th level, the shining blade can smite evil four times per day. These smite evil attempts are gained in addition to any gained through other classes (such as the paladin's ability of the same name).

Spells per Day: A shining blade continues the magical training he began as a divine spellcaster. For every two shining blade levels gained (2nd, 4th, 6th, 8th, 10th), the character gains new spells per day as if he had also gained one level in a divine spellcasting class. He does not, however, gain any other benefit of the spellcasting class. This essentially means that he adds half his shining blade levels to the level of some other divine spellcasting class the character has, then determines spells per day and caster level accordingly. For example, if Jeruk, a 10th-level paladin/1st-level shining blade, gains a level in shining blade, he gains new spells as if he had risen to 11th level in paladin, but he uses the other shining blade aspects of level progression, such as base attack bonus and base saving throw bonuses. If he next gains a level

CLASS REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a shining blade of Heironeous, a character must fulfill all the following criteria:

ALIGNMENT	LAWFUL GOOD
PATRON DEITY	HEIRONEOUS
BASE ATTACK BONUS	+7
BASE WILL SAVE	+3
SKILLS	KNOWLEDGE (RELIGION): 7 RANKS
SPELLCASTING	ABILITY TO CAST DIVINE SPELLS

CLASS SKILLS

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier

The shining blade's class skills (organized by key ability) are:

STRENGTH	
DEXTERITY	
CONSTITUTION	CONCENTRATION
INTELLIGENCE	CRAFT, KNOWLEDGE (RELIGION), SCRY, SPELLCRAFT
WISDOM	HEAL, PROFESSION
CHARISMA	DIPLOMACY

of paladin, making him an 11th-level paladin/2nd-level shining blade, he gains spells as if he had risen to 12th-level paladin.

Shock Blade: Once per day, as a standard action, a shining blade of Heironeous can cause a slashing or piercing weapon he is holding to become a shock weapon, dealing +1d6 points of bonus electricity damage on a successful hit. The weapon is enhanced this way for up to a number of rounds equal to the shining blade's level plus his Charisma bonus (if any), but only so long as the shining blade is holding the weapon. If he is disarmed or gives the weapon to another character, the magical effect ends. This is a supernatural ability.

Holy Blade: At 5th level, the shining blade can bestow two magical enhancements upon his weapon. This supernatural ability replaces the shock blade ability and can be used twice per day. With each use of this ability, he can choose to make the weapon a shock weapon dealing +1d6 damage or a holy weapon dealing +2d6 points of bonus holy (good) damage against evil creatures. The weapon is enhanced this way for up to a number of rounds equal to the shining blade's level plus his Charisma bonus (if any), but only so long as the shining blade is holding the weapon. If he is disarmed or gives the weapon to another character, the magical effect ends. The two uses of this ability can overlap, so in a given combat a shining blade can spend one standard action to make his blade holy and another to make it a shock weapon. The weapon cannot be made to be doubly holy or doubly shocking.

Radiant Blade: At 9th level, a shining blade can bestow three magical enhancements upon his weapon. This supernatural ability replaces the holy blade ability and can be used three times per day. With each use of this ability, he can choose to make the weapon a shock weapon dealing +1d6 damage, a holy weapon dealing +2d6 points of bonus holy (good) damage against evil creatures, or a brilliant energy weapon, which sheds light as a torch and ignores nonliving matter (including armor, undead, constructs, and objects). The weapon is enhanced this way for up to a number of rounds equal to the shining blade's level plus his Charisma bonus (if any), but only so long as the shining blade is holding the weapon. If he is disarmed or gives the weapon to another character, the magical effect ends. The three uses of this ability can overlap, so in a given combat a shining blade can spend one standard action to make his blade holy, another to make it a shock weapon, and another to make it a brilliant energy weapon. The weapon cannot be made to be doubly holy, doubly shocking, or doubly brilliant.

Celestial Transformation: A 10th-level shining blade of Heironeous actually becomes a celestial creature, taking on a shining, metallic appearance and adopting the celestial creature template from the *Monster Manual*.

Multiclass Note: Paladin characters can freely multiclass with this class.

The Radiant Servant of Pelor

Pelor teaches demonstrating the strength of good through charity and modesty. While it seems a contradiction, the point is that the truly strong don't need to prove their power. Pelor urges his priests and their flocks to perform so many good acts that evil has no room to exist, but he acknowledges that there are times when evil must be defeated in direct confrontation. The radiant servants of Pelor put this dogma into living practice. As the name implies, the brothers and sisters of the radiant servants of Pelor are sworn to serve—to minister to the needs of Pelor's followers and good-hearted people everywhere. While combating evil, particularly undead, is an important part of that service, it is by no means the only part. Radiant servants of Pelor are healers, counselors, sources of spiritual and (at times) financial support, and protectors.

Almost all radiant servants of Pelor spend their prior careers as clerics.

NPC radiant servants of Pelor can be found wherever there is human need—in the midst of plague and famine, behind the lines of an army at war, in villages plagued by hauntings, and in cities troubled by crime.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the radiant servant of Pelor prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Radiant servants are proficient with all simple and martial weapons, with all armor, and with shields.

Radiance: When a radiant servant of Pelor casts any spell with the Light descriptor, the radius of illumination is doubled, and the spell is treated as if it were one level higher than it actually is for all purposes, including determining whether it can counter or dispel a Darkness spell. Thus, a *daylight* spell cast by a radiant servant sheds light in a 120-foot radius, and is treated as a 4th-level spell, allowing it to counter or dispel any Darkness spell of 4th level or lower.

THE RADIANT SERVANT OF PELOR

HIT DIE D6

Level	Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per Day
1st	+0	+2	+0	+2	Radiance, turn undead, extra greater turning	+1 level of existing class
2nd	+1	+3	+0	+3	Empower healing, divine health	+1 level of existing class
3rd	+2	+3	+1	+3	Aura of warding	+1 level of existing class
4th	+3	+4	+1	+4		+1 level of existing class
5th	+3	+4	+1	+4	Additional domain	+1 level of existing class
6th	+4	+5	+2	+5	Maximize healing	+1 level of existing class
7th	+5	+5	+2	+5		+1 level of existing class
8th	+6	+6	+2	+6	Positive energy burst	+1 level of existing class
9th	+6	+6	+3	+6		+1 level of existing class
10th	+7	+7	+3	+7	Supreme healing	+1 level of existing class

Turn Undead: A radiant servant adds his radiant servant class levels to his cleric levels for all purposes related to turning undead.

Extra Greater Turning: If a radiant servant has access to the Sun domain, he can perform a greater turning (the granted power of the Sun domain) a number of times per day equal to three plus her Charisma modifier.

Spells per Day: A radiant servant continues the divine spellcasting training she began. Thus, when a new radiant servant level is gained, the character gains new spells per day as if she had also gained a level in a divine spellcasting class she belonged to before she added the prestige class. She does not, however, gain any other benefit of the spellcasting class (except for turning undead, as noted above). This essentially means that she adds the radiant servant levels to the level of some other spellcasting class the character has, then determines spells per day and caster level accordingly. For example, if Matara, a 6th-level cleric, gains a level in radiant servant, she gains new spells per day as if she had risen to 7th level in cleric, but she uses the other radiant servant aspects of

CLASS REQUIREMENTS	
To qualify to become a radiant servant of Pelor, a character must fulfill all the following criteria:	
ALIGNMENT	NEUTRAL GOOD
PATRON DEITY	PELOR
BASE WILL SAVE	+5
SKILLS	KNOWLEDGE (RELIGION): 9 RANKS HEAL: 5 RANKS KNOWLEDGE (UNDEAD): 3 RANKS
FEATS	EXTRA TURNING
SPELLCASTING	ABILITY TO CAST DIVINE SPELLS

CLASS SKILLS	
Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier	
The radiant servant's class skills are:	
STRENGTH	
DEXTERITY	
CONSTITUTION	CONCENTRATION
INTELLIGENCE	CRAFT, KNOWLEDGE (ARCANA), KNOWLEDGE (RELIGION), SCRY, SPELLCRAFT
WISDOM	HEAL, PROFESSION, SENSE MOTIVE
CHARISMA	DIPLOMACY

level progression such as base attack bonus and base saving throw bonuses. If she next gains a level of cleric, making her a 7th-level cleric/1st-level radiant servant, she gains spells as if she had risen to 8th-level cleric.

Empower Healing: When a radiant servant of Pelor of at least 2nd level casts a domain spell from the Healing domain, that spell is affected as though by the Empower Spell feat. The spell does not use up a higher-level slot.

Divine Health: A radiant servant of Pelor who is at least 2nd level is immune to all diseases, including magical diseases such as mummy rot and lycanthropy.

Aura of Warding: At 3rd level, a radiant servant and all allies within 10 feet of her gain a +2 morale bonus to all Will saving throws.

Additional Domain: A radiant servant who reaches 5th level is granted another of Pelor's domains as a third clerical domain. She can use the granted power of the domain, and can choose from the spell lists of three domains when selecting her domain spells for the day. She can only cast one domain spell of each level (1st through 9th) per day. Radiant servants without a level of cleric gain no benefit from this granted ability.

Maximize Healing: When a radiant servant of Pelor who is at least 6th level casts a domain spell from the Healing domain, that spell is affected as though by the Maximize Spell feat. The spell does not use up a higher-level slot. This power supercedes the Empower Healing ability until the character reaches 10th level.

Positive Energy Burst: As a standard action a radiant servant who is at least 8th level can create a positive energy burst that inflicts 1d6 points of damage per class level to all undead creatures within 100 feet of the character. Undead are allowed a Reflex save (DC equal to 10 + the class level of the radiant servant) to avoid half the damage. This supernatural ability uses up two turning attempts. A radiant servant can not use this ability if she has fewer than two turning attempts left for the day.

Supreme Healing: When a radiant servant of Pelor who is at least 10th level casts a domain spell from the Healing domain, that spell is affected as though by both the Empower Spell and the Maximize Spell feats. The spell does not use up a higher-level slot.

The Fleet Runner of Ehlonna

In the wild, speed is sometimes essential. Often, an animal's only hope of survival is to outrun another creature. Certain followers of Ehlonna, goddess of the woodlands, emulate this aspect of the natural world above all others, cultivating their natural speed until they become like the deer leaping between the trees—or, eventually, the wind that blows through them.

Most fleet runners of Ehlonna are clerics or druids who serve that deity, though a number of rangers also follow this path. Multiclass cleric/rangers or druid/rangers quite often become fleet runners, but members of other classes are rarely interested.

NPC fleet runners are almost feral creatures of the woodland. They have been known to run with the centaurs and dance with the satyrs, though many prefer the company of animals to that of more sophisticated creatures. They use their speed and travel-related abilities in defense of the woodlands—to carry messages, send for aid, or bring aid themselves.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the fleet runner of Ehlonna prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Fleet runners are proficient with all simple and martial weapons, with all armor, and with shields.

Fast Movement: The fleet runner has a speed faster than what is normal for her race by +10 feet when wearing no armor, light armor, or medium armor (and not carrying a heavy load). For example, a human fleet runner in studded leather armor has a standard speed of 40 feet. This increase stacks with similar speed increases, such as from the barbarian or monk classes. This is an extraordinary ability.

Greater Mobility: A fleet runner of Ehlonna gets a +8 dodge bonus to Armor Class against attacks of opportunity caused when she moves out of or within a threatened area. This supercedes the bonus granted by the Mobility feat. This is an extraordinary ability.

Additional Domain: A fleet runner gains access to another of Ehlonna's domains as a third clerical domain. She can use the granted power of the domain (using her fleet runner level instead of her cleric level), and can choose from the spell lists of three domains when selecting her domain spells for the day. She can cast only one domain spell of each level (1st through 9th) per day. Fleet runners without a level of cleric gain no benefit from this granted ability.

Bonus Spells: Similar to bonus spells for high ability scores, for each level of fleet runner that a spellcasting character attains, she gains bonus spells to the number of divine spells per day she

THE FLEET RUNNER OF EHLONNA

HIT DIE D8

Level	Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special	Spells
1st	+0	+2	+0	+2	Fast movement, greater mobility, additional domain	1
2nd	+1	+3	+0	+3	Evasion	2
3rd	+2	+3	+1	+3	*Leap of the hart*	1
4th	+3	+4	+1	+4	Shot on the Run feat	2
5th	+3	+4	+1	+4	*Run like the huntress*	1
6th	+4	+5	+2	+5	Improved evasion	2
7th	+5	+5	+2	+5	*Run like the wind*	1
8th	+6	+6	+2	+6	Leopard's pounce	2
9th	+6	+6	+3	+6	Swiftness of the tigress	1
10th	+7	+7	+3	+7	Cheetah's sprint	2

normally casts. These bonus spells can be added to any level of spells the fleet runner can currently cast, but no more than one can be added to the character's highest current spell level. For example, Farella is a 9th-level cleric of Ehlonna who takes one level in fleet runner. She can give herself one bonus 5th-level spell (her highest as a 9th-level cleric), and one bonus spell in one other level (0 through 4th).

If a fleet runner has two divine spellcasting classes already, she must choose which previous class of spells gains the bonus. For example, Jecara is a 3rd-level druid/8th-level ranger, with one level of fleet runner. Conceivably, Jecara could have a bonus 2nd-level druid spell and a bonus 2nd-level ranger spell, or she could put both bonus spells in either druid or ranger, but then only one of them could be 2nd level. Bonus spells cannot be added to an arcane spellcasting class.

Once a fleet runner has chosen how to apply her bonus spells, they cannot be shifted again.

Evasion: At 2nd level and above, a fleet runner can avoid even magical and unusual attacks with great agility. If the fleet runner akes a successful Reflex saving throw against an attack that normally deals half damage on a

CLASS REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a fleet runner of Ehlonna, a character must fulfill all the following criteria:

ALIGNMENT	NEUTRAL GOOD
PATRON DEITY	EHLONNA
BASE WILL SAVE	+3
SKILLS	KNOWLEDGE (NATURE): 11 RANKS KNOWLEDGE (RELIGION): 3 RANKS WILDERNESS LORE: 5 RANKS
FEATS	DODGE, MOBILITY, RUN
SPELLCASTING	ABILITY TO CAST DIVINE SPELLS

CLASS SKILLS

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier

The fleet runner's class skills (organized by key ability) are:

STRENGTH	
DEXTERITY	HIDE, MOVE SILENTLY
CONSTITUTION	CONCENTRATION
INTELLIGENCE	KNOWLEDGE (NATURE), KNOWLEDGE (RELIGION)
WISDOM	HEAL, INTUIT DIRECTION, WILDERNESS LORE
CHARISMA	

successful save, she instead takes no damage. The fleet runner can use evasion only if she is wearing light armor or no armor. This is an extraordinary ability.

Leap of the Hart: At 3rd level or higher, a fleet runner's jumping distance (vertical or horizontal) is not limited according to her height. This is an extraordinary ability.

Shot on the Run: At 4th level, the fleet runner gains the Shot on the Run feat, even if she does not have the prerequisite Point Blank Shot feat.

Run Like the Huntress: At 5th level, a fleet runner gains supernatural stamina while running. She can run for a number of rounds equal to twice her Constitution score without making any checks, and she gains a +8 bonus to Constitution checks made to continue running after that point. This is a supernatural ability.

Improved Evasion: At 6th level, a fleet runner's evasion ability improves. She still takes no damage on a successful Reflex save against spells such as fireball or a breath weapon, but henceforth she only takes half damage on a failed save. The fleet runner can only use improved evasion if she is wearing light armor or no armor. This is an extraordinary ability.

Run Like the Wind: At 7th level, a fleet runner can slip magically between spaces, as per the spell *dimension door,* once per day as a spell-like ability. The fleet runner's effective caster level equals her class level.

Leopard's Pounce: At 8th level, a fleet runner can make a full attack at the end of a charge. This is an extraordinary ability.

Swiftness of the Tigress: When she reaches 9th level, a fleet runner can act as if under the effects of a *haste* spell for a total of 1 round per class level per day. These rounds need not be consecutive. This is an extraordinary ability.

Cheetah's Sprint: Once an hour, a 10th-level fleet runner can take a charge action to move ten times her normal speed. This is a supernatural ability.

The Mighty Contender of Kord

The church of Kord insists that the liberation of the spirit comes through the perfection of the body—in fact, clerics of the Brawler insist that the distinction between body and spirit is a false one, as each is totally dependent on the other. Some devotees of Kord practice breaking chains (a DC 26 Strength check), demonstrating their bodily perfection while symbolizing their spiritual freedom. Those that seek the highest perfection of body and spirit become mighty contenders of Kord.

Most mighty contenders of Kord start as clerics, but fighters and barbarians can enter the class easily by multiclassing as clerics, and many do. Arcane spellcasters are unlikely to find the church of Kord's emphasis on physical strength appealing, but there are exceptions—particularly among the rare half-orc sorcerers.

NPC mighty contenders are an unusual mixture of athletic mysticism. They are very worldly, as a rule, frequenting public baths, gymnasiums, or taverns while expounding their philosophy of spiritual and physical liberation, and demonstrating their feats of incredible strength.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the mighty contender of Kord prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Mighty contenders are proficient with all simple and martial weapons, with all armor, and with shields.

Mighty Endurance: A mighty contender has a special form of damage reduction that allows him to ignore 5 points of subdual damage every time he is dealt subdual damage. This extraordinary ability applies to all effects that deal subdual damage.

Feat of Strength: When a mighty contender performs a feat of strength (the granted power of the Strength domain), he adds his mighty contender level to his cleric levels to determine his Strength enhancement for 1 round. He can now perform a feat of strength a number of times per day equal to his unmodified Strength modifier, but always at least once.

Spells per Day: A mighty contender continues the divine spellcasting training he began, but more slowly. For every two contender levels gained, the character gains new spells per day as if he had gained one level of the spellcasting class he belonged to before he added the prestige class. He does not gain any other benefit of the level (such as turning undead) that the character would have gained. This essentially means that he adds half his mighty contender level to the level of some other spellcasting class he has, then determines spells per day and caster level accordingly. For example, if Gilgas, an 8th-level cleric/1st-level mighty contender, gains another level in mighty contender, he gains new spells as if he

THE MIGHTY CONTENDER OF KORD

HIT DIE D10

Level	Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per Day
1st	+0	+2	+0	+2	Mighty endurance, feat of strength	
2nd	+1	+3	+0	+3		+1 level of existing class
3rd	+2	+3	+1	+3	Surge of strength	
4th	+3	+4	+1	+4		+1 level of existing class
5th	+3	+4	+1	+4	Strength increase	
6th	+4	+5	+2	+5		+1 level of existing class
7th	+5	+5	+2	+5	Feat of power	
8th	+6	+6	+2	+6		+1 level of existing class
9th	+6	+6	+3	+6	Strength increase	
10th	+7	+7	+3	+7	Surge of power	+1 level of existing class

had risen to 9th level in cleric, but uses the other contender aspects of level progression such as base attack and saving throw bonus. If he next gains a level of cleric, making him a 10th-level cleric/2nd-level mighty contender, he gains spells as an 11th-level cleric.

Surge of Strength: When a mighty contender of at least 3rd level performs a feat of strength, the enhancement bonus lasts for 1d4+1 rounds.

Strength Increase: When a mighty contender reaches 5th level, and again at 9th level, his Strength score increases by 1. This is not an enhancement bonus; it is an ability score increase like any character normally gains every four levels.

Feat of Power: Once per day, as a supernatural ability, when performing a surge of strength, a mighty contender of 7th level or higher can add one and a half times his combined cleric and mighty contender levels to his Strength score for the first round of the surge. For the remaining 1d4 rounds, he adds only his level to his Strength score.

Surge of Power (Su): Once per day, as a supernatural ability, when performing a surge of strength, a 10th-level mighty contender can add one and a half times his level to his Strength score for the duration of the surge (1d4+1 rounds).

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CLASS REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a mighty contender of Kord, a character must fulfill all the following criteria:

ALIGNMENT	CHAOTIC GOOD
PATRON DEITY	KORD
BASE FORTITUDE SAVE	+6
SKILLS	KNOWLEDGE (RELIGION): 9 RANKS
FEATS	ENDURANCE, POWER ATTACK
SPELLCASTING	ABILITY TO CAST DIVINE SPELLS

CLASS SKILLS

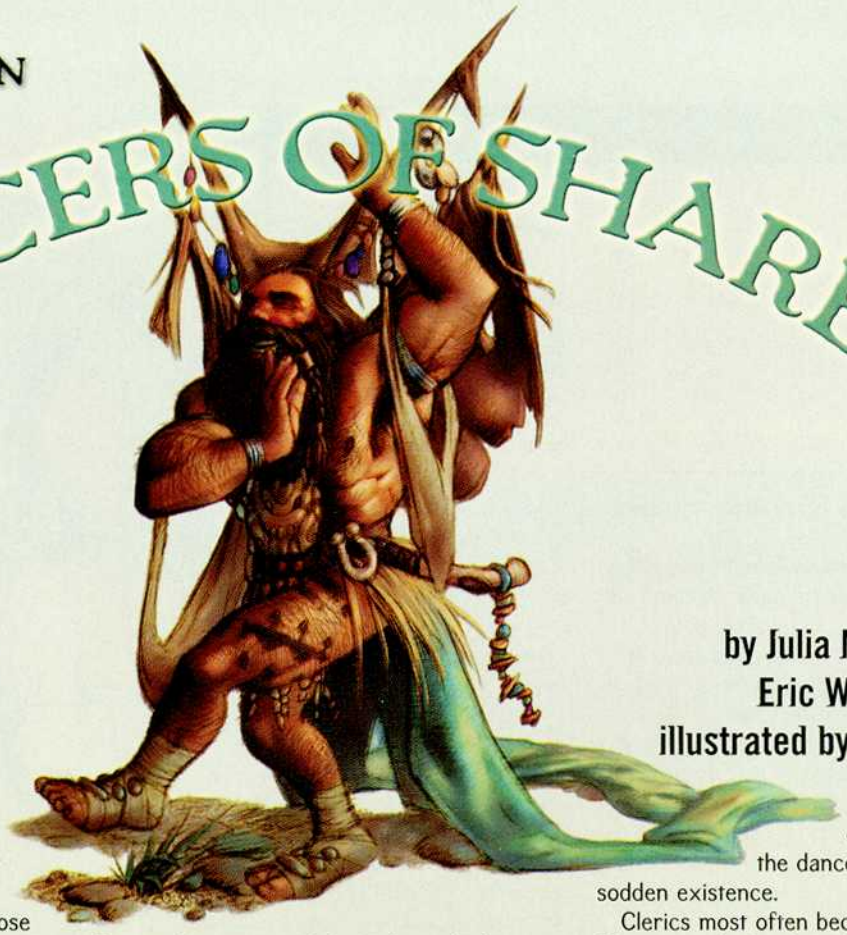
Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier

The mighty contender's class skills are:

STRENGTH	
DEXTERITY	
CONSTITUTION	CONCENTRATION
INTELLIGENCE	CRAFT, KNOWLEDGE (RELIGION), SCRY, SPELLCRAFT
WISDOM	HEAL, INTUIT DIRECTION, PROFESSION, SENSE MOTIVE
CHARISMA	DIPLOMACY, INTIMIDATE

FAITHS OF FAERUN

SHARESS: DANCERS OF SHARESS



Double Your Pleasure

by Julia Martin and Eric W. Haddock
illustrated by Mike May

Dancers of Sharess seek pleasure at every opportunity and live life as one endless revel. They value being footloose and fancy free and resist restrictions of any kind—cultural, emotional, mental, or physical—placed on them by others. They love to dance, and most are accomplished singers and play one or more musical instruments. Dancers find evil ugly and repugnant, and they hate undead, viewing them as a violation of the dead's peaceful rest and an offense against the vibrancy of the positive energy of life.

But dancers of Sharess also draw from an eclectic set of mandates and traditions passed down through the evolution of their goddess and her church. Their hatred of Set comes from their goddess's ancient history as Bast, of Vhaeraun from her merger with Zandilar, and of Shar from her captivity by that deity in her recent past as Sharess. Their affiliation with felines also grows from their goddess's history as Bast, who subsumed Felidae, and their accomplishments in dance from Zandilar the Dancer. Bast also lends them a tradition of fighting skills that few realize exists behind the dancers' pleasure-sodden existence.

Clerics most often become dancers of Sharess, with druids and rangers being less common choices. Sharess's philosophy so chafes under restriction that it cannot accommodate the lawful nature of paladins and monks.

Class Features

All of the following are features of the dancer of Sharess prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Dancers of Sharess are proficient with all simple weapons. They gain no new proficiency with armor or shields.

DANCER OF SHARESS

Levels	Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special	Hit Die: d6 Spells per Day
1st	+0	+2	+0	+2	Cat familiar, cat sight	+1 level of existing class
2nd	+1	+2	+0	+2	Grace of the goddess	+1 level of existing class
3rd	+1	+3	+1	+3	Familiar shapechange (cheetah, leopard, lion)	+1 level of existing class
4th	+2	+4	+1	+4	1st favored enemy, tongue of the diplomat	+1 level of existing class
5th	+2	+4	+1	+4	Touch of Sharess (unarmed)	+1 level of existing class
6th	+3	+5	+2	+5	Familiar shapechange (tiger, dire lion)	+1 level of existing class
7th	+3	+5	+2	+5	Wiles of the pleasure queen	+1 level of existing class
8th	+4	+6	+2	+6	Dance of Zandilar	+1 level of existing class
9th	+4	+6	+3	+6	2nd favored enemy, familiar shapechange (dire tiger)	+1 level of existing class
10th	+5	+7	+3	+7	Improved touch of Sharess	+1 level of existing class

CLASS SKILLS			
Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.			
The dancer of Sharess's class skills (organized by key ability) are:			
STR	Jump, Climb	INT	Knowledge (religion), Spellcraft
DEX	Balance, Move Silently	WIS	Heal, Spot
CON	Concentration	CHA	Diplomacy, Perform

REQUIREMENTS	
To qualify to become a dancer of Sharess, a character must fulfill all the following criteria:	
Patron Deity:	Sharess.
Alignment:	Chaotic good.
Base Attack Bonus:	+3.
Spellcasting:	Able to cast 3rd-level divine spells; clerics who are dancers of Sharess must select the Charm domain as one of their domains.
Perform:	4 ranks, and Perform (dancing) as one of the selected forms of performance.
Knowledge (religion):	9 ranks.

Cat Familiar: Upon gaining her 1st level as a dancer of Sharess, a dancer of Sharess gains a cat familiar. This familiar does not require a day of effort or the expenditure of magical materials costing 100 gp (it chooses the dancer of Sharess by Sharess's grace), but in other ways the familiar is identical to the familiars that sorcerers and wizards can obtain.

Calculate the familiar's special abilities based on the table on page 51 in the *Player's Handbook* using the dancer of Sharess's character level (as opposed to her class level).

Cat Sight (Ex): Dancers of Sharess gain low-light vision at 1st level.

Grace of the Goddess (Su): Dancers of Sharess have a portion of the catlike grace and flexibility of their goddess, along with a measure of her force of personality. They gain a +2 bonus to all Dexterity and Charisma checks and Dexterity-based and Charisma-based skill checks, and a +1 bonus to Reflex saving throws.

Familiar Shapechange (Su): When a dancer of Sharess reaches 3rd level, her cat familiar can, as a standard action once per day, shapechange into a cheetah, leopard, or lion. At 6th level, her familiar adds the forms of a tiger or dire lion to the repertoire for this ability and can shapechange twice per day. At 9th, her familiar adds the form of a dire tiger to its repertoire and can shapechange three times per day.

This ability functions as the *shapechange* spell cast by a spellcaster of the dancer of Sharess's character level. Thus, the familiar can remain *shapechanged* no more than 10 minutes/class level per day of the dancer of Sharess. The amount of time spent *shapechanged* need not be continuous. (In other words, the familiar of a 3rd-level dancer of Sharess could be a cheetah for 1 minute, then return to being a cat, then be a lion for 4 minutes, then return to being a cat, and so on, up to a total of 30 minutes in shapechanged forms in one day).

Favored Enemy (Church of Shar, Vhaeraun, or Set): The dancer of Sharess gains a +1 bonus to Bluff, Listen, Sense Motive, Spot, and Wilderness Lore checks when using these skills against agents of one of the listed churches (pick one). Likewise, she gets the same bonus to weapon damage rolls against agents of the chosen deity. A dancer of Sharess also gets the damage bonus with ranged weapons, but only against targets within 30 feet. The bonus doesn't apply to damage against creatures that are immune to critical hits. At 9th level, the bonus associated with this ability goes up to +2 for the first enemy, and the dancer of Sharess gains a new favored enemy bonus of +1 for agents of one of the churches not selected at 4th level. (This bonus works the same as for rangers in the FORGOTTEN REALMS that select an organization as a favored enemy, with the organization in this case being one of the respective churches.)

Tongue of the Diplomat (Ex): The dancer of Sharess has had ample experience persuading people to do as she wishes and has learned exactly what to say and do to wrap someone around her finger. She gains a +4 competence bonus to Diplomacy checks.

Touch of Sharess (Su): A dancer of Sharess has the ability to stun a creature she touches with an unarmed caress (melee touch attack that requires a free hand) by supernaturally overloading its perceptions of pleasure. She does not provoke attacks of opportunity from armed opponents when she uses this ability. The dancer of Sharess can use this ability once per round, but no more than once per two dancer of Sharess levels per day. The dancer of Sharess must declare she is using the touch of Sharess before making the touch attack (thus, a missed attack roll ruins the attempt). A foe touched by the dancer of Sharess is forced to make a Fortitude save (DC 10 + the dancer of Sharess's character level + her Charisma modifier). If the saving throw fails, the opponent is stunned for 1 round (see page 85 in the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide* for a description of the stunned condition). Constructs, oozes, plants, undead, incorporeal creatures, and creatures immune to critical hits cannot be affected by the touch of Sharess.

At 10th level, the ability becomes even more potent. The duration of the stun effect lasts for 1d4+1 rounds if the target fails his Fortitude saving throw.

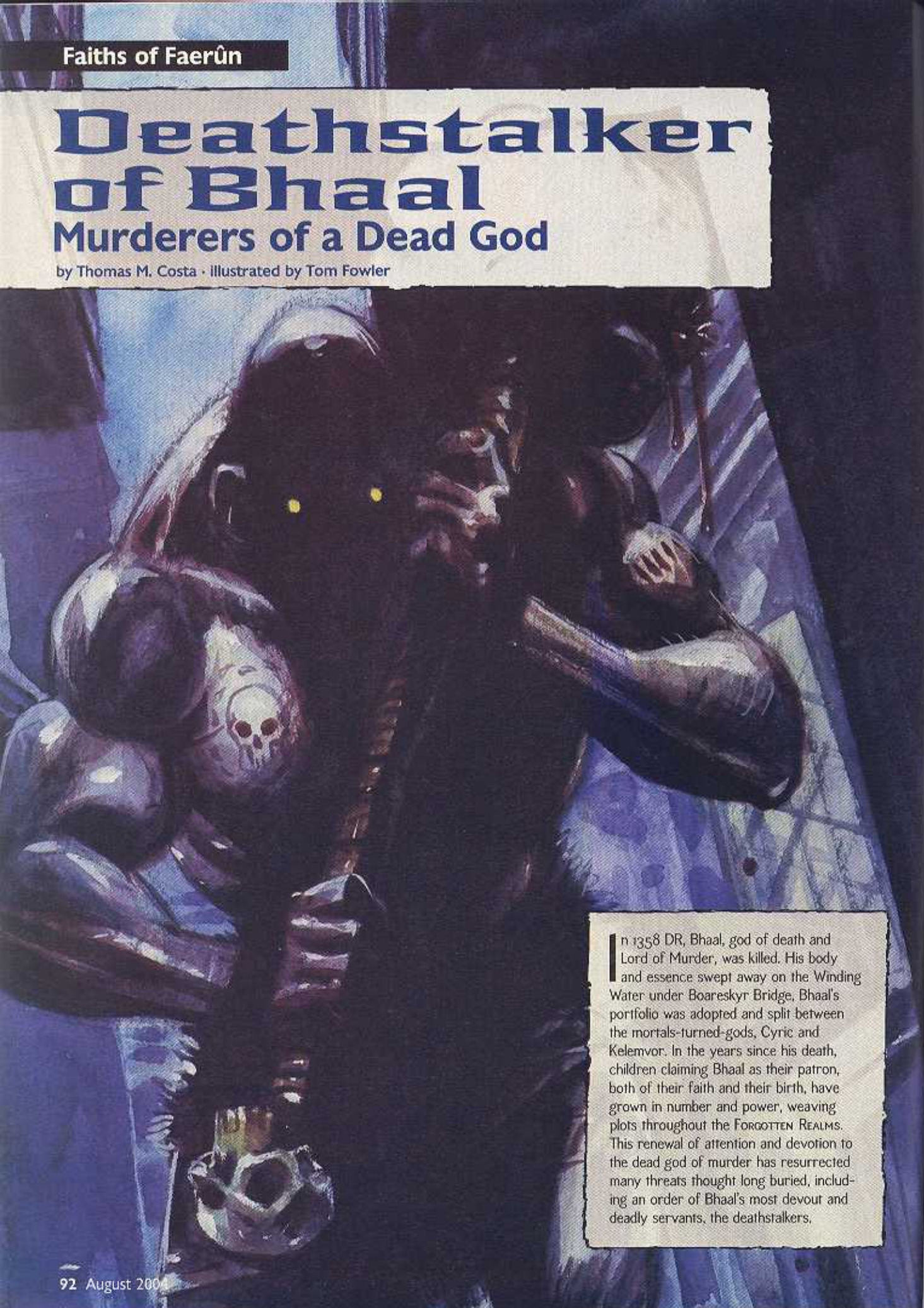
Wiles of the Pleasure Queen (Su): Dancers of Sharess are both supernaturally charming and difficult to charm. Add +2 to the Difficulty Class for all saving throws against spells from the Enchantment school they cast. They also get a +2 bonus to caster level checks (1d20 + caster level) to beat a creature's spell resistance for an Enchantment school spell they are casting, a +2 bonus to dispel checks to counter Enchantment spells, and a +2 bonus to their saving throws against spells from the Enchantment school.

Dance of Zandilar (Su): A dancer of Sharess can use dance to substitute for the verbal component of a spell of the Enchantment school. The dancer of Sharess must succeed at a Perform (dancing) check (DC 15 + spell level); if she does, it is cast as if she had prepared it with the Silent Spell feat. However, the spell does not use up a spell slot one level higher than the spell's regular level as is normal for a silent spell. If the check fails, the spell fails and is ruined.

Deathstalker of Bhaal

Murderers of a Dead God

by Thomas M. Costa · illustrated by Tom Fowler



In 1358 DR, Bhaal, god of death and Lord of Murder, was killed. His body and essence swept away on the Winding Water under Boareskyr Bridge, Bhaal's portfolio was adopted and split between the mortals-turned-gods, Cyric and Kelemvor. In the years since his death, children claiming Bhaal as their patron, both of their faith and their birth, have grown in number and power, weaving plots throughout the Forgotten Realms. This renewal of attention and devotion to the dead god of murder has resurrected many threats thought long buried, including an order of Bhaal's most devout and deadly servants, the deathstalkers.

DEATHSTALKERS OF BHAAL

Deathstalkers are the murderous servants of Bhaal, the Lord of Murder. Reduced to a scattered cult by their god's death and fervent persecution by worshippers of Cyric, this group of priest-assassins is making a name for itself and reestablishing small temples throughout Faerûn.

These zealous killers are dedicated to Bhaal and exhibit all of the powers they lost in the wake of the Godswar. However, it is unclear from where their power comes. Those few aware of the cult suspect the influence of Set encroaching on the portfolio of the mad Cyric, while others believe their powers to stem from Cyric himself. Still others point to recent troubles with the Bhaalspawn and the whispered resurrection of the one, true Bhaal. Whatever the origin of their abilities, the deathstalkers are a fearsome and dangerous lot.

Deathstalkers believe that every murder committed in his name strengthens Bhaal, bringing closer his unholy rebirth. As a result, they view murder as both a pastime and a duty. They are required to deal death once in every tenday in the heart of the night. If imprisonment or other constraining circumstances make this impossible, deathstalkers have to murder twice for each murder missed. In accordance with the Lord of Murder's teachings, deathstalkers strive to ensure that before they die, murder victims know who is killing them and that their death is in the name of Bhaal, intoning, "Bhaal awaits thee, Bhaal embraces thee, none escape Bhaal."

Nearly all deathstalkers are clerics, although many are multiclassed as rogues and a few are multiclassed as barbarians, fighters, rangers, or other classes.

Deathstalker Class Features

All the following are class features of the deathstalker of Bhaal.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Deathstalkers are proficient with all simple weapons and light and medium armor.

Spells per Day: Deathstalkers continue and increase their devotion to Bhaal. At each indicated deathstalker level, the character gains new spells per day as if he had also gained a new level in a divine spellcasting class he belonged to before adding the prestige class. He does not however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained (increased turning abilities, animal companions and so on). This means he adds the deathstalker level to the level of som other spellcasting class he has, then determines spells per day and caste level accordingly. (If the character had more than one divine spellcasting class before becon ing a death stalker he must decide to which class he adds each level of deathstalker for purposes of spells per day).

Death Attack (Ex): Starting at 1st level, if the deathstalker studies his victim for 3 rounds and then makes a sneak attack with a melee weapon that successfully deals damage, the sneak attack has the additional effect of possibly either paralyzing or killing the target (deathstalker's choice). While studying the victim, the deathstalker can undertake other actions as long as his attention stays focused on the target and the target does not detect the deathstalker or recognize him as an enemy. If the victim of such an attack fails her Fortitude saving throw (DC 10 + double the deathstalker's level + the deathstalker's Charisma modifier) against the kill effect, she dies. If the saving throw fails against the paralysis effect, the victim's mind and body become enervated, rendering her completely helpless and unable to act for 1d6 rounds plus 2 rounds per level of the deathstalker. If the victim's saving throw succeeds, the attack is just a normal sneak attack. Once the deathstalker has completed the 3 rounds of study, he must make the death attack within the next 3 rounds. If a death attack is attempted and fails (the victim makes her save) or if the deathstalker does not launch the attack within 3 rounds of completing the study, 3 new rounds of study are required before he can attempt another death attack.

Sneak Attack (Ex): Upon taking the 2nd level of this class, a character gains the ability to make sneak attacks as a rogue (see page 50 of the *Player's Handbook*). If the deathstalker gets a sneak attack bonus from another source (such as previous rogue levels), the bonuses to damage stack.

***Bloodlust* (Sp):** At 3rd level, once per day a deathstalker can evoke and direct the hatred of a living creature within 30 feet. The target of this abil-

DEATHSTALKER OF BHAAL ADVANCEMENT

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per Day
1st	+0	+0	+0	+2	Death attack	+1 level of existing class
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+3	Sneak attack +1d6	–
3rd	+2	+1	+1	+3	*Bloodlust*	+1 level of existing class
4th	+3	+1	+1	+4	Sneak attack +2d6	–
5th	+3	+1	+1	+4	Last breath of Bhaal	+1 level of existing class

DEATHSTALKER REQUIREMENTS

HIT DIE D8

To qualify to become a deathstalker of Bhaal, a character must fulfill the following criteria:

Patron Deity: Bhaal.

Alignment: Lawful evil.

Skills: Hide 5 ranks, Move Silently 5 ranks, Survival 2 ranks.

Feats: Quick Draw.

Spells: Ability to cast 3rd-level divine spells. Clerics must have access to the Death or Destruction domain.

Special: Must have murdered at least sixteen sentient creatures, using sixteen different weapons or methods.

DEATHSTALKER CLASS SKILLS

The deathstalker's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Disguise (Cha), Forgery (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Heal (Wis), Hide (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (religion) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Sense Motive (Wis), Spellcraft (Int), Spot (Wis), Survival (Wis), and Use Rope (Dex).

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

BHAAL

Lord of Murder

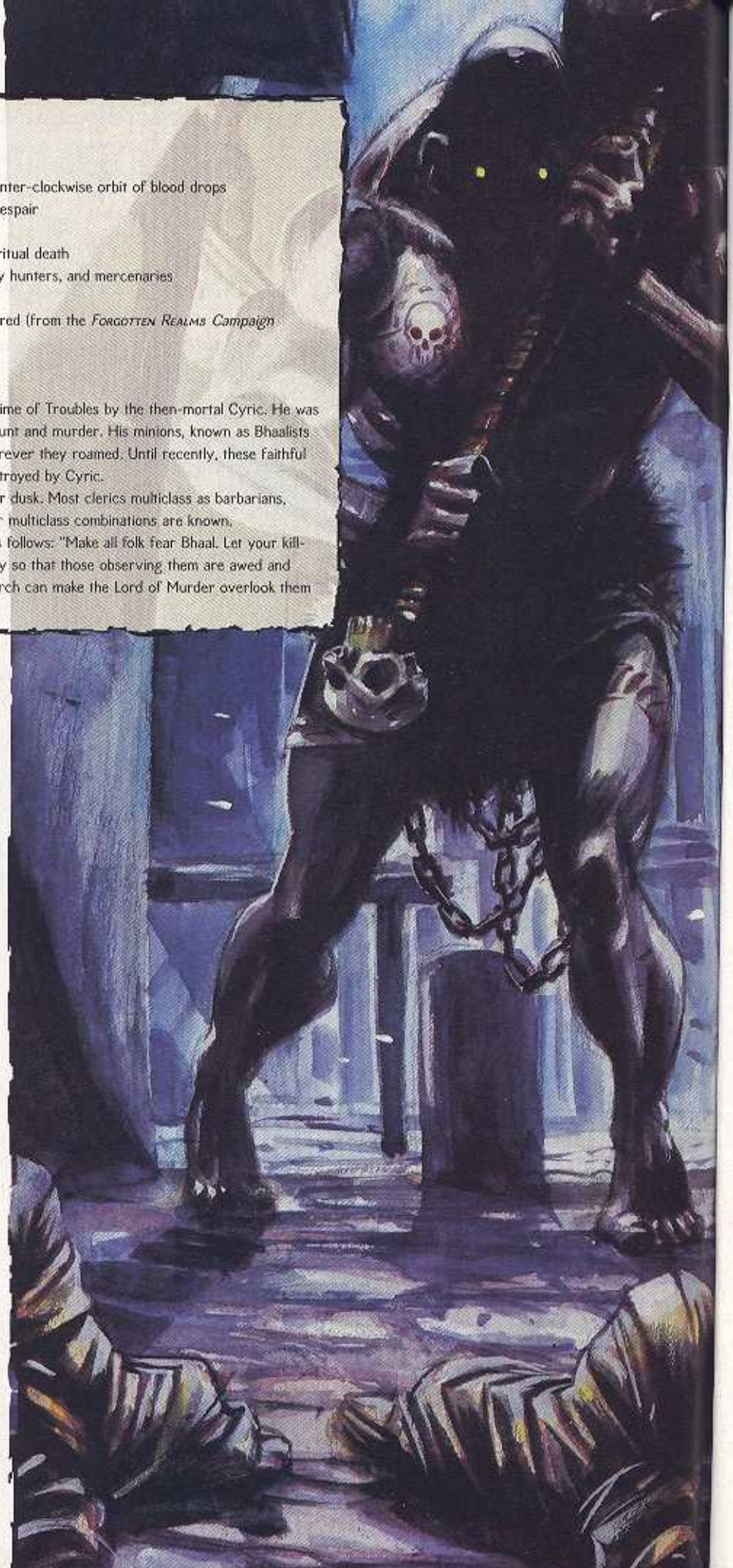
Intermediate Deity (Dead)

Symbol:	A skull surrounded by a counter-clockwise orbit of blood drops
Home Plane:	The Barrens of Doom and Despair
Alignment:	Lawful evil
Portfolio:	Death, especially violent or ritual death
Worshipers:	Murderers, assassins, bounty hunters, and mercenaries
Cleric Alignments:	LN, LE, NE
Domains:	Death, Destruction, Evil, Hatred (from the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting*), Law
Favored Weapon:	"Bone Blade" (dagger)

Bhaal was the god of murder, slain during the Time of Troubles by the then-mortal Cyric. He was violent, cruel, and hateful, and existed only to hunt and murder. His minions, known as Bhaalists or Bhaalyn, wrought devastation and death wherever they roamed. Until recently, these faithful were thought to have all been converted or destroyed by Cyric.

Clerics of Bhaal pray for their spells just after dusk. Most clerics multiclass as barbarians, fighters, rogues, or deathstalkers, although other multiclass combinations are known.

In the past, novices of Bhaal were charged as follows: "Make all folk fear Bhaal. Let your killings be especially elegant or grisly, or seem easy so that those observing them are awed and terrified. Tell folk that gold proffered to the church can make the Lord of Murder overlook them for today."



ity must succeed at a Will save (DC 16 + the deathstalker's Wisdom modifier) to resist this effect. Those that fail are affected as if by the spell *rage* (see page 268 of the *Player's Handbook*) and must attack another creature within 30 feet of them of the deathstalker's choosing. The affected creature will do all it can to kill the target of its hatred. This affect lasts for 1 round per deathstalker level. This is a mind-affecting compulsion effect.

Last Breath of Bhaal (Su): Deathstalkers who die after attaining 5th level are affected by the last breath of Bhaal. Said to contain the power residual in their dead god's last gasp, this ability causes a deathstalker slain in the service of Bhaal to be affected as if by the spell *raise dead,* as cast by a 12th-level cleric. This ability takes effect 1 hour after the deathstalker is killed, as long as the body has remained intact during that time. During that hour, the body shows no sign of life or that magic is affecting the corpse. As per *raise dead,* the deathstalker immediately loses 1 level.

Ex-Deathstalker: Like clerics, a deathstalker who grossly violates the dogma of Bhaal loses all spells and class features and cannot gain levels as a deathstalker until he atones (see the *atonement* spell description on page 201 of the *Player's Handbook*).

DREADMASTER

Bane is an evil deity that most FORGOTTEN REALMS setting Dungeon Masters and players love to hate. Probably no single occurrence in the history of the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting has provoked as much controversy as the death of Bane, and his return sparked another round of heated discussion. One thing no one can argue with, however, is that he made a great bad guy, and his priests and followers make great villains for heroic player characters to oppose.

BY JULIA MARTIN & ERIC HADDOCK • ILLUSTRATED BY DENNIS CALERO

Here is a prestige class formed in the image of the dreadmaster, the old specialty priest of Bane. Villains of this prestige class are particularly suited to be either bullying, lower-ranking villains whose ambitions make them likely to attract heroes' attentions, or fiendishly clever, high-ranking leader villains who sit in the heart of a spider web of intrigue and wield the scepter of command with ruthless and brilliant cruelty.

DREADMASTERS

Dreadmasters are the ultimate tyrants. They seek to rule absolutely (next to, of course, Bane himself), preferably through terror and domination. They instill the fear of Bane in all, but especially in those who do not give at least lip service to his supremacy as a god.

Dreadmasters tend to accumulate followers and build organizations—like churches or societies, or political bodies such as kingdoms, nations, or city-states—over which they can rule with an iron fist. They want to know everything that is going on, overseeing every detail with what they perceive as ruthless precision, and others perceive as an obsessive need to control. They love to accumulate items that enhance their personal presence to better cow others, their physical strength to better beat the weak into submission, and their wisdom or mental faculties to better plot the doom of their enemies. Dreadmasters always have many enemies (both real and imagined).

Clerics most often become dreadmasters, although wizards, sorcerers, and monks with a passionate devotion to Bane or to dictatorship sometimes choose this path as well. Bards, rogues, fighters, and rangers become dreadmasters less frequently, although they are often part of a dreadmaster's retinue.

HIT DIE D8

DREADMASTER

Level	Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special	Spells Per Day
1st	+0	+2	+0	+2	Dominating aura 20 feet	+1 level of existing class
2nd	+1	+3	+0	+3	Insidious insight	+1 level of existing class
3rd	+2	+3	+1	+3	Dominating aura 30 feet	+1 level of existing class
4th	+3	+4	+1	+4	Rodcraft	+1 level of existing class
5th	+3	+4	+1	+4	Dominating aura 40 feet, favored enemy	+1 level of existing class
6th	+4	+5	+2	+5	Enhanced leadership +2	+1 level of existing class
7th	+5	+5	+2	+5	Dominating aura 50 feet	+1 level of existing class
8th	+6	+6	+2	+6	Enhanced leadership +4, fanatical loyalty	+1 level of existing class
9th	+6	+6	+3	+6	Dominating aura 60 feet, special cohort	+1 level of existing class
10th	+7	+7	+3	+7	Enhanced leadership +6 second special cohort	+1 level of existing class

CLASS REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a dreadmaster, a character must fulfill all the following criteria:

Patron Deity: Bane.
Alignment: Lawful evil.
Base Attack Bonus: +4.
Spellcasting: Ability to cast 3rd-level divine spells; clerics who are dreadmasters must have access to either the Hatred or Tyranny domain.
Intimidate: 5 ranks.
Sense Motive: 4 ranks.
Feats: Leadership, Skill Focus (Intimidate), Spell Focus (Enchantment).
Cohort: A cohort of at least 6th level.

CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are features of the dreadmaster prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Dreadmasters are proficient with all simple weapons, all types of armor (light, medium, and heavy), and shields. Bane's favored weapon is the morningstar.

Dominating Aura: A dreadmaster is immune to fear effects (magical or otherwise). Enemies within 20 feet of a dreadmaster suffer a -4 morale penalty on saving throws against fear effects. The radius of this aura increases at 3rd, 5th, 7th, and 9th level. This is a supernatural ability.

Insidious Insight: A dreadmaster has a knack for ferreting out what others are up to so that he can more effectively keep control. Beginning at 2nd level, dreadmasters receive a +2 circumstance bonus to Sense Motive and Gather Information checks. This is an extraordinary ability.

Rodcraft: Dreadmasters have an affinity for magic rods, seeing them as an extension of the symbolism of the divine scepter of rulership that is also exemplified in Bane's favored weapon, the morningstar. Beginning at 4th level, when a dreadmaster makes a rod, the DCs for saving throws against the powers of rods they craft are two higher than would be for those made by a non-dreadmaster crafter. Dreadmasters especially love to make rods of *rulership, enemy detection,* and *lordly might.*

Favored Enemy: At 5th level, the dreadmaster selects a type of creature or an organization as a favored enemy. This class feature functions just like the favored enemy ability of a ranger (see page 45 of the *Player's Handbook)* with the additional FORGOTTEN REALMS setting option (page 26 of the *FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting)* of selecting an organization rather than a creature type. The dreadmaster's favored enemy bonus becomes +2 at 10th level. Dreadmasters can only select one type of favored enemy; unlike rangers, they do not gain additional favored enemies when they increase in level.

Enhanced Leadership: Beginning at 6th level, the dreadmaster receives a +2 bonus to his Leadership score. This extraordinary ability increases to +4 at 8th level and +6 at 10th level. (He still cannot attract a cohort of greater than his character level.) At 6th through 10th level, a dreadmaster does not suffer the -2 cumulative Leadership penalty for causing the death of a cohort for one cohort per each dreadmaster level above 5th (up to a total of five dead cohorts at 10th-level). Dreadmasters of 10th level do not suffer the normal general -2 Leadership penalty for cruelty.

Fanatical Loyalty: Followers and cohorts of the dreadmaster become fanatically loyal to the dreadmaster; only Bane himself can inspire greater loyalty in them. They will not balk at life-threatening actions or actions that would normally lie outside their moral compunctions and normal behavior if the dreadmaster asks them to perform such actions. Spells that the dreadmaster has cast upon his cohorts that normally grant a saving throw or saving throw bonus if the subject is asked to take life-threatening actions or actions contrary to her nature do not do so if the subject is fanatically loyal to the dreadmaster. The dreadmaster gains this is supernatural ability at 8th level.

Special Cohort: At 9th level, the dreadmaster attracts a special cohort (see page 46 of the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide)* in addition to any cohort already gained. If a leader loses this special cohort, he can generally replace it, according to his current Leadership score. It takes time (1d4 months) to recruit a replacement. At 10th level, the dreadmaster attracts a second special cohort in addition to any cohorts or special cohorts already gained. Because of the lawful nature of Bane, special cohorts who are mutually inimical by type, alignment, or nature will not both be attracted to the same dreadmaster. Dungeon Masters can use the "Example Dreadmaster Special Cohorts" table to select special cohorts gained through this ability, or select cohorts of their own choosing or crafting.

CLASS SKILLS	
Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier	
The dreadmaster's class skills (organized by key ability) are:	
STR	
DEX	Ride
CON	Concentration
INT	Craft, Knowledge (arcana), Knowledge (geography), Knowledge (history), Knowledge (local), Knowledge (nobility and royalty), Knowledge (religion), Scry*, Speak Language, Spellcraft
WIS	Profession, Sense Motive
CHA	Bluff, Diplomacy, Gather Information, Intimidate

* Exclusive skill.

EXAMPLE DREADMASTER SPECIAL COHORTS		
CREATURE	ALIGNMENT	COHORT LEVEL EQUIVALENT
Doppleganger	Neutral	6th
Helmed horror	Neutral	13th
Gouger (beholderkin)	Neutral evil	14th
Death kiss (beholderkin)	Neutral evil	16th
Baneguard	Lawful evil	5th
Banedead	Lawful evil	6th
Hell hound	Lawful evil	6th
Displacer beast	Lawful evil	7th
Imp	Lawful evil	7th
Banelar	Lawful evil	9th

* Found in *Monster Compendium: Monsters of Faerûn.*

Faiths of Faerûn:

THE GREEN HUNTER

by Eric Haddock • illustrated by Anthony Waters

There have long been rumors of an elite, secretive group operating in the jungles of Chult, near Fort Belurian. Their purpose and leadership has been unclear, except that they wear holy symbols of Thard Harr and perform good deeds near the fort, specializing in finding those lost in the jungle. *The Morning Rain*, a royal courier vessel from Cormyr, was sent to Fort Belurian with an urgent request for any member, if the order did exist, to assist in locating a person of royal interest lost somewhere in the jungle. Cormyr needed someone who could pass quickly through the undergrowth like a druid, track a man like a ranger, and fend off the monsters in the jungle like a fighter.

There was a response: Lilkinen Tar'rir presented himself as a captain of a new order of "scouts." These scouts were the green hunters, and with their help, Lilkinen was able to rescue the lost alchemist. He now remains the primary liaison between the order and the public.

Green hunters seek to serve the cause of good in whatever capacity they can. They're part ranger, druid, and fighter, specializing in thick growth environments like jungles and dense forests. Green hunters are usually druids, but some begin their adventuring careers as rangers. Druids have the close bond with nature that Thard Harr respects, and rangers are predisposed to the more violent aspects of the order, which Thard Harr also respects. However, druids are much more accomplished spellcasters than rangers, so they are sooner able to meet the requirements for joining the order. Dwarves feature prominently in the order, as Thard Harr is a god among them, but non-dwarves are welcome. Regardless of race, those wishing to join the order must pledge their loyalty to Thard Harr.

The order was started by Lilkinen Tar'rir, and he serves as its leader. He has a room of his own at the Drowning Rock, an inn just outside the walls of Fort Belurian, which he uses to interact with the public whenever he needs to. He mostly spends his time in the jungle, training new members.

While the order was founded in Chult and knows that area well, it has sent green hunters off to many parts of the world for a wide variety of purposes. One reason is to have members participate in adventures. Adventuring is a lucrative endeavor that adds substantially to the order's coffers. Player characters who take this prestige class can be members sent on a mission by Lilkinen or green hunters out in the world for the purpose of sending money back home.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the green hunter prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Green hunters are proficient with all martial weapons and with light armor and shields. Druids who become green hunters may use spiked gauntlets without suffering the penalties for using a prohibited weapon.

In Your Campaign

You don't need to play in a FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign to use the green hunter prestige class. Altering it to fit your campaign is easy. Here are a few examples:

- The green hunters can be devotees of any nature god. Simply change the spiked gauntlet to the favored weapon of whatever nature deity exists in your campaign.
- The green hunters need not be devoted to any particular deity, instead they can be a special sect of druids or rangers that specialize in using whatever weapon you like.
- The green hunters could be an organization of woodland wizards or sorcerers. Just change the +1 caster level to allow arcane spellcasters and replace references to the spiked gauntlet to references to the dagger or club.
- The green hunters could be the "frost hunters," individuals that specialize in hunting in arctic climbs. When the text mentions tangled undergrowth, think instead that it refers to deep snow or slippery ice. The references to the spiked gauntlet can be changed to a weapon more useful in an arctic area, such as the light pick.

Spells Per Day: At every other level gained in the green hunter prestige class, the character gains new divine spells per day as if he had also gained a level in a divine spellcasting class he belonged to before adding the prestige class. He does not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained except for an increased effective level of spellcasting. If a character had more than one divine spellcasting class before becoming a green hunter, he must decide to which class he adds the new effective level for the purposes of determining spells per day.

Quick Travel (Su): With Thard Harr's divine guidance, green hunters are able to safely and quickly navigate terrain with dense undergrowth. When traveling on foot and in forests, jungles, or swamps dense enough to cause a movement penalty, green hunters of 1st level and higher add 10 to their base speed. The growth does not have to be natural for the Hunter to enjoy this bonus.

Hand of Thard Harr (Ex): In the densest jungle, there is little room to swing swords or use pole arms. Thard Harr's favored weapon, the spiked gauntlet, works well in close quarters.

At 2nd level, a green hunter gains the Weapon Focus (spiked gauntlet) feat.

At 4th level, the green hunter gains the Improved Critical (spiked gauntlet) feat.

At 6th level, the green hunter deals an extra point of damage whenever he deals damage with a spiked gauntlet.

At 8th level, the green hunter wearing a spiked gauntlet can use it to disarm foes without provoking an attack of opportunity. If successful, the green hunter can take the weapon in his gauntleted hand rather than allowing it to fall at his opponent's feet.

At 10th level, the penalties associated with using two spiked gauntlets at once are reduced by 2. Thus, a ranger or a character with the Ambidexterity and Two-Weapon Fighting feats could fight with two spiked gauntlets and suffer no penalty.

Unerring Pursuit: At 3rd level, the green hunter gets a +10 morale bonus to any Wilderness Lore skill checks made in any area with undergrowth thick enough to cause a movement penalty, such as a jungle or forest. The bonus is granted whether or not the growth is natural.

Scent (Ex): Beginning at 5th level, a green hunter's senses are so highly attuned that he can utilize the scent ability. This ability allows the green hunter to detect approaching enemies, sniff out hidden foes, and track by sense of smell. He can identify familiar odors just as others do familiar sights.

The green hunter can detect opponents within 30 feet by sense of smell. If the opponent is upwind, the range increases to 60 feet; if downwind, it drops to 15 feet. Strong scents, such as smoke or rotting garbage, can be detected at twice the ranges noted above. Overpowering scents, such as skunk musk or troglodyte stench, can be detected at triple normal range.

When the green hunter detects a scent, the exact location is not revealed—only its presence somewhere within range. He can take a move-equivalent action to note the direction of the scent. If he moves within 5 feet of the source, the green hunter can pinpoint that source.

The green hunter can follow tracks by smell, making a Wisdom check to find or follow a track. The typical DC for a fresh trail is 10 (no matter what kind of surface holds the scent). This DC increases or decreases depending on how strong the quarry's odor is, the number of creatures, and the age of the trail. For each hour that the trail is cold, the DC increases by 2. The ability otherwise follows the rules for the Track feat. A green hunter tracking by scent ignores the effects of surface conditions and poor visibility.

Ferocity (Su): Once per day, a 7th-level green hunter can increase his Strength by +4 points for a number of rounds equal to his green hunter level. When the ferocity ends, the green hunter is fatigued for the duration of that encounter.

Woodland Freedom (Su): The time the green hunter has spent going through dense growth has given him the ability to move through it as easily as if it were not there. The green hunter can move through thorns, briars, overgrown areas, and similar terrain at his normal speed (plus the bonus from quick travel) without suffering damage or other impairment. The green hunter can move through enchanted or magically manipulated plantlife (such as the area of an *entangle* spell) just as easily, but the woodland freedom ability has no affect on the ability of monstrous plants to hold or attack the green hunter.

GREEN HUNTER CLASS REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a green hunter, a character must fulfill all the following criteria:

Patron Deity: Thard Harr.
Alignment: Any good.
Base Attack Bonus: +4.
Knowledge (nature): 5 ranks.
Wilderness Lore: 5 ranks.
Feats: Track.
Spells: Ability to cast divine spells.

GREEN HUNTER CLASS SKILLS

The green hunter's class skills (and the key abilities for each) are:

Str: Climb, Jump, Swim.
Dex: Balance, Hide, Move Silently, Use Rope.
Con: Concentration.
Int: Craft, Knowledge (geography), Knowledge (nature), Search.
Wis: Heal, Intuit Direction, Listen, Spot, Wilderness Lore.
Cha: Intimidate.

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

THE GREEN HUNTER

HIT DIE: D8

Levels	Base Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special	Spellcasting
1st	+1	+2	+0	+0	Quick travel	+1 level of existing class
2nd	+2	+3	+0	+0	Hand of Thard Harr (Weapon Focus)	
3rd	+3	+3	+1	+1	Unerring pursuit	+1 level of existing class
4th	+4	+4	+1	+1	Hand of Thard Harr (Improve Critical)	
5th	+5	+4	+1	+1	Scent	+1 level of existing class
6th	+6	+5	+2	+2	Hand of Thard Harr (+1 to damage)	
7th	+7	+5	+2	+2	Ferocity	+1 level of existing class
8th	+8	+6	+2	+2	Hand of Thard Harr (disarm)	
9th	+9	+6	+3	+3	Woodland freedom	+1 level of existing class
10th	+10	+7	+3	+3	Hand of Thard Harr (reduced penalties)	

HOLY STRATEGISTS OF THE RED KNIGHT

by Travis Stout · illustrated by Fred Hooper

Holy strategist is the name by which a cleric of the Red Knight is known, and it is an apt title indeed. By devoting themselves to mastering military tactics and strategy, these militant clerics hone their minds and bodies into the deadliest weapons in Faerûn. So impressive is their reputation that armies outnumbering their foes three to one have been known to surrender upon learning that a holy strategist leads the opposing force.

The holy strategists' devotion to discipline and a structured, military lifestyle makes them popular with priests of Torm and Tyr, and clerics of the Red Knight often cooperate with priests of Valkur to jointly oversee naval battles. Most holy strategists harbor a certain distaste for clerics of Garagos and almost universally despise Cyricists. They get along well with most other characters who demonstrate an understanding of (or at least a healthy respect for) the use of tactics. Although they are closely allied, priests of the Red Knight and priests of Tempus often find themselves at odds, since many of the Lord of Battle's followers disdain planning, preferring to simply rush into battle.

THE CLERGY

Collectively, the clerics of the Red Knight are referred to as the Red Fellowship. Many members serve as high-ranking commanders in armies throughout Faerûn, often personally leading elite "special forces" units. Others who are not directly in the employ of the church serve as instructors at military academies or as quartermasters in charge of keeping the troops on the front line fed and supplied.

As befits the clergy of such a militant goddess, holy strategists are ranked in a rigid hierarchy. Their titles of rank are almost always based on character level, but extraordinary events can earn a holy strategist a promotion or demotion that is not in accordance with level.

The titles used by the Red Fellowship are, in ascending order: Page (1st-2nd level), Squire (3rd-4th level), Knight (5th-6th level), Knight Quartermaster (7th-8th level), Knight Commander (9th-10th level), Knight Captain (11th-12th level), Lord Knight (13th-14th level), Lord Knight Commandant (15th-16th level), and Lord Knight of the Red Standard (17th level and higher). Recently, as the clergy of the Red Knight has grown in size, the practice of preceding this title with a relative ranking has fallen out of favor. Not surprisingly, many holy strategists also have military ranks bestowed by whatever armies they serve in.

Affiliated Orders

Most paladins who serve the Red Knight are members of the Order of the Red Falcon. Although small in number, the knights of this order are master soldiers who have triumphed against overwhelming odds on numerous occasions.

The Order of the Red Falcon is based at the Citadel of Strategic Militancy, but many of its members travel throughout Faerûn, serving in various armies to teach military history and to keep abreast of any new or intriguing battle tactics. Paladins of the Order of the Red Falcon may freely multiclass as fighters or as clerics of the Red Knight.

Vestments

For ceremonial functions, a holy strategist wears a suit of half-plate or full plate enameled in a blood-red hue. Over this armor, she wears a snow-white tabard embroidered with the Red Knight's holy symbol. For less formal occasions, holy strategists wear flowing robes of red accented with white. The shade of red depends on the individual's rank, ranging from almost black at lower ranks to brilliant crimson at higher ones. Unlike Tempuran priests, holy strategists are not forbidden to cover their faces with their helms, so they often wear ornate, full-face helmets when they wish to convey a grand impression. A holy strategist's holy symbol is usually carved from some type of semiprecious red gemstone, but it is treated as a silver holy symbol for the purpose of determining price, weight, and hit points.

Adventuring holy strategists are expected to wear the highest-quality armor they can afford, although their regular armor is not usually red-enameled. The Red Fellowship does not expect its members to keep their armor spotless at all times, but almost all holy strategists do so anyway, as a point of pride. In the field, a holy strategist is expected to carry a banner or shield marked with an easily recognizable symbol (often the Red Knight's holy symbol, but just as frequently a personal coat of arms or insignia) to serve as a rallying point for her allies. Despite this requirement, however, holy strategists are not prohibited from removing or concealing their symbols should doing so provide some tactical advantage.

PLACES OF WORSHIP

The most important temple of the Red Knight is the Citadel of Strategic Militancy, which is located about 40 miles northeast of the city of Baldur's Gate. This massive keep was once the home of a minor noble family that served the goddess. During the Time of Troubles, the Red Knight possessed the last scion of that family—Kaitlin Bloodhawk—to serve as her avatar. Although the citadel was destroyed during that period, it was rebuilt later and now serves as the home of the Red War College, a new but already famous school for military officers.

The walls of the Citadel of Strategic Militancy are built of checkered red-and-white marble, and a massive, blood-red dome caps the central keep. The chapel is actually an enormous chessboard, where the priests play out ritualized human chess games during religious ceremonies. The First Lady Knight of the Red Standard, Kaitlin Bloodhawk, governs the citadel—the same woman who served as the Red Knight's avatar during the Godswar.

Other temples to the Red Knight are somewhat rare, although more are built every year. Each is dominated by a red-and-white chessboard floor, which the attendant priests keep polished to a brilliant gleam. Temples to the Red Knight in dangerous lands are often guarded by stone golems built of red or white marble and sculpted to look like enormous chess pieces. Smaller shrines, however, are common in fortresses and military

barracks all across Faerûn. Such a shrine might consist of nothing more than a chess set placed in a special alcove where supplicants can go to pray for the Lady of Strategy's guidance.

Holy Strategist Characters

Most holy strategists take a few levels of diviner to gain access to information-gathering arcane spells. The following notes provide suggestions on how to create a typical holy strategist character.

Key Abilities: Intelligence and Wisdom are the two most important abilities for holy strategists. Wisdom is vital because cleric spells are Wisdom-based, and Intelligence is important both for diviner spells and for skills such as Knowledge (history) that give benefits in planning battle strategy. Strength and Constitution are also useful, since holy strategists are expected to enter battle regularly. Charisma can be an important ability as well, particularly for characters who aim toward a prestige class such as warmaster or Purple Dragon knight. Since most holy strategists wear armor heavy enough to limit their agility, high Dexterity is not vital.

Alignment: Although clerics of the Red Knight can be of any alignment that is within one step of Lawful Neutral, most match their deity's alignment exactly.

Recommended Domains: War and Planning are usually the best domains for a holy strategist, since they provide an excellent mixture of offensive, defensive, and tactical spells. Furthermore, the bonus feats granted by these domains free up the holy strategist's available feat slots for other choices.

Recommended Skills: A holy strategist usually spends her skill points on Concentration (Con), Diplomacy (Cha), Knowledge (arcana) (Int), Knowledge (architecture and engineering) (Int), Knowledge (history) (Int), Knowledge (nobility and royalty) (Int), Knowledge (religion) (Int), Ride (Dex), and Spellcraft (Int).

Recommended Feats: The Cosmopolitan and Education feats, both presented in the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting*, are helpful in gaining access to key skills that are cross-class for both clerics and diviners. Combat feats, such as those in the Power Attack and Dodge chains, are helpful to a front-line cleric, while the various divine feats presented in *Defenders of the Faith* can help the holy strategist and her allies crush undead foes, stave off poison and disease, and otherwise keep soldiering on. Five new feats, taught specifically by the Red War College to holy strategists, are presented below.

Recommended Spells: Although holy strategists are war priests, they are most effective when they prepare spells that enhance themselves or their allies (such as *bull's strength*, *bear's endurance*, *divine transformation*, and similar spells) and spells that provide information about their foes (such as *scrying*, *commune*, or *augury*). A smattering of offensive spells (such as *flame strike* or *searing light*) and defensive spells (such as *blade barrier* or *wall of stone*) help to round out the holy strategist's spell list. The new spells presented below are also favored by the Red Knight's clergy.

Multiclassing: As noted above, holy strategists usually take diviner levels in addition to their cleric levels. Typically, a holy strategist advances to 5th level as both a diviner and a cleric and thereafter advances solely in her cleric class. A more martial cleric of the Red Knight might prefer to take fighter or paladin levels rather than diviner levels. Likewise, a holy strategist wishing to focus on commanding troops should consider taking levels in the warmaster (from *Sword and Fist*), warpriest (from *Defenders of the Faith*), or Purple Dragon knight (from the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting*) prestige classes.

New Feats

The following feats are common among holy strategists. While they are normally taught only at the Red War College, the DM may choose to make them available to characters outside of the Red Fellowship as well.

Hard to Fool [General]

You have an innate knack for seeing through deceptions and lies.

Benefit: You gain a +2 bonus on Will saves against illusions and a +2 bonus on Sense Motive checks.

Improved Leadership [General]

You are renowned for your charisma and ability to command.

Prerequisites: Charisma 15, Leadership.

Benefit: You gain a +2 bonus to your Leadership score.

Lady's Gambit [General]

You can sacrifice your health to gain an advantage in combat.

Prerequisites: Base attack bonus +6, Iron Will, Power Attack.

Benefit: You may sacrifice a number of hit points (maximum sacrifice equals your character level), taking them from your current hit point total as if you had lost them to damage. For every two hit points so sacrificed, you gain a +1 bonus on attack and damage rolls for 1 round. Hit points sacrificed in this manner may be regained in the same way that hit points lost to damage can.

Special: Using this feat is a free action, but you may use it only once per round on your turn.

The Red Knight

Lady of Strategy, Grandmaster of the Lanceboard

FAERÛNIAN DEMIGOD

Symbol:	Red knight chess piece eyes of stars
Home Plane:	Warriors Rest
Alignment:	Lawful neutral
Portfolio:	Strategy, planning, tactics
Worshipers:	Fighters, gamesters, monks, strategists, and tacticians
Cleric Alignments:	LG, LN, LE
Domains:	Law, Nobility, Planning, War
Favored Weapon:	Longsword

If you don't have the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting*, the Red Knight should have her home plane be Ysgard or Acheron. Her domains should be Knowledge, Law, Protection, War.

Noble Warrior [General]

You are a skilled military commander from the ranks of the nobility, with an intimate knowledge of war and those who make it.

Benefit: You gain a +2 competence bonus on Knowledge (history) and Knowledge (nobility and royalty) checks.

Pike Hedge [General]

You are particularly skilled at setting a weapon to receive a charge.

Prerequisites: Base attack bonus +2, Combat Reflexes, Hold the Line (from *Sword and Fist*).

Benefit: When readying an action to receive a charge, you deal double damage with any melee weapon, or triple damage with a spear, halberd, or any other polearm that normally deals double damage when set to receive a charge.

Special: A fighter may select Pike Hedge as one of his fighter bonus feats.

New Spells

The following spells are available to clerics of any deity, although typically only clerics of the Red Knight make regular use of them.

Analyze Opponent

Divination
Level: Clr 3
Components: S, DF
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Target: One creature/level
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

You gauge the strengths and weaknesses of your opponents in order to gain combat advantages. Upon casting this spell, you learn a number of strengths or weaknesses of each target equal to 1 + one per two caster levels (maximum four per target). You may choose to learn strengths, weaknesses, or some combination thereof that you specify. If a creature has more strengths or weaknesses than you can learn with a single casting, you learn the most powerful ones first. Thus, if a monster can use *finger of death* at will and has sonic resistance 5, you would learn about *finger of death* first.

For example, suppose a 7th-level cleric casts *analyze opponent* on a black-armored warrior, choosing to learn one strength and two weaknesses. The warrior fails his save, and the DM informs the cleric's player that the opponent has the ability to drain energy (a strength), is vulnerable to sunlight, and can be repelled by a holy symbol (both weaknesses). The cleric comes to the conclusion that he is facing a vampire and breaks out the wooden stakes.

Knight's Move

Transmutation (Teleportation)
Level: Clr 3
Components: V, S, DF
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: 15 feet/2 levels (see text)
Target: You
Duration: Instantaneous

By accessing the Astral Plane, you can teleport with a limited distance and a circumspect form of movement. You may move up to 15 feet per two levels with this spell, but only in the fashion of a knight chess piece, with two-thirds of the movement in one direction and the rest in a perpendicular direction. For example, at 5th level you could move 20 feet in any one direction, then 10 feet in a perpendicular direction. At 6th level, you could move 30 feet in one direction, then 15 feet in a perpendicular direction.

If you would arrive in a place that is already occupied by a solid body, the spell simply fails.

by Julia Martin & Eric Haddock

MAGISTRATI

The specialty priests of *Faiths & Avatars* illustrated what could be done to custom-craft clerics for the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting. They gave priests of different faiths a distinctiveness that was missing in the generic cleric. However, they were unbalanced. Some rocked, some sucked, and some detracted from the unique flavor of other classes.

The new D&D game restores the core abilities of the cleric while giving them the feel of specialty priests through the use of domains. It also allows for a breadth of character customizability through the new multiclassing rules, the addition of feats and skills, and prestige classes. In converting to the new D&D, DMs and players might be tempted to take

Azuth: Magistrati

The magistrati (singular: magistrata) are prime candidates to be simulated with multiclassing.

• The alignment (LN, which matches Azuth's alignment) and weapons of the old magistrati specialty priest are covered by the new cleric with no modification.

• The old magistrati could not wear armor. Congratulations! In the new edition, you are not obligated to eschew armor, but it does throw a wrench into things because you are going to multiclass into wizard, and armor means a spell failure chance for any arcane spell with a somatic component. So pursuing other options to increase your Armor Class is still your best option. If you're making a new character, think about putting a good ability score into Dexterity.

• For domains, pick Law and Spell to get a cool combination of offensive capability and flexibility in your domain spells, as well as reflect the stern and lawful nature of Azuth. (The Spell domain is covered in the new *FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting*.) The Spell domain grants a +2 bonus on Concentration and Spellcraft checks, as well as access to *anyspell* and *greater anyspell* as domain spells. Law gives you law spells at +1 caster level and a really good mix of defensive and offensive spells. Magic is also a strong option, especially since the domain grants you a boost in wizard caster level when using some magic items. Knowledge is also viable, but the granted power is not useful since you are going to be multiclassing as a wizard.

• Now decide whether to turn or rebuke undead, and how you spontaneously cast spells. The *Player's Handbook* allows neutral clerics to pick whether they are more proficient with channeling positive energy or negative energy. The old magistrati turned undead and never commanded them. The new information on Azuth's church doesn't dwell on this. You might be inclined toward turning undead, but you could be a darker (or more "pragmatic") priest of Azuth and go the other route, especially if you want to be a Necromancy specialist.

• The old special ability to use wizard scrolls as well as priest scrolls is covered as soon as you take your first wizard level. The special ability to identify magic items by touch is replaced by access to the *identify* spell (this is more balanced), unless you take Divination as a prohibited school. To simulate the bonus to casting time magistrati used to get, take Quicken Spell as your first feat. Consider taking other metamagic feats, especially Spell Mastery followed by Signature Spell (found in the new *FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting*).

• Most of the other special abilities of the magistrati class focused around watered-down specialized wizard capabilities. To simulate those, multiclass as a specialized wizard. A wizard can summon a familiar as an additional benefit that magistrati didn't get before. To approximate the old magistrati, aim for an even ratio of cleric to wizard levels until you reach 7th level as a wizard; then advance just as a cleric. Unless you are a human, elf, or half-elf, you'll need to keep the levels even or take an experience-point penalty. The rest of the special abilities of the old magistrati were the ability to cast additional spells: one *magic missile;* one *fireball* or *lightning bolt;* and one of the wall spells once a day (depending on the magistrati's level). These abilities are easily simulated by taking Evocation or Conjuration as your school specialization. You then can take those spells as the extra spell of each spell level that you get for specializing.

WATCHERS

those specialty priests and transfer them each into a prestige class. Our advice: Don't.

Instead, try to use the tools provided by the new system. You're more likely to come out with a more focused and balanced character. Start by looking for the core concept of the specialty priest. Often, the Forgotten Realms specialty priests were clerics with a touch of something else—a little fighter, some wizard, some rogue, or even some bard. Let's look at two examples of how to get most of the functionality and flavor of the old class without going to all the trouble of making a new prestige class.

THE MAGISTRATI MULTICLASS PATH

Character Level	Class Levels	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Avg hp	Abilities Gained or Taken
1	Clr 1	+0	+2	+0	+2	8	0 and 1st-level cleric spells, turn or rebuke undead, Law and Spell domains, Quicken Spell
2	Clr 1/Wiz 1	+0	+2	+0	+4	10	0 and 1st-level wizard spells, summon familiar, Scribe Scroll, specialize as an Evoker or Conjurer to get extra spells
3	Clr 2/Wiz 1	+1	+3	+0	+5	14	Feat
4	Clr 2/Wiz 2	+2	+3	+0	+6	17	Ability increase
5	Clr 3/Wiz 2	+3	+3	+1	+6	21	2nd-level cleric spells
6	Clr 3/Wiz 3	+3	+4	+2	+6	24	2nd-level wizard spells, feat
7	Clr 4/Wiz 3	+4	+5	+2	+7	28	
8	Clr 4/Wiz 4	+5	+5	+2	+8	31	Ability increase
9	Clr 5/Wiz 4	+5	+5	+2	+8	35	3rd-level cleric spells, feat
10	Clr 5/Wiz 5	+5	+5	+2	+8	38	3rd-level wizard spells, take Spell Mastery as a bonus wizard feat
11	Clr 6/Wiz 5	+6/+1	+6	+3	+9	42	
12	Clr 6/Wiz 6	+7/+2	+7	+4	+10	45	Take Signature Spell as a feat, ability increase
13	Clr 7/Wiz 6	+8/+3	+7	+4	+10	49	4th-level cleric spells
14	Clr 7/Wiz 7	+8/+3	+7	+4	+10	52	4th-level wizard spells
15	Clr 8/Wiz 7	+9/+4	+8	+4	+11	56	Take Signature Spell as a feat again
16	Clr 9/Wiz 7	+9/+4	+8	+5	+11	61	5th-level cleric spells, ability increase
17	Clr 10/Wiz 7	+10/+5	+9	+5	+12	65	
18	Clr 11/Wiz 7	+11/+6/+1	+9	+5	+12	70	6th-level cleric spells, feat
19	Clr 12/Wiz 7	+12/+7/+2	+10	+6	+13	74	
20	Clr 13/Wiz 7	+12/+7/+2	+10	+6	+13	79	7th-level cleric spells, ability increase

Helm: Watchers

• The alignment (LN, which matches Helm's LN), armor, and weapons of the old watcher specialty priest are covered by the new cleric with no modification.

• For domains, pick Protection and Planning, although taking Law would also mesh well with Helm. Strength, the other option for a cleric of Helm, doesn't simulate the old watcher as well. The Planning domain is described in the new *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting*. Planning grants the Extend Spell feat as a domain ability, and gives you a lot of Divination domain spells that emphasize the watching part of being a watcher. Protection grants the *protective ward* domain ability and versatile protective domain spells.

• Again, the *Player's Handbook* normally allows neutral clerics to pick whether they are more proficient with channeling positive energy or negative energy. The old watchers turned undead and never commanded them. The new information on Helm's church states that his clerics never command undead, so spontaneously casting *cure* spells and turning undead are the way to go.

• To simulate the bonus to surprise that watchers used to get, pick Alertness as your first feat. Take Blind-Fight as your next available feat to round out what used to be one of the standard bonus nonweapon proficiencies for watchers.

• Other special abilities of the watcher class focused on watered down fighter capabilities. To simulate that, take levels of fighter at some time during your career. Taking four levels allows you to specialize in a weapon, but taking more than three can significantly slow your spell progression. Try taking just two levels of fighter instead.

• If your character is Medium-size, taking your first level of fighter also covers the proficient use of Helm's favored weapon, the bastard sword—a martial weapon if used two-handed. You'll need to take the Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword) feat if you want to wield it one-handed.

• The old multiple attack special abilities of the watcher are subsumed into the ability of all classes to gain more attacks per round as their attack bonus exceeds +5. The more levels of fighter you take, the faster you get there, of course.

• Many of the spells that watchers used to get as special abilities remain unconverted in the new edition of D&D, but their functionality is well covered by standard spells in the *Player's Handbook*. The new ability of clerics to spontaneously cast allows them to pray for more spells than before anyway. This ability preserves the flavor of those lost specific abilities.

SKILL SYNERGIES

REFERENCE CHART

THIS SKILL . . .	GIVES A SYNERGY BONUS TO THIS SKILL.
Animal Empathy	Handle Animal (with animals; 9 ranks in Handle Animal gives you the bonus with beasts)
Bluff	Diplomacy
	Disguise (when you know you are observed and are acting in character)
	Innuendo (when transmitting a message)
	Intimidate
	Pick Pockets
Decipher Script	Use Magic Device (when deciphering scrolls)
Escape Artist	Use Rope (when binding someone else)
Handle Animal	Ride
Intuit Direction	Wilderness Lore (to avoid getting lost)
Jump	Tumble
Profession (herbalist)	Heal
Sense Motive	Diplomacy
	Innuendo (to intercept messages)
Spellcraft	Use Magic Device (when deciphering scrolls)
Tumble	Balance
	Jump
Use Magic Device	Spellcraft (when deciphering scrolls)
Use Rope	Climb (when using a rope)
	Escape Artist (escaping rope bonds)

THE WATCHER MULTICLASS PATH

Character Level	Class Levels	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Avg hp	Abilities Gained or Taken
1	Clr 1	+0	+2	+0	+2	8	0 and 1st-level cleric spells, turn undead, Protection and Planning domains, free Extend Spell feat, Alertness
2	Clr 1/Ftr 1	+1	+4	+0	+2	13	Take Blind-Fight as a bonus fighter feat, martial weapon proficiency in all martial weapons
3	Clr 2/Ftr 1	+2	+5	+0	+3	18	Feat
4	Clr 2/Ftr 2	+3	+6	+0	+3	23	Ability increase, take Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword) as a bonus fighter feat
5	Clr 3/Ftr 2	+4	+6	+1	+3	28	2nd-level cleric spells
6	Clr 4/Ftr 2	+5	+7	+1	+4	32	Feat
7	Clr 5/Ftr 2	+5	+7	+1	+4	37	3rd-level cleric spells
8	Clr 6/Ftr 2	+6/+1	+8	+2	+5	41	Ability increase
9	Clr 7/Ftr 2	+7/+2	+8	+2	+5	46	4th-level cleric spells, feat
10	Clr 8/Ftr 2	+8/+3	+9	+2	+6	50	
11	Clr 9/Ftr 2	+8/+3	+9	+3	+6	55	5th-level cleric spells
12	Clr 10/Ftr 2	+9/+4	+10	+3	+7	59	Feat, ability increase
13	Clr 11/Ftr 2	+10/+5	+10	+3	+7	64	6th-level cleric spells
14	Clr 12/Ftr 2	+11/+6/+1	+11	+4	+8	68	
15	Clr 13/Ftr 2	+11/+6/+1	+11	+4	+8	73	7th-level cleric spells, feat
16	Clr 14/Ftr 2	+12/+7/+2	+12	+4	+9	77	Ability increase
17	Clr 15/Ftr 2	+13/+8/+3	+12	+5	+9	82	8th-level cleric spells
18	Clr 16/Ftr 2	+14/+9/+4	+13	+5	+10	86	Feat
19	Clr 17/Ftr 2	+14/+9/+4	+13	+5	+10	91	9th-level cleric spells
20	Clr 18/Ftr 2	+15/+10/+5	+14	+6	+11	95	Ability increase

Because having some skills gives you a bonus when using other skills, you should consider the effects of these synergies when creating your character. If you plan to use Climb or Escape Artist, you'd do well to add ranks to Use Rope as well. Having high ranks in Bluff, Sense Motive, Diplomacy, Innuendo, Intimidate, and Pick Pockets can make a great package of mutually supporting skills. Here's a handy chart to make your skill selection easier:

Note that all synergy bonuses are +2. They also require 5 ranks in a skill to function with one exception, which is noted below.

THIS SKILL . . .	GETS A SYNERGY BONUS FROM THIS SKILL.
Balance	Tumble
Climb (with a rope)	Use Rope
Diplomacy	Bluff
	Sense Motive
Disguise (observed and in character)	Bluff
Escape Artist (escape rope bonds)	Use Rope
Handle Animal (with animals; 9 ranks for bonus with beasts)	Animal Empathy
Heal	Profession (herbalist)
Innuendo (transmit messages)	Bluff

THIS SKILL . . .	GETS A SYNERGY BONUS FROM THIS SKILL.
Innuendo (intercept messages)	Sense Motive
Intimidate	Bluff
Jump	Tumble
Pick Pockets	Bluff
	(scrolls only) Spellcraft
Ride	Handle Animal
Spellcraft (decipher scrolls)	Use Magic Device
Tumble	Jump
Use Magic Device	Decipher Script
(decipher scrolls)	Spellcraft
Wilderness Lore	Intuit Direction
(avoid getting lost)	

FAITHS OF FAERÛN

NIGHTCLOAK

BY JULIA MARTIN & ERIC HADDOCK • ILLUSTRATED BY MATT WILSON

This month we revive another specialty priest from the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting. In opposition to last month's priests of Selûne, we present the nightcloaks, the most favored priests of Shar. Shar and Selûne have been at war since before Faerûn was formed, and their clergy carry on that battle.

Nightcloaks

Nightcloaks are the apple of Shar's eye—devoted to her vision, preserving her secrets, practicing her magic, and as twisted and bitter as she is. They are beings of iron will and determination, although that determination is perverse. They weave webs of intrigue, mental domination, blackmail, and control through the use of illusion, necromancy, and enchantment. Yet they are not afraid to smash their toys if it suits Shar's purposes. They are cruel and intelligent, and they do not fear slipping away to return and grind their foes to dust at a later time. Honor is of no consequence to them. They do as they please, so long as it furthers their—and Shar's—power.

Clerics most often become nightcloaks. Rangers are rare. Nightcloaks often have levels of wizard, sorcerer, bard, or rogue in addition to the class that grants them divine spellcasting ability.

CLASS REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a nightcloak, a character must fulfill all the following criteria:

Patron Deity: Shar.
Alignment: Neutral evil.
Base Attack Bonus: +4.
Spellcasting: Ability to cast 2nd-level divine spells. Clerics must have access to the Darkness domain.
Bluff: 2 ranks.
Move Silently: 2 ranks.
Perform: 4 ranks.
Feats: Iron Will, Shadow Weave Magic, Spell Focus (Enchantment, Illusion, or Necromancy), and Pernicious Magic or Tenacious Magic.

THE NIGHTCLOAK

Level	Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special	Spellcasting
1st	+0	+2	+0	+2	Darkness spells	+1 level of existing class
2nd	+1	+2	+0	+2	Eyes of Shar	+1 level of existing class
3rd	+2	+3	+1	+3	Insidious Magic	+1 level of existing class
4th	+3	+4	+1	+4	Shadow talk	+1 level of existing class
5th	+3	+4	+1	+4	Disk of night	+1 level of existing class
6th	+4	+5	+2	+5	*True lies*	+1 level of existing class
7th	+5	+5	+2	+5	Mind of Shar	+1 level of existing class
8th	+6	+6	+2	+6	Shar's caress	+1 level of existing class
9th	+6	+6	+3	+6	*Minion of Shar*	+1 level of existing class
10th	+7	+7	+3	+7	*Voice of ineffable evil*	+1 level of existing class

HIT DIE d8

Class Features

All of the following are features of the nightcloak prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Nightcloaks are proficient with all simple weapons, all types of armor, and with shields.

Darkness Spells: A nightcloak can pray for and receive any Darkness domain spell as if it were on her divine spell list. The spell uses a spell slot of a level equal to its level in the Darkness domain list. For instance, a cleric/nightcloak could pray for *darkbolt* as a 5th-level cleric spell, and a ranger/nightcloak could pray for *blacklight* as a 3rd-level ranger spell.

Eyes of Shar: Nightcloaks have eyes that are totally black. They have 60-foot darkvision. They can also see through magical darkness to a range of 10 feet (in the same black-and-white sight that darkvision provides). They cannot be blinded by magical effects. This is an extraordinary ability.

Insidious Magic: Nightcloaks get the Insidious Magic feat as a bonus feat at 2nd level, reflecting their ability to use the Shadow Weave under Shar's close guidance.

Shadow Talk: Nightcloaks are able to communicate mystically through the shadows of the mind. Nightcloaks can whisper short messages to other worshipers of Shar within 500 feet. All Shar worshipers within range hear the message as a whisper in their mind. Observers can hear the words if they are close enough to physically hear the nightcloak's actual whispers (a DC 15 Listen check if the listener is within 10 feet of the nightcloak, +1 DC per 5 feet beyond that). This a free action. This supernatural ability is a language-dependent, and it can be used to communicate with undead worshipers of Shar and undead creatures in the service of worshipers of Shar.

Disk of Night: When a nightcloak wields a chakram, she negates damage reduction in creatures she attacks as if it were a +2 weapon. If the chakram's bonus is greater than the effect of this class ability, use the chakram's bonus to determine if damage reduction is negated. This is a supernatural ability.

True Lies: A nightcloak can reach into a creature's mind and modify a subject's memories as the 4th-level bard spell *modify memory*. A nightcloak can use this spell-like ability a number of times per tenday equal to her Charisma modifier (minimum of one). The *modify memory* works as if cast by a bard of the nightcloak's character level. This ability is a standard action (as described in the *modify memory* spell).

Mind of Shar: Shar grants nightcloaks the extraordinary ability to use their minds to warp their bodies. They can choose to use their Intelligence modifier or their Constitution modifier, whichever is greater, as a bonus to Fortitude saving throws. This is an extraordinary ability.

Shar's Caress: Nightcloaks that have Weapon Focus in chakram, whip, or dagger become able to surround that weapon with Shadow Weave magic that burns Shar's opponents with a black flame on a successful attack. The nightcloak is able to use this ability to deal an additional 2d6 points of divine damage a number of times per day equal to the nightcloak's Charisma modifier. A nightcloak must decide to use this supernatural ability before the attack is made; if the attack misses, that use of Shar's caress is wasted. This damage is divine damage not fire damage, and spell resistance does not apply.

Minion of Shar: Once per day as a standard action, a nightcloak can summon one shadow per nightcloak class level to do her bidding for a number of rounds equal to her class level. Any shadows this summoned shadow creates by draining Strength are under the control of the nightcloak, but vanish along with the original when the duration expires. The nightcloak is able to verbally communicate with the shadows as if she knew their language. She can also use her shadow talk ability to communicate with them. This is a spell-like ability.

Voice of Ineffable Evil: Once a day, nightcloaks can command a creature as per the *dominate monster* spell as though cast by a sorcerer of a level equal to the nightcloak's character level. The effect lasts one day. Unlike most spell-like abilities, *voice of ineffable evil* has a verbal component.

CLASS SKILLS

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier

The nightcloak's class skills (organized by key ability) are:

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
		Concentration	Craft	Heal	Bluff
			Knowledge (arcana)	Intuit Direction	Diplomacy
			Knowledge (history)	Profession	
			Knowledge (the planes)	Sense Motive	
			Knowledge (religion)		
			Scry*		
			Spellcraft		

*Exclusive skill

PRAYERS OF THE FROSTMAIDEN
The Spells of Auril

by Thomas M. Costa · illustrated by Beth Trott

It appeared suddenly in the wilds of Icewind Dale, a book with blue pages that felt as if they were made of ice. The man holding the book was tired and on the run. By the time he stumbled into the busy market of Ten Towns, he was exhausted, frantic, and crazed. It was there that two pursuing ice devils caught him. In an instant, the gelugons ripped the man apart and snatched the book away; by the next they were gone.

In their wake the man lay dying, raving weakly about the Winter of Death. He spoke of the *Revelations of the Icedawn*, a holy book of Auril, the Frostmaiden, said to contain her most chilling prayers. He spoke of the book as the gift of Iyraclea, the Ice Queen, and of a coming winter that would entomb the North in ice and snow like a coffin.

The tale of the man's death spread to the archmage Khelben "Blackstaff" Arunsun, who took the news seriously enough to send several Moonstars to investigate. They were found not a month ago, their hearts frozen and shattered within their sundered bodies. Its location now unknown, the madman's copy of the *Revelations of the Icedawn* is rumored to hold the most prized prayers of Auril's faith. Were one to read it, he would find that it holds the spells detailed here.

Auril's Flowers

Transmutation [Cold]
Level: Clr 6, Drd 5
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Long (400 ft. + 40 ft./level)
Area: 30-ft. radius burst
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: Reflex half
Spell Resistance: No

This spell causes moisture in the ground at a point you designate to freeze into a pingo, a mound of solid ice covered by a layer of soil, and burst violently through the surface. This flings dangerous ice shards and smalls stones throughout the area, turning the surface of the ground into dense rubble (see page 90 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.) The shards and stones deal 1d6 points of damage per caster level (maximum 15d6). Half the damage is cold damage. The origin point of the spell must be on the ground. If there is no source of moisture in the ground to a depth of 3 feet, such as sand in a desert or solid stone, the spell has no effect.

Cold Fire

Transmutation [Cold]
Level: Clr 3, Drd 2
Components: V, S, DF
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Target: One fire source (up to a 20-ft. cube) or one creature
Duration: 1 minute/level (D), or instantaneous (creature)
Saving Throw: No (fire source) or Fortitude half (creature)
Spell Resistance: No (fire source) or Yes (creature)

You are able to change the normal flames of a fire (that lasts for more than 1 round) into cold flames. Affected flames inflict cold damage on creatures that come into contact with them. The spell can also affect magical fires such as those generated by a *wall of fire*, providing the affected fire is small enough. *Cold fire* flames are blue and white for the duration of the spell.

If the target is a creature with the fire subtype or cold vulnerability, the spell causes 1d6 points of cold damage per two caster levels (maximum 5d6) to the creature, but has no further effect.

Cold Snap

Transmutation [Cold]
Level: Clr 6, Drd 5
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 minute
Range: 1 mile
Area: One-mile-radius circle, centered on caster
Duration: 2d4 hours
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

This spell causes a powerful cold front to form, lowering the temperature in the affected area by 5° F per caster level (maximum change of 50° F), to a maximum low of -20° F (see Cold Dangers on

page 302 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.) Three or more hours of temperatures below 30° F can damage or destroy any fragile flora, such as fruit, in the area of effect.

A druid casting this spell doubles the duration and affects a circle with a 2-mile radius.

Corona of Cold

Evocation [Cold]
Level: Clr 4, Drd 4
Components: V, S, DF
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Personal
Area: 10-ft.-radius emanation centered on you
Duration: 1 round/level (D)
Saving Throw: Fortitude negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

The caster is surrounded by a protective aura of cold that also causes damage to others within its radius. The spell absorbs the first 5 points, +1 point per caster level, of heat or fire damage the caster would take each round.

The spell also causes 1d6 points of nonlethal damage due to cold each round to all other creatures within the corona. A successful save prevents the damage caused by the spell that round. Creatures damaged by the spell shiver uncontrollably, suffering a -2 penalty to their Strength and Dexterity for as long as they remain within the area; these penalties do not stack with consecutive rounds of damage or additional *corona of cold* spells.

Freeze

Conjuration (Creation) [Cold]
Level: Clr 5, Drd 4
Components: V, S, DF
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)
Effect: Ray
Duration: 1 round/2 levels
Saving Throw: Reflex partial
Spell Resistance: Yes

A thin white ray streaks from your outstretched hand. You must make a successful ranged touch attack with the ray to deal damage to the target. A target struck takes 1d6 points of cold damage +1 point per two caster levels. A creature struck must succeed at a Reflex save or be encased in a 5-inch-thick sheath of ice and be immobilized. A creature encased in ice suffers 1d6

FOR YOUR CAMPAIGN

If you are using the Forgotten Realms, but your heroes do not follow Auril, some of these spells might be available to the faithful of Ulutiu or other gods, such as Silvanus.

On other worlds you can grant these spells through another god of winter, or to the winter cult of a god of weather or nature. Alternatively, the spells could be sacred to tundra-dwelling druids, found in the psalms of a long-dead god, or even be in the hands of a wizard attempting to research similar arcane spells.

In the case of assigning them to alternate gods, remember that you might need to tweak some of the spells; for instance, *ice axe* might be renamed *ice spear* to correspond with a deity's favored weapon.

FOR CLERICS OF AURIL

Auril is a fickle and evil goddess, whose frozen heart is untouched by any hint of warmth. She commands her faithful to blanket the land in snow and put chill in every bone. Toward that end, she has taught her clergy many spells. Several are unique, some are similar to known druid and wizard spells (with their energy type changed to cold), and still others resemble nonelemental spells with minor descriptive changes.

If the DM allows, clerics of Auril also may choose the Weather domain (from *Deities and Demigods*, page 215) and/or the Winter domain (from *Dragon Magazine* #290, page 50) instead of the Storm and/or Air domains.

Here are some examples of altering spells specifically for Aurilian clerics, in order to add more flavor to a campaign:

ORIGINAL	NEW NAME	SPELL LEVEL
Burning hands	*Frost fingers*	*Clr 2*
Chill metal		*Clr 3*
Fire shield	*Chill shield*	*Clr 4*
Cone of cold		*Clr 6*
Fire trap	*Ice trap*	*Clr 3*
Flame blade	*Frost blade*	*Clr 3*
Flame strike	*Cold strike*	*Clr 5*
Flaming sphere	*Cold sphere*	*Clr 3*
Flesh to stone	*Flesh to ice*	*Clr 7*
Grease	*Ice patch*	*Clr 2*
Ice storm		*Clr 5*
Polar ray		*Clr 9*
Ray of frost		*Clr 1*
Shocking grasp	*Cold hand*	*Clr 2*
Simulacrum		*Clr 8*
Sleet storm		*Clr 4*
Stone to flesh	*Ice to flesh*	*Clr 7*
Wall of ice		*Clr 5*

points of cold damage +1 point per two caster levels each round until freed. A target encased in ice is aware and breathes normally but cannot speak or move other than to attempt to escape by making a Strength check (see below). It may still execute purely mental actions, such as using a spell-like ability. A spellcaster may cast a spell with no verbal or somatic component so long as the spell lacks a focus or material component, or the material component, focus, or divine focus is already in the spellcaster's hand.

Note that the ice blocks line of effect. A winged creature cannot flap its wings and falls. A swimmer can't swim but, as ice floats, the encased swimmer will rise to the surface and bob about.

A DC 26 Strength check breaks the ice, freeing the encased creature. A total of 15 points of damage destroys enough of the ice to free the creature. When the ice has suffered at least 7 points of damage, the DC to break it drops by 2. When the duration of the spell expires, the ice melts and the encased creature is freed. Damage that would harm the creature must first deal enough damage to destroy the ice before the creature suffers damage, and damage dealt to the ice is subtracted from damage that would be dealt to the creature.

Frost Breath

Evocation [Cold]
Level: Clr 3, Drd 3
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Close (25 ft. +5 ft./2 levels)
Area: Cone
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: Reflex half
Spell Resistance: Yes

You breathe a cone of intense cold at your foes. The spell causes 1d4 points of cold damage per two caster levels (maximum 5d4). In addition, all creatures damaged by the *frost breath* that fail their Reflex save are dazed for 1 round by the sudden shock of cold.

Material Component: Three drops of water or fragments of ice (which are held in a cupped palm and blown toward the target).

Frostbite

Evocation [Cold]
Level: Clr 4, Drd 3
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Target: One creature
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: Fortitude partial
Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell inflicts intense cold damage upon the target, causing numbness, hypothermia, and frostbite as if the target had been exposed for a prolonged time to freezing temperatures. The target suffers 1d6 points of cold damage per two caster levels (maximum 10d6) and 1d4 points of nonlethal damage due to cold per two caster levels (maximum 10d4). The target may make a Fortitude save to negate the nonlethal damage. If the target suffers the nonlethal damage, the target becomes fatigued.

Heat Leech

Necromancy [Cold]
Level: Clr 8
Components: V, S, DF
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Targets: Living creatures, no two of which may be more than 30 ft. apart
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: Fortitude negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

The heat is drained from all living creatures except you within the affected area, which heals and empowers you. All affected living creatures take 1d4 points of cold damage per four caster levels (maximum 5d4). The caster gains hit points equal to the damage dealt to all the victims. No single victim can contribute more than its current hit points +10. Absorbed hit points first heal the caster of damage currently sustained. Remaining absorbed hit points become temporary hit points that last 1 minute per level.

Ice Axe

Evocation [Cold]
Level: Clr 3
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: 0 ft.
Effect: Battleaxe-like swirling ice
Duration: 1 min./level (D)

Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell creates a battleaxe-shaped formation of jagged, fast-swirling ice shards. You attack with *ice axe* as if you are proficient. The axe deals 1d8 points +1 point per two caster levels (maximum +10) of cold damage and 1d8 points of slashing damage with a successful hit. You cannot be disarmed of the *ice axe* nor can it be sundered. Since the axe is virtually weightless, your Strength modifier does not apply to attack or damage rolls. The *ice axe* is magic for the purposes of overcoming damage reduction. Damage reduction may apply to the *ice axe*'s slashing damage, but it does not affect the cold damage the *ice axe* deals. If you choose to hold something other than the *ice axe* in your hand or use the hand in some other way, you may, but the *ice axe* vanishes until the hand is empty again.

Material Component: A shard of ice, glass, or crystal.

Ice Gauntlet

Evocation [Cold]
Level: Clr 1
Components: V, DF
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: 1 minute/level (D)

This spell creates a large bristling ball of rock-hard ice spikes around one of the caster's fists. The caster may attack with her fist in all respects as if she were wearing a *+1 spiked gauntlet*. The *+1 spiked gauntlet* deals normal damage for the caster's size plus 1 point of cold damage. Damage reduction may apply to the *ice gauntlet's* damage, but it does not affect the cold damage the *ice gauntlet* deals. If the caster suffers any amount of fire damage, the *ice gauntlet* melts and the spell ends.

Note that this spell effect precludes the use of one hand for casting spells with a somatic component (so long as nothing if held in the caster's other hand, such spells can still be cast), and might make other tasks requiring two hands, such as climbing, more difficult or even impossible.

Snowshoes

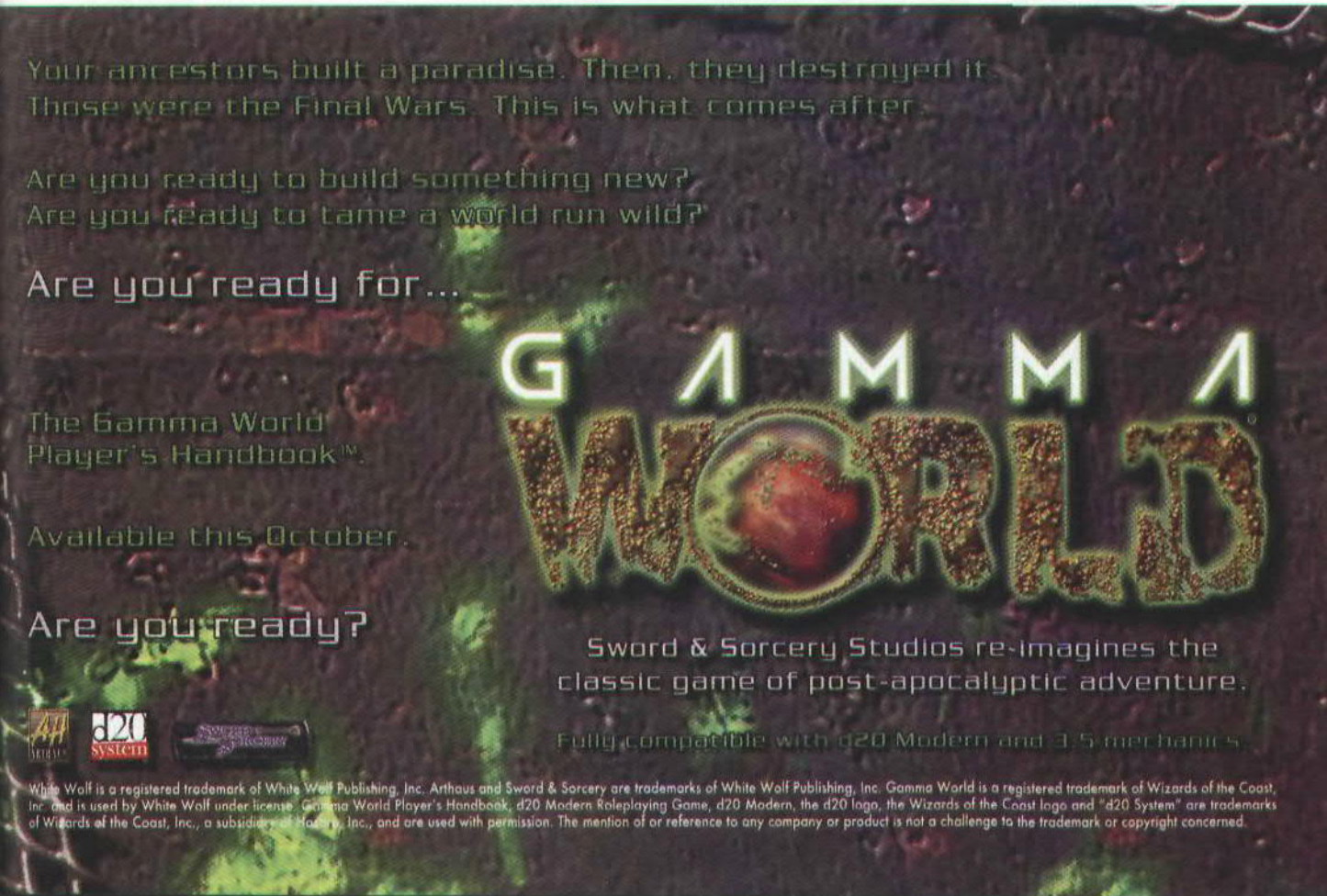
Transmutation
Level: Clr 1, Drd 0, Rgr 1
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Touch
Target: Creature touched
Duration: 1 hour/level (D)
Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

The affected creature can walk lightly over ice without having its speed reduced. The affected creature gains a +5 bonus to any Balance check or Reflex saving throw to walk on ice and snow without slipping and falling, avoid cracking ice they walk over, or to avoid falling through cracked ice. In addition, affected creatures do not leave a more readily discernible trail through the ice and snow than they do on solid ground, denying trackers potential bonuses to follow the affected creature's path. (See Weather on pages 93-95 and Cold Dangers on page 302 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for more details on the effects of weather and ice.)

Snowshoes, Mass

Transmutation
Level: Clr 3, Drd 2, Rgr 3
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Target: One creature/level, no two of which can be more than 30 ft. apart

This spell functions like *snowshoes*, except as noted above. D



FAITHS OF FAERÛN

SILVERSTAR

BY JULIA MARTIN & ERIC HADDOCK • ILLUSTRATED BY MATT WILSON

Some of the old specialty priests are poorly translated with just multiclassing and feat choice. Some of them were such a grab bag of capabilities that it is difficult to see their core theme. Want to have some of those eclectic abilities and refocus your cleric on the driving themes of his deity? Then you probably want to enter into a prestige class. Here is one to take the place of Selûne's specialty priests, the silverstars.

SELÛNE: SILVERSTARS

Silverstars are dedicated advocates of freedom and tolerance, wanderers on the path of truth, and absolute foes of Shar. They seek to build harmony among lycanthropes and nonshapechangers, and they protect the weak and the oppressed everywhere. They cannot abide slavery, and they hate most undead. They rarely settle in one place for long, instead moving along when seized by wanderlust or enticed by a new cause or mission. Sometimes they receive visions and are seen as somewhat "touched" with prophecy by their closeness to the Moonmaiden. They deal with lunar energies and phenomena and are, to a limited degree, able to wield the power of the moon, bringing its fierce, pure white light to Toril to advance the goddess's wishes.

Clerics most often become silverstars; rangers are a less common choice. Selûne demands an individualistic outlook on life that is incompatible with the lawful nature of paladins and monks, and her passionately good and chaotic nature leaves little room for the balance a druid requires.

SILVERSTAR — HIT DIE: D8

Level	Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special	Spellcasting
1st	+0	+2	+0	+2	Moon spells	+1 level of existing class
2nd	+1	+2	+0	+2	Lunar sight	+1 level of existing class
3rd	+2	+3	+1	+3	Moon's hand +1	+1 level of existing class
4th	+3	+4	+1	+4	Tears of Selûne 1/day	+1 level of existing class
5th	+3	+4	+1	+4	Prophet's sight 1/day	+1 level of existing class
6th	+4	+5	+2	+5	Selûnite lycanthrope	+1 level of existing class
7th	+5	+5	+2	+5	Moonshield	+1 level of existing class
8th	+6	+6	+2	+6	Prophet's sight 2/day	+1 level of existing class
9th	+6	+6	+3	+6	*Tears of Selûne* 2/day, moon's hand +2	+1 level of existing class
10th	+7	+7	+3	+7	*Moonfire*	+1 level of existing class

Class Features

All of the following are features of the silverstar prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Silverstars are proficient with all simple weapons, all types of armor, and with shields. Selûne's favored weapon is the heavy mace, which silverstars refer to as the moon's hand.

Spellcasting: A silverstar continues training in magic. Thus, when a new silverstar level is gained, the character gains new spells per day as if she had also gained a level in a divine spellcasting class she belonged to before she added the prestige class. She does not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained (improved chance of controlling or rebuking undead, additional favored enemies, and so on). This essentially means that she adds the level of silverstar to the level of some other spellcasting class the character has, then determines spells per day and caster level accordingly.

Moon Spells: A silverstar can pray for and receive any Moon domain spell as if it were on her divine spell list. The spell uses a spell slot of a level equal to its level in the Moon domain list. For instance, a cleric/silverstar could pray for *moonblade* as a 3rd-level cleric spell, and a ranger/silverstar could pray for *moonbeam* as a 2nd-level ranger spell.

Lunar Sight: Silverstars have low-light vision. This is an extraordinary ability.

Moon's Hand: When a silverstar wields a heavy mace, she negates damage reduction in creatures she attacks as if it were a +2 weapon. At 9th level, it negates damage reduction as if her heavy mace were a +3 weapon. If the mace's bonus is greater than the effect of this class ability, use the mace's bonus to determine whether damage reduction is negated.

Tears of Selûne: A silverstar can project small balls of luminescent lunar energy from her eyes as a *dancing lights* spell (torches or will-o'-wisps only) cast by a wizard of her level. At 9th level, this ability can be used twice per day. Activating this ability is a standard action. This is a spell-like ability.

Prophet's Sight: A silverstar is able to see as if under the effect of a *true seeing* spell cast by a cleric of her level. At 8th level, this ability can be used twice per day. Activating this ability is a standard action. This is a supernatural ability.

Selûnite Lycanthrope: Silverstars who contract any form of lycanthropy are treated as natural lycanthropes. Their type becomes shapechanger, and they can select the Improved Control Shape feat (see the *Monster Manual*, page 218) or the Scent ability as a feat (see the *Monster Manual*, page 10) at any point that they can select a new feat. Silverstars do not change alignment due to contracting lycanthropy and are aware of their actions while in animal or hybrid form.

Moonshield: The silverstar gains a +1 bonus to saves against Enchantment, Illusion, and Necromancy spells and effects, and spells and effects with the Darkness descriptor. This is a supernatural ability.

Moonfire: The silverstar can cast *moonfire* once a day as a 17th-level cleric. Activating this spell-like ability is a standard action.

CLASS REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a silverstar, a character must fulfill all the following criteria:

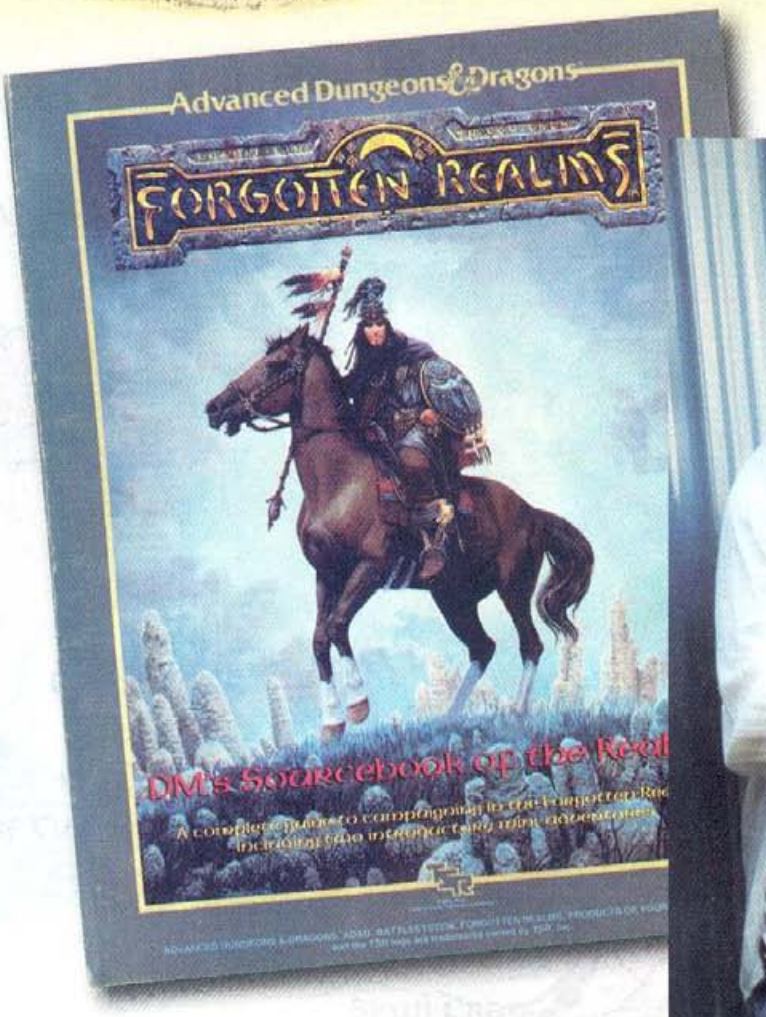
Patron Deity: Selûne
Alignment: Chaotic Good
Base Attack Bonus: +4
Spellcasting: Ability to cast 2nd-level divine spells. Clerics who wish to become silverstars must have access to the Moon domain.
Intuit Direction: 2 ranks
Sense Motive: 2 ranks
Feats: Blind-Fight, Dodge, Mobility, Spring Attack

CLASS SKILLS

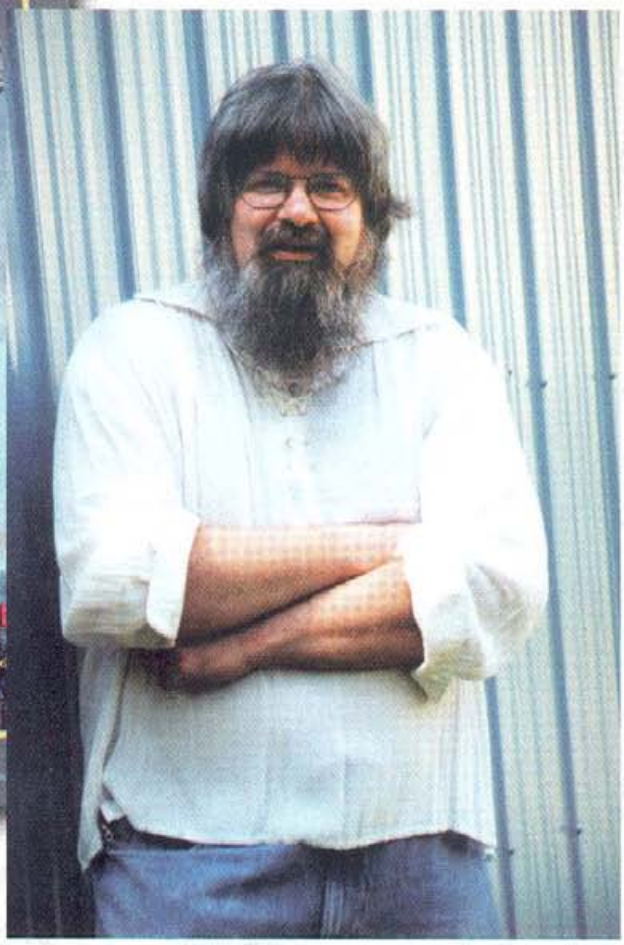
Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier

The silverstar's class skills (organized by key ability) are:

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
		Concentration	Craft	Heal	Diplomacy
			Knowledge (arcana)	Intuit Direction	
			Knowledge (geography)	Profession	
			Knowledge (local)	Sense Motive	
			Knowledge (nature)	Wilderness Lore	
			Knowledge (the planes)		
			Knowledge (religion)		
			Scry		
			Spellcraft		



interview conducted by Jeffery E. Thetford



INTERVIEW WITH

ED GREENWOOD

VOLO'S GUIDE TO THE MASTER OF THE FORGOTTEN REALMS

This month, DRAGON presents an interview with Ed Greenwood, creator of Waterdeep and the FORGOTTEN REALMS.

How did you get your start in the writing business?

I've always been "a writer," jotting down tales and scenes and fragments for my own amusement from the moment I could form the letters of the alphabet with a pencil, and writing (pretty awfully at first) stories of "what happened next" to favorite fictional characters by the time I was six (which is why the Realms began when I was seven or eight).

I come from a family of writers and all through my youth worked on school yearbooks, "little" literary magazines, senior citizens' center newsletters, church bulletins, and magazine articles. I'm Canadian, and at that time the Canadian literary community was a small, cozy family; I had some books of mine published early on.

How I got started in the game writing business was simple: I started writing articles for DRAGON magazine (or *The Dragon*, as it was then—a name I still vastly prefer). They started publishing them (the "Curst" monster in issue #30 was my first), Kim Mohan was impressed by the use of footnotes in my Gates article (in DRAGON #37) and that soon led to a "Contributing Editor" position (which meant they were interested in seeing all of the steady flood of articles I sent them) and lots of appearances in DRAGON. I worked FORGOTTEN REALMS references into my articles to give my players some fun.

These got noticed, and when TSR was looking for a new campaign world setting they contacted me, and the rest, as they say (ahem), is history.

What was the most difficult part of designing the early Realms?

If by "early Realms" you mean before TSR started publishing it (and the most difficult part became the "traffic cop" role of making sure Writer A didn't kill off Character X before the time of Writer B's novel that starred Character X, or destroy a kingdom that Writer B was going to use, and so on), it was finding time enough to give every spot on the ever-increasing maps the same level of rich detail. Even now, the published Realms concentrate on the Heartlands and neglects more distant areas (although the third edition Realms sourcebooks are trying to paint in some of those forgotten corners). I not only had to give the tourist-guidebook details ("That spire on your left is the blah blah blah, and the field on your right is planted with barley"), I had to give the underlying reasons ("Barley sells well in the markets of Sembia, so of course the farmers here plant blah blah blah") and the life of every locale (not just "the Hatfields hate the McCoys" stuff, but which merchant has a covert trade agreement with another merchant, local attitudes toward other villages or the distant ruler or strangers or all gnomes, and so on). I've had a busy life (yes, outside gaming! Imagine!) and have never had quite enough time to do a really satisfying job.

Now, I'm not advocating that all gamers use or need that level of detail, or that folks should feel bound by any "canon" details in their own game. I'm saying that as a writer of imaginary fantasy settings gamers have to pay for, I believe I must provide such a level of detail (to give value for money, if nothing else).

With the advent of third edition and 3.5, what do you think of the direction that the Forgotten Realms are heading, taking into consideration your earlier vision of what you wanted it to become?

I'm not a fan of endless prestige classes. My ideal Realms sourcebook would have no stat blocks and minimal class and "hard" game notations (it's enough to say that "Roldro is a powerful wizard [perhaps a wizard 12]"), because I want to use the space on the pages to give gamers the maximum amount of usable over-and-over lore ("Roldro collects old maps, and will pay handsomely for any good ones of XXX, but he's not the prissy old collector he

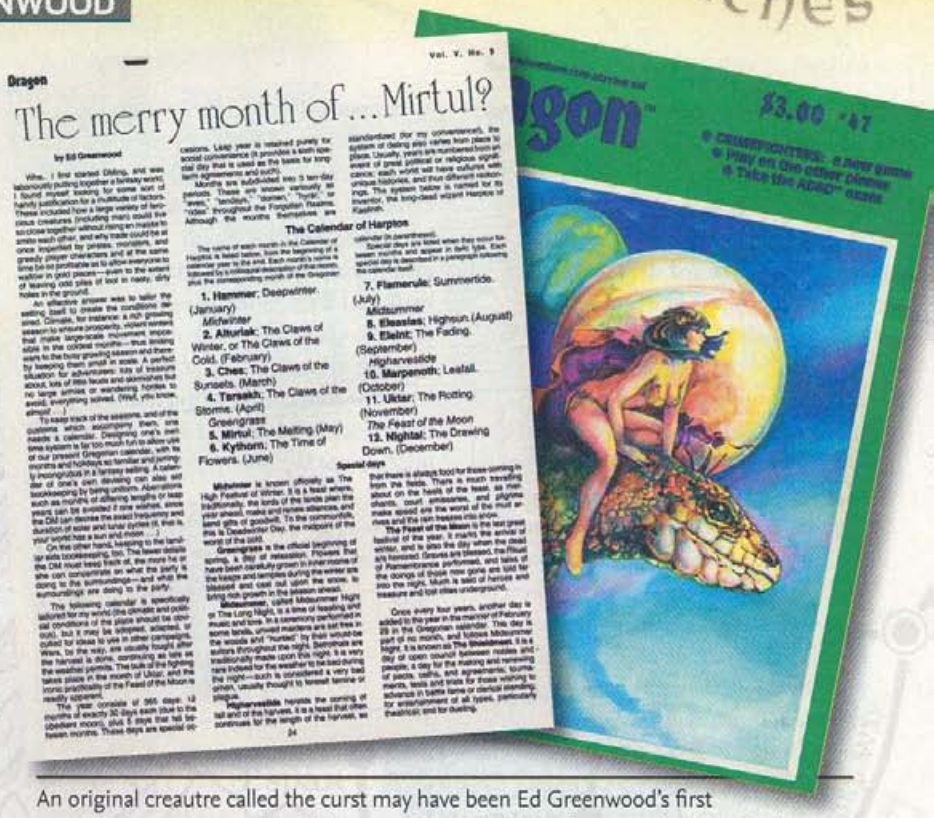
likes to pretend to be. A retired former herald, he's keenly aware of the genealogies of six kingdoms, and very quietly makes a good living identifying lost heirs and throne claimants for every cabal willing to pay for such information—even if it leads to coups and bloody civil wars and shattered thrones. Moreover, Roldro once received *The Tome of Ineffable Magicks* in payment of a debt, and has mastered..."). That sort of stuff is far more useful to DMs trying to spin plots and subplots in their own campaigns than stats for Orc Encounter #36. After all, there are already tons of published stat blocks those DMs can use for such needs.

With that said, I'm happy that Realms sourcebooks are continuing to be published and are continuing to "paint in the map" of the Realms, covering the fuzzy areas and adding more detail. I'm also pleased that Realms novels go from strength to strength in the field, because the more stories going on in the Realms, the more gamers think about the Realms, the more it seems alive, and the more interesting it stays.

In what direction would you like to see Dungeon & Dragons go? Is there an area of the game that has not been explored that you would like to see fleshed out in a book or supplement or module?

I would love to see a sourcebook that deals with merchant shipping, caravans, banking (currency, trade flows, and commerce), heraldry, courts (laws and justice, not just enforcement and sentencing) and Court etiquette ("How do I ask to see the king?"), so that gamers could have a sample business contract in mock-medieval language that they could photocopy and "fill in the blanks," and so on. A book that covers all the neglected stuff, if you will.

Now, a gaming business person will tell you (as many have told me) that something like this would never sell, but I think it's a matter of dressing it up in the right attractive clothing. Stuffing in enough goodies, if you will. Give me photocopy-able handouts DMs can give to players (writs, proclamations of thanks for PC heroism, "Wanted" posters for fugitives, charters for adventuring companies and grants of arms for nobles and the just-knighted, and so on). To use a Realms example, sneak in a simplified Sword Coast "Pirate and Traveler" style board game that gives me a deck of cargo cards that I can draw from. To tell me very quickly "what's in this wagon" or "what's down in this ship's hold besides the slave girls we're rescuing—if they're chained to bombs, I'd like to know that before I go down there with my flaming torch in my hand."


Dragon

The merry month of ...Mirtul?

That's just one idea off the top of my head, of course. Like any gamer, I have many others.

What other games do you enjoy playing?

Lots of games, from board games (like *Arkham Horror, Awful Green Things From Outer Space, Empires of the Middle Ages, Kingmaker,* and *International Oil-man*) to roleplaying games (like *Call of Cthulhu* and *Metamorphosis Alpha*). I rarely have time to sit down and really enjoy games these days, but I like simple card games and board games with simple mechanics but strategic difficulties (especially if the board itself is beautiful to look at). Many of the Cheapass Games appeal to my sense of humor and desire for fast-playing, enjoyable games that don't appeal to rules lawyers or are likely to end in furious disagreements over how well they've accurately simulated this or that real-world military detail.

You have said that your gaming group gets together about once or twice a year for a marathon gaming session lasting up to three days. Do you still have these marathon sessions?

Whenever we can, which isn't nearly often enough. Yes, things are falling apart for the home Realms players, which isn't surprising when you consider that we're scattered all over the world now, with busy professional lives and young families of our own. (It's hard to get people to show up for a gaming session when they're on the other side of the world, backpacking alone from ancient monument to ancient monument. It's even harder when they're tenured professors teaching heavy class loads at a large university, trying to stay fit, AND juggling infants at home.) That's the problem with having a group of incredibly bright, imaginative, inquisitive, and handsome people: they can go far in life—and have.

An original creautre called the curst may have been Ed Greenwood's first contribution to DRAGON [#30], but an article on building fantasy calendars was the first to mention the FORGOTTEN REALMS by name.

Who is the most underrated NPC bad-guy from your home realms campaign? How about from the merchandised Realms?

Manshoon is the most underrated NPC villain in the published Realms, because the TSR Code of Ethics prevented me from showing the Zhentarim as really competent, early on, and I was never able to dwell on the extent and sophistication of Manshoon's Machiavellian plotting and subtle spread of influence. For a man not directly supported by a deity (as, for instance, Elminster is), Manshoon achieved more than anyone else in the current Realms, in matters of acquiring information and in being able to influence others.

He was well on his way to having a Realms-wide network of informants and agents that could persuade a farmwife in Halruaa to purchase this sort of cloth instead of that sort so subtly that she might not even be aware her decision was being influenced. Why does that matter? Well, if you do that to several thousand farmwives, you change entire markets, profiting thereby and ruining rivals. (This is something modern-day multinational business concerns understand all too well.) Larloch could establish the same degree of influence, but isn't interested in doing so—and is far less "in touch and in tune" with daily life in the Realms than Manshoon is, and so could never match Manshoon's subtlety. So the "real" Manshoon is the master manipulator, not Fzoul's puppet. (In fact, this could just be his ploy: set Fzoul up to be the figurehead, er, target, while the sly and urbane Manshoon schemes unhampered in the background... heh-heh.)

In the original "home" Realms campaign, the most neglected villain was a certain Lord of Waterdeep whose identity I'm going to keep secret because the Company of Crazed Venturers (the PCs) still haven't stumbled into understanding the depths of his villainy. He's been quietly in the background of almost every guild scandal and important-NPC murder they've seen, and they've just never picked up on the clues. I think I may have him try to romance one of the Venturers with an eye to marrying her (and trying to slay most of the Venturers on their ways to or from her wedding feast), acquiring her land and wealth,

and then have her slowly poisoned, just to see if they notice this guy then. Perhaps if he put on a dragon suit and roared at them...

Now that EBERRON is here, what do you see for the future of FORGOTTEN REALMS? Do you think it will be overshadowed and essentially phased out like GREYHAWK was with the advent of second edition?

We've had a good, long run.

The Realms could quite possibly end up as a fiction-only setting, as DRAGONLANCE did for a time, or even be licensed out to another company. Those aren't my decisions—which is a good thing, because I'd probably be a terrible businessperson.

Under the original Realms agreement, there are conditions under which the Realms "reverts" to me, so I doubt the current copyright holders will let those conditions happen.

I am privy to the very good business reasons for the creation of EBERRON, and agree with them, but the Realms novels are selling so well that it would seem foolish to make the Realms "go away." There's also the proven track record of the Realms, which has been a profitable financial engine for far longer than most settings in the fantasy gaming world have lasted (popular settings have been "brought back" repeatedly, but that's not the same thing). If you have a winning racehorse and you buy a new one (let's call it, er, EBERRON), you'd better make sure it can win races before you send your proven winner to the glue factory.

However, as a game designer, I'm interested in seeing what's done with EBERRON (I view it as "another platter on the buffet" for all gamers, not as a rival or enemy to the Realms), and the Realms has built up a fandom over the years that will not let the setting die (like Tolkien's Middle Earth and Star Wars and Star Trek and so on). Even if the published Realms ended tomorrow, the Realms will go on—something that pleases me very much. I have friends all over the world because of the Realms, I'm regularly asked what Realms character names mean because people want to apply them to their babies, I get asked to perform marriages as Elminster... so the Realms has a life of its own, now, far larger than any one person or company.

Elminster is probably the single most recognized NPC from the *FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting*. How did you create such a living personality?

I needed someone too powerful for lazy roleplayers to have their characters casually slay to shut him up (hence the "has powerful magic" part), who could be an unreliable and cantankerous source of advice (add the "old wise sage with major attitude" part). This gave me someone PC adventurers needed, but couldn't push around or always go running to (because he might be off saving the world somewhere else, so couldn't they handle their scraped knees themselves for once, hmmm?).

This gave me how he had to be. Mostly I wanted an old fart that could bluntly tell the emperor that he had no clothes and always get away with doing so. The guy who causes utter silence at a wild party by saying what everyone suspects but no one dares to say out loud.

From that needed role, the rest of him developed, step-by-step. So he's not a Merlin clone (though that's the

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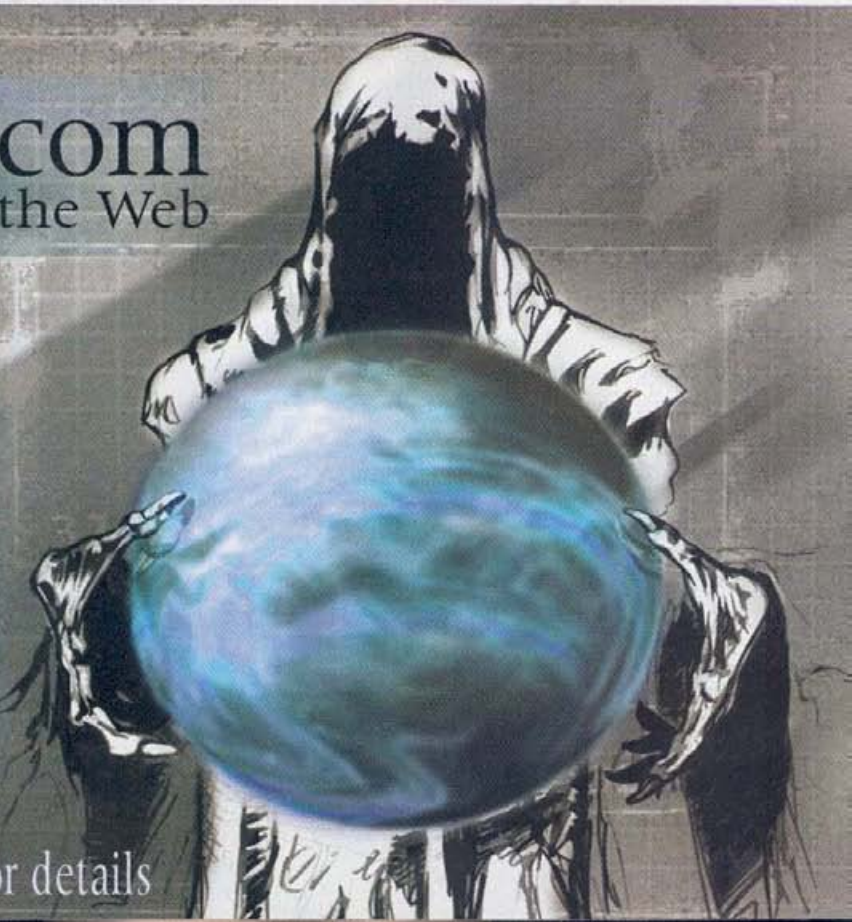

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role he's mostly playing), or a Gandalf rip-off or a Belgarath parody, and he's NOT my alter ego. He's the guy so powerful that he can take your best shot, yawn, and then stand there without retaliating, and calmly say, "Ye seem more hostile than most adventurers who come here seeking to slay me. Why, may I ask? Is thy codpiece too tight? Crown on crooked, this morning? Bored with slaying helpless children? Or just seeking glory and too stupid to think there might be a reason for my reputation? Hmmm?"

He's not a munchkin (too tall and too low a voice, for one thing), he's the lover and most trusted servant of the most powerful deity in the world he lives in, beyond all munchkinism. Which lets me use him to examine more important issues than merely chasing power, such as: What do you do with all that power once you've got it? Once you've had it for centuries, and outlived everyone you cared about, and most of their countries, too? What's it like to go insane because you're just so tired of it all, but aren't allowed to just lie down and die? How do you react when you know that's the trap you live in? What keeps you going? What do you still believe in, and care about? And then, when you start the final fall-apart anyway, what do you rush to do in the dwindling time you have left? What does it really mean to love entities (gods, individual people, horrible scaly monsters)? To love ideas? Countries? A world?

If you follow along watching what this Elminster guy does and says, and jot it all down, well—he creates himself, as he goes. Just like real people do.

Did you expect Elminster to become so legendary?

No, I expected Elminster to be the Old Storyteller narrator of the Realms, who introduced us to other characters and their unfolding stories, and then faded away off the page as the harp strings thrummed, and the reader plunged into those stories. I expected him to be the old guy people went to consult (like the oracle at Delphi, whom the reader never directly sees in the old tales), rather than onstage much. However, the books people at TSR thought differently, so I ended up writing a series of Elminster books. His tale isn't quite done yet, but the Old Mage's legendary status is a perfect illustration of the way commercial writing works: It's not about what you the writer want to say, it's about what your audience wants to hear. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle grew to hate Sherlock Holmes and killed him off—and his readers demanded his return and didn't want to buy anything else by Doyle.

A lot of vocal gamers and readers hate Elminster and want to see him gone—but the sales figures tell the different opinion of the more silent majority.

Was Elminster patterned after you or one of your original gaming group?

No, he isn't me, and was never an echo of any real person (or gaming character, PC or NPC). His speech and mannerisms and character have all developed on their own over the years, making him increasingly unique (despite what some believe). I'm often asked to pick actors I'd like to see portray El in a movie, and I can say that Nichol Williamson's Merlin in the movie *Excalibur* (which came out well after Elminster's character was established, of course) is pretty close in manner of speech, tone of voice, and accent. Ditch the earring and skullcap, and change the red hair to flowing white, of course.

Over the years I've often put on a costume and portrayed Elminster at conventions, but please understand that this is a fat fantasy author playing the Old Mage, not anything like the Old Mage himself.

Is Waterdeep the greatest city in the Realms?

Just as in the real world, the answer to that depends on whether the answerer is a fan of Waterdeep or not. It's currently one of the most important and best-known trading cities of Faerûn, for two reasons: The lumber, mined metals, livestock, and other foodstuffs now flowing out of the Sword Coast North are greatly needed by the rest of the Realms (a trade Waterdeep dominates, for reasons of geography and climate more than anything else), and Waterdeep is a human-dominated cosmopolitan trading city where coins rule, half the creatures of Faerûn rub shoulders, and tolerance is legendary.

That combination of tolerance, variety of goods and skills, and freedom from daily oppression by a strong ruler is hard to match anywhere else in Faerûn. So people keep coming, and the coins keep flowing.

How do all the nobles of Waterdeep get (or stay) so rich? They certainly seem to spend a lot!

The nobles of Waterdeep got that way in part because they were very successful merchant families, usually long ago. In other words, because it's now so hard to become a noble in Waterdeep, the nobility you see now are "old money."

So most of them have extensive crofts (farms) and ranches somewhere in Dessarin Vale or more southerly lands, and have made money from these for decades. All those people crowded inside the walls of Waterdeep have to eat and drink daily, and most nobles own breweries, wagons, and warehouses, so they provide the provender to the city, at city street prices.

The costs of running these country properties are often low because kin of the nobles and loyal servants live on the lands and receive most of their pay as "roof and platter" (room and board, which of course their own daily work provides). In other cases, nobles have far more land than they can work, and rent it out to tenant farmers.

In addition to their primary businesses (listed in various Waterdeep sources over the years), many Waterdhavian noble families also own small—or not so small—fleets of ships carrying cargoes up and down the Sword Coast, and invest in caravan costers. They also invest in hundreds of small Waterdhavian businesses (supporting shopkeepers and craftsfolk who'd otherwise never have coin enough to get started or weather cash flow problems), and most importantly are landlords, getting rent from rooms and buildings in crowded

Waterdeep, and from way-inns they own on the roads outside the city, too!

Houses maintained by most Waterdhavian noble families in Amn, Tethyr, Silverymoon and elsewhere usually have a few "country cousin" kin living there—and working as factors (trade agents) for the family.

A few noble families of Waterdeep have fallen on hard times, but often replenish their coffers by allowing rich, ambitious "wannabe" nobles to marry into their ranks. Nobles also have a few legal rights, and a lot of social influence (including unwritten customs or rules that aren't actually laws) that other Waterdhavians lack, that help them prosper in competition with visiting "outlander" merchants or commoners.

So if nobles wander the streets staggering under the weight of so many coins, why don't they get robbed all the time?

Well, there are such things as bodyguards. More importantly, citizens of Waterdeep know that most nobles don't carry much coin at all. They have their bills paid for them by their stewards (servants), who "come around" to places the nobles shop at, a day or so later, and settle up.

Nobles are scrupulously honest about settling all accounts, by the way, because if word gets around that a particular family is disputing or denying bills, their reputation is stained—and that ruins their credit, meaning other traders won't deal with them or will demand harder bargains.

So a "wild young blade" of a noble who spends lavishly, gambles, or goes on sprees of breaking things will have his costs covered. Even if the family patriarch or matriarch is enraged (and almost always they've established procedures where they must approve large drafts on the family vaults, so nothing can be hidden from them), they'll pay.

Family spendthrifts are often encouraged to make investments or start sideline businesses to earn their own spending money. Less wealthy nobles usually do this with their children. Wastrels "beyond rescuing" might be publicly disowned, quietly killed in "accidents," shipped off in virtual slavery (drugged or coerced) to far corners of the world to make their own fortunes, serve as hireswords (in hopes that battle will soon kill them), or even sent on family business far from Waterdeep and there poisoned by hired agents.

So the heads of noble houses decide who gets lavish spending money, and even which family members get to live in the family mansions. They dare not mistreat spouses or heirs in ways the watching city can detect, however, or the family status—and as I said, business opportunities, and therefore, wealth—will be permanently harmed.

So how does the rest of Waterdeep handle, and think about, money?

In lots of different ways, just as with any large group of people. After all, Waterdeep is home to: near-slaves (the 'prentices of cruel masters, lowly servants of the most ill-behaved nobles, those too old or sick to work, and Dock Ward street urchins), a lot of "short-coin" laborers (non-guild workers paid

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by the day or by the task), "guilded" workers, independent (not guilded) shopkeepers, rising or successful merchants (who no longer have to work daily in their own shops, but have hired a staff; who also usually own more than one property; and are becoming landlords or part-owners of businesses other than their own original one, sometimes little shops started by their sons and daughters), established merchants (born into a successful business or who've become a confident and settled landlord or multi-business owner, no longer grasping and clawing for coins), really rich wannabe-noble merchants (who spend coins like water to impress the city, and want to be socially important), and the nobles.

Most Waterdhavians don't want to reveal full details of their wealth, assets, debts, and prospects to anyone—and don't, often taking elaborate troubles to conceal things from tax collectors, business partners and fellow guild members, and even close kin (using trade agents and go-betweens in negotiations, setting up "dummy" companies, and so on).

Folk in Waterdeep love to discuss trade prospects, and "who will probably do what—just you watch!" Such conversations take the place of the weather for casual daily discourse; other usual topics are: "What's hot?" (meaning new products, processes, fads and fashions or "who's buying what?") and "What's the news?" (business feuds and announcements, and the usual city gossip about murders, trysts, weddings, breakups, robberies, scandals, fights and insults, and so on). Waterdhavians want to tell you all about their latest business venture (particularly if they want you to invest in it), but they usually want to limit what they say to just that, and gloss over what else they own, are doing, or how their other business concerns are performing.

Waterdhavians are always looking for a deal, and love getting not just a low price but bargaining shrewdly. Someone who pays high prices for things without question is either a fool (usually in love), an outlander (ignorant of the proper current "street price"), or a noble or wannabe-noble with money to burn who wants everyone to know how much coin he can afford to waste. Of these, only nobles or wannabe-nobles impress most Waterdhavians, and observers judge if a big spender belongs in one of those two groups by judging manner, speech, dress, and company kept, not just the amount of coins spent. If so judged, you impress, without anyone knowing exactly how much your complete holdings are (which allows con men to operate).

Also, Waterdhavians aren't impressed by someone with large amounts of coin but no assets (property, ships or shares in ships, or goods owned) or investments. They regard such people suspiciously, as thieves, agents of foreign interests up to no good, or fools. So impressing a Waterdhavian always involves more than just a sum of money.

What's it like on the streets of Waterdeep? Are there rush hours?

Crowded, with lots of people walking (many of them wheeling along delivery handcarts), and wagons and horse-riders trying to cleave through all the pedestrians. There are daily rush hours, when the city gates open (almost always at dawn) and before they close (almost always at dusk, though sometimes they're kept open a little later when caravans are assembling outside the city and there are lineups of wagons jammed inside the gates).

Traffic jams may happen due to goods-wagons moving to and from the docks when many large ships are loading or unloading, during festivals, guild parades, large contests at the Field of Triumph, and extraordinary events like the first warm bathing days of a year (everyone heads to Sea Ward to get to the beach), market fairs outside the walls (when multiple caravans arrive and the City Guard keeps them from entering due to crowding, so street vendors and eager shoppers go out to them), or when the city's under attack.

Wagon traffic tends to disappear from Sea Ward and North Ward except during daylight hours, so as long as you're nimble enough to avoid nobles' galloping horses and coaches whizzing about, pedestrians can get around easily after dusk. That "easier after dark" rule holds true—if one dares to go out—everywhere in the city except around Caravan Court and right along the docks (though much of Dock Ward can be slow going for someone not large, ugly, obviously well-armed, and walking with a lot of friends).

The City Guard controls access to the city (the various gates, plus a harbor patrol) but the Watch commands the streets, calling in the Guard only when there's a riot or pitched battle. (Their horncalls can also summon Watchful Order "magical reinforcements" when necessary.) The Watch has wagons that trundle arrested persons off to dungeon cells under Castle Waterdeep, where their release can be obtained the next day upon payment of a fine.

The City Guards at all city gates routinely inspect wagons (due to sheer volume of traffic, they can't do every one or search most crates and coffers thoroughly; instead, they spot-check when suspicious). The Watch usually searches only to force someone into moving a wagon they seem unwilling to move ("All right then, Master Thorgund, I guess we'll just have to see what you consider so precious that it can't be moved one wheel-turn! Right, lads, let's have it all out and down onto the cobbles!"). Both the Guard and the Watch have the right to search any handcart or conveyance, at any time. Anything suspicious will be seized, along with the wagon and its tenders, and "brought along" to Castle Waterdeep for a full inspection (under the eyes of grim City Guard types with loaded crossbows, and Watchful Order duty magists irritated at having their card and dice games interrupted).

By the way, few Guard or Watch officers accept bribes, but they will report all attempts to offer such. Nobles get lenient treatment, but outlanders and known troublemakers receive "hard eye" attention. Familiar local carters and peddlers usually get a nod, a wave, and a quick inspection.