

Legendary Gunsmiths

Volume 1



Although later eclipsed by the more utilitarian discovery of steam power and the discovery of manite, one of the most fundamentally revolutionary discoveries in Aden was the development of gunpowder. At the time that gunpowder and firearms became more prevalent, most existing armor afforded very little protection against bullets, and learning to use a firearm was vastly quicker and easier than learning to master a bow or even a crossbow. There was little large-scale conflict present in the world at that time, but what skirmishes did exist were transformed completely by the presence of guns on the field of battle. Those who possessed them suddenly became the victors almost by default if their opponents did not. The world adjusted, as it always does, but the learning curve was a steep one, and those who could not change quickly failed to survive it.

It has been more than four centuries since gunpowder was first developed, and the secret of its creation is no longer secret at all. Most settlements of any significant size have a steamwright or arcanist who can produce it with relatively simple ingredients. Likewise, most metal workers are familiar with the basic components of a firearm's mechanisms, and can repair them if not produce their own. The production of quality firearms is as much art as it is science, however, and there are those throughout the Known Lands who have made a name for themselves by crafting exceptionally high-grade items. In the difficult times following the Darkfall, enthusiasts have traveled across the entire continent, a life-threatening and extremely expensive proposition to be sure, to patronize such experts.

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HEIMLOCKE & SONS

In the Urbanan city of Blackport there is a small, modest workshop, easily overlooked if one is not deliberately hunting for it, where one of the greatest living gunsmiths in the Known Lands plies his trade. Dieter Heimlocke is nearing seventy years old, which is an incredible age for a human to reach with the perils that face the people of Aden today, and has been crafting firearm components since he was a child, learning at the knee of his father and grandfather. Heimlocke & Sons has been in business for almost two hundred years, although there have been brief periods where they have been shut down for one reason or another, and Dieter currently works alongside several of his own children, a nephew or two, and even one of his oldest granddaughters. Together, they craft some of the finest firearms in Western Aden, possibly the entire continent.

The success of Heimlocke & Sons is almost an accident. When Dieter's grandfather began his business, he could not get all the raw materials he needed, and thus began building pistols with a slightly larger bore than others. This required him to produce his own packed rounds for it as well, which meant that those who purchased their firearms from him had to purchase their ammunition from him as well. This kept him in business while he began to build a larger customer base, until his pistols were well known and well regarded enough that others in the area began to make and stock rounds for "Heimlocke Pistols" to sell to their own customer bases who happened to own one. To this day the family is uncertain where this was merely happenstance or a deliberate, canny move by the original Heimlocke designed to build dependence upon his fledgling business.

Members of the Heimlocke family begin working in the family business from a very young age in hopes of discovering their particular talents. Most find that they are skilled at some aspect of the process, whether it's the crafting of incredibly fine-tuned mechanical components, mixing the perfect blend of components to create high-quality gunpowder, or even just being especially good at managing money and logistics. If someone can't find their niche within the family business, of course, they're free to go and find something else to do with their life; the Heimlockes accept that not everyone has a talent for the firearm business, but they try to keep as many members of the family involved as possible to keep outsiders from poaching their techniques and business.

Heimlocke Firearms

Heimlocke & Sons sells a standard array of firearms in both standard and masterwork varieties. Their specialty, however, is the Heimlocke Special, an exquisitely crafted masterwork pistol with a slightly larger-bore barrel that allows for rounds with a correspondingly larger quantity of gunpowder. Because of this, all range increments are increased by 20 ft. Within close range, the pistol also does an additional +1 damage. However, the cost of this bonus is the sharply increased recoil, which makes any additional ranged attacks made during the same round (from a matched pistol, for example) suffer -1 to the attack roll. These specialist weapons cost double the normal price for a masterwork pistol.



BREATH OF THE DRAGON

The signs for this firearm workshop bear the symbol of the dragon, the greatest of the Ten Beasts whose philosophies govern all aspects of life in Vanora. Under normal circumstances, this would be considered tantamount to heresy, for only the Dragon Emperor and his vassals are permitted to bear the sign of the dragon. The proprietor, an elven alchemist and metalworker named Toshimoko, is something of an oddity, however. She did serve in the Vanoran militia, as do a great many citizens, but was never chosen to serve among the Sons of the Dragon. However, she did prove an exceptional quartermaster and equipment specialist, and served the Sons in this manner although she never bore their emblem herself. However, during one large-scale exercise on behalf of the Sons, Toshimoko was one of the called up to be on duty. At some point, the Emperor's personal firearm malfunctioned and, rather than return to the palace for his personal gunsmith to attend to it, he handed it over to Toshimoko. She promptly made several small adjustments that dramatically improved the weapon's performance. The Emperor, a firearm aficionado, appreciated the work and complimented Toshimoko's skill, asking how he could repay her for her expertise. She simply requested the right to use the dragon emblem when she opened her own firearm workshop, and the Emperor readily agreed.

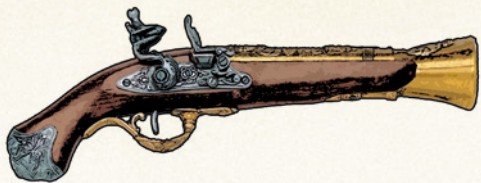
It would be several more years before Toshimoko's service to the Empire was complete, and by that time the Darkfall had taken place and the Emperor's son had taken his place on the throne. The previous Emperor's promise was documented in writing, however, and so Toshimoko proceeded to open her workshop as intended. The novelty of the dragon emblem and the story behind it was sufficient to ensure that Toshimoko did not lack for customers, and often had to turn them away because she could not possibly hope to fill all the orders that were submitted to her. Once she had been in business a short time and was a demonstrable financial success, she began to be slightly more selective in taking new clients, choosing tasks that challenged or interested her in some way. She has also taken a pair of apprentices, young elves whose families have been friends with hers for a very long time, and skilled enough to master several of her rudimentary techniques, such as those she used on the Emperor's firearms years ago.

Although Toshimoko has created several innovations that have been duplicated by competitors throughout the Known Lands, undoubtedly her most significant development has been the creation of a breech-loading rifle, which has dramatically decreased loading time for most rifles. She has likewise been working on the notion of firearms that contain multiple rounds and can be fired several times consecutively before requiring reloading, but at the private request of the Emperor, she has halted her research into "lever action reloading" rifles until such time as the Emperor can provide her with proper security and facilities to ensure that no one outside the Sons of the Dragon will possess such a powerful upgrade in weaponry.

Toshimoko and her apprentices prefer to work on projects involving rifles. As an adjunct to the Sons of the Dragon, Toshimoko shares their belief that close quarters combat is an honorable pursuit that should, when possible, be performed with a blade. For that reason, she produces fewer pistols than anything else, despite that they are quite popular with the common people, as they are the only products of hers that they can afford. This has not prevented her from developing new innovations in that area, however, as her popular Dragon's Breath Blunderbuss can attest.

Dragon's Breath Firearms

One of Toshimoko's earliest and most popular designs is the so-called Dragon's Breath Blunderbuss. It is a pistol-sized scattergun, although Toshimoko prefers the term blunderbuss, which was a less-effective version of the scattergun that existed fifty years or so ago, with an enhanced and reinforced chamber specifically designed to hold a dose of alchemist's fire. This allows the weapon to shoot alchemist's fire with twice the range increment it could normally be thrown. Reloading takes twice as long as normal due to the delicacy required in pouring such a volatile alchemical creation into the weapon's comparatively small chamber. This is considered a masterwork scattergun and priced accordingly.



LONGSWORDS

This unimaginatively named shop is one of a number of blacksmith shops operating in the city of Sea Reach, the capital of Arasteen. The shop is a second-generation business, opened by the mother of its current proprietors when she was a young woman, and over several decades of service it has developed a reputation for good service and excellent craftsmanship. The current proprietors are Bjorn and Sven Skaldson, and their younger sister Ysilla. Ysilla is a brilliant steamwright who loves to experiment with new ideas, and has managed to automate enough of the shop's traditional blacksmithing equipment that her older brothers can afford to spend more time with their families or drinking with their friends (more often the latter), and so they allow her to pursue whatever interests she desires in gratitude for their increased freedom.

Ysilla was always a brilliant child, but some years ago a chance encounter with the merchant captain Jacinda MacIntyre, a noteworthy gunslinger, in one of the city's open-air markets. So proficient was Captain MacIntyre in dispatching an ambush by some of her unsavory competitors that Ysilla genuinely believed for some time that she had used magic. Once she recognized that the captain was merely extremely skilled, she tried for more than a year to replicate some of her maneuvers, but found her physical skills wanting. Thus, she turned to studying firearms themselves, and found much more success in that regard. As in all things, Ysilla's thoughts turned to matters of efficiency, and how to improve upon the shortcomings of firearms in general. Reloading time, in particular, was something that she found offensive, and reasoned that if her personal hero, Captain MacIntyre, had not had to carry so many pistols on her person, she would have been capable of even greater feats. Excited by the prospect, Ysilla turned her attention fully to this proposition.

Most of the patrons of Longswords are aware that the shop now sells a small number of firearms in addition to its normal wares. Only those who truly study firearms and their use have any inkling of the importance the shop holds among the circle of true aficionados. Word of her specially crafted goods has spread throughout Arasteen, and even among certain high-level practitioners in other nations as well. Although her family doesn't really understand it, they do know that there is more new traffic in Longswords than before, and that a lot of

it is there for Ysilla's goods. She never asks for much in return, just a share of the profits so that she can continue her new developments, technologies, and materials. Frankly her brothers love the new normal and encourage her to continue as much as she wants. The elder of the twins, Bjorn, is more financially aware than his brother, and he worries somewhat that if Ysilla's new suitor, a half-elf ranger who works with the city guard, ends up marrying her, it could impact their shop's bottom line, and for that reason he has taken to carefully discouraging the relationship between the two whenever possible. His brother remains oblivious to the matter and, if he were to become aware of it, would probably take Bjorn strongly to task for prioritizing profit over family.

The Fourth Blade

Although outsiders find the title confusing, Ysilla's greatest success to date is named for an old Arastinian proverb extolling the virtues of persistence that states when the first three blades fail to slay an enemy, surely it is the fourth blade that will prevail. This massive rifle literally has four barrels, one situated on top of another. A normal rifle requires a move action to reload, but the Fourth Blade has a simple crank that allows a new barrel to rotate to the top position with a half-turn, making it a free action. The Fourth Blade weighs triple the weight of a normal rifle and costs three times as much. Most who are not familiar with its purpose find its appearance bordering upon the ridiculous, but this opinion often changes when they see it put to use by one skilled in its applications.



THE TOYMAKER'S WORKSHOP

This oddly named business is closed the vast majority of the time, as the proprietor travels across the Known Lands and into the Southern Seas throughout much of the year. The workshop is open a maximum of two months out of the year, and often not in consecutive periods of more than a week or two at a time, usually opening with little announcement and closing with only a day or two's notice. Despite this, there are those who watch the shop closely and wait for any sign of activity, knowing that once it does open, getting in to see the owner early is essential to getting a successful contract completed.

The Toymaker's Workshop is one of numerous businesses and estates maintained across the face of the Known Lands by the enigmatic mechatronics known as Mikal the Toymaker. Generally regarded as a tragic figure, Mikal's past is the subject of conjecture by a great many of those who have met him or who have even only heard of him. He is not prone to discussing his past and turns away any potential customer foolish enough to ask with assurances that they will never be a patron of his business again. He seems to regard the pursuit of improving and developing technology as one of his foremost priorities, and returns to Balaquim at random intervals when he feels as though he has new ideas for firearms that need to be implemented or merely tested. Unfortunately this is not exactly a predictable schedule, which makes his presence in the city at his workshop highly erratic, much to the chagrin of those who are interested in his work.

Mikal's firearm modifications are entirely unique, and he rarely repeats himself when modifying a weapon. He doesn't always even take the owner's requests into consideration, which is something that those who seek to hire him must accept before he will even consider providing them with his services. His most famous creations are as far beyond conventional firearms as a firearm is beyond a shortspear, however, and only a handful of them exist anywhere in the Known Lands. As a mechamage, Mikal has a particular fondness for steam-powered golems and their applications, and his personal golem takes the form of a clockwork falcon that has a staggering array of applications, which many of his enemies have found out to their chagrin very shortly, sometimes immediately, before passing from the mortal coil. The time, effort, and enchantments that Mikal has invested into his personal golem ensure that there are none like it anywhere else, but there are a few far less advanced models that he has made for others on occasion. Rumor has it that there are potential customers who have camped out in Balaquim for more than a year at a time in hopes of convincing Mikal to make one of the devices for them, but he is notoriously selective in which customers he accepts.

Mikal & His Toys

For more information on the Toymaker, see *Heroes & Villains of Aden*.

The Toymaker's most famous ware in his Balaquim workshop are the extremely limited number of his so-called Aerial Falcon Rifles, extremely complex and ridiculously expensive weapons that he crafts personally for those who impress him with their requests to own one. These are patterned after his personal steam golem, but lack that entity's autonomy and versatility, essentially existing as remote piloted firearms. An Aerial Falcon Rifle is, as the description indicates, a heavily enchanted, steam-powered device roughly double the size of a normal falcon and in the same rough shape. It is controlled by a small console roughly the size of a man's hand, which includes a small crystal that allows the controller to see what the rifle is pointing at. The device can travel up to one mile from the controller and operate normally; farther than this and it stops and awaits instruction once the controller moves within distance. It works as a sniper rifle with normal damage and range increments. The aerial rifle has a flight speed of 15, hardness of 5, and 20 hit points. They cost 10,000 crests.



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