

D&D

SWORD COAST ADVENTURER'S GUIDE™



DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®

Explore the Sword Coast in this campaign sourcebook
for the world's greatest roleplaying game

SWORD COAST ADVENTURER'S GUIDE™



CREDITS

This book was a collaboration between Wizards of the Coast and Green Ronin Publishing. Members of the Green Ronin creative team are marked with an asterisk below.

Lead Designer: Steve Kenson*

Designers: Joseph Carricker,* Brian Cortijo,* Jeremy Crawford, Peter Lee, Jon Leitheusser,* Mike Mearls, Jack Norris,* Sean K Reynolds, Matt Sennett, Rodney Thompson

Managing Editor: Jeremy Crawford

Editor: Kim Mohan*

Editorial Assistance: Chris Sims, Matt Sennett, Dan Helmick

Producer: Greg Bilsland

D&D Lead Designers: Mike Mearls, Jeremy Crawford

Art Directors: Kate Irwin, Hal Mangold,* Shauna Narciso

Graphic Designer: Emi Tanji

Cover Illustrator: Tyler Jacobson

Interior Illustrators: Conceptopolis, Olga Drebas, Jason A. Engle, Randy Gallegos, Illich Henriquez, David Heuso, Tyler Jacobson, McLean Kendree, Howard Lyon, William O'Connor, Claudio Pozas, Bryan Syme, Eva Widermann

Cartographers: Jared Blando, Mike Schley

Font Designer: Daniel Reeve

Project Management: Neil Shinkle, John Hay

Production Services: Cynda Callaway, Jefferson Dunlap,

David Gershman

Brand and Marketing: Nathan Stewart, Liz Schuh, Chris Lindsay, Shelly Mazzanoble, Hilary Ross, John Feil, Greg Tito, Kim Lundstrom, Trevor Kidd

Playtesters: Adam Hennebeck, Anthony Caroselli, Arthur Wright, Bill Benham, Bryce Haley, Christopher Hackler, Claudio Pozas, Daniel Oquendo, David "Oak" Stark, Gregory L. Harris, Jason Baxter, Jason Fuller, Jay Anderson, Jeff Greiner, Jonathan Longstaff, Jonathan Urman, Josh Dillard, Karl Resch, Ken J Breese, Keoki Young, Kevin Neff, Krupal Desai, Kyle Turner, Liam Gulliver, Logan Neufeld, Lou Michelli, Matt Maranda, Mik Calow, Mike Mihalas, Naomi Kellerman-Bernard, Paul Hughes, Paul Melamed, Richard Green, Robert Alaniz, Rory Madden, Shane Leahy, Shawn Merwin, Stacy Bermes, Teos Abadia, Tom Lommel, Travis Brock, Yan Lacharité

Disclaimer: Wizards of the Coast cannot be held responsible for any actions undertaken by entities native to or currently inhabiting the Forgotten Realms, including necromancer lords of distant magocracies, resident mages of any or all Dales but especially Shadowdale, drow rangers wielding one or more scimitars and accompanied by one or more panthers, mad wizards inhabiting sprawling dungeons accessible via a well in the middle of a tavern, beholders who head up criminal cartels, and anyone with the word Many-Arrows in their name. In the event of a catastrophic encounter with any or all such entities, blame your Dungeon Master. If that doesn't work, blame Ed Greenwood, but don't tell him we told you that. He knows more archmages than we do.



DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, D&D, Wizards of the Coast, Forgotten Realms, the dragon ampersand, Sword Coast Adventurer's Guide, Player's Handbook, Monster Manual, Dungeon Master's Guide, all other Wizards of the Coast product names, and their respective logos are trademarks of Wizards of the Coast in the USA and other countries. All characters and their distinctive likenesses are property of Wizards of the Coast. This material is protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America. Any reproduction or unauthorized use of the material or artwork contained herein is prohibited without the express written permission of Wizards of the Coast.

Green Ronin Publishing and the Green Ronin Publishing logo are trademarks of Green Ronin Publishing.

Printed in the USA. ©2015 Wizards of the Coast LLC, PO Box 707, Renton, WA 98057-0707, USA. Manufactured by Hasbro SA, Rue Emile-Boéchat 31, 2800 Delémont, CH. Represented by Hasbro Europe, 4 The Square, Stockley Park, Uxbridge, Middlesex, UB11 1ET, UK.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Here are the Forgotten Realms works that most influenced this book.

Athans, Philip. *A Reader's Guide to R.A. Salvatore's Legend of Drizzt*. 2008.

Baker, Richard, Ed Bonny, and Travis Stout. *Lost Empires of Faerûn*. 2005.

Boyd, Eric L. *City of Splendors: Waterdeep*. 2005.

_____. *Drizzt do'Urdur's Guide to the Underdark*. 1999.

Connors, William W. *Hordes of Dragonspear*. 1992.

Cordell, Bruce R., Ed Greenwood, and Chris Sims. *Forgotten Realms Campaign Guide*. 2008.

Crawford, Jeremy, and Christopher Perkins. *Ghosts of Dragonspear Castle*. 2013.

Cunningham, Elaine. *Thornhold*. 2001.

Greenwood, Ed. *Dwarves Deep*. 1990.

_____. *Volo's Guide to Baldur's Gate II*. 2000.

_____. *Volo's Guide to the North*. 1993.

_____. *Volo's Guide to the Sword Coast*. 1994.

_____. *Volo's Guide to Waterdeep*. 1992.

_____. *Waterdeep and the North*. 1987.

_____. *Waterdeep*. 1989.

_____. *City of Splendors*. 1994.

Greenwood, Ed, and Jason Carl. *Silver Marches*. 2002.

Greenwood, Ed, Matt Sennett, and others. *Murder in Baldur's Gate*. 2013.

Greenwood, Ed, Sean K Reynolds, Skip Williams, and Rob Heinsoo. *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting*. 2001.

Grubb, Jeff, Kate Novak, and others. *Hall of Heroes*. 1989.

Jaquays, Paul. *The Savage Frontier*. 1988.

Leati, Tito, Matt Sennett, and Chris Sims. *Scourge of the Sword Coast*. 2014.

Perrin, Steve. *Under Illefarn*. 1987.

Salvatore, R.A. *The Crystal Shard*. 1988.

_____. *Rise of the King*. 2015.

Salvatore, R.A., James Wyatt, and Jeffrey Ludwig. *Legacy of the Crystal Shard*. 2013.

Sennett, Matt, Erik Scott de Bie, and Ari Marmell. *Neverwinter Campaign Setting*. 2011.

slade, Ed Greenwood, Jeff Grubb, and others. *The North: Guide to the Savage Frontier*. 1996.

ON THE COVER

Tyler Jacobson illustrates this band of adventurers as they engage in aggressive negotiations with a fierce delegation of orcs. Featured (left to right): Skip Brickard, a halfling fighter with an orc-sized chip on his shoulder; Illydia Maethellyn, an aged moon elf cleric of Sehanine Moonbow; Hitch, a brash rogue whose shady past ties him to the Zhentari; Makos, a tiefling warlock hell-bent on revenge against his infernal father; and Nayeli Goldflower, a powerful human paladin driven by an oath of vengeance.

620B243800001 EN

ISBN: 978-0-7869-6580-9

First Printing: November 2015

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



CONTENTS

Preface	4
Chapter 1: Welcome to the Realms	7
The Sword Coast and the North	7
Toril and Its Lands	9
Time in the Realms.....	14
A Brief History.....	15
Magic in the Realms	18
Religion in the Realms	19
The Gods of Faerûn	23
Chapter 2: The Sword Coast and the North	43
The Lords' Alliance.....	43
Dwarfholds of the North	58
Island Kingdoms.....	66
Independent Realms.....	73
The Underdark	99
Chapter 3: Races of the Realms	103
Dwarves	103
Elves.....	105
Halflings.....	108
Humans.....	110
Dragonborn	112
Gnomes	114
Half-Elves	116
Half-Orcs	117
Tieflings	118
Chapter 4: Classes	121
Barbarians.....	121
Primal Paths.....	121
Bards	122
The Harpers	123
Bardic Colleges.....	123
Musical Instruments.....	124
Clerics.....	125
Divine Domain.....	125
Druids.....	126
Druid Circles	126
Fighters	127
Martial Archetype	128
Monks	129
Monastic Orders.....	129
Monastic Traditions.....	130
Paladins	131
Paladin Orders.....	132
Sacred Oath	132
Rangers.....	133
Rogues.....	134
Roguish Archetypes	135
Sorcerers	136
Sorcerous Origin.....	137
Warlocks	138
Patrons in the Realms.....	138
Otherworldly Patron	139
Wizards	140
Wizardly Groups.....	140
Arcane Tradition.....	141
Cantrips for Sorcerers, Warlocks, and Wizards....	142
Chapter 5: Backgrounds.....	145
City Watch.....	145
Clan Crafter.....	145
Cloistered Scholar.....	146
Courtier.....	146
Faction Agent.....	147
Far Traveler.....	148
Inheritor	150
Knight of the Order	151
Mercenary Veteran	152
Urban Bounty Hunter	153
Uthgardt Tribe Member	153
Waterdhavian Noble	154
Appendix: Class Options in Other Worlds.....	155
Dragonlance.....	155
Eberron	155
Greyhawk.....	156
Homemade Worlds.....	157
Index	158
Sidebars	
Regions of the Realms.....	11
Coin of the Realms.....	13
The Calendar of Harptos	15
Weave-Affecting Magic	19
The Earthmother	27
The Legend of Knucklebones, Skull Bowling, and the Empty Throne	31
The Legend of Tyche and Her Twin Daughters	40
The Gods of Mulhorand	41
Note to the DM: Making the Realms Yours	44
Ruined Kingdoms of the North	48
Everbright	50
The Wards of Waterdeep	54
Fallen Dwarven Kingdoms and Their Marks	58
The Dirge of Delzoun	60
The Canticle of Gauntlgrym	61
Valkur, Hero-God of the Northlanders	68
Fort Morninglord	80
The Uthgardt Tribes and Their Territories	93
Lost Tribes of the Uthgardt	94
The Cavern of Menzoberranzan	101
Dwarf Clans of the North	103
Rare Elf Subraces	106
Ghostwise Halflings	110
Option: Human Languages	112
Ladies of the Golden Hills	114
Deep Gnome Feat	115
Half-Elf Variants	116
Tiefling Variants	118
Aasimar	119
Spiked Armor	121
Uthgardt Totems	122
The Moonstars	124
The Harpers and Druids	127
Swash bucklers and Two-Weapon Fighting	136
Arcane Spellcasters	137
Mage Sigils	141
Bladesinger Styles	142
Knightly Orders of Faerûn	151
Mercenaries of the North	152
Barbarian Tribes of Faerûn	154

PREFACE

HAIL AND WELL MET, TRAVELER! WELCOME to a world of magic and adventure. Originally created by Ed Greenwood, the Forgotten Realms setting has been home to Dungeons & Dragons stories and games for decades. Built for tales of swords and sorcery, the Realms initially grew and flourished in Ed's D&D campaign, which featured heroes like the Knights of Myth Drannor in the Dalelands. Ed also shared glimpses of the Realms in the pages of *Dragon* magazine, giving D&D players their first tales from the wizard Elminster, the old sage of Shadowdale, who occasionally found his way through a portal between Faerûn and our world and into Ed's living room.



When TSR, the company that owned D&D at the time, sought a new campaign world to expand the D&D multiverse, they chose the Forgotten Realms, and in 1987, the gates were flung wide for players and Dungeon Masters all over the world to come to Faerûn and create their own heroic tales. A year later, author R.A. Salvatore introduced readers to the adventures of the drow outcast Drizzt Do'Urdan in his first novel, *The Crystal Shard*, establishing the Underdark as an essential part of the Realms.

In the years since, the Forgotten Realms have played host to a vast number of game products, novels, video games, and more, making it one of the most widely visited fantasy settings ever created. The lost portals to the Realms have returned and remained open in the depths of our imaginations and do so to this day, as more and more visitors find their way there.

It is no surprise, then, that the Forgotten Realms became the setting for the first adventures for fifth edition Dungeons & Dragons. Already, new heroes have accomplished great deeds and saved Faerûn from terrible evil and will continue to do so, as long as the flame of imagination draws them there.

This book is further fuel for the fire sparked by those adventures and the glimpses of the Realms you can find in the fifth edition *Player's Handbook*, *Dungeon Master's Guide*, and *Monster Manual*. It gives you a broad look at the continent of Faerûn and the world of Toril in general, and the regions of the Sword Coast and the North in particular.

In these pages, you'll learn about the history, lands, and peoples of Faerûn, of the great city-states of the Sword Coast and the North, of the world's gods, and of the factions and forces that support and threaten civilization. Chapter 1 of this book gives an overview of the Sword Coast and nearby lands, its history, the role of magic, and its religions. Chapter 2 goes into detail about the cities and other locations of the Sword Coast. Chapter 3 gives history and some game material for various races and subraces, both common and uncommon, that can be met on the Sword Coast and in the North. Chapter 4 shows how the character options in the *Player's Handbook* fit into this region and presents new character class options specific to the Forgotten Realms. Chapter 5 gives backgrounds designed to link your characters to the great places, people, and events of Faerûn.

While the body of Realms lore is vast, and this book is only an introduction, the Forgotten Realms setting—like D&D itself—is yours, and has been ever since Ed opened that first portal and invited us to come and visit. The Realms are a place to create and tell your stories, about your adventurers and their deeds. The lands and peoples of Faerûn welcome you, traveler, for it is a place of peril sorely in need of the heroes you will bring forth.

Go now, through the portal of imagination and into vast and wonderful realms awaiting beyond.





CHAPTER 1: WELCOME TO THE REALMS

ON THE WORLD OF TORIL, BETWEEN THE windswept Sea of Swords to the west and the mysterious lands of Kara-Tur to the east, lies the continent of Faerûn. A place of varied cultures and races, Faerûn is dominated by human lands, be they kingdoms, city-states, or carefully maintained alliances of rural communities. Interspersed among the lands of humans are old dwarven kingdoms and hidden elven enclaves, assimilated populations of gnomes and halflings, and more exotic folk.

A great deal of adventure is to be had in the Realms, for those willing to seek it out. The routes between cities and nations often cross into the territory of brigands or marauding humanoids. Every forest, swamp, and mountain range has its own perils, whether lurking bandits, savage orcs and goblinoids, or mighty creatures such as giants and dragons. Ruins dot the landscape and the caverns that wind beneath the surface. In these places, treasures of every living race—and a number of dead ones—wait for adventurers intrepid enough to come and claim them.

Faerûn is filled with rich history and wondrous tales of adventure and magic, but the lifeblood of its common people is agriculture and trade. Most rural folk depend on farming to eat, and Faerûnians who live in cities ply skilled trades or use brawn to earn their keep, so they can purchase the goods and food provided by others. News and gossip are carried between population centers by caravans and ships that bring in supplies for trade and by traveling bards and minstrels who recount (or invent) stories to inform and entertain people in taverns, inns, and castles. Adventurers also spread news—while also creating it!

The common folk of Faerûn look on adventurers with a mixture of admiration, envy, and mistrust. Folk believe that any stalwarts willing to risk their lives on behalf of complete strangers should be lauded and rewarded. But such adventurers, if they become successful, amass wealth and personal status at a rate that some people find alarming. Even people who admire these adventurers for their energy and their acts of valor might have misgivings: what horrors will be unleashed if adventurers, heedless or unknowing of the danger, unlock a ruin or a tomb and release an ancient evil into the world?

Most of the people who populate the continent have little or no knowledge of lands outside Faerûn. The most educated among the populace agree that Faerûn is but one continent and that Toril is the whole of the world, but for the majority of people, who don't experience intercontinental travel or extraplanar exploration, "Faerûn" is more than large enough of a concept for them to comprehend.

Except in the most remote or insular places, Faerûnians are accustomed to seeing people of different cultures, ethnicities, and races. Only in the most cosmopolitan areas does such casual acceptance extend to evil humanoid races—such as goblinoids, orcs, and

drow—to say nothing of even more dangerous creatures. Adventurers tend to be more tolerant, accepting exiles, misfits, and redeemed folk from strange lands and with unusual shapes.

THE SWORD COAST AND THE NORTH

Running along the Sea of Swords from north of Amn to the Sea of Moving Ice, the Sword Coast is a narrow band of territory dominated by the city-states of the area that use the sea for trade. For most who care about such things, the area is delimited by Neverwinter in the north and Baldur's Gate in the south, but territory farther to the north and south that isn't under the sway of a more influential power is usually also included in maps of the Sword Coast.

More broadly, the North refers to all the territory north of Amn, split into two general regions: the Western Heartlands and the Savage Frontier. The Western Heartlands encompasses a narrow strip of civilization running from the Sunset Mountains to the Sea of Swords, and northward from the band of territory marked by the Cloud Peaks and the Troll Mountains to the Trade Way. The Savage Frontier is the name given to the rest of the unsettled or sparsely settled territory in the North, not including the major cities and towns and any settlements in their immediate spheres of influence.

Most of the communities, nations, and governments of the North can be grouped into five categories: the cities and towns that are members of the Lords' Alliance, the dwarfholds that have been built throughout the area, the island kingdoms off the coast, the independent realms scattered up and down the coast, and the subterranean environs of the Underdark. Each category is discussed briefly here; more details can be found in chapter 2.

THE LORDS' ALLIANCE

The Lords' Alliance is a confederation among the rulers of various northern settlements. The number of members on the Council of Lords, the group's governing body, shifts depending on the changing status of member cities and political tensions in the region. Currently, the Lords' Alliance counts these individuals as council members:

- Laeral Silverhand, the Open Lord of Waterdeep
- Dagult Neverember, Lord Protector of Neverwinter
- Taern Hornblade, High Mage of Silverymoon
- Ulder Ravengard, Grand Duke of Baldur's Gate and Marshal of the Flaming Fist
- Morwen Daggerford, Duchess of Daggerford
- Selin Ramur, Marchion of Mirabar
- Dowell Harpell of Longsaddle
- Dagnabbel Waybeard, Queen of Mithral Hall
- Lord Dauner Ilzimmer of Amphail
- Nestra Ruthiol, Waterbaron of Yartar

The Lords' Alliance includes the strongest mercantile powers of the North. In addition to providing military support and a forum for the peaceful airing of differences, the Alliance has always acted under the principle that communities with common cause that engage in trade are less likely to go to war with one another. By maintaining strong trade ties within the alliance as well as outside it, the Lords' Alliance helps to keep the peace.

DWARFHOLDS OF THE NORTH

The various dwarven communities of the North are the heirs and survivors of Delzoun, the great Northkingdom of long ago. Despite continually warring over the centuries with the orcs and goblinoids of the region, and having to fight off assaults from below by duergar and drow, the shield dwarves have stood fast, determined to hold their halls against all threats—and, when necessary, reclaim them.

Holds that survive from the days of Delzoun include Mithral Hall, Citadel Adbar, and Citadel Felbarr. The fabled city of Gauntlgrym, built by the Delzoun dwarves and recently taken back from the drow, stands as a beacon of resurgent dwarven strength in the North. Stoneshift Hold and Ironmaster are lonely settlements continually girding themselves for threats real and imagined. Sundabar and Mirabar are also generally considered dwarfholds, despite their substantial human populations.

Until recently, many of the dwarfholds were members of the Silver Marches (also known as Luruar), an alli-

ance of cities that provided mutual protection across the North. Disagreements and failed obligations during a war with the orc kingdom of Many-Arrows destroyed the remaining trust between members of the Marches, and that pact is no more. The dwarfholds still ally with one another, and individually with nearby human realms, but no longer pledge to stand unified with all their neighbors.

ISLAND KINGDOMS

Off the western coast of Faerûn are a number of island realms of varying size. The most distant, and yet perhaps the most symbolically important to the mainland, is Evermeet, the island paradise of the elves, reputed to be a part of the divine realm of Arvandor. Much closer to Faerûn are the Whalebones and Ruathym, ancient homes of the ancestors of the Illuskan people, and the Moonshaes, where many of those same people now share the islands with the Ffolk and an elf offshoot known as the Llewy. The free port of Mintarn lies nearby, a neutral site for meetings between enemies and a recruitment spot that offers abundant jobs for sailors. Despite its size, the tiny island of Orlumbor, with its treacherous harbor and its skilled, in-demand shipwrights, is an independent and influential nation unto itself.

In the seas to the south, pirates of many races and predilections sail from the Nelanther Isles, preying on trade running north and south along the coasts. Since the beginning of the Sundering, fabled Lantan and Nimbral have returned. Both the center of invention and the isle of Leira-worshiping illusionists are even more secretive and less welcoming of strangers than before their disappearance.

INDEPENDENT REALMS

Interspersed among the fortresses of the dwarves and the settlements protected by the Lord's Alliance are significant sites that have no collective character, except that they exist largely outside the protection or purview of the great powers of the region. Even the civilized locales among these places, such as Elturgard, exist, at best, in an uneasy tension with the denizens of the wilder lands within and just outside their borders, and survive only through constant vigilance and the steady recruitment of new defenders.

A great variety of independent nations and notable locations is encompassed within the wild lands of the North. Among them are the great library of Candlekeep, home of the greatest collection of written lore in Faerûn; the imposing, giant-scale castle of Darkhold; the fortified abbey of Helm's Hold; sites of great battles such as Boareskyr Bridge and the Fields of the Dead; realms of some security, such as Elturgard and Hartsvale; and the yuan-ti realm of Najara. The lands of the Uthgardt, the towns of frigid Icewind Dale, the quiet Trieltha Hills, the cutthroat city of Luskan, and the legendary Warlock's Crypt, dominion of the great lich Larloch, are all independent realms, as are the High Moor, the Trollclaws, and the High Forest.



There is much danger and adventure to be had in the free places of the North, and a great deal of wealth and treasure as well. The ruins of ancient kingdoms and countless smaller settlements litter the countryside, waiting for the right explorers to happen upon them.

THE UNDERDARK

Extending miles downward and outward beneath the surface of Faerûn, and reaching to other continents as well, the great network of subterranean caverns known as the Underdark is home to all manner of strange and deadly creatures. Duergar and drow—dark reflections of dwarves and elves—live in these sunless lands, as do the svirfneblin, or deep gnomes. Most surface-dwelling folk aren't threatened or even disturbed by denizens of the deep places, but the creatures occasionally emerge to raid or to seek some kind of goal in the surface world.

Among the lands of the Underdark beneath the North are the svirfneblin city of Blingdenstone, the duergar city of Gracklstugh, and the infamous drow city of Menzoberranzan. Also prominent is Mantol-Derith, a trading post for Underdark merchants.

TORIL AND ITS LANDS

Toril is a vast and wondrous world, filled with an immense diversity of peoples and a rich, full history. For most folk of the Sword Coast, however, knowledge doesn't extend much beyond the confines of the North, and anything "known" outside of Faerûn proper is based more in rumor than in fact.

FAERÛN

The vast central continent of Toril, Faerûn is a land mass divided by a great sea known as the Inner Sea, or the Sea of Fallen Stars. The lands beyond the North can be roughly divided into those to the south and those to the east, becoming more foreign to the folk of the Sword Coast and the North the farther away they are.

LANDS TO THE SOUTH

To the south of the Sword Coast lie ancient nations, a tremendous, forbidding jungle, and all manner of lands destroyed or transformed by magical cataclysms and upheavals. Amid the ruin and the distress in these realms are signs of renewal and hope, as tenacious civilizations and peoples rebuild, reclaim, and create anew.

Amn. A nation led by the representatives of five noble families, Amn is a place where the wealthy rule, openly and without pretense. Shrewd traders and ruthless in business, Amnians believe that the end of a successful transaction is justified by any means, ethical or otherwise. Although the nation is richer by far than even the northern metropolises of Baldur's Gate and Waterdeep, its influence is curtailed by the unwillingness of its rulers to work together in the nation's best interest. The members of the Council of Five are fairly unified and tight-fisted in their control of Amn, but their ability to affect events outside their own borders is limited because they can't agree enough on major matters of foreign policy. The oligarchs utterly control their nation,

but beyond the areas that each rules, their families and businesses compete with one another and with the locals of far-flung places.

The use of arcane magic is illegal in Amn, meaning that the only authorized spellcasters in the nation are wielders of divine magic who enjoy the support and patronage of a temple, and users of arcane magic who have been given special dispensation by one of the oligarchs. So pervasive is the sway of Amn's oligarchy that few crimes merit physical punishment but those that involve the use of arcane magic or an offense against one of the council's merchant houses. Other infractions are forgiven after the miscreant makes payment of an appropriate fine.

Calimshan. This southern land has long been the battleground for warring genies. After years of struggling beneath their genasi masters, human slaves arose to follow a Chosen of Ilmater, at first using nonviolent resistance, and then erupting in full rebellion following his disappearance. They overthrew the genie lords of Calimport and Memnon, casting the remaining genies out of the cities and back to their elemental homes or into the depths of the deserts.

Much of Calimshan is a chaotic place dominated by wealth, political influence, and personal power. Many pray for the return of the Chosen and the completion of his work. Others are learning to live together without genie masters, and to grudgingly accept the remaining genasi among them.

Chult. The vast, choking jungles of Chult hide what many believe to be great mineral wealth, including large gemstones and veins of ore. Poisonous flora and fauna riddle the jungles, but some still brave the dangers to





seek their fortunes. Some of the exotic plants that grow only in Chult fetch high prices in mainland markets. Ruined Mezro stands across the sea from Calimshan, waiting for explorers and its displaced people to cleanse the city of its undead inhabitants and uncover the treasures that lie hidden there.

Eastward along the Chultan peninsula lie the remains of Thindol and Samarach. Despite the apparent fall of both civilizations, Thindol remains infested with yuan-ti, while the illusions cloaking Samarach's mountain passes conceal the activities in that nation.

Dambrath. Situated on a warm plain on the shore of the Great Sea, Dambrath is ruled by nomadic clans of human horse riders who revere Silvanus, Malar, and occasionally Selûne. Given the Dambrathan's history of domination by the Crinti, a ruling caste of half-drow, it is no surprise that they reserve their greatest hatred for the drow.

The clans meet twice a year at a sacred site known as the Hills of the Kings, where dozens of totem sculptures are preserved. At these gatherings, each clan updates its totem with an account of its exploits over the previous seasons. Many Dambrathans seek out lycanthropy as a means of showing reverence for their favored deity and honoring their heritage.

Elfarro. A blasted near-desert north and east of the North Wall mountains bordering Halruua, Elfarro isn't a name bestowed by its residents, but rather the sobriquet that travelers use for this violent region. The tribes of xenophobic elves that claim this area don't hesitate to discourage uninvited guests by any means necessary. A simple group of pilgrims might be scared off with some arrows, while a band of hunters or explorers is likely to be killed outright.

Food is sparse in this region, with the forests long since vanished, and as a result the elves of Elfarro fiercely protect the herds of animals they have cultivated. The elves have no interest in looting the cities of fallen Lappaliya, but neither are they willing to allow "adventurers" free access to those lands through their territory.

Halruua. Once believed destroyed in the conflagration of the Spellplague, Halruua has largely been restored to the insular, magic-mighty nation it once was. Because of the foresight of their divinations, Halruuan wizards were able to use the raging blue fire that followed Mystra's death to propel their nation safely into the realm of Toril's twin, Abeir (displacing part of that world into the Plane of Shadow).

Now that the events of those times have mostly been undone, the famed Halruuan skyships and waterborne

vessels have spread out from their home once again, seeking to establish trading routes and political connections, as well as to learn what has changed of the world in their century of absence.

The Lake of Steam. Far to the south and east of the Sword Coast, the Lake of Steam is more accurately an inland sea, its waters tainted by volcanism and undrinkable. Around its perimeter is a conglomeration of city-states and minor baronies typified by the shifting domains known as the Border Kingdoms. Here, along the southern shore of the lake, explorers and fortune seekers squander their amassed wealth building castles, founding communities, and drawing loyal vassals to them—only to have all those good works disappear within a generation or two. In some cases, one of these realms is fortunate to be saved from its inevitable decline by another group of successful adventurers, who inject enough wealth and wisdom to keep the enterprise going a few more decades.

Luiren. Long the homeland of halflings and thought to be the place where their race had its genesis, Luiren was lost during the Spellplague to a great inundation of the sea. In the century since that great disaster, the waters receded, and now stories told by travelers from the south tell of halfling communities that survived as island redoubts.

Tethyr. Tethyr is a feudal realm ruled by Queen Anais from its capital of Darromar. The queen commands her dukes, who in turn receive homage from the counts and countesses of the realm, appoint sheriffs over their counties, and generally maintain order. The farmlands of Tethyr are abundant, and its markets flow freely with trade from the Western Heartlands.

Tethyr has seen more than its share of noble intrigue and royal murder, and adventurers who are native to Tethyr or merely passing through that land are often drawn into such plots, either as unwitting accomplices or as easy scapegoats.

LANDS TO THE EAST

To the east lie many of the older nations of the Realms, including the Western Heartlands of Faerûn—those civilizations centrally located on the continent, and thereby best able to take advantage of trade routes and access to the Sea of Fallen Stars. As in the North, there are cold lands to the east, as well as more temperate regions. As one travels farther from the Sword Coast, one moves from lands not so different from one's own to places so foreign they might as well exist on other continents or worlds—which a few of them actually have done.

Aglarond. The great peninsula of Aglarond juts out into the Inner Sea, and that body of water and the forests of the Yuirwood define much of the nation's character. A realm of humans living in harmony with their elf and half-elf neighbors, Aglarond has been a foe of Thay for centuries, in part due to the temperament of its former ruler, the Simbul. The nation is now ruled by a Simbarch Council, which has backed away from open hostilities with Thay. With the restoration of the Weave, the ongoing changes to the political landscape, and calls for elven independence within the nation, it is unclear what

REGIONS OF THE REALMS

Just as "the North" describes an area that includes a number of nations and governments, a number of collective terms exist for other regions across Faerûn. Not all such names are used universally, and opinions vary as to which lands qualify in which groups. Here are some currently recognized regional groupings:

The Cold Lands: Damara, Narfell, Sossal, and Vaasa

The Heartlands: Cormyr, the Dalelands, the Moonsea, and Sembia

The Lands of Intrigue: Amn, Calimshan, and Tethyr, also known as the Empires of the Sands

The Old Empires: Chessenta, Mulhorand, and Unther

sort of place Aglarond will be in a generation's time, except that its potential for great change will be realized.

Chessenta. A collection of city-states bound by common culture and mutual defense, Chessenta isn't truly a nation. Each city boasts its own heroes, worships its own gladiatorial champions, and spends as much time insulting and competing with the other cities as it does on any other activity. The city of Luthcheq is dominated by worship of the bizarre deity known as Entropy, while Erebos is ruled by the latest incarnation of the red dragon known as Tchazzar the Undying. Heptios contains the largest library in Chessenta, a center of learning where all nobles aspire to send their children for tutoring. That city is looked on with disdain by the people of Akanax, whose militant contempt for the "fat philosophers" of Heptios is widely known. Toreus welcomes all visitors, even those from lands that are despised or mistrusted, and foreign coin can buy nearly anything there. The floating city of Airspur still flies somehow, its earthmotes unaffected by the fall of its fellows when the Sundering came to a close.

Cormyr. For most folk in central Faerûn, the notion of a human kingdom is inextricably linked to Cormyr. A strong realm bolstered by its loyal army (the Purple Dragons), a cadre of magical defenders and investigators (the War Wizards), and numerous wealthy and influential nobles, Cormyr is recovering from its war with Sembia and Netheril—a conflict that cost the nation much, but left the kingdom standing, and which, in the end, Netheril didn't survive. The pride of that victory remains strong in Cormyr's collective consciousness, even as Queen Raedra draws back from plans to permanently welcome into the realm towns that lie beyond Cormyr's traditional borders.

Cormyreans are justly proud of their homeland, and go to great lengths to guard it and its honor. Still, there is no shortage of danger in the Forest Kingdom, whether from scheming, treacherous nobles, monsters out of the Hul-lack Forest or the Stonelands, or some ancient, hidden magic. Cormyr is many things, but dull isn't one of them.

The Cold Lands. The nations of Damara, Narfell, Sossal, and Vaasa, known collectively to most Faerûnians as the Cold Lands, rest near the Great Glacier in the cold, dry environs of the northeast. Few outside the region have much interest in what goes on here, except for those in the immediately surrounding lands, who fear a resurgence of the ancient evils of the region—though they ar-

en't fearful enough to do more than send an adventuring party or two into the area to investigate.

In Damara, the usurper King Yarin Frostmantle sits on the throne of the Dragonbane dynasty, while his people complain about his tyranny and the growing threat from demons across the country. In Narfell, skilled riders and archers hunt, raid, and are gradually reclaiming their heritage as a great nation of mages who treated with devils. The Warlock Knights of Vaasa threaten to break the bounds of their nation and invade Damara, the Moonsea, or both, while some of its members suspiciously eye the ominously silent Castle Perilous, perhaps planning another excursion to the place. The tiny nation of Sossal trades with its neighbors, but shares little of itself with the wider world.

The Dalelands. The humans who call the Dalelands home want nothing more than lives untroubled by the concerns of larger nations. They take great pride in their peaceful coexistence with the elves of Cormanthor, and in their ability to remain largely self-sufficient and autonomous even when their homeland was used as a battlefield by Cormyr, Netheril, Sembia, and Myth Drannor in the recent conflicts. Featherdale and Tasseldale have reasserted their independence since the end of the war, and rejoined Archendale, Battledale, Daggerdale, Deepingdale, Harrowdale, Mistledale, Scardale, and Shadowdale on the Dales Council. The High Dale did the same shortly afterward.

Dalesfolk are mistrustful of anyone unwilling to sacrifice for the common good, but those who put in good work—whether in defense or labor—are accepted as equals, entitled to share in the rewards from their toil.

The Hordelands. Formerly known as the Endless Wastes, this land has gained a new name among Faerûnians, styled after the vast Tuigan horde that roared out of the east and rode against Faerûn more than a century ago. After these tribesfolk were defeated, some of the fierce, mounted warriors who survived the conflict gathered to form the small nation of Yaïmunnahar. Some others cling to the old ways, mastering the sword and the bow and riding across the steppes on their short-legged horses. Brave merchants still traverse the Golden Way to and from Kara-Tur, but those who return from such a voyage are fewer than they once were.

Impiltur. With the rising of the waters of the Sea of Fallen Stars, some of Impiltur's wealth and influence is returning, leading to whispers among the populace that a lost king of the line of old will rise up to lift Impiltur out of its woes and back to the great nation it once was.

Impiltur is a nation of humans with pockets of dwarves and halflings among its populace. Where once a long royal line sat its throne and ruled over a unified kingdom, now a Grand Council sits around a table and struggles to combat the presence of demons, and demon worship, within the nation's borders.

The Moonsea. The shores of the Moonsea have long been home to cities that rise swiftly, relying on vigorous trade and gathering powerful mercenaries to their banners, only to overextend themselves and fall—sometimes crumbling over time, and sometimes dropping like stones from the sky.

Now that Netheril and Myth Drannor have fallen, those two great powers can no longer exert their influence over the Moonsea, allowing the city of Hillsfar to spread its wings and eye southward expansion, and Mulmaster to once again further the worship of Bane. Phlan, Teshwave, Thentia, and Voonlar—all Moonsea cities where greater powers jockeyed for influence—now work to find their own identities before an unchecked or malevolent realm swallows them, one by one.

This region is also home to the ruins of the Citadel of the Raven and Zhentil Keep, former strongholds of the Zhentarim, which the Black Network shows occasional interest in restoring.

Mulhorand. Since the Chosen of the gods began to appear in the last few years, Mulhorand has become a land transformed. Its deities manifested fully in the forms of some of their descendants, and swiftly rallied the Mulan to overthrow the Imaskari. Aided by the mighty wizard Nezram, known as the World-Walker, the Mulhorandi overthrew the rulers of High Imaskar, who fled into the Plains of Purple Dust or to extraplanar safeholds.

When the upheaval ended and the Chosen began to disappear, the gods of Mulhorand remained to rule their people, focusing their attention on defending their restored homeland to keep the war in Unther and Tymanther from spilling over its borders. For the first time in centuries, the people in Mulhorand are free, with the gods declaring that slavery shall no longer be practiced among the Mulan since their return.

Rashemen. A harsh, cold land filled with hardy folk, Rashemen is a fiercely traditional nation. It is ruled by its Iron Lord, Mangan Uruk, who speaks for the power behind the throne: the Wychlaran, the society of masked witches that determine Rashemen's course. These witches wield great powers tied to the land and its magic and guard against evil fey and vengeful spirits. A small number of male spellcasters, known as the Old Ones, create magic items and weave arcane rituals for the witches. Rashemi witches revere the Three, a triumvirate of goddesses they call Bhalla (the Den Mother), Khelliara (the Forest Maiden), and the Hidden One. Over the centuries, scholars in other lands have speculated that these deities might be faces of Chauntea, Mielikki, and Mystra, respectively.

The nation's warriors are a fierce, stoic lot, famed for their strength, endurance, and stubbornness in battle. Rashemen is a long-standing enemy of Thay, and has often thwarted that nation's ambitions to rule Faerûn. Little pleases a Rashemi warrior more than the chance to strike down a Red Wizard in battle.

Sembia. Following a period of subjugation at the hands of Netheril, Sembia is already on its way to becoming the economic power it was in prior years. Although relations are cool with the Dales and Cormyr following the most recent war, Sembian merchants are quick to dismiss previous conflicts as the work of the Netherese, and remind their former trading partners of the long and mutually profitable relationships they previously enjoyed. To prove its good intentions, Sembia has "allowed" Featherdale and Tasseldale to regain their independence, even though Sembian investors had owned

much of Featherdale for nearly seventy years when the war came to an end.

Before Netheril claimed Sembia as a vassal state, mercenary work and adventuring were popular livelihoods among Sembians who didn't have local families to feed. Those endeavors are even more popular now among veterans of the war, who are better trained than their predecessors were. A few of Sembia's less scrupulous former soldiers have taken to banditry, which offers other Sembians more opportunities for guard work.

Thay. For centuries one of the greatest concentrations of magical might in Faerûn, Thay is ruled by the ancient lich, Szass Tam, and the nation's Council of Zulkirs in a ruthless magocracy. The council's will is enacted by regional tharchions and bureaucrats, leaving the ruling Red Wizards to focus on magical study and more important arcane matters.

For a time, living mages couldn't hope to advance to prominence in Thay: Szass Tam promoted undeath as a means of existence with boundless possibilities, and held back those who didn't agree with this philosophy. The recent battles with the demon Eltab, however, have prompted Szass Tam to loosen this stricture—the living now have hope of ascending within the Red Wizards, even if that hope is merely to advance to a high station within the cadre of Tam's servants.

Thesk. Reminders of the century-old war with the Tuigan horde remain throughout Thesk, in the many and varied features of its present-day inhabitants, particularly the half-orc descendants of the mercenaries who fought in that great conflict.

Thesk is known to many as the Gateway to the East because it is the western terminus of the Golden Way, which runs through the Hordelands and into Kara-Tur. Because their city is a crossroads of sorts between Faerûn and the east, it should come as no surprise that Theskians don't judge outsiders quickly, and don't bristle at visitors who demonstrate strange quirks in speech or behavior. The people of Thesk trade readily with any folk, even nearby orcs and goblins that are willing to treat with them peacefully. They aren't fools, however, and have no patience for violent or raiding humanoids of all sorts.

Turmish. On the southern shore of the Sea of Fallen Stars, Turmish is a nation of mercantile cities ruled by its Assembly of Stars, representatives of each of its cities in a parliamentary democracy. After being much diminished by the devastation wrought in this area a century ago, Turmish is currently enjoying a revival of its fortunes, as the rising of the waters of the Inner Sea has returned some of the trade that was lost in the cataclysm. Turmish is the birthplace of the Emerald Enclave, which has proudly taken credit for the rebirth of Turmishan agriculture, the cessation of the great rains that plagued the region a few years ago, and the restoration of the god Lathander.

Tymansher. In decades past, the land of the dragonborn claimed as its territory part of what had been the vanished nation of Unther. Then Unther suddenly returned to Faerûn a few years ago and promptly went to war against Tymansher. The realm has since been reduced to small tracts mainly along the coast of the

Coin of the Realms

Nearly every major power of Faerûn has its own currency: coins minted within its borders that represent both its influence and material wealth. Most coins of pure composition and standard weight are accepted at face value across the continent, though not every city-state or nation bothers to mint every sort of coin.

Some of the most commonly found, and widely accepted, currency in the Realms is summarized below. Each grouping is arranged in order of value: copper, silver, electrum, gold, and (when present) platinum. Most people across Faerûn refer to coins by whatever name the issuing government uses, regardless of origin, except for Zhentil Keep—for some reason, all Zhent coins have unflattering epithets associated with them.

Amn: fander, taran, centaur, danter, roldon

Cormyr: thumb, falcon, blue eye, golden lion, tricrown

Sembia: steelpence (an iron coin), hawk, blue eye, noble

Silverymoon: glint, shield, sword, dragon, unicorn

Waterdeep: nib, shard, sambar, dragon, sun

Zhentil Keep: fang ("dung-piece"), talon/naal ("flea-bit"), tarenth ("hardhammer"), glory ("weeping wolf"), platinum glory ("flat metal gem")

Silverymoon also mints two special coins: the moon and the eclipsed moon. The moon is a crescent-shaped, shining blue coin of electrum, valued at 2 unicorns in Silverymoon and nearby settlements, and 1 unicorn everywhere else. The eclipsed moon stamps an electrum moon with a darker silver wedge to complete a round coin. It is worth 5 unicorns within the city, but only 2 unicorns elsewhere.

Waterdeep has its own coins. The taol is a square piece of brass, worth 2 dragons in the city—and virtually worthless to anyone not trading with Waterdeep. Most traders exchange their taols for standard coins before traveling. The "harbor moon" is a palm-sized crescent of platinum inset with electrum, and is worth 50 dragons in the city, 30 dragons elsewhere. Its name comes from its common use in buying large amounts of cargo. Both taols and harbor moons are pierced to enable the bearer to string multiple coins together.

Baldur's Gate sets the standard for minting trade bars—ingots of metal (usually silver) of an accepted size and weight used in lieu of great piles of coins or gems for larger transactions. The most common such trade bar is a 5-pound bar 6 inches long, 2 inches wide, and 1 inch thick, valued at 25 gp.



Alamber Sea and Ash Lake. The dragonborn that have withdrawn to those areas have lost none of their military tradition, and their ability to hold this smaller amount of territory makes it unlikely that Unther will push farther any time soon—particularly since the Untherite navy has been unable to overcome the great beast that guards the harbor of Djerad Kethendi and the nearby waters of the Alamber.

Some of Tymansher's dragonborn have spread across Faerûn and gained reputations as competent, highly sought-after mercenaries.

Unther. Trapped in another world, the people of Unther had succumbed to domination by others. Then among them arose one who called himself Gilgeam, and he reminded them of their former greatness. Under the leadership of this reincarnated god, the people of Unther rose up as an army to face their masters. On the eve of a great battle, the people of Unther were miraculously returned to their home, and Gilgeam wasted no time in leading them against the dragonborn occupying their *ancestral lands*. The Untherites have retaken much of the land they formerly held, while seeking to wipe out the "godless lizards" they blame for their time of oppression in Abeir.

Gilgeam wants nothing short of a complete return to Unther's former glory. This achievement will require utterly destroying Tymansher, of course, and eventual war with Mulhorand to reclaim lands lost centuries ago, but as every Untherite knows, the great God-King is patient, for he is eternal.

Westgate. The dismal city of Westgate isn't a romantic place, but someone seeking employment for shady work, or looking to hire someone for the same, will find few places better suited in all of Faerûn.

Westgate is considered by some Faerûnians as a harbinger of the eventual fate of places like Amn and Sembia, where coin rules over all other considerations. As in many such places, one's moral outlook is less important in Westgate than one's attitude toward bribery. The city's proximity to Cormyr makes it a breeding ground for that nation's enemies, including the Fire Knives, a guild of thieves and assassins that the naive pretend doesn't exist.

KARA-TUR

Far to the east, past the wastes of the Hordelands, lie the empires of Shou Lung, Kozakura, Wa, and the other lands of the vast continent of Kara-Tur. To most people of Faerûn, Kara-Tur is like another world, and the tales told by travelers from its nations seem to confirm it. The gods that humans worship in Faerûn are unknown there, as are common peoples such as gnomes and orcs. Other dragons, neither chromatic nor metallic, dwell in its lands and fly its skies. And its mages practice forms of magic mysterious even to archwizards of Faerûn.

Stories of Kara-Tur tell of gold and jade in great abundance, rich spices, silks, and other goods rare or unknown in western lands—alongside tales of shapechanging spirit-people, horned giants, and nightmare monsters absent in Faerûn.

ZAKHARA

Far to the south of Faerûn, beyond Calimshan and even the jungles of Chult, are the Lands of Fate. Surrounded by waters thick with pirates and corsairs, Zakhara is a place less hospitable than most, but still braved by travelers who hope to profit from its exotic goods and strange magics. Like Kara-Tur, Zakhara seems a world away to Faerûnians. It is thought of as a vast desert, sprinkled with glittering cities like scattered gems. Romantic tales abound of scimitar-wielding rogues riding flying carpets and of genies bound in service to humans. Their mages, called sha'ir, practice their magic with the aid of genies and, it is said, might carry the lineage of these elemental beings in their blood.

BEYOND THE TRACKLESS SEA

Farther to the west, past even Evermeet, are untold, unknown lands beyond the Trackless Sea. Many explorers have visited such lands, and some have even returned, bearing tales that change from generation to generation about exotic locales, from island chains that are the sites of countless shipwrecks, to fearsome feather-clad warriors, and vast continents that suddenly appeared where nothing—or something very much different—had rested only seasons prior.

TIME IN THE REALMS

Although a number of means exist for marking the days and the passage of time during a year, nearly all folk in Faerûn have adopted the Calendar of Harptos. Even the cultures and races that don't favor this method of marking time are aware of it, with the result that it is recognized across nearly all races, languages, and cultures.

A year on Toril consists of 365 days. In the Calendar of Harptos, the year is divided into twelve months of thirty days, loosely following the synodic cycle of Selûne, the moon. A month is made up of three ten-days, also known as rides. Five annual holidays, falling between the months, complete the 365-day calendar. Once every four years, the Calendar of Harptos includes Shieldmeet as a "leap day" following Midsummer.

Individual days of a tenday have no special names. Instead, they are denoted by counting from the beginning of the period ("first day," "second day," and so on). Days of the month are designated by a number and the month name. For example, sages would record an event as occurring on "1 Mirtul" or "27 Uktar." People might also refer to a given day by its relationship to the current date ("two tendays from today") or the nearest holiday ("three days past Greengrass").

SPECIAL CALENDAR DAYS

Every nation, faith, and culture across Faerûn has its own special festivals and holidays, the observances of which are governed by the cycles of the sun, the moon, the stars, or some other event. In addition, the Calendar of Harptos specifies five annual festivals keyed to the changing of the seasons and one quadrennial festival that are observed in almost every land, with particular

celebrations varying based on local traditions and popular faiths.

Midwinter. The first festival day of the year is known generally as Midwinter, though some people name it differently. Nobles and monarchs of the Heartlands look to the High Festival of Winter as a day to commemorate or renew alliances. Commoners in the North, the Moonsea, and other, colder climes celebrate Deadwinter Day as a marking of the midpoint of the cold season, with hard times still ahead, but some of the worst days now past.

Greengrass. The traditional beginning of spring, Greengrass is celebrated by the display of freshly cut flowers (grown in special hothouses wherever the climate doesn't permit flowers so early) that are given as gifts to the gods or spread among the fields in hopes of a bountiful and speedy growing season.

Midsummer. The midpoint of summer is a day of feasting, carousing, betrothals, and basking in the pleasant weather. Storms on Midsummer night are seen as bad omens and signs of ill fortune, and sometimes interpreted as divine disapproval of the romances or marriages sparked by the day's events.

Shieldmeet. The great holiday of the Calendar of Harptos, Shieldmeet occurs once every four years immediately after Midsummer. It is a day for plain speaking and open council between rulers and their subjects, for the renewal of pacts and contracts, and for treaty making between peoples. Many tournaments and contests of skill are held on Shieldmeet, and most faiths mark the holiday by emphasizing one of their key tenets.

The next Shieldmeet will be observed in 1492 DR.

Highharvestide. A day of feasting and thanks, Highharvestide marks the fall harvest. Most humans give thanks to Chauntea on this day for a plentiful bounty before winter approaches. Many who make their living by traveling road or sea set out immediately following the holiday, before winter comes on in full force and blocks mountain passes and harbors.

The Feast of the Moon. As nights lengthen and winter winds begin to approach, the Feast of the Moon is the time when people celebrate their ancestors and their honored dead. During festivals on this day, people gather to share stories and legends, offer prayers for the fallen, and prepare for the coming cold.

KEEPING TIME FROM DAY TO DAY

Most people don't keep track of the time of day beyond notions such as "mid-morning" or "nigh sunset." If people plan to meet at a particular time, they tend to base their arrangements around such expressions.

The concept of hours and minutes exists mainly where wealthy people use clocks, but mechanical clocks are often unreliable, and rarely are two set to the same time. If a local temple or civic structure has a clock that tolls out the passing of the hours, people refer to hours as "bells," as in "I'll meet you at seven bells."

THE SHIFTING OF THE SEASONS

The worlds of Abeir and Toril drifted apart in 1487 and 1488 DR. In some places this change was accompanied

THE CALENDAR OF HARPTOS

Month	Name	Common Name
1	Hammer	Deepwinter
	<i>Annual Holiday: Midwinter</i>	
2	Alturiak	The Claw of Winter
3	Ches	The Claw of Sunsets
4	Tarsahk	The Claw of Storms
	<i>Annual Holiday: Greengrass</i>	
5	Mirtul	The Melting
6	Kythorn	The Time of Flowers
7	Flamerule	Summertide
	<i>Annual Holiday: Midsummer</i>	
	<i>Quadrennial Holiday: Shieldmeet</i>	
8	Eleasis	Highsun
9	Elient	The Fading
	<i>Annual Holiday: Highharvestide</i>	
10	Marpenoth	Leafall
11	Uktar	The Rotting
	<i>Annual Holiday: The Feast of the Moon</i>	
12	Nighthal	The Drawing Down

by cataclysm, while in others the shift went without notice. Astronomers and navigators who closely watched the stars couldn't fail to see that there were nights when they seemed to hang in the sky. The winter of 1487–1488 lasted longer than normal. It was then noted that the solstices and equinoxes had somehow shifted, beginning with the spring equinox falling on Greengrass of 1488 DR. The seasons followed suit, with each starting later and ending later.

This shift in seasons has caused some sages, and the priests of Chauntea, to consider changing the marking of some of the annual feast days, but most folk counsel patience, believing that the seasons will fall back to their previous cycle over the coming years.

A BRIEF HISTORY

The known history of the Sword Coast region spans thousands of years, extending back into the misty epochs of the creator races and the ages of the first nations of the elves and dwarves. Comparatively recent history is the story of the rise and deeds of humans and other younger races.

Much of what follows in this section is known mainly by sages, some of whom have been alive for the last few centuries of Faerûn's history. The common folk across the continent have little knowledge of, and little use for, events that have transpired far away in time and space. News does travel, of course, so even people who live in a village along the Sword Coast might get wind of happenings in distant lands.

THE DAYS OF THUNDER

Tens of thousands of years ago, empires of reptilian, amphibian, and avian peoples—known in Elvish as *Iqua'Tel'Quessir*, the creator races—dominated the world. They built great cities of stone and glass, carved paths through the wilderness, tamed the great lizards, worked mighty magics, shaped the world around them,

and warred upon each other. Those were the Days of Thunder.

The age of the creator races came to a sudden end some thirty thousand years ago. Perhaps their wars reached a terrible and inevitable crescendo, or they tampered with forbidden forces. For whatever reason, the world changed, and their vast empires vanished. All that remains of them are ruins and the scattered lizardfolk, bullywug, and aarakocra tribes, barbaric descendants of those who once ruled the world.

THE FIRST FLOWERING

From the ruins of the Days of Thunder arose the first nations of the Proud People—the elves and dwarves—in the region.

The elves raised up the nations of Aryvandaar, Ardeep, and Ilythiir. They settled Illefarn along the Sword Coast, from the Spine of the World to the River Delimbiyr—its capitol Aelinthaldaar in the shadow of what is now Mount Waterdeep. Wood elves and moon elves founded the kingdom of Eaerlann in the Delimbiyr Valley and the High Forest, and separatists from Aryvandaar settled Miyeritar in the lands of the present-day High Moor and Misty Forest.

The dwarf clans united as the nation of Delzoun, named for its forge-founder, with dwarffolds built on sites ranging from the Ice Mountains to the Nether Mountains and the Narrow Sea, and settlements and halls westward to the Crags and the Sword Mountains.

The Proud People regularly defended their homelands against orc hordes that arose from the mountains of the Spine of the World and surged southward to attack and pillage.

THE FIRST SUNDERING

Thousands of years after the rise of the great elven nations, hundreds of elf high mages united to cast a spell intended to create a glorious homeland for their race. The spell succeeded, but it rippled backward and forward in time, and the land was sundered, changing the face of the world. The largest continent of this new world is now called Faerûn. Far from its western shores rose the isle of Evermeet, considered a part of Arvandor, the home of the elven gods on the plane of Arborea, and a bridge between worlds.

THE CROWN WARS

Some thirteen thousand years ago, war broke out between the elven nations of Aryvandaar and Miyeritar, beginning a series of conflicts known as the Crown Wars. Lasting some three thousand years, these conflicts culminated in the Dark Disaster, in which terrible storms engulfed Miyeritar, turning it into a wasteland within a single season, leaving behind the area now known as the High Moor. The high mages of Aryvandaar are blamed for the destruction, although no proof was ever produced.

The vengeful dark elves of Ilythiir turned to corrupt and demonic powers, unleashing them against Aryvandaar. In the centuries of destruction that followed, elf priests and high mages fervently prayed to Corellon Larethian and the gods of the elven pantheon for salvation.

THE DESCENT OF THE DROW

Corellon interceded in the Crown Wars and cursed the dark elves so that they might never dwell comfortably under the sun. Now finding themselves pained by exposure to daylight, the drow—in a mere two months' time—retreated from the sunlit lands of the World Above into the Underdark. They abandoned all loyalty to the elven gods who betrayed and banished them, turning instead to Lolth, the Demon Queen of Spiders, as their patron. Wars soon began between the drow and the underground cities of the dwarves.

THE AGE OF HUMANITY

For millennia following the end of the Crown Wars, humans spread and settled throughout Faerûn as the elven and dwarven nations stagnated and then began a long, slow decline. Deep in the Underdark, the drow fought wars of survival and conquest in their new domain.

THE RISE AND FALL OF NETHERIL

More than five thousand years ago, a group of human fishing villages on the shores of the Narrow Sea joined under the rule of the shaman-king Nether, becoming known as the empire of Netheril. The Netherese learned the use of magic from the Eaerlanni elves and became renowned wizards. Centuries later, they discovered the arcane texts known as the *Nether Scrolls* in the ruins of Aryvandaar and subsequently abandoned the practices of the Eaerlanni in order to procure even greater magical power.

Netheril grew to become an invincible nation of magic and wonders, dominating much of the North for three thousand years. Then the power-mad Netherese arcanist Karsus attempted to usurp the role of the goddess of magic. The resulting disruption in the fabric of magic sent Netheril's floating cities crashing to the ground, destroyed a host of other wards and enchantments, and brought about the end of the great empire.

THE GREAT CITIES

In the decades and centuries following the collapse of Netheril, many cities of the Sword Coast and the North, such as Illusk and Citadel Sundbarr, took in refugees from the fallen empire, and new settlements made up entirely or primarily of human survivors from Netheril and their descendants were established throughout the North and in the Western Heartlands.

Nearly fifteen hundred years ago, the human settlers of the Dalelands and the elves of Cormanthor pledged their alliance in an agreement known as the Dales Compact. A monument called the Standing Stone was erected to mark the occasion, and the advent of Dalereckoning was decreed, beginning with the year 1 DR. This method of numbering the years in Toril's history has spread across Faerûn and is commonly understood (if not universally accepted).

The city of Neverwinter—called Eigersstor when it was a mere settlement—was founded in 87 DR. On the banks of the River Raurin, the humble community of Silverymoon Ford came into being in 384 DR, and less than two centuries later it had grown to become the city of Silverymoon.

In 882 DR, a village and trading post on the shore of a deep bay in the shadow of a great mountain was named Nimoar's Hold, after the Uthgardt chieftain who claimed the area and fortified it. The place became known to sea captains as "Waterdeep," a name that displaced the original within a few generations. In 1032 DR, Ahghairon, heir to the arts of Netheril, saved the city from itself by unseating Waterdeep's warlord and would-be emperor, Raurlor. Ahghairon declared that wisdom, not strength of arms, would rule in the city from now on, and created the Lords of Waterdeep.

These and other nations and great city-states rose to prominence along the Sword Coast, forming a chain along the Trade Way from Illusk in the far north to Baldur's Gate in the south, near the borders of Amn. Like their elven and dwarven predecessors, they fought off attacks by savage humanoids, including orc hordes from the Spine of the World. Waterdeep, guided by its mysterious Lords, became a rising power, while old Illusk fell to the orcs for decades, until it was eventually reclaimed and the city of Luskan built upon its ruins.

THE PRESENT AGE

The four and a half centuries since the establishment of the Lords of Waterdeep have been tumultuous times for the Sword Coast and the world. Throughout this period, civilization struggles against the savage forces of chaos, and life attempts to persevere against the agents of death and strife, sometimes in places where even the gods themselves have not been exempt from destruction.

The last one hundred fifty years have comprised one of the most cataclysmic periods in Faerûn's history. On no fewer than three occasions, Toril has been shaken to its core by forces that have repeatedly rewritten the laws of reality.

THE TIME OF TROUBLES

In 1358 DR, the gods were cast out of their otherworldly domain and made to wander the land incarnated as mortals. In seeking to recover their divinity, they warred among themselves. Magic became unpredictable, and the prayers of the faithful went unanswered. Some of the gods-turned-mortal were slain, while a handful of mortals ascended to godhood, assuming the responsibilities of the dead deities.

THE RETURN OF NETHERIL

In 1374 DR, the Empire of Netheril rose again when the floating city of Thultanhar, commonly known as Shade, returned from a nearly two-thousand-year-long excursion in the Shadowfell, to hover above the Anauroch desert. The shadow-touched nobles of the city almost immediately began hunting for ancient Netherese ruins and artifacts and preparing for a restoration of their once-great empire.

THE SPELLPLAUGE

In 1385 DR, the ascended deity Cyric, aided by Shar, murdered Mystra, the goddess of magic, in her domain of Dweomerheart. This act ripped asunder the fabric of magic in the world, unleashing its raw power in a catastrophe called the Spellplague. Thousands of prac-

titioners of the Art were driven mad or killed, while the face of Faerûn was reshaped by waves and veils of mystic blue fire. Entire nations were displaced or exchanged with realms from other worlds, and parts of the earth were torn free to float in the air.

THE SECOND SUNDERING

A century after the Spellplague, the lands and peoples of Faerûn had become accustomed to the state of things—just in time for everything to change again.

The first indication of new turmoil came in 1482 DR, when Bhaal, the long-dead god of murder, was reborn in Baldur's Gate amid chaos and bloodshed, leaving two of the city's dukes and many of its citizens dead. The return of Bhaal and his apparent reclamation of the domain of murder from Cyric led some scholars and sages to believe that the rules by which all deities must abide were in flux.

In 1484, strange calamities began to occur throughout Faerûn. An earthquake struck Iriaebor. A plague of locusts afflicted Amn. Droughts gripped the southern lands as the sea steadily receded in places. Amid this tumult, conflict broke out in many regions of the continent. The orcs of Many-Arrows warred against the dwarfholds of the North and their allies. Sembia invaded the Dalelands, and Cormyr raised an army to come to the aid of the Dalesfolk. Netheril brought forces to Cormyr's border, and Cormyr was drawn into a war on both fronts.

Throughout this period, tales began to spread of individuals who had been touched by the gods and granted strange powers. Some of these so-called Chosen were at the root of the conflicts that grip the land. Some seemed driven by divine purpose, while others claimed to be mystified as to why they would be singled out.

In 1485, in Icewind Dale, the Chosen of Auril fomented war with Ten-Towns and was defeated. In Anauroch, seeing that Netherese forces were spread thin, the long-subjugated Bedine people rebelled. Having defeated or besieged the dwarfholds of the North, orcs march on Silverymoon. In Cormyr and Sembia, the Netherese and the Cormyreans traded ground, while the Dalelands became a war zone. As if to offset the drought in the south, in the autumn of 1485 the Great Rain began to fall around the Sea of Fallen Stars and continued unceasingly.

While the waters rose to the east in early 1486, the tide turned against the orcs in the North, and by the end of the year their armies were broken and scattered. Also during that year, the elves of Myth Drannor came to the aid of the Dalelands and helped push back Sembian forces. On the Sword Coast, the Hosttower of the Arcane rose again in Luskan, along with the Arcane Brotherhood. In Waterdeep and Neverwinter, efforts were made to clear those cities of century-old rubble and neglect. Cormyr repulsed the last of the Sembian and Netherese forces from the nation, reclaiming its territory, and recalled its forces, turning inward to address issues of rebuilding.

Late in 1486, the Great Rain finally abated, but this event didn't signify an end to the chaos. The Sea of

Fallen Stars had grown, submerging great swaths of land beneath its waves.

Early in 1487, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions abounded for months, as if the whole world was convulsing. Rumors spread of chasms caused by the Spellplague suddenly vanishing, and stories circulated of known destinations being farther away from one another, as if the world had quietly added miles of wilderness to the distance between them. Word began to spread of places and peoples not heard from since the Spellplague. It became apparent that some of the effects of that terrible time had been reversed. During the year, ships claiming to be from Evermeet, Lantan, and Nimbral—nations thought vanished or destroyed—sailed into ports on the Sword Coast and in the Shining South. Tales spread of the legendary skyships of Halruaa being spotted in southern skies. No longer engaged in Cormyr, Netheril attacked Myth Drannor by floating the City of Shade over it. In a struggle for control of Myth Drannor's *mythal* and the Weave itself, the flying capital of Netheril was brought crashing down on Myth Drannor, resulting in the cataclysmic destruction of both.

As the year drew to a close, there were nights when the heavens seemed to hang motionless. Throughout much of Faerûn, the winter of 1487 and 1488 lasted longer than any on record. The solstices and equinoxes had somehow drifted. Later seasons followed suit, with each starting and ending later than expected. Prayers to the gods for knowledge and mercy seemed to go unacknowledged, apart from the presence of their Chosen.

Although the orcs were defeated in the North, the League of Silver Marches was disbanded in 1488, as former allies blamed one another for failures in the war. Sembia divided into separate city-states only nominally allied with one another. While a handful of settlements survived, the Netherese Empire was no more. The remainder of the Netherese forces battle with the Bedine over control of the Memory Spire, thought to be a tomb of the phaerimm, Netheril's ancient enemies. The battle awakens what turns out to be a hive of the creatures, and they use the life and magic-draining power of the spire against the lands below.

By 1489, many of the wars that began during the Sundering had ground to a close. Other conflicts arose, and mighty threats still imperiled the world, but the deities ceased interfering with the world through their Chosen. The gods were no longer silent but quiet, and in many places new priesthoods arose to interpret the gods' now subtle signs.

The world today seems a place filled with new lands and opportunities, where those who dare can leave their mark. Students of history and those elves and dwarves who recall the past that short-lived humans see as distant perceive a world much like it was over a century ago. For most folk, wild tales of people empowered by the gods, and of far-off lands returned to the world, are the subjects of fireside chatter. Daily concerns and the dangers and opportunities just beyond their doors take precedence, and plenty of both remain on the Sword Coast and in the North.

MAGIC IN THE REALMS

From the simplest cantrip to the mightiest workings of High Magic, from the blessings of healing mercy to the raising of mighty heroes from the dead, magic permeates the Realms. Any understanding of magic begins, and ends, with an understanding of the Weave.

THE WEAVE

The Weave is an essential element of the universe, running through everything in unseen threads. Some creatures, objects, and locations have deep, intrinsic ties to the Weave and can perform extraordinary feats that come naturally to them (a beholder's flight, a vampire's charming gaze, a dragon's breath weapon, and so forth). Creatures with the necessary talent and skill can also manipulate the Weave to perform magic by casting spells.

The Weave isn't normally visible or detectable, even through the use of spells. *Detect magic* doesn't let you perceive the Weave, for instance. The Weave isn't magic, precisely, any more than a collection of threads is a garment; it's the raw material from which the tapestry of magic is woven.

In two senses, both the metaphorical and the real, the goddess Mystra is the Weave. She is its keeper and tender, but all three times the goddess of magic has died or been separated from her divinity (twice as Mystra, and once as her predecessor, Mystryl), magic has been twisted or has failed entirely. With Mystra's last death and the coming of the Spellplague, the Weave was thought destroyed, and the term lost its significance. Since the end of the most recent Sundering, both Mystra and the Weave have returned to their roles of centuries past, and spells and magic items are more reliable than they had been while the Spellplague raged.

SUPERNATURAL POWERS AND PSIONICS

The inborn magical abilities of certain creatures, the acquired supernatural powers of people such as monks, and psionic abilities are similar in that their users don't manipulate the Weave in the customary way that spellcasters do. The mental state of the user is vitally important: monks and some psionics-users train long and hard to attain the right frame of mind, while creatures with supernatural powers have that mind-set in their nature. How these abilities are related to the Weave remains a matter of debate; many students of the arcane believe that the use of the so-called Unseen Art is an aspect of magical talent that can't be directly studied or taught.

MAGIC ITEMS

Where a spell effect is brought to life by manipulating the threads of the Weave, the creation of a magic item ties some of those threads together in a specific way, to produce the desired effect for as long as the item lasts. The Weave provides immediately available energy for spells and also enables those who know the craft to har-

ness that energy inside an object until it is called forth by its user (who, of course, need not be a spellcaster).

In some cases, the magic of an item must be tied to its wielder, representing an entwining of the threads of the Weave between wielder and object known as attunement. As with all matters related to magic, the number of items to which a single being can be attuned is limited, but the benefits of such a relationship can be considerable.

MYTHALS

Mythals are some of the most powerful magic in the world of Toril, constructs that bind and shape the Weave in a particular location, sometimes so powerfully that the rules of magic or even reality can be bent or rewritten.

A *mythal* is a permanent field of overlapping magical wards and effects tied to a specific location. In its original usage, this term applied to the works of High Magic that protected ancient elven cities. It has since been expanded to cover all manner of similar protections, from the immense floating cities of fallen Netheril to the wards of Silverymoon to the smaller—but no less effective—workings of magic that keep safe important locations like Candlekeep. Even the many-layered wards and effects of Undermountain, beneath Waterdeep, are considered a *mythal* by some.

Most *mythals* are defensive in nature, designed to restrict the kinds of magic that can be employed in the area they govern, and the most common restrictions are concerned with teleportation and conjuration magic. Everska's *mythal* influences the weather of the area and wards its inhabitants against disease, while the *mythal* of undersea Myth Nantar makes its waters breathable and more comfortable for creatures not suited to underwater life.

In many ways, a *mythal* is less like a spell or a magic item than a living creation of magic, capable of growing stronger or weaker, absorbing damage, or dying. *Mythals* can also sometimes heal themselves, as did the *mythal* of Silverymoon, blossoming out of the Moonbridge following Mystra's most recent return. Each active *mythal* has one or more beings attuned to its effects, who can ignore any restrictions on spellcasting, can direct targetable effects of the *mythal*, and can teach others of appropriate skill how to access its secrets.

Except in cities such as Silverymoon and Everska, adventurers are most likely to encounter damaged or failing *mythals* in ruined locations where magic once had great influence. Although an *identify* spell might reveal some of the simplest effects of a *mythal*, active restrictions on spellcasting can be discovered only by trying (and failing) to cast a prohibited spell. A powerful spellcaster might learn how to access or repair a *mythal* without assistance, but such feats are legendary, and rarely attempted by even the most renowned of mages. Any elven city with Myth in its title (Myth Drannor, Myth Glaurach, Myth Nantar, and others) has, or had, a *mythal* protecting it. The ruins of such places are certain to have unpredictable effects related to their damaged or destroyed *mythals*.

WEAVE-AFFECTING MAGIC

Certain spells allow casters to perceive or manipulate the effects of the Weave in particular ways. The Weave itself also has irregularities that affect spells.

Detect Magic. Detect magic reveals threads of the Weave woven together through spellcasting, or the “knots” of the Weave in a magic item. A magic item appears enmeshed in the silvery-blue threads of the Weave, and the way the threads are arranged reveals what type of magic is used (necromancy, abjuration, and so on). Similarly, active spells and areas imbued with magic are limned in a silvery network of threads, which might twist and reknit themselves depending on the magic involved.

Dispel Magic. Dispel magic unwinds and prematurely ends magic, unraveling whatever construct of the Weave was put in place.

Antimagic. Antimagic effects can dispel existing spells and unravel any magic woven from the Weave. Permanent effects, such as those from magic items, are usually suppressed by antimagic: while the effect is within an area of antimagic, the construct of the Weave unravels, but the threads snap back into place once the magic is outside the area.

Dead Magic. In rare areas of dead magic, the Weave is absent. Not only do spells and magic items cease to function, but even the supernatural abilities of creatures that are innately tied to the Weave might fail as the knot of the Weave they carry with them unravels.

Wild Magic. In an area of wild magic, the Weave becomes “tangled,” spontaneously forming its own constructs and resulting magic. It also tends to twist the constructs of the Weave created by spellcasting, causing unexpected results.

RELIGION IN THE REALMS

Though wizards work wonders with their Art, and adventurers take their fates into their own hands, it is on the gods that most folk in the Forgotten Realms depend when they have need. The gods play a role in the lives of nearly everyone, from the mightiest lord to the meanest urchin.

The various races of Toril worship their pantheons, which remain largely the same from region to region, with different cultures and societies emphasizing some deities over others. Although exceptions exist—the gods of Mulhorand, for example—all the gods are revered across all of Faerûn.

FORMS OF WORSHIP

The average person worships different gods in different contexts. Most vocations have a patron deity: farmers make offerings to Chauntae for the prosperity of their crops, clerks sharpen their quills with a prayer to Deineir, while pious merchants remember to set coins aside for Waukeen at the end of the day. Most people worship a deity associated with their livelihood, family, or home, while others feel called to a particular god for a variety of reasons. Individuals often carry or wear a small token of their favored deity: a pendant or a pin in the image of the god's holy symbol, or some other personal keepsake.

In addition, people regularly venerate gods based on their needs and circumstances: a farmer whose favored deity is Chauntae would pray to Amaunator for a few clear, sunny days, and a Waterdhavian noble who habit-

ually worships Denier would give thanks to Sune after a successful coming-out party for her son. Even priests of particular gods acknowledge the roles that other deities play in the world and in their lives.

In general, worshipers view their relationships with the gods as practical and reciprocal: they pray and make offerings because that is how one invites the blessings of the gods and turns away their wrath. These prayers and other acts of devotion are generally performed quietly at the shrine in one's household or community, or occasionally in a temple dedicated to one's deity, when a worshiper feels the need to "come knocking upon a god's door" to ask for attention.

Forms of worship are often acts of veneration: giving thanks for favor shown, making requests for future blessings, and offering praise for the deity's intercessions, large and small. Because most folk in Faerûn don't want to attract the ire of the cruel or savage gods, beseeching them to keep the peace is also an act of worship. A hunter or a farmer might make offerings to Malar in hopes of keeping predators at bay, and a sailor might pray to Umberlee that she withhold her wrath for the duration of a voyage.

NEW AND FOREIGN GODS

The Faerûnian pantheon isn't the only one known on Toril. Nonhuman races honor their own gods, for example, and people in faraway lands are known to worship altogether different gods. Occasionally, foreigners bring the worship of these gods to Faerûn. In addition, on rare occasions a new god comes into being, perhaps a mortal elevated to godhood or a deity whose arrival was foretold by prophets and leaders of new religions. In cosmopolitan places such as Waterdeep and Calimshan, small shrines and temples to strange gods spring up from time to time.

The burgeoning worship of a new deity is rarely a concern to the other gods of the Faerûnian pantheon, and the people who revere those deities, except when the newcomer's area of concern directly competes with that of an established deity. The methods of resolving such conflicts range from friendly dueling festivals or rites meant to emphasize the glory of one god over another, to campaigns of outright religious bloodshed.

Over generations, a new god might become a settled-in member of the pantheon. Indeed, some scholars posit that Faerûn has many "immigrant" gods, who joined the pantheon's ranks so long ago that their foreign origins are lost in antiquity.

DEAD AND RESURRECTED GODS

Over and over, mourning bells have tolled for some of the deities of the Realms. Gods were struck down during the Time of Troubles, when the Spellplague wrought its destruction, and most recently when Netheril fell. Some deities have even been slain by mortals wielding impossibly powerful magic.

When a god withdraws from a pantheon, divine magic stops flowing to the faithful, and miracles and omens associated with that god cease, that deity's priesthood loses faith, and holy sites are abandoned or taken over by other faiths. To the deity's worshipers in the world,

it is immaterial whether the god is truly dead or merely dormant—the consequences for them are the same either way. Yet, as recent events have borne out, a god who is gone might not remain absent forever. More than a few supposedly dead gods have returned and amassed a new body of worshipers. Indeed, the legends of some gods speak of a cycle of death and resurrection.

As the Sage of Shadowdale once noted, "If the gods can grant the power to raise mortals from death, why do ye assume they should be laid low by it forever?"

THE AFTERLIFE

Most humans believe the souls of the recently deceased are spirited away to the Fugue Plane, where they wander the great City of Judgment, often unaware they are dead. The servants of the gods come to collect such souls and, if they are worthy, they are taken to their awaited afterlife in the deity's domain. Occasionally, the faithful are sent back to be reborn into the world to finish work that was left undone.

Souls that are unclaimed by the servants of the gods are judged by Kelemvor, who decides the fate of each one. Some are charged with serving as guides for other lost souls, while others are transformed into squirming larvae and cast into the dust. The truly false and faithless are mortared into the Wall of the Faithless, the great barrier that bounds the City of the Dead, where their souls slowly dissolve and begin to become part of the stuff of the Wall itself.

RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

Those who serve as priests of a god aren't necessarily clerics. Indeed, the power invested in clerics and other divine spellcasters by the gods is given out only rarely (see "Divine Magic" below). The work of a priest is to serve one's deity and that deity's faithful, a task that doesn't necessarily require the use of magic.

The kind of person attracted to a deity's priesthood depends on the tenets of that god: the cunning rogues who venerate Mask have little in common with the upright law-keepers of Tyr, and the delightful revelers who revere Lliira are different from both.

TEMPLES AND SHRINES

The core religious institutions of Faerûn are temples and shrines. Whether a small, out-of-the-way building, or a complex made up of multiple structures and tracts of land, each temple operates according to the traditions of its faith, although powerful or charismatic figures who rise to prominence within the temple hierarchy might motivate or inspire changes to those traditions.

Temples in Faerûn don't have regular services as such. Group observances in a temple occur only at specific festival times, and priests also go out into the community to perform rites such as marriages and funerals. Temples are places where worshipers go either to spend personal or family time in a space consecrated to a deity or to seek the aid of the priests for some reason.

Small shrines and private chapels, as distinct from full-fledged temples, are common throughout Faerûn, particularly in areas where a temple doesn't exist.

THE FAERÙNIAN PANTHEON

Deity	Alignment	Domains	Symbol
Akadi, goddess of air	N	Tempest	Cloud
Amaunator, god of the sun	LN	Life, Light	Golden sun
Asmodeus, god of indulgence	LE	Knowledge, Trickery	Three inverted triangles arranged in a long triangle
Auril, goddess of winter	NE	Nature, Tempest	Six-pointed snowflake
Azuth, god of wizardry	LN	Arcana, Knowledge	Left hand pointing upward, outlined in fire
Bane, god of tyranny	LE	War	Upright black hand, thumb and fingers together
Beshaba, goddess of misfortune	CE	Trickery	Black antlers
Bhaal, god of murder	NE	Death	Skull surrounded by ring of bloody droplets
Chauntea, goddess of agriculture	NG	Life	Sheaf of grain or a blooming rose over grain
Cyric, god of lies	CE	Trickery	White jawless skull on black or purple sunburst
Deneir, god of writing	NG	Arcana, Knowledge	Lit candle above an open eye
Eldath, goddess of peace	NG	Life, Nature	Waterfall plunging into a still pool
Gond, god of craft	N	Knowledge	Toothed cog with four spokes
Grumbar, god of earth	N	Knowledge	Mountain
Gwaeron Windstrom, god of tracking	NG	Knowledge, Nature	Paw print with a five-pointed star in its center
Helm, god of watchfulness	LN	Life, Light	Staring eye on upright left gauntlet
Hoar, god of revenge and retribution	LN	War	A coin with a two-faced head
Ilmater, god of endurance	LG	Life	Hands bound at the wrist with red cord
Istishia, god of water	N	Tempest	Wave
Jergal, scribe of the dead	LN	Knowledge, Death	A skull biting a scroll
Kelemvor, god of the dead	LN	Death	Upright skeletal arm holding balanced scales
Kossuth, god of fire	N	Light	Flame
Lathander, god of dawn and renewal	NG	Life, Light	Road traveling into a sunrise
Leira, goddess of illusion	CN	Trickery	Point-down triangle containing a swirl of mist
Lliira, goddess of joy	CG	Life	Triangle of three six-pointed stars
Loviatar, goddess of pain	LE	Death	Nine-tailed barbed scourge
Malar, god of the hunt	CE	Nature	Clawed paw
Mask, god of thieves	CN	Trickery	Black mask
Mielikki, goddess of forests	NG	Nature	Unicorn's head
Milil, god of poetry and song	NG	Light	Five-stringed harp made of leaves
Myrkul, god of death	NE	Death	White human skull
Mystra, goddess of magic	NG	Arcana, Knowledge	Circle of seven stars, nine stars encircling a flowing red mist, or a single star
Oghma, god of knowledge	N	Knowledge	Blank scroll
The Red Knight, goddess of strategy	LN	War	Red knight lanceboard piece with stars for eyes
Savras, god of divination and fate	LN	Arcana, Knowledge	Crystal ball containing many kinds of eyes
Selûne, goddess of the moon	CG	Knowledge, Life	Pair of eyes surrounded by seven stars
Shar, goddess of darkness and loss	NE	Death, Trickery	Black disk encircled with a purple border
Silvanus, god of wild nature	N	Nature	Oak leaf
Sune, goddess of love and beauty	CG	Life, Light	Face of a beautiful red-haired woman
Talona, goddess of poison and disease	CE	Death	Three teardrops in a triangle
Talos, god of storms	CE	Tempest	Three lightning bolts radiating from a point
Tempus, god of war	N	War	Upright flaming sword
Torm, god of courage and self-sacrifice	LG	War	White right gauntlet
Tymora, goddess of good fortune	CG	Trickery	Face-up coin
Tyr, god of justice	LG	War	Balanced scales resting on a warhammer
Umberlee, goddess of the sea	CE	Tempest	Wave curling left and right
Valkur, Northlander god of sailors	CG	Tempest, War	A cloud and three lightning bolts
Waukeen, goddess of trade	N	Knowledge, Trickery	Upright coin with Waukeen's profile facing left

THE DWARVEN PANTHEON

Deity	Alignment	Domains	Symbol
Abbathor , god of greed	NE	Trickery	Jeweled dagger, point-down
Berronor Truesilver , goddess of hearth and home	LG	Life, Light	Intertwined silver rings
Clangeddin Silverbeard , god of war	LG	War	Crossed silver battleaxes
Deep Duerra , duergar goddess of conquest and psionics	LE	Arcana, War	Mind flayer skull
Dugmaren Brightmantle , god of discovery	CG	Knowledge	Open book
Dumathoin , god of buried secrets	N	Death, Knowledge	Mountain silhouette with a central gemstone
Gorm Gulthyn , god of vigilance	LG	War	Bronze half-mask
Haela Brightaxe , goddess of war-luck	CG	War	Upright sword whose blade is spiraled in flame
Laduguer , duergar god of magic and slavery	LE	Arcana, Death	Broken arrow
Marthammar Duin , god of wanderers	NG	Nature, Trickery	Upright mace in front of a tall boot
Moradin , god of creation	LG	Knowledge	Hammer and anvil
Sharindlar , goddess of healing	CG	Life	Burning needle
Vergadain , god of luck and wealth	N	Trickery	Gold coin with the face of a dwarf

Shrines tend to be unstaffed, kept up by the locals and visitors who use the place for prayer. A shrine might be as modest as a roadside well, where traveling merchants can drop a coin to request good fortune from Waukeen, or as grand as a statue of Amaunator surrounded by braziers in a pavilion in the middle of a village.

Traveling priests often seek out and visit these sites, and they act as meeting places for the faithful. When word gets around that a traveling priest of Eldath has come into town, the faithful seek her out at the holy spring dedicated to the goddess at the edge of town.

A family or business might maintain a shrine or a chapel to its favored deity, perhaps a set of wind chimes consecrated to Akadi hung from the high branches of a tree in the garden, or a wooden symbol shaped like the hand of Azuth in miniature displayed on a prominent wall with a space nearby to burn a candle or some incense.

COMMUNING WITH THE GODS

Though many tales are told of times past when the gods appeared in physical form and walked the land, occasions of that sort are few and far between. For the most part, the gods communicate with their faithful through signs and omens, appreciated by those able to interpret them. Of course, some signs are more subtle—and thus more open to interpretation—than others.

The most common kind of communion that worshipers and priests find with their deities is in prayer, song, or meditation. Such experiences are intensely personal, and it is common wisdom to keep them that way. After all, “advice” from one’s god that appears during morning prayer and gives one a good turn to the day is worthwhile only for oneself. Let each worshiper commune in their own way, as the saying goes.

Divine magic also provides a means of communing with the gods and can be used to call upon their guidance. Divine pronouncements of this sort are often personal in scope and brief, and those edicts that concern broader matters tend to be open to interpretation or debate.

PRIESTHOOD

Priesthood is a vocation like any other, with those who undertake it often honing their abilities through a system of apprenticeship. At a small temple, a novice or an acolyte might study under the only priest available. Larger temples can accommodate groups of acolytes, each learning under the direction of one or more mentors responsible for training them in the duties and skills of the priesthood.

Once acolytes complete their education, they are often ordained in a ritual in which a successful candidate is invested with the responsibilities of the priesthood.

CONFLICTS AND PERSECUTION

The moral and ethical values of the deities in Faerûn run the gamut, representing all the outlooks that their mortal followers demonstrate, from the principled agents of good to the vicious proponents of evil. Most cultures and societies aren’t nearly as cosmopolitan as the population of Faerûn taken as a whole; as a result, religious persecution (from the viewpoint of those who garner the attention) is practiced in places where worship of certain deities is frowned on.

Most governments that engage in persecution limit such restrictions to the establishment of formal temples, priesthoods, and organized festivals. (On a practical level, it’s impossible to prevent individuals from innocuously or secretly worshiping whichever deities they choose.) For instance, although worship of Talona—like that of many evil gods—is forbidden in Waterdeep, this prohibition extends only to the creation of a temple and the presence of her priesthood within the city. Individual citizens or families who revere Talona might be viewed as misguided, but they aren’t taken into custody or punished as long as they obey the laws of the city.

Some places take this form of persecution a step further, for a variety of reasons. A tyrant might outlaw worship of Torm, lest it inspire rebellion, and an otherwise fair-minded mayor of a river-mill community might demand that worshipers of Silvanus find elsewhere to

THE ELVEN PANTHEON

Deity	Alignment	Domains	Symbol
Aerdrie Faenya, goddess of the sky	CG	Tempest, Trickery	Bird silhouetted against a cloud
Angharradh, triple goddess of wisdom and protection	CG	Knowledge, Life	Triangle with three interlocking circles within
Corellon Larethian, god of art and magic	CG	Arcana, Light	Crescent moon
Deep Sashelas, god of the sea	CG	Nature	Dolphin
Ereval Ilesere, god of mischief	CN	Trickery	Asymmetrical eight-armed star
Fenmarel Mestarine, god of outcasts	CN	Trickery	Two peering elven eyes
Hanali Celani, goddess of love and beauty	CG	Life	Golden heart
Labelas Enoreth, god of time, history, and philosophy	CG	Arcana, Knowledge	Setting sun
Rillifane Rallathil, god of nature	CG	Nature	Oak
Sehanine Moonbow, goddess of divination, dreams, travel, and death	CG	Knowledge	Full moon under a moonbow
Shevarash, god of vengeance	CN	War	Broken arrow over a tear
Solonor Thelandira, god of archery	CG	War	Silver arrow with green fletching

THE DROW PANTHEON

Deity	Alignment	Domains	Symbol
Eilistraee, goddess of song and moonlight	CG	Light, Nature	Sword-wielding dancing drow female silhouetted against the full moon
Kiaransalee, goddess of necromancy	CE	Arcana	Female drow hand wearing many silver rings
Lolth, goddess of spiders	CE	Trickery	Spider
Selvetarm, god of warriors	CE	War	Spider over crossed sword-and-mace
Vhaeraun, god of thieves	CE	Trickery	Black mask with blue glass lenses inset over eyes

THE HALFLING PANTHEON

Deity	Alignment	Domains	Symbol
Arvoreen, god of vigilance and war	LG	War	Crossed short swords
Brandobaris, god of thievery and adventure	N	Trickery	Halfling footprint
Cyrrollalee, goddess of hearth and home	LG	Life	An open door
Sheela Peryroyl, goddess of agriculture and weather	N	Nature, Tempest	Flower
Urogalan, god of earth and death	LN	Death, Knowledge	Silhouette of a dog's head
Yondalla, goddess of fertility and protection	LG	Life	Cornucopia on a shield

live because of recent problems the timber-cutters have had with local druids.

DIVINE MAGIC

The gods show their favor toward mortals in myriad ways. A chosen few have their minds and souls opened to the power of magic. There is no formula for who does and doesn't receive this divine insight, as the gods keep their own counsel concerning their selections. Some who are favored seek to ignore or deny their gift, while others embrace it wholeheartedly.

Some who display the potential for divine magic develop and practice their abilities in a temple, a sacred grove, or some other spiritual place, perhaps in the company of other students. Other practitioners of divine magic discover and nurture their gods-given power entirely on their own.

THE GODS OF FAERÙN

The gods that make up the pantheon of Faerûn are much like the population of some of the Realms' greatest cities: an eclectic blend of individuals from a variety of sources. The makeup of the pantheon has shifted over the ages, as a result of changes in the Realms and its people (or vice versa, depending on which scholars you believe). The following pages describe the most prominent members of the pantheon.

The deities of the Faerûnian pantheon are by no means the only powers worshiped in the Realms. The nonhuman races have pantheons of their own (described in chapter 3), and scattered other cults and local divinities can be found across Faerûn.

THE GNOMISH PANTHEON

Deity	Alignment	Domains	Symbol
Baervan Wildwanderer, god of woodlands	NG	Nature	Face of a raccoon
Baravar Cloakshadow, god of illusion and deception	NG	Arcana, Trickery	Dagger against a hooded cloak
Callarduran Smoothhands, god of mining and carving stone	N	Knowledge, Nature	Golden signet ring with six-pointed star
Flandal Steelskin, god of metalwork	NG	Knowledge	Flaming hammer
Gaerdal Ironhand, god of protection	LG	War	Iron band
Garl Glittergold, god of trickery and gems	LG	Trickery	Gold nugget
Nebelun, god of invention and luck	CG	Knowledge, Trickery	Bellows and a lizard tail
Segojan Earthcaller, god of earth and the dead	NG	Light	Glowing gemstone
Urdlen, god of greed and murder	CE	Death, War	White clawed mole emerging from ground

THE ORC PANTHEON

Deity	Alignment	Domains	Symbol
Bahgtru, god of strength	LE	War	Broken thigh bone
Gruumsh, god of storms and war	CE	Tempest, War	Unblinking eye
Ilneval, god of strategy and hordes	LE	War	Upright blood-spattered sword
Luthic, mother-goddess of fertility and healing	LE	Life, Nature	Orcish rune meaning "cave entrance"
Shargaas, god of stealth and darkness	NE	Trickery	Red crescent moon with a skull between the moon's horns
Yurtrus, god of death and disease	NE	Death	White hand, palm outward

AMAUNATOR

The Keeper of the Eternal Sun, the Light of Law, the Yellow God

The rule of law and the glory of the sun are both in Amaunator's dominion. His priests help establish bureaucracies and lawful order in communities. They often witness contracts and signed agreements, stamping such documents with the sun-symbol of Amaunator to signify their validity.

His priests teach that Amaunator has died and been reborn time and again. Like the sun, he might pass into the realm of darkness, but inevitably his bright gaze will fall on the world once again. Amaunator is seen as a stern and unforgiving deity, not unlike Silvanus in composure, but his concern isn't for the balance of life—he cares that things proceed according to the celestial order, that promises are kept, and that the rule of law persists.



Farmers and travelers beseech him when they pray for rain or sun, as do any others looking for a favorable change in the weather. But the most common form of propitiation to Amaunator is the practice of swearing oaths, signing contracts, and declaring laws under the light of the sun. So ingrained in the common perception is the connection between a solemn oath and the sun that those engaged in closing deals or issuing edicts often pause and wait for a passing cloud to clear the sun before completing the transaction or pronouncement.

ASMODEUS

The Lord of the Ninth, The Cloven, Old Hoof and Horn

Open worship of Asmodeus began roughly a century ago when small cults with charismatic leaders sprang up in the aftermath of the Spellplague. That catastrophe left many asking why the gods were angry or had abandoned them. To those questioners, the faithful of Asmodeus provided answers and a god who would forgive all



their faults. Still, for the next few decades, the cult of Asmodeus struggled for acceptance.

In the beliefs of the people of the North—which coincide with many tales told by dwarves, elves, and others—Asmodeus is Lord of the Ninth, the leader of all devils of the Nine Hells. People know devils to be iron-minded and silver-tongued purveyors of temptation, whose price for their boons can be as dear as one's soul. It's said that when a soul waits on the Fugue Plane for a deity to take it to its appropriate afterlife, devils approach the soul and offer it a chance at power and immortal pleasures. All a soul needs to do is take one step out of the dust and the milling crowd and put a foot on the first rung of the infernal ladder that represents the hierarchy of the Nine Hells.

The faithful of Asmodeus acknowledge that devils offer their worshipers a path that's not for everyone—just as eternally basking in the light of Lathander or endlessly swinging a hammer in the mines of Moradin might not be for everyone. Those who serve Asmodeus in life hope to be summoned out of the moaning masses of the Fugue Plane after death. They yearn for the chance to master their own fates, with all of eternity to achieve their goals.

To those not so dedicated, priests of Asmodeus offer the prospect of a reprieve in the afterlife. All souls wait on the Fugue Plane for a deity's pleasure, which determines where a soul will spend the rest of eternity. Those who lived their lives most in keeping with a deity's outlook are taken first. Others, who have transgressed in the eyes of their favored god or have not followed any particular ethos, might wait centuries before Kelemvor judges where they go. People who fear such a fate can pray to Asmodeus, his priests say, and in return a devil will grant a waiting soul some comfort.

Today, shrines to Asmodeus are still rare and temples are almost unheard of, but many folk have adopted the habit of asking Asmodeus for reprieve from their sins. After transgressing against a god in some way, a person prays to Asmodeus for something to provide respite during the long wait. Asmodeus is known to grant people what they wish, and thus people pray for all the delights and distractions they desire most from life. Those who transgress in great ways often ask Asmodeus to hide their sins from the gods, and priests say that he will do so, but with a price after death.



SYMBOL OF AURIL

AURIL

The Frostmaiden, Lady Frostkiss, Icedawn

Auril, the merciless goddess of cold and winter, is worshiped mostly in regions that are affected by deep winters. Folk propitiate Auril with offerings and prayers for mercy. Her priests warn others to prepare for winter, and to stock extra provisions in order to have some to spare as offerings to the goddess.

Few favor Auril except for those who make their livelihood from winter or those who truly love the season. Her rare priests tend to be folk who would, but for their status, likely be outcasts from their communities. They practice celibacy and remain aloof from others when not serving in their official capacity.

Luskan has a temple dedicated to Auril, the white-spired Winter Palace. The structure is a roofless array of pillars and arches carved of white stone. The rituals of Auril's worship often seem cruel to outsiders. In Luskan, visitors gather at the temple to watch the frequent "wet parades," a ritual in which supplicants don garments packed with ice. They then journey between six white pillars known as the Kisses of Auril, which are dispersed throughout the city. The worshipers move from pillar to pillar, chanting prayers to the goddess. Upon reaching a pillar, a supplicant must climb it and then "kiss the lady," touching lips to a rusty iron plate at the top. In winter, these events resemble frantic footraces, with the added risk of frostbite and injuries caused by falling from the slippery pillars. The parade runners are cheered on by patrons who come out of nearby taverns to place bets on the stamina of the participants. Those who finish the race are thought to have helped make the winter easier, and they rarely have to pay for food or ale all winter long.

AZUTH

The High One, the Lord of Spellcraft, the First Magister

Few pay homage to Azuth aside from wizards. For them, the High One is the ultimate embodiment of all that they hold dear.

Mystra serves as goddess of magic; Oghma is god of knowledge; and Deneir is god of writing and language. Azuth takes aspects of these general fields and applies them to the specific practices of wizards. For instance, while Mystra is the deity who represents the soul, art, and wonder of magic, Azuth is god of a wizard's long hours of study, exacting standards of movement and



SYMBOL OF AZUTH

speech, and cramped, ink-stained fingers. Wizards invoke Azuth when they scribe scrolls, inscribe magic circles, attempt to memorize spells, and even when they cast spells. Often this acknowledgment comes in the form of silently forming Azuth's holy symbol, pointing the index finger of the left hand to the sky. For many wizards, the gesture is so commonplace in their lives that it becomes an unconscious habit.

Temples dedicated to Azuth are scarce, and clerics of the deity are extremely rare. Even in magic-saturated Halruaa, only a handful of holy places are dedicated to Azuth. Sometimes a statue or a shrine dedicated to him stands in a corner of a temple to Mystra or another deity. More often, a wizard has a personal shrine at home. Azuth is represented at such sites as a hooded and bearded figure with left hand held high, finger pointed up. Sometimes he is represented by merely the hand. In either case, the finger often serves as a candleholder or as the point of origin for a *light* spell.

BANE

The Black Hand, the Lord of Darkness

Bane has a simple ethos: the strong have not just the right but the duty to rule over the weak. A tyrant who is able to seize power must do so, for not only does the tyrant benefit, but so do those under the tyrant's rule. When a ruler succumbs to decadence, corruption, or decrepitude, a stronger and more suitable ruler will rise.

Bane is vilified in many legends. Throughout history, those who favor him have committed dark deeds in his name, but most people don't worship Bane out of malice. Bane represents ambition and control, and those who have the former but lack the latter pray to him to give them strength. It is said that Bane favors those who exhibit drive and courage, and that he aids those who seek to become conquerors, carving kingdoms from the wilderness, and bringing order to the lawless.

At many times and in many places in Faerûn, the faithful of Bane have been seen as saviors for their efforts in slaughtering raiders, throwing down corrupt rulers, or saving armies on the brink of defeat. But in just as many other places, the worship of Bane has created or supported cruel dictatorships, aided mercantile monopolies, or brought about the practice of slavery where before it didn't exist.

SYMBOL OF BANE



BESHABA

The Maid of Misfortune, Lady Doom, Black Bess

Beshaba is the counterpoint to Tymora and is just as frequently acknowledged in daily life as is her more benevolent "sister." She is seen as a cruel and capricious goddess who must be propitiated to avoid attracting her attention and interest in a negative way.

Beshaba's name is invoked when someone is beset by bad luck—which could be as minor as stubbing a toe or breaking a wagon wheel, or as catastrophic as slipping and accidentally falling off a cliff. It is also invoked to ward off her attentions when someone is doing something in which good luck wouldn't play a part but bad luck might. For example, someone rolling dice would invoke Tymora because they want random chance to fall in their favor, but someone about to cross a rickety bridge would ask Beshaba to keep the bridge intact.

Folk make the symbol of Beshaba by folding in their thumbs and extending their fingers on one or both hands (mimicking the horns of her holy symbol) to ward off misfortune. The same gesture raised to the head signifies a salute; when pointed at someone, the "horns" indicate ill favor directed toward that individual.

Many druids worship Beshaba as one of the First Circle. They propitiate her with dances while wearing fire-blackened antlers dipped in blood. According to these druids, her holy symbol is the horns of a stag because when Beshaba was first worshiped, humans were simple hunter-gatherers and she was believed to bring misfortune to hunters, such as being gored by a stag.

Although most people tremble in fear at the prospect of Beshaba's attendance at any event (even in spirit), Beshaba is almost always invoked and welcomed formally in the opening speeches or ceremonies of formal functions such as marriages and coronations, contests of sport or martial prowess, and at the naming ceremonies of children. If she isn't invited to such an event, she might take offense and wreak misfortune on those involved.

Temples to Beshaba are virtually unknown. It's common, however, for rural folk to erect a post and mount antlers on it at the site of some roadside accident or murder. In cities, where antlers are hard to come by and murders and accidents more prevalent, the fashion is to draw the black antlers of Beshaba with charcoal on a nearby wall, leaving the symbol on display until weather scours it away. These "shrines," in either form, serve as warnings to others about places of ill fortune.

SYMBOL
OF BESHABA



More formal shrines to Beshaba exist in places where folk frequently hope to ward off misfortune. These sites tend to be posts or stones painted red with blackened antlers attached to them, or a red, triangular wall-mounted plaque with attached antlers. Both types have a stone or bronze bowl where coins can be tossed or burnt offerings made. The Red Wizards of Thay commonly erect such shrines outside their ritual chambers to guard against unfortunate mistakes.

Few dare to take Beshaba as a patron. The rare clerics of the Maid of Misfortune are those who have been deeply affected by great misfortunes and who seek to warn others of the essential unfairness of life—or to inflict that unfairness upon them.

BHAAL

The Lord of Murder

The folk of Faerûn don't normally pray to or acknowledge Bhaal. He is seen as a deeply evil and destructive deity who hungers for death—meaning the death of any sentient beings through unlawful means.

Some people pray to Bhaal when they want to commit murder. A person might have good reason to resort to murder, such as when one is unable to redress some injustice through lawful means. But it's far more common for prayers to Bhaal to be uttered by those who seek to kill someone out of jealousy, greed, or wrath. It's rare for anyone but assassins or compulsive killers to take Bhaal as a patron, and clerics who revere Bhaal often qualify on both counts.

Murder cults of Bhaal have arisen in the past, each led by a charismatic, self-styled priest of Bhaal, but organized worship of the Lord of Murder is extremely uncommon. Temples and shrines are similarly rare. Those who erect a shrine to Bhaal usually do so to thank him for a successful murder. Such shrines typically feature a skull or a severed head surrounded by drops of blood (often both from the murdered victim).

CHAUNTEA

The Great Mother, the Grain Goddess

Chauntea is goddess of agriculture: sowing and reaping, seeding and harvest, breeding and butchery, shearing and weaving. In this aspect she is a rural deity rarely prayed to behind the walls of a city except by kitchen gardeners. But Chauntea is also the Great Mother, a goddess of crib, hearth, and home. And as such she is



SYMBOL OF BHAAL



SYMBOL OF CHAUNTEA



SYMBOL OF CYRIC

THE EARTHMOOTHER

The druids of the Moonshae Isles worship the Earthmother, she who is the generative power of the land itself. To some mainlanders, the Earthmother is an aspect or manifestation of Chauntea, but to the Ffolk, she is simply the Earthmother, and always will be. The moonwells of the isles are her sacred sites and her windows onto the world. See "Druids" in chapter 4 for more information.

welcomed into all homes at mealtimes and at the birth of children, and folk give her thanks whenever they experience the pleasure of settling by a fire and feeling safe and loved.

Chauntea's faith is one of nurturing and growth. Agricultural aphorisms and farming parables dot her teachings. Growing and reaping, the eternal cycle, is a common theme in the faith. Destruction for its own sake, or leveling without rebuilding, is anathema to her.

Temples of Chauntea maintain a great body of lore about farming and cultivation. Her priests work closely with communities in rural areas, and they are willing to roll up their sleeves and dig their hands into the dirt.

CYRIC

The Prince of Lies, the Dark Sun

The worship of Cyric derives directly from the story of his ascension to godhood. Cyric was a mortal during the Time of Troubles and the key to how that chaotic period resolved, but he was also a selfish traitor and a murderer. When he became a god, Cyric continued to work various plots of deceit and murder—the most famous of which is that, according to legend, Cyric murdered Mystra and thus caused the Spellplague over a century ago.

Those who don't worship Cyric see him as a god of madness, strife, and deceit, although his priests consider such claims to be heresy. Their Prince of Lies isn't a twisted madman, but a god of dark majesty who proves that, ultimately, all bonds between folk corrupt and wither away.

Cyric's church works openly in Amn, where the citizens espouse the principles of ambition, self-reliance, and "buyer beware." Those who take Cyric as their patron tend to be sadists, con artists, power-mad connivers, and worse. Other folk pray to Cyric when they want to do wrong but don't want others to find out about it.

"The Dark Sun," originally one of Cyric's epithets, has become a metaphor for strife in the Realms. "A Dark Sun has risen o'er this court" might be spoken as a

warning that intrigues and infighting have gotten out of hand in a noble household; and married couples know to seek advice from others if "a Dark Sun shines through the window" in their relationship.

DENEIR

The Lord of All Glyphs and Images, the First Scribe, the Scribe of Oghma

Deneir is the god of literature and literacy, the patron of the artist and the scribe. His is the power to accurately render and describe, to write and to read, and to pass on information. In legend, Deneir is often portrayed as being a scribe in service to Oghma, and he is sometimes thought of as Oghma's right hand.

It's common practice for someone who writes a letter or records information to say a prayer to Deneir to avoid mistakes. Similarly, artists acknowledge Deneir before beginning and upon completing paintings, particularly illuminations on manuscripts, tapestries that relate stories, and any such attempt to use art to capture the truth.

Followers of Deneir believe that information not recorded and saved for later use is information lost. They consider literacy an important gift of the gods, one that should be spread and taught. His followers are scribes and scholars devoted, like their patron, to preserving written works, and also to experiencing them, for they say that Deneir himself is hidden within the lines, shapes, and passages of all written works. Priests of Deneir take an oath of charity as well, compelling them to accept the requests of others to write letters and transcribe information.

The god's followers tend to be individualists, united by their shared faith but not overly concerned with religious hierarchy and protocol. This behavior is supported by the fact that Deneir's blessings of divine magic are more often bestowed on those who lose themselves in written works than on those who fancy themselves part of any temple or religious order. Contemplation of the faith's most holy book, the *Tome of Universal Harmony*, is the most effective way to become deserving of Deneir's blessings.



SYMBOL OF DENEIR

ELDATH

The Quiet One, the Guardian of Groves, the Mother of the Waters

Eldath is the goddess of waterfalls, springs, pools, stillness, peace, and quiet glades. She is thought to be present at many such places, particularly those that serve as druid groves. Eldath is a goddess of comfort, healing, and calm. Her blessed waters heal the sick, cure madness, and comfort the dying.

Most rural places have a pond or a glade that locals ascribe to Eldath. Tradition dictates that it be a place of quiet reflection where others are left to their thoughts. A body of water such as a pond or a spring typically serves as a repository of offerings. If the holy site is a glade, a stream one crosses along the way might serve as the repository, or a prominent bush or tree in the glade might be the place where people tie offerings. Typical offerings are broken weapons or items that are remembrances of arguments, which the faithful discard while making a wish for peace in the future. Many of those who favor Eldath are pacifists or people who are troubled by violence they have witnessed or experienced.

Eldath's priests don't organize into large sects. Indeed, many are itinerant, wandering between various holy sites and shrines, seeing that the locations are cared for and that they remain places of sweet serenity. The faithful of Eldath are usually close to nature, and allied to druids, who count Eldath among the First Circle. It is taboo to strike a priest of Eldath, and killing one is said to bring great misfortune. Despite the measure of protection that this belief affords them, most priests of Eldath avoid conflicts rather than attempting to quell them. Those who serve Eldath are happy to preside over peaceful negotiations and to certify treaties, but they can't force others to engage in harmony.

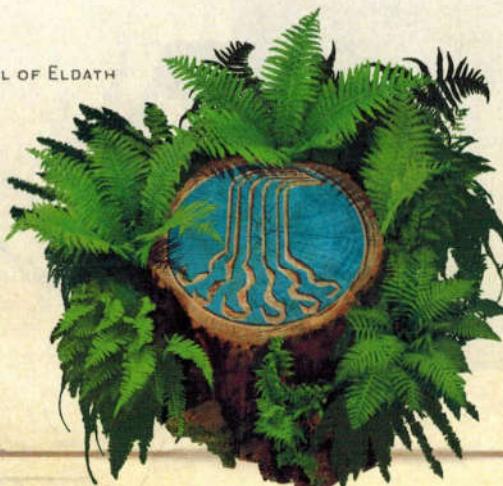
GOND

The Wonderbringer, the Inspiration Divine, the Holy Maker of All Things

Gond is the god of artifice, craft, and construction. He is revered by blacksmiths, woodworkers, engineers, and inventors. Anyone who is crafting something might say a prayer to Gond to guide the work, but folk know that Gond smiles most brightly upon new inventions that others find useful.

Priests of Gond wander the North dressed in saffron vestments, adorned with sashes that contain within

SYMBOL OF ELDATH



their folds gears, locks, hooks, and bits of steel, tin, and wood that might prove useful in a pinch. They also wear belts of large, linked metal medallions and enormous sun hats. A traveling priest of Gond offers services to distant villages as a tinker, a carpenter, and a civil engineer rolled into one, ready to help build a better paddock gate, dig a new well, or mend pots or furniture that might otherwise go to waste. All priests of Gond keep journals in which they record ideas, inventions, and innovations discovered in their travels, and take great delight in meeting fellow priests and sharing their finds. In large cities, the Gondar construct temples that serve as great workshops and inventors' labs. Wandering priests turn their journals over to the resident scribes at such temples, who then record the priests' observations for posterity and the benefit of all.

Most who favor Gond practice time-honored crafting professions: they are smiths and engineers, architects and weavers, leatherworkers and jewelers. Even so, this faith has a well-earned reputation as a haven for crackpot inventors and visionaries.

The center of Gond's worship on the Sword Coast lies in Baldur's Gate, where the faithful have erected two huge structures in honor of the Wonderbringer: a temple called the High House of Wonders and a museum of craft and design called the Hall of Wonders. Lantan had been the preeminent place of Gond's worship in the world until a century ago, when the island nation disappeared, and since its return the few Lantanese merchants seen in Sword Coast ports have said little about the present state of their homeland.

GWAERON WINDSTROM

The Mouth of Mielikki, the Master Tracker, the Tracker Never Led Astray

Few aside from rangers of the North pray to Gwaeron Windstrom. Said to have been a mortal man elevated to godhood by Mielikki, Gwaeron serves rangers as their intercessor with Mielikki. He is seen as a master ranger, the perfect tracker, a peerless animal handler, and a dedicated foe of rapacious creatures such as trolls and orcs. He is said to look like an old man with a long white beard who is still hale and mighty, and he is believed to take rest and sleep in a stand of trees near Tribhaar.

Rangers pray to Gwaeron because he represents much of the work they do, and because he can speak to Mielikki on their behalf. In the North, most rangers view Mielikki as too mysterious, holy, and wild to be



SYMBOL OF GOND



SYMBOL OF HELM

addressed directly with their requests, but they consider Gwaeron Windstrom to be one of them and thus understanding of their needs.

Gwaeron has no temples, but shrines dedicated to him can be found in many places that serve wilderness wanderers as trail markers. Each one is denoted by a carving of Gwaeron's symbol, a paw print with a star on the palm, on a prominent tree or stone.

HELM

The Watcher, He of the Unsleeping Eyes, the Vigilant One

The god of vigilance and protection, Helm is seen as the epitome of the guardian, the watcher, and the guard. He is venerated by those who need to remain watchful for enemies or danger. Helm is a favorite deity of people who make a living by protecting someone or something, such as bodyguards, members of the city watch, and the guards of a treasury vault.

Helm embodies the spirit of watchfulness without regard to good or evil. In legends, he is honorable and keeps his word to a fault, such as when he guarded the celestial stairways during the Time of Troubles, preventing the gods from ascending them and continuing the chaos of that period, until the Tablets of Fate were found.

Although his faith has known dark days, worship of Helm never truly faded away. Most of his followers believe that the Watcher can never be vanquished utterly, and recent events have borne out that assertion.

Helm's priests teach that one must be ever vigilant, ever aware, ever prepared for one's enemies. Patience, clear thought, and careful planning will always defeat rushed actions in the end. Those who favor Helm strive to be alert, clear-headed, and true to their word. These traits don't necessarily make them nice people, however, and as such many consider the faithful of Helm to be inflexible and merciless.

HOAR

The Doombringer, Poet of Justice

Hoar, known in the lands along the Inner Sea as Assuran, is a god of revenge and retribution. He isn't typically worshiped habitually, but his name is invoked by those who seek vengeance. When a guilty party falls prey to fate—such as when a murderer escapes prosecution, but is then accidentally slain himself—the hand of Hoar

SYMBOL OF HOAR



is given credit. When one hears three rolls of thunder in succession, it is thought to be a sign from Hoar that some act of vengeance has been performed. Many human societies have the custom of ringing a bell or a gong three times when judgment of a crime is rendered or an execution takes place.

Folk speak Hoar's name when they want revenge, particularly when they are incapable of avenging themselves. This invocation might be in response to a petty slight or a true injustice, and the acknowledgment of Hoar might be a short prayer said aloud or might be written down somewhere. It's generally believed that the more permanent the form of the prayer, the more likely it is to be fulfilled. For this reason, some etch their prayers in lead and bury it or hide their prayers inside diaries. Aside from bounty hunters and those on crusades of vengeance, few truly revere Hoar, and he is served by fewer still who would call themselves priests. Temples or shrines of Hoar are almost nonexistent except for ancient sites in Chessenta and Unther.

Hoar became a member of the Faerûnian pantheon when his worship extended beyond the lands that originally revered him. Most consider Tyr to be the arbiter of laws, and Hoar to be the god who metes out punishment that comes as a result of breaking those codes. A judge might favor the worship of Tyr, while a jailor or a headsman is more likely to pray to Hoar.

ILMATER

The Crying God, the Rack-Broken Lord, He Who Endures

Ilmater is the god of suffering, martyrdom, and perseverance, renowned for his compassion and endurance. It is he who offers succor and calming words to those who are in pain, victimized, or in great need. He is the willing sufferer, the one who takes the place of another to heft the other's burden, to take the other's pain. He is the god of the oppressed and the unjustly treated.

It is said that if he had his way, the Crying God would take all the suffering in the world onto himself, so as to spare others. Since he can't, he blesses those who endure on others' behalf, and he alleviates suffering when he can. Martyrs who die that others may live are always blessed by Ilmater with a final rest and reward in the god's afterlife, should they so choose.

Ilmater's priests take in the ill, the starving, and the injured, and his temples give most of what they receive to help offset the suffering of the world. His followers

provide succor when they can, but also use force to put an end to torture and suffering inflicted on others. Ilmater's priests travel to places where the worst possible conditions exist, ministering to the needs of the oppressed, the deceased, and the poor. They put others ahead of themselves, are sharing of all they have, and emphasize the spiritual nature of life over the welfare of the material body.

Priests of Ilmater who are on a quest to aid others can be recognized by their hair shirts, vests of coarse fur worn against the bare skin. It is taboo to harm such priests as they go about their duties, such as when they administer to the wounded on a battlefield. The taboo is so strongly felt among humans that other races respect the custom. Even orcs and goblinoids will avoid directly attacking a peaceful priest of Ilmater, as long as the priest administers to their fallen warriors as well.

Most folk deeply respect the work and the sacrifice of Ilmater's faith, and lend aid to such endeavors where they can. When a temple of Ilmater sends its faithful to help refugees of war or victims of plague, their willingness to sacrifice their own well-being always prompts ordinary people to support them, whether they are inspired or shamed into action.

JERGAL

The Final Scribe, the Pitiless One, the Bleak Seneschal

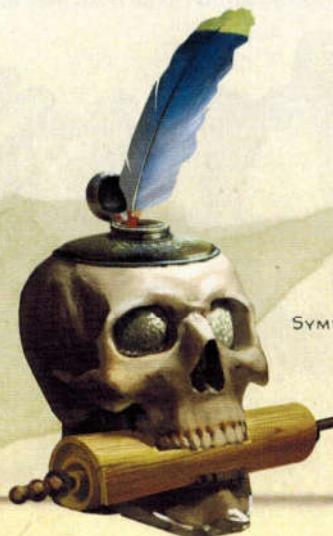
Legend has it that Jergal is an ancient deity. The story goes that in the time of Netheril he was worshiped as the god of death, murder, and strife. Yet with the passing of time, he became bored with his position. Then one day three mortals, each a powerful adventurer, met Jergal in the lands of the dead, determined to destroy him and take his power. Instead, Jergal calmly abdicated his throne of bones and allowed each of the three mortals to take part of his divinity. Thus it was that Bane assumed the portfolio of strife, Myrkul the rulership of the dead, and Bhaal the portfolio of murder. Jergal lost his former stature and became a scribe of the dead.

Jergal is now seen as an uncaring custodian of the dead. He is thought to record the passing of the living and to aid Kelemvor in seeing that souls are properly bound to their appropriate afterlife. He is rarely acknowledged directly, except for being mentioned at funerals and among those who practice the custom of writing the name of the deceased on a sheet of parchment and placing it in the corpse's mouth. This rite is

SYMBOL OF ILMATER



SYMBOL OF JERGAL



THE LEGEND OF KNUCKLEBONES, SKULL BOWLING, AND THE EMPTY THRONE

Long ago there was but one god of strife, death, and the dead, and he was known as Jergal, Lord of the End of Everything. Jergal fomented and fed on the discord among mortals and deific entities alike. When beings slew each other in their quest for power or in their hatred, he welcomed them into his shadowy kingdom of eternal gloom. As all things died, everything came to him eventually, and over time he built a kingdom unchallenged by any other god. But he grew tired of his duties, for he knew them too well, and without challenge there is nothing—and in nothingness there is only gloom. In such a state, the difference between absolute power and absolute powerlessness is undetectable.

During this dark era arose three powerful mortals—Bane, Bhaal, and Myrkul—who lusted after the power Jergal possessed. The trio forged an unholy pact that they would gain such ultimate power or die in the attempt. Over the length and breadth of the world they strode, seeking powerful magic and spells and defying death at every turn. No matter what monster they confronted or what spells they braved, the three mortals emerged unscathed at every turn. Eventually, the trio journeyed into the Gray Waste and sought out the Castle of Bone. Through armies of skeletons, legions of zombies, hordes of wraiths, and a gauntlet of liches they battled. Eventually they reached the object of their lifelong quest—the Bone Throne.

"I claim this throne of evil," Bane the tyrant shouted to Jergal.

"I'll destroy you before you can raise a finger," threatened Bhaal the assassin.

"And I shall imprison your essence for eternity," promised Myrkul the necromancer.

Jergal arose from his throne with a weary expression and said, "The throne is yours. I have grown weary of this empty power. Take it if you wish—I promise to serve and guide you as your seneschal until you grow comfortable with the position." Then, before the stunned trio could react, the Lord of the Dead asked, "Who among you shall rule?"

The trio immediately fell to fighting among themselves while Jergal looked on with indifference. When eventually it appeared that either they would all die of exhaustion or

battle on for an eternity, the Lord of the End of Everything intervened.

"After all you have sacrificed, would you come away with nothing? Why don't you divide the portfolios of the office by engaging in a game of skill for them?" asked Jergal.

Bane, Bhaal, and Myrkul considered the god's offer and agreed to it. So Jergal took the skulls of his three most powerful liches and gave them to the trio so they could compete in skull bowling. Each mortal rolled a skull across the Gray Waste, having agreed that the winner would be he who bowled the farthest.

Malar the Beastlord arrived to visit Jergal at this moment. After quickly ascertaining that the winner of the contest would receive all of Jergal's power, he chased off after the three skulls to make sure that the contest would be halted until he had a chance to participate for part of the prize. Bane, Bhaal, and Myrkul again fell to fighting, as it was obvious their sport had been ruined, but again Jergal intervened. "Why don't you allow Lady Luck to decide, so you don't have to share with the Beast?"

The trio agreed to this alternative, and Jergal broke off his skeletal finger bones and gave them to the contestants. When Malar returned from chasing the skulls, he found that the trio had just finished a game of knucklebones.

Bane cried out triumphantly, "As winner, I choose to rule for all eternity as the ultimate tyrant. I can induce hatred and strife at my whim, and all will bow down before me while in my kingdom."

Myrkul, who had won second place, declared, "But I choose the dead, and by doing so I truly win, because all that you are lord over, Bane, will eventually be mine. All things must die—even gods."

Bhaal, who finished third, proclaimed, "I choose death, and it is by my hand that all that you rule, Lord Bane, will eventually pass to Lord Myrkul. Both of you must pay honor to me and obey my wishes, since I can destroy your kingdom, Bane, by murdering your subjects, and I can starve your kingdom, Myrkul, by staying my hand."

Malar growled in frustration, but could do nothing, and so yet again only the beasts were left for him.

And Jergal merely smiled, for he had been delivered.

common in places where an individual's grave or tomb isn't marked with the person's name.

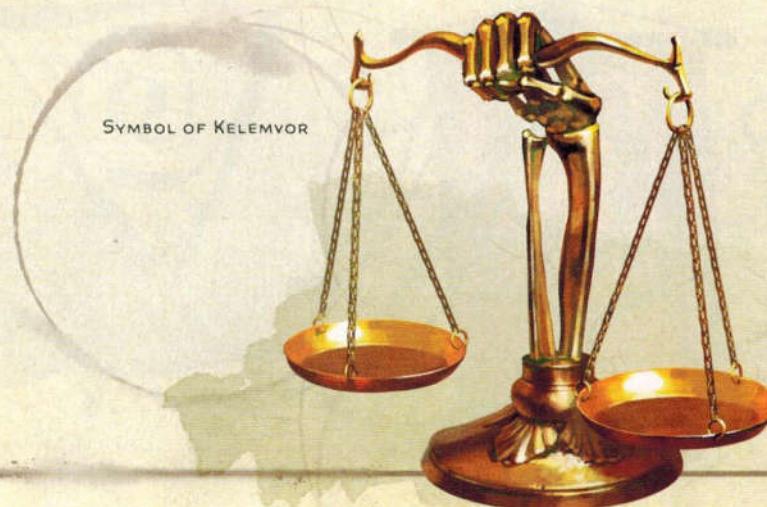
Few people favor Jergal as a deity, and most who do are concerned with the dispensation of the dead in some way. Priests of Jergal serve communities as undertakers and caretakers of gravesites. Jergal has no temples dedicated to him aside from abandoned places devoted to his old, darker incarnation, but his priests are welcome in the temples of Kelemvor, Deneir, and Myrkul. His

faithful send their annual recordings of mortality to holy sites where records of that sort are kept.

KELEMVOR

The Lord of the Dead, the Judge of the Damned

Kelemvor is seen as a just, fair, and comforting god of death. Death comes to all, and when it occurs Kelemvor is there to take each soul by the hand and lead it to the



proper afterlife. Kelemvor's priests teach that those who revere the gods according to the rites of their religion have done their proper service and will be offered the afterlife they seek.

The faithful of Kelemvor provide people with peaceful transitions into the care of the Lord of the Dead. They help the dying put their affairs in order, and they officiate at funeral rites for those who can't afford the lavish ceremonies of their faith. The tenets of Kelemvor's faithful compel them to forestall or prevent untimely deaths whenever possible. Different sects and worshippers define "untimely" in different ways. One group might concentrate on stopping the spread of disease, another on the prevention of murder, and yet another on eliminating the scourge of the undead. In fact, all the faithful of Kelemvor despise the undead and work to some degree to eliminate them, for undead of any sort are seen as an abomination of the natural order. This belief obviously puts Kelemvor's faithful at odds with necromancers, priests of Myrkul, and others who promote the creation of the undead, and it also causes conflict from unexpected sources. For instance, priests of Kelemvor routinely destroy any writings about the creation of the undead that they find—an act that offends those who value knowledge for its own sake, such as the faithful of Oghma and Deneir. And there also exist undead that aren't evil, such as the baelnorn, which the elves consider holy. Kelemvor's devotees seek the end of such beings regardless of that fact.

LATHANDER

The Morninglord, Inspiration's Dawn, the Rose-and-Gold God

Lathander is the god of the spring, birth, and renewal, a deity of conception, vitality, youth, renewal, and self-perfection. He is god not of the sun but of the dawn, which represents the start of a new day filled with potential.

Lathander is a god of beginnings. People commonly offer a prayer to him before undertaking any journey or endeavor. Lathander's name is invoked to seal alliances and christen new ventures or companies. As a result, the god is very popular among the merchant classes, and the church has benefited accordingly.

The rising sun is his symbol, and his colors are the rose, gold, and violet of the dawn. Lathander's temples and shrines host a wide range of functions both municipal and personal. At such places folk get married in dawn ceremonies, announce the start of civic projects,

and even give birth when possible, to provide the baby good fortune.

The faithful of Lathander embrace the founding of new communities and the growth of civilization, as long as that civilization gives everyone the potential to succeed. They despise the undead, seeing them as both a corruption of the natural order and a disavowal of new beginnings, because undead cling to their old existence rather than moving on.

LEIRA

The Lady of the Mists, Mistshadow, the Lady of Deception

Leira has worn many masks, and more than once has been thought to be dead or to be another deity altogether. Perhaps such a reputation is only natural for the goddess of illusion and deception. Her faithful agree that whatever the "truth" might be, their Lady takes great delight in the confusion sown by her various incarnations. Even the faithful of Cyric once taught that their god killed Leira, but now they espouse the strange idea that somehow she is his daughter.

Leira isn't viewed as malicious or as a trickster but is seen as enigmatic, quiet, and retiring. She is credited with inventing Ruathlek, the language of illusionists and the spoken tongue of Nimbral.

The faithful of Leira seem to be scarce, although it is difficult to know this for certain, because those who favor her rarely make their inclinations known. Leira is the patron of illusionists and liars. She receives little regular worship except from illusionists, who pray to the Mistshadow for potency in their magic, and con artists, for whom she is a kind of champion. Most people pray to her when they hope to keep something secret, or placate her with a prayer before making an important decision when they fear being deceived. Some folk perform a swirling motion with a finger behind their backs when telling a lie as a way of beseeching her for aid.

Her priests wear vestments of white and mist-gray, and their faces are covered by smooth, featureless masks. Only in Nimbral do temples to Leira exist, and shrines dedicated to her found across the continent are usually disguised as other kinds of sites, marked with signs that only the faithful would recognize.

SYMBOL OF LATHANDER



SYMBOL OF LEIRA



LLIIRA

Our Lady of Joy, Joybringer, the Mistress of Revels

Lliira is a beloved goddess, a deity of contentment, release, joy, happiness, dance, and freedom. As the patron of festivals, she is honored at any celebration, and dance is the primary way to worship her. The Mistress of Revels is said to abhor violence, and any fighting or drawing of weapons (except in ceremony) at a celebration will cause her to withhold her favor. Her priests and priestesses, known as joybringers, take it as their mission to make other people happy, even if just for a moment.

Her faithful always wear at least one clothing item of a bright, cheerful color, and her priests' vestments have more in common with festival attire than with somber ecclesial garments. Rubies and sapphires are sacred to Our Lady of Joy, and her priests bless anyone they see wearing such adornments.

Lliira's followers aren't frivolous, however. To them, divine joy is a very real gift to the world of mortals, and one much needed. To that end, they fight those who would bring misery to others. They are fierce against their foes, and joyous revelers when their work is done.

LOVIATAR

The Maiden of Pain, the Scourge Mistress, the Willing Whip

Pain isn't a means to an end for Loviatar's faithful, but an end unto itself. To them, nothing is as transcendent as suffering, and all pain is holy, from the crudest barbarism, to the most sublime torture, to the emotional suffering of the heartbroken or the betrayed.

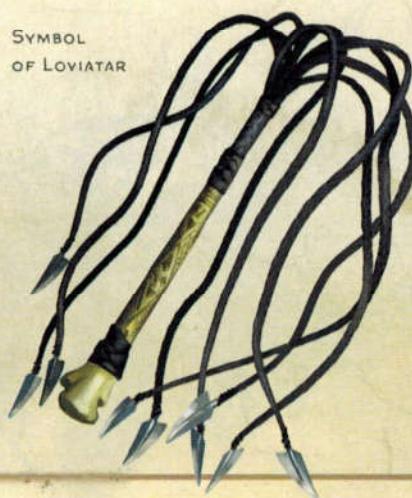
The pain that one feels is proof of the Lady's attention, and so her faithful are notorious self-flagellants. Pain is also a path to power, in terms of both one's ability to inflict it and one's ability to endure it. A cold, cruel demeanor is considered ideal because it best emulates the Scourge Mistress, and for the same reason her faithful appreciate beauty, cultural refinement, and a certain adeptness at manipulation.

Though temples to Loviatar are rare, her faithful are more numerous than might be expected. Loviatar is the chosen deity of those who inflict pain as a matter of course, including torturers and others who need to break the will of their victims. She is favored by sadists and masochists, and some of her followers form cultish cells of secret adherents. Each of these groups is led by someone who takes pleasure in administering pain and



SYMBOL OF LLIIRA

SYMBOL
OF LOVIATAR



SYMBOL OF MALAR

dominating others, supported and backed up by a number of submissive sycophants.

Worshipers of Loviatar rarely gather in numbers except in the more populous cities. When small cadres of faithful operate quietly in such places, few citizens take notice or raise a fuss if they do witness cult activity. The sufferers who endure the lash, however, aren't always willing participants, and Loviatar's cults sometimes operate secret slavery rings, which can draw the attention of the authorities. The open worship of Loviatar and temples clearly dedicated to her are rarely seen except in lands where slavery is an accepted practice.

MALAR

The Beastlord, the Black-Blooded One

Malar epitomizes the dark side of nature, the world that is red in tooth and claw. His faithful believe the hunt is the center point between life and death—the facing off of hunter and prey, forcing the issue of who lives and who dies. People believe that Malar can't be propitiated and knows no mercy, so he receives prayers only from those engaging in a hunt. Such supplicants pray to Malar for two reasons: to beg the aid of his peerless skill as a hunter, or to adopt his fearsome mantle and thus ward off other predators. Malar is the god of those who delight in the hunt, don't shy from bloodshed, and savor the fear of their prey.

Many lycanthropes consider Malar to be their divine father, as do some other intelligent predators. He has many devotees who are druids and rangers of particularly savage inclination, and many barbarians take Malar as a patron for his ferocity and cruelty. His priests use claw bracers, impressive gauntlets bedecked with stylized claws that jut out from the ends of the fists, as ceremonial weapons.

MASK

The Lord of Shadows, the Master of All Thieves

Mask is a trickster god, the patron of ne'er-do-wells, spies, and thieves. All that occurs within shadow is in the purview of Mask. People whisper a prayer to Mask whenever stealth is required or intrigue is afoot. Courtiers and diplomats invoke the god's name in hopes of a smooth negotiation.

Those who favor Mask usually pursue thievery and other forms of acquisition of what belongs to others, such as pickpocketing, burglary, mugging, and con

games. Ordinary folk pray to him to avert his eyes from their valuables, but the cautious sometimes employ "Mask's purse," a small, cheap cloth pouch worn in plain sight (thus easily cut or lifted) containing a small offering of coin. By convention, a pickpocket pilfers Mask's purse when encountering another person wearing one, and considers the gain a gift from the god, while the one who lost the purse is grateful to the Lord of Shadows for accepting a respectful sacrifice of a small portion of his goods. Of course, nothing prevents another pickpocket from targeting someone who has lost Mask's purse, but anyone with the ill luck to attract multiple pickpockets in a single outing has probably earned Mask's ire anyway.

Priests of Mask are usually thieves by profession, and often serve as higher-ups in the local underworld or criminal syndicate. They go by the title of demarche or demarchess, and wear veil-masks when acting in their priestly capacity.

MIELIKKI

Our Lady of the Forest, the Forest Queen

People rarely speak of Mielikki except in quiet forest spaces. Woodlands that evoke wonder are where she reigns supreme, but she is said to keep watch over good folk in any forest, not matter how dark or cruel. When children are lost in the woods, people beseech Mielikki to protect them until they are found.

Mielikki is the goddess of the forest and the creatures that live within it. She is seen as a remote and spiritual deity—less human-like than many other gods. She's not unmindful of people, but her attention and favor are difficult to attract. She is the patron of rangers in the same way that Milil is the patron of bards, but even rangers rarely pray to her directly. They instead pray to Gwaeron Windstrom, who they believe will carry their words to the goddess by tracking her to whichever forest she hides in.

Mielikki's symbol is a unicorn, which prompts some to think of her as such and conflate her with Lurue, Queen of the Unicorns and the actual goddess of their kind. But most tales depict Mielikki as a beautiful woman whom Lurue allows upon her back as a rider, and the two are thought to be boon companions. Mielikki's relationships with other deities of the natural world are more complex. Silvanus is sometimes thought of as her father and Eldath is considered her sister, but Mielikki walks her own path through the wilds.



She has many shrines, particularly in the Savage Frontier. Most consist of a dead tree trunk into which has been carved a likeness of her holy symbol, a unicorn's head. Alternatively, the likeness might be carved on a separate piece of wood and tacked to a living tree. These shrines typically mark the point in a forest beyond which locals know not to cut timber or hunt. Often these tributes are created by loggers at the end of a logging excursion as a mark of thanks to the goddess for providing the wood and for keeping the timber cutters safe during the work.

MILIL

The Lord of Song, the One True Hand of All-Wise Oghma

Milil is the god of poetry, eloquence, and song. He is a god of creativity and inspiration, of the entire song more than just the lyrics or the music. He represents the finished thought, the result of the process that takes an idea from conception to realization. Milil is most venerated by bards, troubadours, and other entertainers, but anyone preparing to entertain or speak before a crowd might offer Milil a brief prayer for a successful performance. Those who seek inspiration in a creative endeavor also pray to Milil.

His icons depict him as a handsome male, sometimes a human, sometimes an elf, and even a half-elf in places (such as Aglarond) that have a large half-elf population. He is variously depicted as young or old, but his identity is always apparent because of his five-stringed harp made of silvery leaves, which he carries constantly. He is the ideal to which all performers aspire: poised and confident, winningly charismatic, and a source of inspiration for those who listen to him. He is said to have total recall of anything he hears or that is spoken while music plays, as well as utmost skill at improvisation.

Holy sites dedicated to Milil are often found in performance venues and schools of music. Whether the site is a vast concert hall or a small choral chamber, it must have excellent acoustic qualities. Milil's priests are patrons of the arts in addition to being performers themselves, and they frequently act as tutors in the arts of performance at his shrines and temples.

Like Deneir, Milil is sometimes thought of as being in service to Oghma. In these portrayals of the deity, Milil is the god's left hand, also referred to as the One True Hand. This expression isn't meant to denigrate the right hand (Deneir); rather, it stems from the fact

that left-handedness is more often associated with great artistic ability and the belief that the greatest art comes from the acceptance of truth.

MYRKUL

The Lord of Bones, Old Lord Skull, the Reaper

Myrkul is an ancient god, one of three former mortals who were raised to deityhood when Jergal grew weary of his divine duties and distributed his influence between them. Myrkul became the god of death and the dead, and ruled over the City of the Dead for centuries until he, in turn, was slain. In time Myrkul returned, for can death itself truly ever die? Myrkul's faithful see him as the Reaper, who lays claim to souls and brings them to Kelemvor to be judged.

Myrkul is a deity of death, decay, old age, exhaustion, dusk, and autumn. He's the god of the ending of things and hopelessness, as much as Lathander is the god of beginnings and hope. Folk don't pray to Myrkul so much as dread him and blame him for aching bones and fading vision. Myrkul is thought to be passionless and uncaring even of his most devout worshipers. Those who take Myrkul as a patron tend to be morose, taciturn, and obsessed with the dead and the undead. Like many followers of Kelemvor and Jergal, priests of Myrkul serve as undertakers and typically keep their patron's identity secret.

Shrines to Myrkul or engravings of his holy symbol appear in many places where humans bury their dead, but full-fledged temples are rare. The few that exist are hallowed places where the dead from hundreds of miles around are brought for internment, even if they were not of Myrkul's faith. There is little space set aside for the living in such a location, usually a single modest shrine, but its catacombs and ossuaries are vast. In the deepest chamber of each temple rests a throne, and upon that throne sits the doomwarden—the preserved corpse of the most revered saint in the history of the temple (often its founder). Initiates to the faith are brought to kneel before a temple's doomwarden, where they must spend a night and a day fasting and meditating in complete darkness.

MYSTRA

The Lady of Mysteries, Our Lady of Spells, the Mother of All Magic

Mystra is the goddess of magic, and with that the goddess of possibilities. She is venerated by mages and by

those who use magic or magical objects in their daily lives. She also receives the prayers of those who find magic wondrous or encounter magic they fear. Mystra is the goddess of the essential force that makes all spell-casting possible. She provides and tends the Weave, the conduit through which mortal spellcasters and magical crafters can safely access the raw force of magic.

The faith of Mystra is pervasive in Faerûn, which is to be expected for a land as touched by magic as it is. Her worshipers include those who use magic or work closely with it, such as alchemists and sages. The blue-clad priests of Mystran temples count wizards and sorcerers among their numbers, as well as the occasional bard. The goal of Mystra's faithful is simple: that magic be preserved and promulgated throughout the Realms. It isn't unusual for her followers to keep an eye out for those who demonstrate high potential for using magic and help arrange for such persons to find tutelage with a suitable mentor.

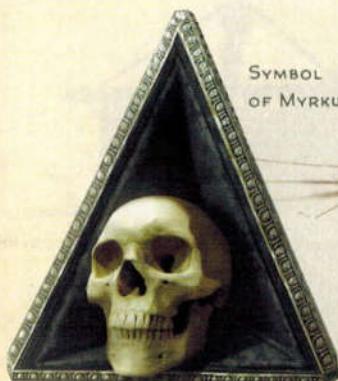
OGHMA

The Binder, the Lord of Knowledge

Oghma is the god of inspiration, invention, and knowledge. Above all else, Oghma represents knowledge in its most supreme, raw form—the idea. An aphorism cited by his faithful about this concept serves them as a prayer when it is repeated aloud: "An idea has no heft but it can move mountains. An idea has no authority but it can dominate people. An idea has no strength but it can push aside empires. Knowledge is the greatest tool of the mortal mind, outweighing anything made by mortal hands. Before anything else can exist, the idea must exist."

Oghma's faithful spread knowledge and literacy as widely as possible, believing that minds ought never to be shackled by ignorance and thus not be able to bequeath the benefit they might otherwise provide their fellows. Not surprisingly, those who follow Oghma oppose those who foster deceit, trickery, and ignorance.

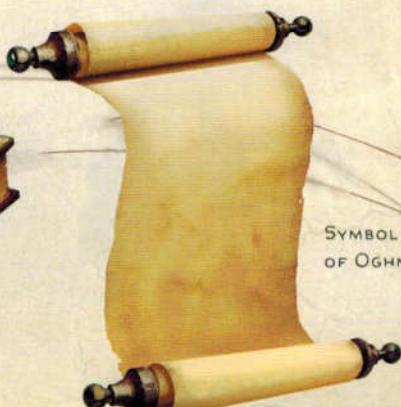
Folk of many professions favor the Binder: wizards, cartographers, artists, bards, clerks, inventors, sages, scribes, and all manner of others who uncover, preserve, and create knowledge and learning. The worship of Oghma was, at one point, one of the few organized faiths in Faerûn that had an established orthodoxy and a complete network of temples that adhered to that orthodoxy. Schisms during the Time of Troubles shattered that network, and now the structures that house the



SYMBOL
OF MYRKUL



SYMBOL OF MYSTRA



SYMBOL
OF OGhma

faith are individual temples or small networks of allied temples, much in the manner of other faiths.

THE RED KNIGHT

The Lady of Strategy, the Crimson General, the Grandmaster of the Lanceboard

The Red Knight is the goddess of planning and strategy. Those who favor her call themselves the Red Fellowship. They believe wars are won by the best planning, strategy, and tactics. The worship of the Red Knight is filled with doctrine about strategy, such as: "Every war is a series of battles. Losing one doesn't mean losing the war." "In war, plan for peace. In peace, plan for war." "Seek allies among your enemy's enemies."

Worship of the Red Knight arose among a hero-venerating monastic order of Tempus in Tethyr shortly after the Time of Troubles. The Red Knight has since grown in popularity because of what her followers call the Great Stratagem: for decades, her priests have been traveling to places of warfare to educate generals and kings in the arts of strategy and battlefield tactics. Many of the leaders they approached turned them away at first, but it soon became apparent that those who accepted the counsel of the Crimson General's followers gained a distinct benefit. Grateful victors built temples to the Lady of Strategy, and gradually her faith spread.

Today, followers of the Red Knight can be found in nearly any land that has seen warfare in the past century. Worshipers of the Red Knight are rare in the general population, but those who revere her can frequently be found among high-ranking commanders of armies, instructors in colleges of war, quartermasters, and the authors of tomes of strategy. Each temple to the Red Knight includes an altar dedicated to Tempus, and so such a place is likely to be frequented by mercenaries and soldiers. A temple is surrounded by a vast pavilion and courtyard, which can be rented by companies of soldiers and mercenaries for practice and training. Her priests believe that drilling one's troops in a temple courtyard is a form of propitiation that the Red Knight looks upon with special favor.

SAVRAS

The All-Seeing, the Third Eye, Divination's Lord

Savrás is a god of divination and fortunetelling. Few people worship him, but many pray to him when performing small rituals of foresight. For example, young

men and women sometimes attempt to divine the names of their future spouses by saying a rhyming chant that calls upon Savras while gazing in a mirror.

Savrás has no currently active temples in Faerûn, and his shrines are few and far between, tucked away in the corners of libraries and scriptoria. Despite this lack of prominence, certain folk pay regular homage to Savras, including investigators, diviners, judges, and others who have a need to uncover the truth. Such individuals can sometimes be identified by the elaborate staffs they carry in homage to Savras. According to legend, Savras was trapped in Azuth's staff for ages. Azuth eventually freed Savras so long as Savras swore fealty, and today the staff is a potent symbol for those who revere Savras. Devout worshipers take great pains to decorate and embellish their staffs, each hoping that Savras might find it a welcoming place to stop for a time.

SELÛNE

Our Lady of Silver, the Moonmaiden, the Night White Lady

Selûne is thought to be among the most ancient of Faerûn's deities. Most humans in Faerûn consider the moon in the sky to literally be the goddess gazing down on the world, and the trailing motes of light behind it her tears. She is also a goddess of stars and navigation as well as motherhood and reproductive cycles. She is seen as a calm power, frequently venerated by female humans as well as by a mix of other folk: navigators and sailors, those who work honestly at night, those seeking protection in the dark, the lost, and the questing.

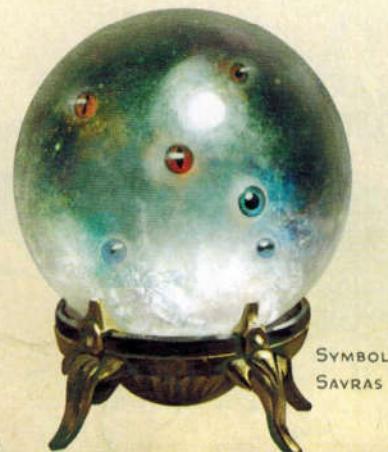
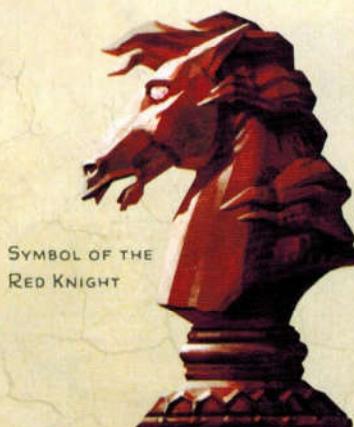
There are many legends about Selûne, chief among them being the tale of the battle at the beginning of time between Selûne and her sister, Shar. The Tears of Selûne, the cluster of starry lights that follow the moon around the sky, are thought to be brought about by the goddess's joy, sorrow, or both.

Milk, a symbol of motherhood, is used in many rites performed by the worshipers of Selûne, as are trances and meditation. Those who favor her typically set a bowl of milk outside on each night of the full moon.

SHAR

The Mistress of the Night, the Dark Lady, Our Lady of Loss

The dark twin of Selûne, Shar is the goddess of darkness, both in its physical form and as it exists in the minds and souls of mortals. People worship Shar as



the goddess of night, secrets, loss, and forgetfulness. She represents pains hidden but not forgotten, and vengeances carefully nurtured away from the light. She is said to have the power to make folk forget their pain or become inured to a loss, and many people in distress pray to Shar for such a blessing.

Shar is revered by those who must venture into dark places and so pray to her for protection, such as miners, as well as by those who have fallen into melancholy and despair, who wish to forget something, or who have lost something and wish to recover it. Priests drawn to serve Shar often nurture their own deep wounds or dark secrets, which in their minds makes them best suited to console those who suffer from a similar ill. Throughout the world's history, many followers of Shar have done dark deeds in her name—most notably the shadovar of Netheril, an entire society dedicated to Shar. The tragedies and losses brought about by the fanaticism of her followers have caused many places to outlaw her worship and thus driven most of her priests into secrecy, but such prohibitions only heighten the priests' umbrage at authorities and make the faithful a focal point for rebellion and revenge against whoever rules.

SILVANUS

Oak Father, the Old Oak, Old Father Tree

Silvanus represents the entirety of nature, deserts as well as forests, sharks as much as deer. But folk in the North, who contend with the dangers of forests, mountains, and plains, see Silvanus more as a god of those places. Silvanus is thought of as a grim and severe father figure who metes out flood and drought, fire and ice, and life and death in the wilderness. In legends he often commands other nature deities, dealing out rewards and punishments to them as is fitting.

Nature and its impartial fairness is central to the dogma of Silvanus's faith. His priests seek to know the total situation, to view the macrocosm; their viewpoint isn't confined to one person's or one nation's idea of what is best. The loss of a farming community to goblin raids is a tragedy for some, but the event provides an opportunity for the wilderness to grow up and make the land fertile again, which in turn provides new challenges for those who would return to tame it.

The creed of Silvanus dictates that nature's glory must be preserved not merely because nature is beautiful, but because wild nature is the true state of the world. Its expanses refresh and revitalize the mortal soul, and give

breath to all the world. Many of his faithful oppose the expansion of settlements into wild places, and consider excessive consumption of natural resources to be not only wasteful but blasphemous.

Silvanus often receives veneration from travelers in wild lands, explorers, and residents of rural communities far from the protection of a local lord or a great city. The oak leaf is Silvanus's symbol, and a grove of oak trees within a village or on its outskirts is often dedicated as a shrine to him. In rural places where oak trees don't grow, an oak leaf etched into the bark of another kind of tree signifies a sacred site.

SUNE

Lady Firehair, the Lady of Love, the Princess of Passion

Sune Firehair is a deity of passion and the delights of the senses. She is the goddess of beauty in all its forms—not just pleasing sights, but also enchanting sounds, luxurious tastes and scents, and the exquisite pleasures of the flesh, from a lover's caress to the brush of silk on the skin. Her worshipers seek out these pleasures in life, not out of mere decadence, but because the experience of pleasure is the touch of Sune herself.

The followers of Sune have a reputation as hedonists, and so they are, to a degree. More than that, her priests foster beauty in the world. They do so by creating art, by acting as patrons for promising talents, and by investing in merchants who bring luxuries to far-off places that have never seen satin or tasted a luscious wine.

Her priests consider loveliness to be one of their greatest callings, and all are trained in composure, fashion, and cosmetics. Indeed, so talented are Sune's priests in the creation of beautiful appearances that many take pride in their ability to present themselves as stunningly attractive examples of either gender.

But beauty is more than skin deep, say the Sunites; it issues from the core of one's being and shows one's true face to the world, whether fair or foul. The followers of Sune are believers in romance, true love winning over all, and following one's heart to one's true destination. Fated matches, impossible loves, and ugly ducklings becoming swans are all in the purview of Sune.

Temples dedicated to Sune are common in human lands, and they frequently serve as public baths and places of relaxation. A temple usually features a mirrored and well-lit salon where folks can primp, as well as see others and be seen. Where a temple doesn't exist, or in a large city where the nearest temple might be too

SYMBOL OF SILVANUS



SYMBOL OF SUNE



far to walk to, a small shrine to Sune often stands near a street corner. These sites consist of a mirror hung beneath a small roof where one can say a prayer while checking one's appearance. The spot might feature a shelf or a cupboard holding various perfumes and cosmetics so that those without the funds to purchase such items can still make themselves feel beautiful.

TALONA

Lady of Poison, Mistress of Disease, the Plague-crone

One of the most often beseeched of Faerûn's deities, Talona is the goddess of disease and poison, blamed for everything from common illnesses to crop failure to brackish wells to plague. Depicted in temple iconography as a withered crone with a cup or a vase that holds all the varieties of disease and poison, Talona is a fearsome goddess, and many are the prayers that beg her for protection from illness and poison. Various rituals to placate her involve the use of three drops of blood or three tears—to be dropped into a well that has gone bad, dripped into the handkerchief of someone beset by coughing, dropped into a fire made by burning a withered crop, dripped into the mouth of a plague sufferer, and so on. It's common practice to mark a container of poison with her holy symbol, three droplets in a triangle, and during epidemics folk paint the same image on the homes of the infected.

Though she is often the recipient of prayers, Talona has almost no temples and few cults dedicated to her. A cult or a shrine to her might arise in an area after it suffers from pestilence, when some of those who survived decide to revere her or even become priests.

TALOS

Stormlord, the Destroyer

Talos is the dark side of nature, the uncaring and destructive force that might strike at any time. He is the god of storms, forest fires, earthquakes, tornadoes, and general destruction. He counts the ravager, the raider, the looter, and the brigand among his followers. Those who favor him see life as a succession of random effects in a sea of chaos, so the devout should grab what they can, when they can—for who can say when Talos will strike and send them into the afterlife?

Talos is portrayed as a broad-shouldered, bearded young man with a single good eye, the other covered by a dark patch. He is said to carry a collection of three staffs, made from the first tree cut down in the world,

SYMBOL OF TALONA



the first silver smelted, and the first iron forged. He uses these staffs to raise destructive winds, cause terrible storms, and split the land in acts of rage. The three lightning bolts of his holy symbol represent these staffs, and when he vents his wrath on the world, he is thought to hurl them down from the sky as lightning strikes.

Although Talos is a popular deity, his name is invoked more often out of fear than out of reverence. He does have priests, mostly traveling doomsayers, who warn of disasters to come and accept charity in exchange for blessings of protection. Many of his faithful wear a black eyepatch, even if both eyes are intact.

TEMpus

The Foehammer, the Lord of Battles

Tempus is a war god concerned with brave conduct during war, using force of arms over talk for settling disputes, and encouraging bloodshed. The god of war is random in his favors, meaning that his chaotic nature favors all sides equally. Lord Tempus might be an army's ally one day, and its enemy the next. He might seem to manifest before a battle, appearing to one side or the other. If he is seen riding a white mare (Veiros), then the army will succeed. If he rides a black stallion (Deiros), then defeat is certain. Most often he appears to be riding with one foot in each mount's stirrup, signifying the unpredictable nature of battle. In such visions, Tempus is always a powerfully built warrior dressed for battle in the style of those who envision him.

Tempus's favor might be randomly distributed, but over the centuries his priests have made an effort to spread and enforce a common code of warfare—to make war a thing of rules, respect for reputations, and professional behavior. This code, called Tempus's Honor, has the purpose of making conflicts brief, decisive, and as safe as possible for those not directly involved. The rules in the code include the following: arm anyone who has need of a weapon; disparage no foe; acquit oneself with bravery; train all for battle; and don't engage in feuds. Those who poison wells, taint fields, kill noncombatants, or engage in torture in the name of war are all considered sinners.

Worshippers of Tempus are legion, and his name is often on the lips of soldiers. His priests are tacticians, often skilled in the art of war. Many of his ordained don't serve in temples, but as battlefield chaplains with armies and mercenary companies, encouraging their fellow soldiers with both word and blade. Priests of

SYMBOL OF TALOS



Tempus teach that war conducted properly is fair in that it oppresses all sides equally, and that in any given battle, a mortal might be slain or might become a great leader among his or her companions. Mortals shouldn't fear war but should see it as a natural force, the storm that civilization brings about by its very existence.

TORM

The Loyal Fury, the True, the Hand of Righteousness

Torm is the god of duty and loyalty, revered by those who face danger to bring about a greater good. Those who favor Torm believe that one's salvation can be found through service, that every failure to perform one's duty diminishes Torm, and that every success adds to his luster. Those who take Torm to heart must strive to fulfill his commandment to go out into the world and be an active force for good, to right wrongs, and to help the hopeless. They must strive to maintain peace and order while opposing unjust laws. Followers of Torm stand ever alert against corruption and are expected to strike quickly and hard against any evidence of rot in the hearts of mortals. As the sword arm of justice, Torm's faithful are expected to bring quick deaths to betrayers. Considering these tenets, it should be no surprise that most human paladins have Torm as their patron.

Most temples dedicated to Torm are fortresses built on heights. These structures offer austere quarters for residents and visiting knights, drilling grounds, and stables. White granite, lion statues, and armored figures predominate in the architecture, with the coats of arms of fallen heroes decorating the walls of the great halls.

Torm is seen as the good right hand of Tyr, and a such his symbol is a white gauntlet made for the right hand. It represents Tyr's sword hand, but it is also a symbol of forbearance. Torm is frequently depicted with his right gauntlet extended palm forward, which worshipers call the Hand Resolute. It signifies the principle that the just and true must pause before acting to judge whether their intentions uphold Torm's ideals. Temples, civic structures, and the homes of the faithful are often decorated with images of the Hand Resolute as a constant reminder of this principle.

Worshipers of Torm come from most walks of life, for he welcomes any who seek the best in themselves and others, who uphold his tenets of loyalty, responsibility, duty, and kindness, or who are willing to sacrifice to keep evil from gaining ascendancy in the world. The faithful know that all of them will stumble from time

SYMBOL OF TEMPUS



to time while following in Torm's footsteps, but Torm's priests teach that the shame of a minor fall from grace is far less severe than declining to rise oneself up to Torm's standards.

TYMORA

Lady Luck, Our Smiling Lady

Tymora is the bright-faced goddess of fortune, the one to whom gamblers and game-players pray in Faerûn. Our Smiling Lady is said to love none so much as those who gamble with the utmost skill and daring. Yet she is thought to watch over all who take risks to better their fortunes.

The battle cry of the followers of Tymora is "Fortune favors the bold." Someone might say words to Tymora before any endeavor in which a little good luck would help, but not when an incidence of bad luck might occur. (On such occasions folk pray to Beshaba to spare them from bad luck; praying to both is thought to anger both goddesses.) One common method of divining the future is to toss a coin to a stranger (typically a beggar) and ask if it's heads. If it is, the coin is left with the stranger as payment for Tymora's favor. If it's not, the stranger can choose to keep it (and the bad luck) or return it.

Those who favor Tymora—as distinct from folk who invoke her name by mumbling over the dice—tend to be daring sorts. Adventurers and gamblers make up much of their ranks. They all have the belief that what is good about their lives is the result of having both good luck and the bravery to seek it out. Tymora has worshipers among all sorts of folk: the dashing young noble, the risk-taking merchant, the daydreaming field hand, and the scheming ne'er-do-well.

Priests of Tymora and temples devoted to Lady Luck are scarce, since her faith tends not to stress a need for intermediaries: "Let the lucky man and the Smiling Lady suss it out," as the old saying goes. Shrines to Tymora at gambling parlors aren't unusual, however, and sometimes such establishments attract a priest and effectively become temples.



SYMBOL OF TORM

THE LEGEND OF TYCHE AND HER TWIN DAUGHTERS

Before the Dawn Cataclysm, there was but one goddess of luck, Tyche. Ever flirting with fortune and disaster, Lady Luck bestowed and withdrew her favor at a whim. When her current paramour, Lathander, started a fight among the gods, Tyche kissed the Morninglord with misfortune and wandered off to explore the world.

During her travels, Lady Luck discovered a budding rose of unequaled beauty. Delighted with this fortuitous happenstance, Tyche reached to pluck this delightful token, which she assumed was a peace overture from Lathander, who sought to regain her good graces. Much to her amazement, Lady Luck couldn't pluck the rose from its bush no matter how hard she tried. Frustrated, she cursed the rose with bad luck, and the flower's stem broke in her hands. Tyche put the plucked rose behind her ear and continued on her way. Unknown to Tyche, the rose was a manifestation of Moander, god of corruption and decay. The severed rose stem crept into Tyche's ear and subtly began to rot her from the inside out.

When Tyche returned home, she came across her dear friend, the goddess Selûne, waiting to speak with her. Also waiting for her were Lathander, who wished to regain her affections, and Azuth, who had come to mediate the dispute between the two. Selûne wept great tears as she saw the corruption destroying her friend from within, and before Tyche could discern her intent, Selûne lashed out with a bolt of purifying light. Tyche's rotted core split down the middle and a smaller, brighter version of the goddess of luck stepped out, allowing the goddess of the moon to save that which was good and pure in her friend. However, following this first figure out of the rotten shell was another form stunning to behold, but full of dark malice and capricious ill will. As the two forms emerged, they immediately fell upon each other in hate, struggling madly, and were separated only by the combined efforts of all three visitors.

It is said that Tymora, Tyche's Fair-Haired Daughter, embodies all the grace and kindness of her mother, while Beshaba, Tyche's Unpleasant Daughter, got only her looks. Since their birth, the twin aspects of Tyche—Tymora, Lady Luck, and Beshaba, Maid of Misfortune—have battled each other, contesting matters as great as the fate of nations and as small as the flip of a coin.

TYR

Grimjaws, the Maimed God, the Evenhanded

Tyr Grimjaws, Tyr the Evenhanded, Wounded Tyr, the Maimed God, the Blind, Blind Tyr, the Lord of Justice—all of these names speak to the nature of the Faerûnian god of justice. Tyr appears as a noble warrior missing his right hand, which he lost to Kezef the Chaos Hound in an act of bravery and sacrifice, and with his eyes wrapped in cloth to signify his blindness, caused by a

wound dealt to him by Ao when he questioned the justice of the Overgod's actions.

Tyr's followers devote themselves to the cause of justice, to the righting of wrongs and the deliverance of vengeance. This devotion isn't necessarily concerned with equality or fairness, but rather the discovery of truth and the punishment of the guilty. Those who favor Tyr tend to be stiff-necked about matters of theology and laws, seeing things in terms of black and white. Tyr's credo of lawfulness and honesty is a demanding one, and his priests remind the faithful not to hold in contempt others who can't live by it—it wouldn't be an honorable calling if everyone could muster the strength of will to follow it.

Many orders of knighthood are devoted to Tyr, including the Knights of Holy Judgment and the Knights of the Merciful Sword. Such knights—as well as judges and priests, clerics, and paladins who worship Tyr—sometimes wear thin strips of diaphanous cloth over their eyes to remind others of the blindness of justice.

UMBERLEE

The Bitch Queen, the Queen of the Depths, the Wavemother

No community that lives by the sea can ignore the influence of Umberlee, the furious goddess whose tempestuous nature reflects and is reflected by the waters of the deep. Any such community makes sure to host festivals to propitiate the Wavemother and seek her favor. Although mercurial in temperament, she can be generous to those who do her honor, as is any great queen.

The Bitch Queen is worshiped out of fear instead of adoration, and ship crews offer her gems, tossed over the side, to calm storm-tossed waters. As her most common moniker suggests, she is viewed as capricious and cruel with no firm ethical outlook; the sea is a savage place, and those who travel it had best be willing to pay the price of challenging her domain.

There is little in the way of an organized clergy of Umberlee. Her priests roam coastal cities, warning of doom and demanding free passage on ships in return for ensuring the goddess's pleasure. Often they wear the colors of waves and storms, and they decorate themselves

SYMBOL OF TYR



with items that remind others of the sea's dangerous nature—a necklace of shark teeth, seaweed wrapped about a human bone, and so on. The preserved hand of a drowned person is thought to be a particularly holy object, and some of her few clerics use such severed hands as holy symbols. Umberlee does have a large number of shrines in the coastal cities, and sailors often leave flowers or small candies at them in hopes that she will spare them on their next voyage. Both Waterdeep and Baldur's Gate have true temples dedicated to Umberlee, staffed largely by the widows of sailors lost at sea.

WAUKEEN

Our Lady of Gold, the Coinmaiden, the Merchant's Friend

Waukeen is the goddess of wealth and trade, on both sides of the law. Her most ardent worshipers include shopkeepers, members of trading costers, wealthy merchants, caravan guides, itinerant peddlers, money-changers, and smugglers. She is interested in anything that increases trade and the flow of money, whether new trade routes, new inventions, or the whim of changing fashion. Those who take Waukeen as a patron can be reliably thought of as greedy, but the Coinmaiden is said to frown upon misers and smile upon the industrious and the profligate, and thus priests who bear her holy symbol find themselves welcome in many towns and cities.

Temples of Waukeen resemble guildhalls and often serve as meeting places for trade consortiums. Those who follow Waukeen's ethos seek to create more opportunity for all and see competition for wealth as one of society's main means of progress. Thus, the faithful of Our Lady of Gold often find themselves at odds with trade guilds and others who would form monopolies. It's common practice among those who seek Waukeen's favor to set aside a tithe of ten percent of their profits, but rather than being given to a temple, the money is meant to be spent to help a struggling business, to finance a new endeavor, or, if all else fails, on frivolous fun.



SYMBOL OF UMBERLEE

THE GODS OF MULHORAND

People of Faerûn refer to Mulhorand as one of the Old Empires, but most don't know that Mulhorand is in fact the oldest human empire still in existence on the continent. Mulhorand's pantheon of deities, sometimes called god-kings or pharaohs, can trace their lineage even farther back.

According to the demigods enthroned in Mulhorand, the ancestors of the Mulhorandi people were brought from another world and enslaved by the Imaskari in an ancient empire deep in what is now Raurin, the Dust Desert. When the gods of those ancestors heard the pleas of their distant faithful, they set out in a great celestial ark guided by the entity known as Ptah. Upon arriving in the world, two of the deities, Re and Enlil, set about empowering the slaves and fomenting rebellion.

The revolt succeeded, but Re and Enlil couldn't keep peace with one another. Each then founded a separate dynasty of divine mortals, Re in Mulhorand, and Enlil (father of Gilgeom) in Unther. Re and his related deities ruled Mulhorand through mortal incarnations for thousands of years.

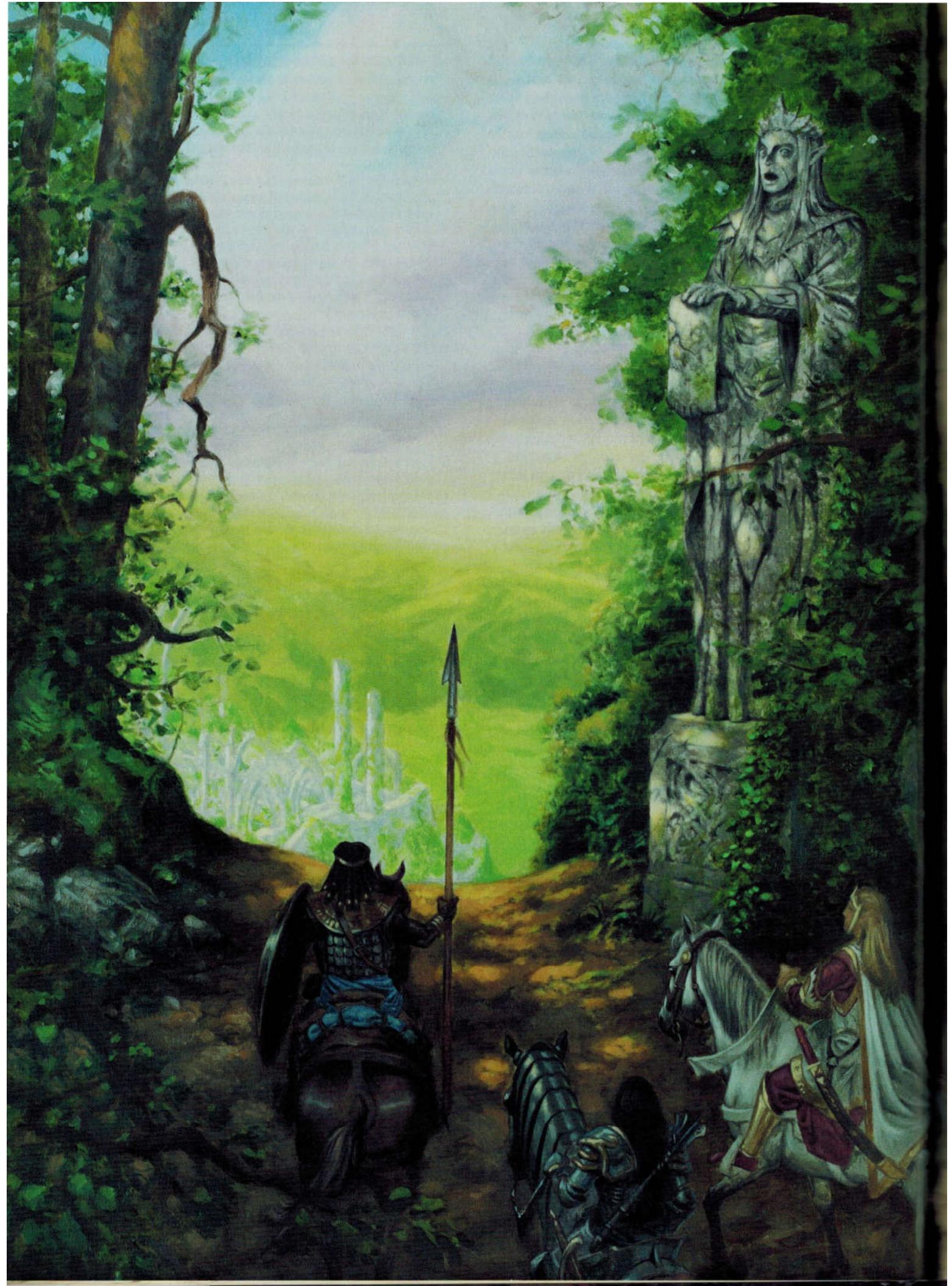
Time took its toll, and the attention the deities of Mulhorand paid to their followers wavered and diminished. Each new incarnation of Isis, Osiris, and Thoth was a little more human and a little less divine. When the magically powerful Imaskari returned with a vengeance a little over a century ago, they stole the scepter of rulership from a grasp so weak it barely had any strength left.

Although Mulhorand's conquerors outlawed slavery in the area they now called High Imaskar, the Mulhorandi people recognized the yoke they now bore. The Imaskari were the new coming of the slavemasters of old, as depicted in the carvings in the pharaohs' tombs. Many prayed that the vanished gods would return and once again free them from Imaskari rule, and during the Sundering, that is what happened. What were referred to as Chosen in other lands were recognized in Mulhorand as living gods, come to lead the Mulhorandi in an uprising.

Today Mulhorand is ruled by demigods that call themselves by such names as Re, Anhur, Horus, Isis, Nephthys, Set, and Thoth. They take different forms, some human and others tieflings or aasimar, but all speak and act like the gods of legend come to life, which they must be. This family of deities bears the scars of all the past loves, rivalries, and wars between them, but for now they have set their differences aside for the betterment of Mulhorand and its people, and the people of Mulhorand love them for it.

SYMBOL OF WAUKEEN





CHAPTER 2: THE SWORD COAST AND THE NORTH

THIS CHAPTER DETAILS MANY OF THE locales of the Sword Coast and the North, as seen through the eyes and recollections of a person living in Faerûn. Rather than being exhaustive descriptions, what follows are snippets of information drawn from the experience of five individuals who have traversed, lived in, and explored these areas. Like any other narrators, they have opinions and biases, and may be drawing conclusions from incomplete information. No one in the Realms knows everything about any subject, even its oldest and most learned sages, and the views formed from such incomplete information can often suggest an inaccurate conclusion. This is not to say that any of the information the narrators provide is false, only that they may not be entirely knowledgeable in their declarations.

The details given here only begin to scratch the surface of the adventuring possibilities in the North. Although some of these locales are virtually unknown to outsiders, entire books longer than this one could be (and have been) written about others. If the descriptions leave you wanting to know more, consider them an inducement for you and your companions to visit these places and experience them firsthand.

Be aware, also, that there is a great deal more to the North than what is presented here. There are ruins without names, and settlements so small as to not even warrant mention in this tome. What lurks in the uncharted areas, waiting to tantalize or perhaps terrorize, is all the more formidable because it can't be anticipated.

THE LORDS' ALLIANCE

FOR A CENTURY AND A HALF, AND MORE, THE LORDS' Alliance has stood as the most important and influential group in the North. Its power has kept towns safe from the predations of larger powers, has kept the ambitions of Luskan in check, and has taught the rulers of many cities that it is better to cooperate, even for a time, than to merely shut one's doors and allow the storms to rage outside. It was this philosophy that led to the founding of Luruar, and when the lesson was lost, so too were the Silver Marches. But it serves no purpose to dwell on the folly of the past. Better instead to look to the future, repair the walls, and wait for word from the watching sentries.

—Andwe Cururen, agent of the Lords' Alliance

The Lords' Alliance isn't a nation unto itself, but a partnership of the rulers of towns and cities across the North, who have pledged peace with one another and promised to share information and effort against common threats such as orc hordes and Northlander pirates. It is a loose confederation of those settlements

and their agents, all of whom owe allegiance first to their homelands, and second to the Lords' Alliance.

In the harsh lands of the North, where winters are cold and monsters and human barbarians regularly stream out of the mountains to pillage outlying settlements, large nations are rare indeed, particularly in the current state of the world. Instead, great city-states have emerged, enriched by trade and protected by stout walls and loyal defenders. Such cities—including Baldur's Gate, Mirabar, Neverwinter, Silverymoon, and Waterdeep—extend their influence into nearby regions, often creating or accepting vassal settlements, but in the end, these realms are cities, driven to consider their own protection and future before other concerns.

In the years soon after its founding more than one hundred fifty years ago, there was more interest in membership, and the Alliance accepted some members from farther south. Since then, events such as the growth of Elturgard into a power in its own right, and the recent fall of the Silver Marches, have caused the group to draw in on itself, restricting its membership to powers in the North. The current members of the Alliance are Amphail, Baldur's Gate, Daggerford, Longsaddle, Mirabar, Mithral Hall, Neverwinter, Silverymoon, Waterdeep, and Yartar. There is some doubt that Mithral Hall will be part of the alliance for much longer, but until rulership of the dwarven city is more firmly established, it remains a member.

It is impossible to ascribe an overall character to the individual members of the alliance. As a group, the agents of the members are interested in the preservation of civilization in the North, and they share what information they can—and oppose what threats they must—to further that goal. In the end, though, a merchant of Waterdeep and one of Baldur's Gate are concerned mainly for their own purses and the welfare of their home cities, and are unlikely to care what happens to the other, except inasmuch as it affects trade.

The advice and insights in this section come from Andwe Cururen, a half-elf native of Silverymoon who was once a Knight in Silver (a member of the city's army), and now serves as an emissary and, when necessary, an active agent for the Lords' Alliance. She travels the North on behalf of the Alliance, representing its interests and gathering and updating information on its settlements for her superiors, fellow agents, and potential recruits, including adventurers who might serve the Alliance or one of its members.

AMPHAIL

Named for its founder, a former warlord of Waterdeep, the small town of Amphail is home to just over seven hundred souls, yet it sought and received membership in the Lords' Alliance just under a century ago, thanks to the maneuverings of the noble families that control its lands. Where once it was simply an example of the extent of Waterdeep's reach, Amphail became the playground of that city's noble families, a place where they can scheme against their rivals and send their

NOTE TO THE DM: MAKING THE REALMS YOURS

The information in this chapter is intentionally nonspecific with respect to threats, monsters, and statistics. While you can use these details to flavor your descriptions of the towns and cities your players might visit, you should in no way consider these pieces of narration definitive. They're meant to provide touchstones, not to constrain your players to a narrow conception of the world.

You might decide to change some of the details, either to surprise your players or to account for events that have transpired since they obtained the information herein.

You're encouraged to take what's presented here and make it, and the Forgotten Realms, your own.

more rambunctious offspring to unleash some of their destructive tendencies without harming the family's reputation in proper society. As a result of being a member of the Lords' Alliance, Amphail is the equal of such great cities as Neverwinter and Baldur's Gate in matters that concern the other powers of the region, despite its clear inferiority in size and strength.

Amphail's sovereignty means that, although patrols from the Waterdeep City Guard sometimes ride north to check on matters in Amphail, the only true authority in the town is the will of the noble families that control it. The primary business of Amphail is horse ranching, and the town is a fine place to find replacement mounts, and all manner of tack, bridle, feed, and other goods necessary to keep up one's horse. Most farms have farriers, or at least hands that can swiftly shoe a horse, and spare shoes all but litter the town.

Visitors to Amphail often get a polite admonishment to "mind the high born" or "ware silver saddles" from the locals, but those who ignore such warnings should expect no help if they get into trouble with the nobility. Amphailans are by their nature suspicious of and quiet around folk who openly display wealth or status, having learned early in their lives that nobles are folk who like to throw their weight around, to the detriment of anyone nearby without enough coin or a grand enough title to stand up to them. I find that these common folk are ideal sources of information about the very people they distrust.

For their part, the young nobles that litter the town seem to make mischief mainly because they can. The feuds and rivalries that would generate only carefully worded insults in the city can escalate into brawls when these miscreants are far from the watchful eyes of their parents. Duels have long been prohibited by mutual agreement, due to the blood feuds they provoked in the past, but hands often drift to sword hilts when heated words are exchanged. Nearly every other sort of noble indiscretion is foisted on the residents of Amphail. Those who suffer property damage or worse at the nobles' hands are forced to forgive the offense in exchange for the application of coin or a promise made in the transgressor's name (suggesting that the youngster's relatives will handle any obligations). Some businesses survive entirely by bringing the comforts of Waterdeep to Amphail, creating gathering places where young nobles can feel at home.

The three greatest families with significant interests in Amphail are Houses Amcathra, Ilzimer, and

Roaringhorn; and most coin and business eventually passes through the hands one of those houses or its intermediaries. When Amphail joined the Lords' Alliance, these three houses were the loudest and most influential voices, and now control the rulership of the town, with the controlling family changing each Shieldmeet. The current Lord Warder is Dauner Ilzimer, who speaks for the town to the Lords' Alliance. House Amcathra has yet to choose its successor for next Shieldmeet. Houses Jhanszil and Tarm have smaller breeding concerns in the area, and House Eagleshields has holdings near Amphail that it uses to continue its long tradition of caring for unhealthy animals from nearby farms, and offers fine tack and other gear for sale.

Among the common folk, the Oglyntyr family has the largest and oldest cattle and horse farm in Amphail, and supplies some of the finest Amphail grays (loyal, intelligent steeds favored as personal mounts) to nobles and travelers in the region. A new family, not noble but possessing much wealth, has purchased the old Baldasker ranch. We suspect that the Hemzar family, who were unknown in either Amphail or Waterdeep before the purchase, like most of the mysterious matters in Amphail, may have the secret backing of one noble house or another.

My contacts say the Oglyntyrs have petitioned the Ilzimmers to help crush this upstart business, a move that they are considering. I visited the Hemzar ranch, and I'd consider such a move inadvisable. A large family of Tashlutar descent, they seemed capable and confident of their position, despite my warning. I wasn't allowed the opportunity to explore the property fully, but I did note signs that the Hemzars are prepared to rear and train far more dangerous beasts than horses and cattle. I was then tempted to warn the Oglyntyrs, but that family can be as odious as the worst nobles. These things tend to sort themselves out.

The noble families of Waterdeep who send their children to Amphail, or allow them to go there, hope that their sons and daughters will learn some lessons about life while away from Waterdeep. If they are going to cause damage or hurt feelings in the process, at least they will do so far away from the watchful eyes of the other nobility of the city. To the young nobles, there is no one in Amphail of any real consequence who might be permanently harmed by any improprieties. They also believe there is no one of note nearby to hear these hot-headed youngsters issue their boasts and proclaim their schemes—I have more than once learned of a threat simply by listening to children of different houses brag to one another about matters that were meant only for the family.

Aside from the excesses of its nobles, Amphail is a peaceful town, with the threat of full-scale retaliation from both Waterdeep and the Lords' Alliance casting a long, dark shadow over any plans to disturb matters there. The nobles of Waterdeep have heavy purses, and are willing to spend as much coin as necessary to protect their favored playground—and to punish anyone that might disrupt their control over it. The only thing the nobles don't seem to be able to spend

away is the smell of manure, which in the summer months hangs thick over the town. It is that manure that helps to feed the true business of Amphail: feeding Waterdeep with the produce from the many farms that surround the town.

Because so many of Amphail's farms are owned by House Ammakyl, members of that noble family are by far the most enriched by the commerce there. They consider themselves good landlords to the folk that farm their lands, and are sure to bring any threats to honest, hard-working commoners to the attention of both the Lord Warder and the Lords of Waterdeep. Anything that threatens farming in Amphail threatens the City of Splendors directly, and such situations are dealt with swiftly and surely by the city's Guard. As a result, even the most rebellious nobles are careful not to tread too heavily on Ammakyl turf in Amphail, as a house that does so might swiftly find its favorite foods suddenly difficult to procure for a revel or some other event where the family's status is at risk.

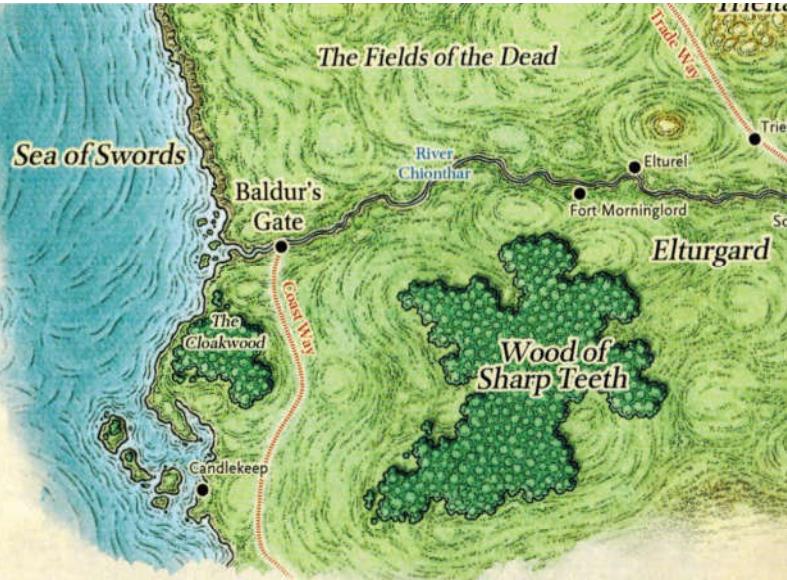
BALDUR'S GATE

On the Coast Way, some forty miles upstream along the River Chionthar from the Sword Coast, lies the bustling city of Baldur's Gate. Home to tens of thousands, the harbor city has poor soil, but its sheltered bay, well away from the tides that batter the coast, make it an ideal location for trading goods from locations to the west in the Sea of Swords, inland along the river, and up and down the coast. Baldur's Gate is a place of commerce, and the city enjoys great success handling the coins of other powers and making them its own.

Sadly, Baldur's Gate has a storied connection with the dark god, Bhaal. Just a few years ago, the city saw the terrifying return of the Lord of Murder. Following a number of deaths, one of the city's dukes, Torlin Silvershield, was revealed as the Chosen of Bhaal, and underwent a monstrous transformation, turning many citizens into bloodthirsty killers and inspiring a riot and much death before finally being put down by brave adventurers. Even now, murderous echoes ripple through the city and beyond, and reports of unexplainable, gruesome killings flow out of Baldur's Gate.

Baldur's Gate is ruled by the Council of Four, dukes who vote among themselves on matters of law and policy for the city. A single grand duke is chosen from among the four, and is empowered to break ties when the council is deadlocked. The current Grand Duke is Ulder Ravengard, who is joined by Dukes Thalamra Vanthampur, Belynne Stelmane, and Dillard Portyr, the former grand duke, who ceded the post to Ravengard after the city's recent troubles. Below the council sits the Parliament of Peers, a group of about fifty Balduarians who meet daily (though almost never in full number) to discuss the future of the city and recommend actions for the dukes to take on all matters, great and small. At any given time, roughly one-quarter of the peers are powerful members of Lower City society, with the rest drawn from the Upper City's noble families, called patriars.

Defense of the Upper City is handled by the Watch, the official constabulary of the city's elite. Their duty is to defend the patriars and enforce their laws, and little



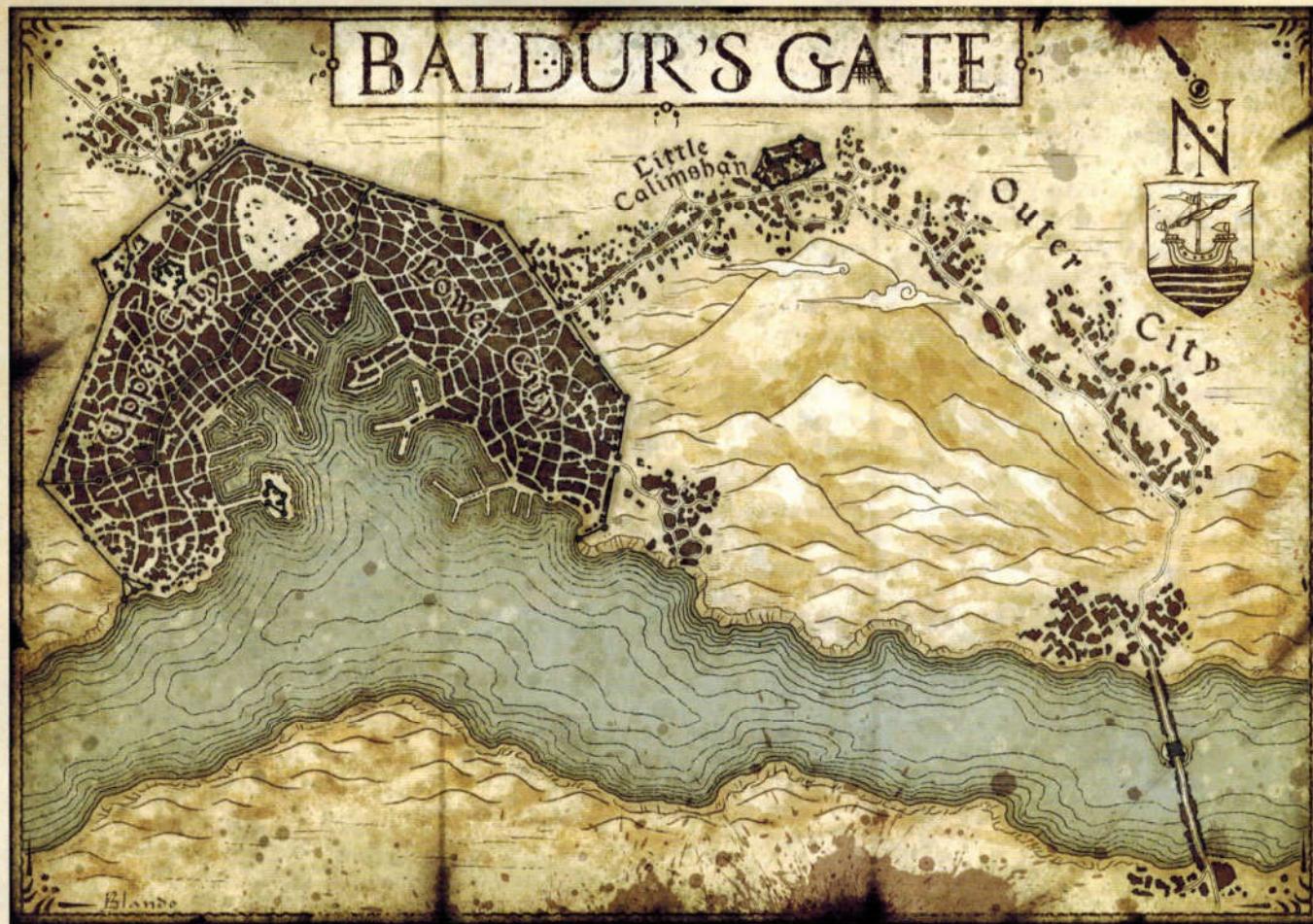
else. For the rest of Baldur's Gate, security is enforced and order maintained by the Flaming Fist mercenary company, a supposedly neutral force which is free to fight in external conflicts, so long as it doesn't side against Baldur's Gate. By tradition, the highest officer of the Flaming Fist is one of the city's dukes, and Grand Duke Ulder Ravengard fulfills that tradition proudly. Membership in the Flaming Fist is fairly easy to achieve, and adventurers with much experience swiftly advance in rank (and, consequently, political influence) once they become permanent members. Many ranking officers are former adventurers who have "retired" to military life.

In both the Upper and Lower Cities, the underworld is controlled by a shadowy group known merely as the Guild. The dukes don't acknowledge the power of this group in any meaningful way—at least not publicly—but try (at least nominally) to curb its influence where and how they can. I lost count of how many gangs claim territory in the Lower and Outer City, and all of them seem to owe allegiance to the Guild. Efforts to destroy the Guild have thus far failed, due in part to the inability of outsiders to identify a clear leader of the group, but in no small measure to the shameful lack of effort on the part of the rulers of the city to protect its people.

UPPER CITY

The Upper City of Baldur's Gate is the enclosed haven of the city's nobility—the patriars. Sitting atop their hill, the patriars look down on the rest of Baldur's Gate in every real sense, wielding their wealth and influence to push the Council of Four to protect their lifestyle. Though at one time a wealthy merchant or powerful adventurer might hope to advance to the ranks of the patriars, there is no longer room, physically or otherwise, for the class of the Upper City to grow. Now, only those born into the patriarch families inhabit the manors of this oldest part of Baldur's Gate. The poorest among these go so far as to sell furnishings and decorations from inside their homes in order to keep up appearances with their fellow patriars.

Most would say that the lives of patriars are marked by luxury and decadence, and for a great many of them, this is likely true. However, some families do make an honest attempt at improving the city, and nearly every family has at least one member who engages in major



commerce—no matter one's heritage, everyone must have coin in order to eat. There is but one nonhuman family among the patriarchs, the dwarven Shattershields, who have been in Baldur's Gate for long enough that they are just as accomplished as their human peers at looking down on the rest of the citizenry.

A number of gates divide the Upper City from the Lower City, but the one to note is the famous Baldur's Gate, from which the city takes its name. Trade passes only through this gate, and is taxed by the city—despite the fact that it was just such taxes that led to the city's being overthrown by its first dukes and the Lower City enclosed by its ring wall. The other gates exist solely for the convenience of the patriarchs and their retinues. Any who aren't in the presence of a patriarch, wearing a patriarch's livery, or bearing a letter of proof of employment by a patriarch must use Baldur's Gate to pass between the Upper and Lower Cities. Bear this in mind when trying to sneak from one part of the city to the next.

LOWER CITY

Hard against the harbor lies the Lower City, where stone, slate-roofed houses stand (sometimes unsteadily), and the folk who have long performed the real work of the city reside. Baldur's Gate depends on trade, and that trade flows in and out of the Gray Harbor. The hands that load and unload ships, that tally cargo and haul goods, that repair keels and mend sails, all live here. The damp clings heavily in this portion of the city—some say it's held in by the Old Wall—and lamps (lit and

filled by citizens, not the city) pierce the fog. Most locals are wise enough to carry lanterns or lamps, and visitors that have not learned to do so can usually hire a young Baldurian to guide them through the streets.

The Lower City was long ago walled in to benefit from the protection of the city, but the divide between the two wards is as stark as it has ever been. The Flaming Fist is responsible for keeping order in the Lower City, and do so with brutal efficiency, deterring most from engaging in bold, public acts of theft, vandalism, or violence.

Where merchants in other cities might hope to one day join the nobility, in Baldur's Gate the best one can hope for is to become an absurdly wealthy and influential merchant. Becoming a patriarch is out of the question. Still, the wealthiest Baldurians live as much like the patriarchs as they can, buying up adjacent properties in the hopes of demolishing them in order to build large homes to echo the manors of the Upper City. The Bloomridge district has a number of such homes, and some of the patriarchs grumble that these merchants are growing too comfortable with their new status.

OUTER CITY

Outside the walls, there are no laws barring construction or settlement, and so those who are too poor to reside within the city or to purchase property have slowly built up a third ward of the city, living in the shadow of its walls, paying its taxes, and covering both sides of the roads leading into Baldur's Gate. Here, the poorest of the poor live in the Outer City, but so too do

those whose businesses are considered too troublesome, noisy, or foul-smelling to operate within the walls, so tanners, smiths, masons, dyers, and other tradesfolk abound. The city does woefully little to help the folk here, and charitable souls (myself included) sometimes start at one end of the road with a full purse, only to see it empty by the time they reach the other end.

The lack of laws in the Outer City has led to two strange phenomena, unrelated to one another. A walled Calishite district has grown up to the east of the city proper, known by Baldurians as Little Calimshan. Within the district, neighborhoods are divided by walls, but these walls have walkways atop them so that foot traffic can proceed unimpeded by the gates that slow carts and mounts. Here, refugees from Calimshan have found a home away from that southern nation, and largely depend on themselves for trade, culture, and defense.

Buildings have also been constructed along Wyrm's Crossing over the Chionthar. Shops, taverns, and tenements choke the bridge, hanging from both spans, and even in some cases built to hang from the supports that hold it up. Folk must pay a toll to cross on foot or by cart or wagon, but many swear they would pay yet more to be able to use the bridge without having to dodge the hawkers and urchins that infest the area.

DAGGERFORD

Built against the side of a low hill on the floodplains of the Delimbir, this small, walled town is dominated by the keep of the local duchess, Lady Morwen Daggerford. Counting the town itself and the nearby hamlets and farms that look to it for protection and guidance, some twelve hundred people call the area home. Lady Morwen is the sister of the previous duke, Maldwyn Daggerford, and she seems a capable and charismatic leader. The Daggerford family's authority over the area dates back to the ancient Kingdom of Man that succeeded Phalorm in the region. Though that realm has been dust for centuries, there are those that see Daggerford as the last bastion of a better time of peace, wealth, and influence—a time that, given the right leadership, has the smallest of chances of being restored.

Daggerford is a pastoral haven. Wide, sprawling hills nearby offer peaceful vistas, but are sometimes overrun by raiding orcs or goblins. The frequent caravans heading north to Waterdeep or south to Baldur's Gate need escort or guarding, and can offer news of both of those cities (and the settlements between them). Several inns stand ready to accept visitors, except in the busiest of trade or festival periods, when they fill swiftly, and many locals open up their homes to lodgers. Warriors in need of coin can help their purses by offering their services as trainers for the local militia, or accompanying the town guard on its patrols.

Daily rulership is in the hands of the Council of Guilds, composed of the heads of the town's informal trade groups. These guildmasters believe themselves more powerful and influential than they truly are, imitating the Lords of Waterdeep by going robed and masked to council meetings. This charade, in the eyes of most, borders on farce, as everyone in Daggerford

knows precisely who the council members are, and no magic disguises the forms, voices, or mannerisms of the guild leaders, and a trained spy can learn which guildmaster is which after only an evening or two of proper observation.

The largest and oldest building in Daggerford is the ducal castle, a three-level keep enclosed by a two-story wall that contains its own smithy, a wide parade ground, and stabling for a large number of animals. The dukes of Daggerford have always kept a well-stocked larder, capable of feeding the castle's inhabitants and any citizens that might shelter inside during a siege.

Three gates lead into the town of Daggerford: River Gate, which provides access to the river, and through which shipping cargo is carted into the town proper; Caravan Gate, which handles most landgoing traffic, including land-based trade; and Farmers' Gate, which remains open at nearly all times, but is wide enough only to let one wagon or cart pass at a time.

A militia guards Daggerford. Militia service is mandatory for all able-bodied adults, and lasts for twenty years. All citizens living within the town receive instruction from the duchess's own soldiers in the use of spears and other weapons, and must spend at least one day a month in defense of the town, standing sentry on its walls or patrolling the nearby roads. Their training means that the common citizens of Daggerford aren't easily cowed by armed folk demanding goods, coin, or passage, and are slightly more likely to take up work as mercenaries, caravan guards, or adventurers.

Although she is less amiable than her brother was, Lady Morwen is acknowledged as more capable of ruling Daggerford than Duke Maldwyn had been. She is well liked by the people, who understand that she has an honorable heart, and wishes what is best for Daggerford. She regularly trains with the militia, and is seen in the town wearing armor just as often as she is adorned in the finery befitting her station. She often visits the local shrine to Tempus, which only enhances her reputation as a pious woman. Lady Morwen's features are only now starting to age, as though catching up with her white hair.

Most folk of Daggerford know one another, at least casually, by sight. Strangers are usually welcome, especially if they have coin to spend, unless such folk come armed and belligerent through the town. Guards stationed at each gate make note of new faces, but don't take action against those they don't recognize unless they are given reason to do so.

The largest of the town's inns, the River Shining Tavern, is the second biggest building in Daggerford, and the site of many local celebrations and gatherings. Here, the wealthy come to eat and relax. The inn is old—many locals claim it to be older even than the ducal castle—and to many, is the very soul of Daggerford. The Silver Flood Inn and Lizard's Gizzard also offer rooms, though the latter has no food to provide its guests, only beds.

One of Daggerford's most unusual businesses is the Sword Coast Traders' Bank, which accepts deposits from traveling merchants and enables them to receive these funds at a similar location in either Waterdeep

RUINED KINGDOMS OF THE NORTH

Many folk consider the start of civilization in the North to be marked by the founding of Waterdeep. More learned folk are aware of the deeper history of the region, and know of at least some of the kingdoms that have been built by the residents of the North down the centuries.

Ruins of these kingdoms are scattered throughout the North, and many present-day cities and towns are built atop their remains, sometimes with their residents ignorant of what lies just beneath their boots.

Eaerann. The elven kingdom of Eaerann, a survivor of the ancient Crown Wars, stretched from the High Forest to the Delimbiyr Vale. Weakened by the retreat of much of its populace to Evermeet and by orc attacks, Eaerann finally fell six hundred years ago to the demons that burst forth from Ascalhorn (once known as Hellgate Keep and now as Hellgate Dell).

Illefarn. Ten thousand years ago, the capital city of Illefarn occupied the site where Waterdeep stands today. A kingdom of elves that accepted both humans and dwarves in its lands, Illefarn stood intact for seven millennia. It was eventually fragmented by increasing human settlement of the area, and repeated orc attacks spelled its doom.

Athalantar. The short-lived human kingdom of Athalantar lay south of the High Forest in territory claimed by its self-styled Stag King thirteen centuries ago. Its rulers were briefly supplanted by magelords, but then reclaimed the throne, only to be wiped out by orcs within a few generations.

Phalorm. Dwarf, elf, and human monarchs all shared the rule of Phalorm, also known as the Realm of Three Crowns, which was founded nearly a thousand years ago in the High Moor. Phalorm lasted barely a century before repeated orc and goblin attacks overcame it.

Kingdom of Man. When Phalorm fell, the surviving humans of the kingdom established the Kingdom of Man, formally known as Delimbiiran, which lasted only two generations. Its dissolution left behind a number of petty "kingdoms" that welcomed new human settlers in several locations, leading to the founding of new cities and towns on the Sword Coast and in its environs.

Netheril. For centuries, the legend of Netheril served as a lesson of human hubris and a lure for treasure hunters too prideful to learn from its story. Long before the Dales Compact and the advent of Dalereckoning, Netheril arose as a human empire founded on the might of magic learned from the golden Nether Scrolls, artifacts at least as old as the creator races. Flying Netherese cities drifted through the skies all over the North, but primarily they hung high over a verdant land that is now the desert of Anauroch.

Then Karsus, one of the mighty mages of Netheril, dared to believe that he could wrest control of the Weave and become a god himself. He almost succeeded, but in his failure Karsus killed the goddess of magic, shredded the Weave, and sent the floating enclaves that couldn't flee to other planes crashing to the ground. From the moments after the crash when the spilt blood was still fresh to the present day's moss-covered or dune-buried stones, the ruins of Netheril and its arcane secrets have drawn many to their doom.

or Baldur's Gate. Lady Belinda Anteos (of the Waterdeep noble house) promises that her business is secure and that the bank's magical means of communicating precise amounts of currency between cities can't be tampered with.

Members of local guilds that do business outside the town don't entirely trust the Traders' Bank, preferring instead to borrow coin from the Hardcheese family of halflings that run the Happy Cow tavern. The Alliance officially has no preference, but I find Lady Anteos trustworthy enough to be an alternative to carrying large sums on the road. It's easier to part with a small portion of one's purse than to lose everything to a band of brigands during a journey through the wilds.

Visitors to Daggerford are advised both to avoid the tannery to the west and to swiftly cross Tyndal's Bridge when approaching from the south. The tannery's location, up on the hill, does little to contain the stink of the process, and the Watermen's Guild dumps the city's waste over the side of the bridge. On hot days, the scents exuded from both sites can be overwhelming, which is why I have again asked the Alliance to assign a different agent to visit on next summer's rounds.

Tyndal's Bridge is a low stone structure over which travelers pass when approaching from the west, where a local boy named Tyndal held off a number of lizard-folk with only a dagger. He grew to manhood, married the local ruler's daughter, named himself duke, and built Daggerford atop the ruins of an older castle. This story, and most of the area's history, is happily related to any who ask by Sir Darfin Floskin, an elf older than Daggerford itself. He longs to see a rise in cooperation between humans, dwarves, and elves in the region, such as was once embodied in the realm of Phalorm. Darfin has been advisor to many dukes of Daggerford through the years. Though he was rebuffed by Duke Maldwyn during his reign, there are signs that Lady Morwen may be more receptive to the advice of a gold elf who has witnessed the fall of the human kingdom of Delimbiiran, the founding of Daggerford, and all the days since.

LONGSADDLE

The hamlet of Longsaddle is little more than a row of buildings on either side of the Long Road, halfway along the lengthy journey from Triboar to Mirabar. A path leaves the road here and winds to the Ivy Mansion, the great house of the wizards of the Harpell family. Since the Harpells founded the town more than four centuries ago, they have brooked little nonsense and less mayhem. Their own behavior sometimes borders on the bizarre and can be disturbing—they once turned two rival sects of Malarites into rabbits for disturbing Longsaddle with their squabbles, leaving them at the mercy of the predators they had honored—but they are one of the most potent gatherings of mages anywhere in the North.

The Harpells are a jovial, if insular, lot. All wizards, they tend to marry wizards as well, and the elder women of the family (by blood or marriage) set the course for the house and utterly rule matters within the Ivy Mansion. The family takes on a number of apprentice wizards, using them for menial tasks and for basic defense of Longsaddle. Some apprentices are often the inadvertent test subjects for an experimental spell, but such is the danger of apprenticing to the Harpells. It is likely this spirit of experimentation that caused the Harpells to found their town so far away from other settlements. Young wizards with oddly sized or shaped

limbs, strange hair color, or shifting forms are fairly common sights in Longsaddle, not surprising to locals though they might give visitors pause.

Given the Harpells' reputation as powerful wizards, and the sheer number of them, there is no shortage of folk poking around Longsaddle and the nearby lands hoping to discover caches of magic, hidden like children's treasures. Of course, few, if any, such bundles exist, but the locals draw no shortage of entertainment from sending would-be thieves on grand chases for wands, rings, and other magic trinkets that any prudent person would realize simply don't exist. After all, if the average trader in Longsaddle knew where powerful magic was located, he would be more likely, down the years, to try to claim it.

The primary business of Longsaddle is ranching, and the lands surrounding the village are dominated by hundreds of ranches and farms of every sort and size, from tiny horse farms to great fields of cattle. During those days that livestock are brought in for trading, Longsaddle is a dusty, noise-filled place, with the sounds of the animals competing with the shouts of farmers hoping to sell their goods.

At all other times, it's a quiet, almost sleepy hamlet, except when the booming reverberation of a Harpell-crafted spell breaks the silence. The family is constantly researching magic both old and new, and twisting spells and rituals into interesting (to them) innovations. This proclivity has prompted them to surround Ivy Mansion with as many magical wards as the family can muster, in order to protect the populace from an errant explosion, terrifying illusion, or the odd, galloping horse of lightning speeding by.

Several businesses designed to attract travelers stand in Longsaddle, if for no other reason than travel along the well-named Long Road can be tiresome. The first is the Gilded Horseshoe, an old inn to the west of the road that serves fine food and drink, offers comfortable beds, and is close enough to the Ivy Mansion that no one would dare disturb it or its guests. The owners have access to some of the choicest cuts of meat in Longsaddle, and as a result, their roasts and stews are exquisite.

Across the road, the Ostevers family serves as the local slaughterer and butcher for folk wishing to take meat, rather than live animals, away from Longsaddle. Rumor holds that the sausages have much improved down the years but buyers are advised to "mind the tusks" by locals, a reference to an old joke that none remember. Folk willing to wait can have the able hands of the Ostevers perform a slaughter, hanging, dressing, and packing for them, though this process is likely to take days longer than most travelers can spare.

There is entertainment to be had at the Gambling Golem, where cheaters in the card or dice games are tossed out into the street, and a local marbles game known as scattershields is popular. Dry goods, candles, lanterns, saddles, rope, and wagon wheels are available from a number of other shops.

It can't be stressed enough that while the Harpells have little interest in the daily running of Longsaddle, it is undeniably their town. They rarely suffer insults, and never tolerate violence against themselves, their family,



or the locals. A conflict involving the Harpells is likely to end swiftly and bloodily, and (unless the offender is convincingly apologetic, unconscious, dead, or forgiven of the wrongdoing) will often draw additional Harpells to support their kin. Harpell supports Harpell in all public matters, and no one bothers to record the numbers and names of those that forgot that fact.

Aside from the Harpells, the dominant families of Longsaddle are ranchers: the Cadrasz, Emmert, Kromlor, Mammlar, Sharnshield, Suldivver, and Zelorrgosz families have ranched in or near Longsaddle for generations, and influence most of the daily life there. They set the market days, help resolve disputes among families, and broker purchases when a farmer or businessperson dies without an heir. They settle smaller matters and keep the peace as best they can, knowing full well that if the Harpells need to get involved in a dispute, there is always the possibility of an offender's being blasted into nothingness.

These families are also the ones most likely to hire outsiders to deal with matters on the ranches, whether an orc raid or the appearance of lycanthropes in the area (though it's rumored that the latter creatures may be the descendants of one of the Harpells). The major ranching interests often hire adventurers not only to further their own aims or provide for defense, but to secretly hinder or harm one another and gain an advantage in their ongoing competition. Adventurers that go too far on such a mission can be explained away as foolish outlanders, and if they offend a Harpell and get blasted in the middle of the Low Road, there will be no one left to ask about the matter. My best advice is to be mindful of the scent of magic in the air and act accordingly.



MIRABAR

Mirabar is a human city that rests atop dwarven caverns. On the surface, humans dominate the population, with some dwarves mixed in, and a handful of gnomes and halflings. The uppermost level of the undercity is mostly dwarves, with some few humans. The mixing of races is due to convenience of trade, preference, or skill; just as some few humans like to mine, to imbibe strong dwarven drink, and to work underground, so do a minority of dwarves take to the open sky, doing dock work, or even manning and building ships. The lower levels beneath Mirabar are all dwarven, as even the most dwarf-like human can live so deep below ground for only so long. Almost all of its citizens, regardless of race, honor Moradin and the dwarven gods, making Mirabar a dwarven city in spirit and ethics, if not entirely by population, much in the way my own Silvery-moon speaks to elven ideals of natural beauty.

Long ago, the great dwarven kingdom of Gharraghaur stood to the west of Delzoun, delving mines near the River Mirar and finding great, near-endless veins of gems. Like many of the dwarven realms, Gharraghaur fell to marauding orcs, which destroyed the kingdom and its capital city but couldn't take advantage of the wealth therein. For millennia the lower city lay empty, until some eight hundred years ago, when Prince Ereskas of Amn settled the same spot, creating the city of Mirabar (coincidentally echoing the dwarven “bar” naming convention used for citadels throughout the North). It was only when dwarves returned to work the mines below that Mirabar began to see its fortunes increase.

Mirabar is ruled by its hereditary marchion, Selin Raurym, who issues edicts fed to him by the Council of Sparkling Stones. The council is a group of dwarves

EVERBRIGHT

The dwarves were the first to discover the secret of treating their metal with everbright. The technique has been imitated by other races, to varying degrees of success. Armor, weapons, and other metal objects to which everbright is applied maintain their luster without needing to be polished, and are resistant to natural (and, in some cases, magical) pitting, rusting, and tarnishing.

and some few humans elected to make policy for the city, who determine where the output of Mirabar's mines will be sold. Although the council has long kept Mirabar associated with the Lords' Alliance, it is the marchion who negotiates with his fellow lords. Thus far, Selin Raurym has proved far more capable than his predecessors at making beneficial decisions for the city, and the council has given him great leeway to speak for Mirabar outside the walls. His threat to pull out of the Alliance following its failure to aid the northern cities against the most recent orc hordes, though considered by some an empty gesture, has brought Mirabar more advantageous relationships with Waterdeep and Baldur's Gate, something which has not gone unappreciated by the council.

The city's guard, the Axe of Mirabar, exists primarily to deter and prevent sabotage of the mines, without which Mirabar would collapse. The guard also provides swift and capable defense and law enforcement within the city. The wealth of Mirabar is so great that it maintains docks, ships, and fortified harbors on many of the islands in the Sea of Swords, and as such the city is always seeking magical and military support for these defenses. Where other cities might use such vast mountains of coin as Mirabar possesses on shows of prosperity, Mirabars use it for more functional goals, making sure that the city's defenses are new, that its gates close securely when they are moved, that its buildings and walls are strong and secure. Given the recent destruction of Sundabar's surface city at the hand of orc armies, such expenditures are well justified, since no one in Mirabar wishes to see the surface city wiped out. It would simply be bad for business. Mirabar spares no expense in defending its wealth, and hires as many mages and adventurers as necessary to clear threats away from roads, investigate sabotage, and otherwise protect its vital trade.

With the rise of Mithral Hall in the last century, and now Gauntlgrym, Mirabar fears its place as the armory of the North is at risk. The miners, smelters, and smiths of Mirabar work ever harder to increase their output and improve their craft, while the jewelers and enamelers study ways to incorporate ancient techniques of melding dwarven, human, and elven designs together in their work, in the manner of old Phalorm.

Mirabaren (or to some, just Mierren) dwarves like to cultivate long, wide (as opposed to tapered or pointed) beards and tight braids of hair growing elsewhere than on the chin, a fashion copied by some local humans. They love polished, *everbright*-treated sheets of metal, particularly copper, used as doors or mirrorlike wall-panel inlays. They often set gems into the pommels and nonworking ends of tools and weapons. Mierren dwarves tend to be wealthy, to have personal collections of unusual and rare gems, to use seals made of gems carved into signet rings, and to be investors in ventures (rather than property) up and down the Sword Coast. They are sophisticated and worldly, and they decry the isolationist and xenophobic attitudes of some dwarves. Mierren dwarves demonstrate their own broader attitudes by being the diplomatic traders and power brokers in trademoots and agreements in Fireshear and Neverwinter and everywhere else they can worm their

way into, among dwarves and between dwarves and non-dwarves.

To other dwarves, Mierren are translators and local guides and "the people who know the right people" in human-dominated cities everywhere along the Sword Coast and in much of the Heartlands. Most adult Mierren have dealings with a variety of human costers and merchants, taking care to avoid exclusivity or cultivate too narrow a range of business partners and contacts, so they control their own destinies and fortunes. They abhor the thought of humans having the slightest chance of dominating them.

The wealth that flows through Mirabar has not only extended the reach and worldly knowledge of all Mierren, it has enabled them to indulge all sorts of personal hobbies, such as art collections (statuettes and paintings in particular). The private living quarters of most Mierren feature comfortable furniture, painted artwork large and small, statuary, and hanging chimes—often metallic, but always soft and pleasant, never loud or strident. Gems are plentiful in Mierren families and are used as currency and in all manner of personal adornment, rather than being hidden away. Semiprecious stones line many of the streets in Mirabar, and gorgeous inlays mark important corners and intersections, some so new that one can still smell the jeweler's dust.

Still, despite the city's overall wealth, there are rich and (relatively) poor Mirabarrans. Not everyone shares in the coin the city's sales bring in, and wage workers whose income is determined by a day's labor or a month's output can't hope to expect that a well-worded contract by an employer will enrich them in the least. Wealthy merchants and business owners are careful not to show their success ostentatiously; their clothing might be of richer fabrics, but still in the same styles and colors as the garb of poorer folks. Waiting rooms and front halls in the fortified homes of the rich are just as sparsely furnished as those in poorer homes. Keeping up the appearance of relative equality in fortunes is vital, for if anyone in a position to commit a violent act—say, a weaponsmith with access to great stores of swords and axes—knew just how wealthy the wealthiest Mirabarrans were, there would very likely be bloodshed before the offended parties were satisfied.

NEVERWINTER

A short while ago, Neverwinter was beset by all manner of damage, danger, and gloom. Now, the orcs that once menaced the city have moved east to join their brethren in being crushed by the dwarves. The Chasm that rent the land has been sealed by powerful magic. The High Road has been cleared and rebuilt, and trade has resumed with Waterdeep and realms to the south. What was the blasted, wounded city of Neverwinter just a decade ago is now an exciting, humming place, where folk seem eager to throw off the hardships from which they have emerged and create a new, brighter future for their city.

Nearly half a century ago, Mount Hotenow (the nearby volcano that perpetually heats the river flowing through the city) violently erupted, destroying much of Neverwinter, killing thousands, and leaving in its wake a great,

gaping chasm that split the city. Neverwinter was in ruins, and external influences—from Netheril to Thay to Lord Dagult Neverember of Waterdeep to the agents of the Hells themselves—sought to exert control over the city. Many folk fought to stem all these dangers, and eventually, a measure of peace fell over Neverwinter.

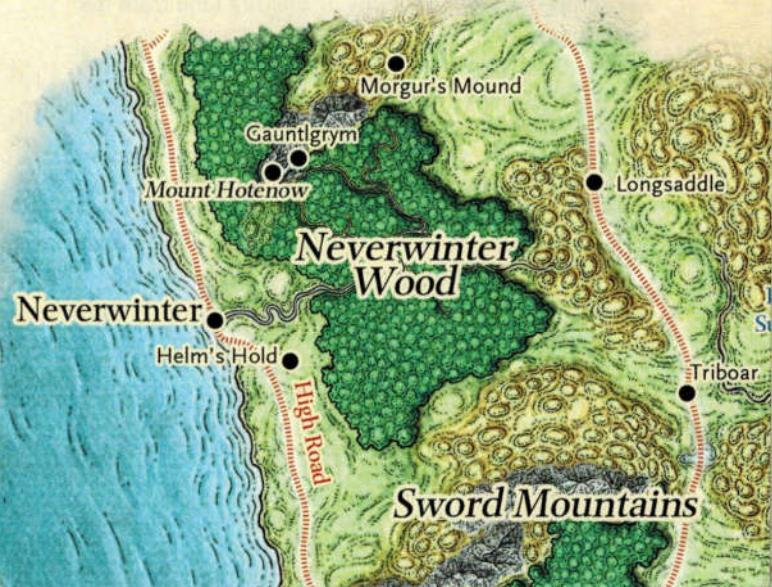
Since Dagult Neverember was deposed as the Open Lord of Waterdeep, he has thrown his full attention and effort into the rebuilding of the city from which he claims descent. Whatever people's opinions are of his claim to Neverwinter's throne, he has proven a capable, inspiring leader over these last few years, and the population has embraced him as Lord Protector. He engineered the sealing of the Chasm and the restoration of the High Road, and is seeking other ways to repair and improve the city. Even if he can never prove his descent from Lord Nasher Alagondar, the people of Neverwinter have accepted his leadership. (My rumored personal dislike of Lord Neverember has nothing to do with my assessment of his leadership; I merely find him an intolerable flirt.)

Neverember's influence radiates outward from the Protector's Enclave, centered at the Hall of Justice. With Tyr restored to life and his worship returning to prominence, the Lord Protector has moved into a modest, private villa. This sacrifice—and the renewal of Tyr's faith in the previous center of his operations—is only further proof, to some, that Neverember deserves to rule Neverwinter. As yet, Castle Never remains a dangerous ruin, but Neverember has plans to reclaim and rebuild it as a symbol of the city's rejuvenation.

The faithful of Oghma have arrived in Neverwinter to restore the House of Knowledge to its former glory, but beyond that, shrines to all manner of gods have been cobbled together in every corner of the city.

As the city restores itself, there are likely to be requests for ennoblement and the privileges that provides, and certainly, trading interests will emerge. But Lord Protector Neverember is sure to point out that he is merely a protector, not a king, and so can't invest or recognize anyone. Guilds may form, but it is sure to be years, if not decades, before any prove strong enough to persevere over their rivals.

Increasingly, calls come from the citizenry for the enforcers out of Mintarn to be replaced by respectable, local guards who have a personal interest in the defense of Neverwinter. This public sentiment has led to some





neighborhoods organizing their own makeshift militias, and the Lord Protector wants to avoid conflict between them and the mercenaries he has hired. As a result, Neverember has slowly been drawing down the number of soldiers from Mintarn, as the citizens that grew up defending the makeshift Wall from threats out of the Chasm prove themselves capable of becoming a proper military force. Both Baldur's Gate and Waterdeep have offered to help train the new guards of Neverwinter, but Lord Neverember prefers the assistance of seasoned adventurers to the ignominy of seeking help from his former city.

With the restoration of nearby Gauntlgrym, Neverwinter hopes to have a close ally that can provide it with stout armor and strong weapons. Although the city presently has little to offer, trade activity is rapidly growing in Neverwinter, as word of its rebirth opens it up to shipping from the Sea of Swords, goods from the north, and coin from the south. Adventurers come to Neverwinter seeking work and following rumors of nearby treasures, and often find additional employment clearing out dangerous corners of the city and escorting the ever more numerous caravans up and down the High Road. It is the Lord Protector's hope that, with commerce and income both on the rise, and talented

craftfolk returning to ply their trades, that Neverwinter will someday again be worthy of its former epithet: the City of Skilled Hands.

Opposition to Neverember's authority still exists, but with no unified leadership and no other power in the city to which to appeal, the rebels are slowly turning away from their resistance and toward helping the city rebuild. Many of the Sons of Alagondar, a rebel group that initially opposed Lord Neverember, have begun to volunteer as replacements for the Mintarn mercenaries currently patrolling the city. If the Sons of Alagondar can be brought into line with his goals, Neverember hopes to use that achievement as a draw for wealthy Waterdhavian nobles—who have been reluctant to link their fortunes to a failed Open Lord who was effectively exiled from Waterdeep—to invest in the city and perhaps rebuild some of the noble villas in that district as places for them to stay when they do business.

With the Chasm closed, and the wall that separated the rest of the city from its horrors now torn down, a great swath of Neverwinter lies empty, with no inhabitants and plentiful chunks of stone plundered from ruins all across the city. Anyone who is willing to do so can come to this area, claim a portion of land, and build a structure in which to live or work. There aren't

yet any guilds to restrict trade or construction, and no nobles to be petitioned or placated. Those seeking to create a home or start a business can simply do so, and even those without skills or money can use their hands and backs to provide until they can set up a place for themselves.

Along the river, many of the merchant villas are being claimed and restored by folk who have heard rumors of what Neverwinter once was, and might be again. Some have no skills to speak of, and many have no wealth, but all come with the desire to work and to enrich themselves in the process. New stores and workshops open by the tenday, and workers without training offer their services as laborers or apprentices; those that fail move on to other employment, taking advantage of the multitude of opportunities the city now offers. Those with no other options can get work dredging or mapping the city's sewers for the Lord Protector, a task made necessary by the cataclysm that created the Chasm.

Like any city, Neverwinter isn't without its drawbacks. Though most folk are willing to work, some steal as a means of making their living, and prey upon those who have little to be taken. Food is sometimes scarce, as inns and taverns underestimate the number of guests they will receive, or merchants simply run out of goods to sell. It's likely to be a few years before the city entirely shakes itself of these ills, but for some, the uncertainties of life in Neverwinter are what make the place exciting. For many traders, in particular those who produce or vend the grains and vegetables needed in the city, it is a vast opportunity to both aid a fledgling power and get quite rich in doing so.

SILVERYMOON

Long a powerful and influential member of the Lords' Alliance—and, for its entire existence, the Silver Marches of Luruar—Silverymoon is what many cities aspire to be: a quiet, peaceful realm, where many races live together for common knowledge, celebration, and defense. The city is peopled primarily by the "goodly" races (humans, dwarves, gnomes, elves, halflings, and half-elves), but no being is turned away from Silverymoon because of its race—though a drow or an orc proving true to one's blood is sure to be punished in full for transgressing against the peace of the city. I will make no secret of my love for my home in the following summary, but I will endeavor to be as evenhanded as I can in describing it.

The Gem of the North is a stunning place of sweeping curves, soaring towers, and structures built into the living trees. To many elves, the city is a reminder of the ancient elven cities of old; some call it the Myth Drannor of the North, even nowadays after the restoration and subsequent fall of that fabled city. Even where stone is employed in construction, ivy and other living plants grow through, over, or around most structural elements, giving most of the city a green cast.

Despite its arboreal architecture, Silverymoon is very much civilized, boasting schools of music and magic, a great library, bardic instruction, and temples or shrines to Mielikki, Oghma, Silvanus, Sune, Tymora, and Mystra. Knowledge, both the acquisition of it and

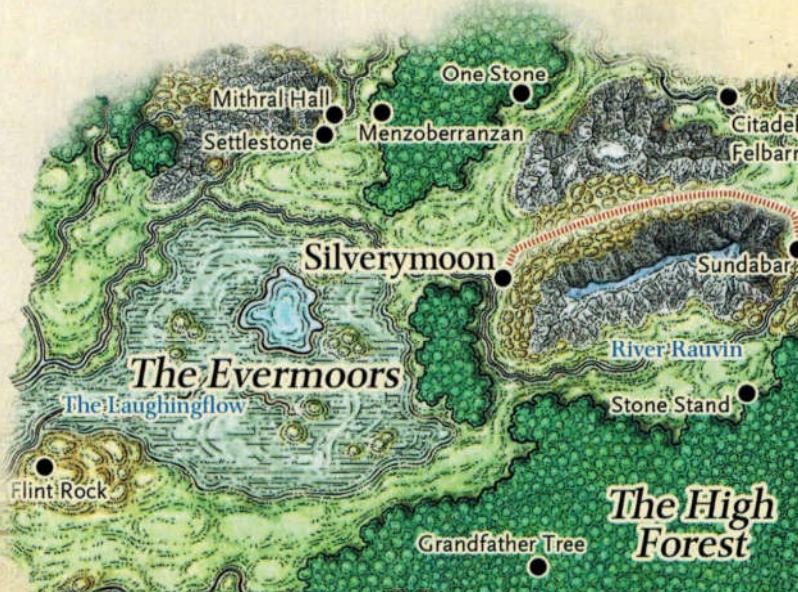
the wisdom that comes from diligent study, is the real treasure of Silverymoon, as much as magic or wealth could ever be.

While it is easy and pleasing enough to get lost among the trees of the city, anyone who comes close enough to the River Raurin is awed by the vision of the Moonbridge: the great arch of silvery force that spans the water. Even for those native to the city, it is a powerful, moving sight, and some claim to see the goddess Lurue (for whom the city is named) dancing above the motes of the bridge when no one else is watching.

Given its beauty, a visit to Silverymoon is among the most memorable experiences most non-Silvaeren might have. Even among those that regularly fight monsters or handle magic, Silverymoon is a place of quiet, contemplative beauty, splendid opportunities for learning, and respite from the harsher realities of the North.

Folk seeking knowledge that has been lost or hidden often come to Silverymoon seeking a means to find it, whether by studying in the Vault of the Sages or perusing the Map House for the location of a lost city or grove. These are but two of the many buildings and houses of learning in the Conclave of Silverymoon, the great center of knowledge and wisdom that forms much of the city's southern part. If a map, a book, or a spell exists anywhere in Faerûn, knowledge of it likely exists here, even if only a mere mention in a tome or a recollection of one of the city's great sages. Candlekeep might be the greatest assembly of written knowledge anywhere in the world, but in the end, that place represents accumulation for its own sake. Silverymoon is where study and wisdom are honored. If your charge is to translate an ancient tome in a lost language, to learn the proper intonation of a complex song, or to better understand the cryptic writings of a long-dead sage, there is no better place to seek aid than Silverymoon.

It is an easy thing to come to Silverymoon seeking knowledge of one subject, and find oneself so enraptured by the study that it takes a lifetime to accomplish—or to realize that it was the study, rather than the sought-after fact, that one truly desired. Although tutors and sages in every field can be found in Silverymoon, rarely is interaction with one so simple as to ask a question and be provided an answer. Learning to cast a particular spell, to find an ancient ruin, or understand a specific secret might involve undergoing months of



instruction to prove to a teacher that the knowledge imparted is being entrusted to a deserving person.

In the east of the city is the High Palace, capital of the city and of the fallen state of Luruar. Lord Methrammar Aerasumé lives in this high, slender-spired structure. The merlons of its battlements are carved to resemble unicorn heads. The soldiers of the High Guard, clad in shining silver plate, protect the residence and seat of power, and keep those out that don't have business within.

Silverymoon has long been led by a high mage. One of the longest ruling, and certainly the most influential of these, Alustriel Silverhand, stepped down more than a hundred years ago to become the High Lady of Luruar, and was succeeded by Taern Hornblade. Though he ruled wisely over the last century, Taern recently relinquished the city's leadership to High Marshal Methrammar Aerasumé, Alustriel's half-elf son and the leader of Silverymoon's armed forces. Taern still speaks for the city on Methrammar's behalf at meetings of the Lords' Alliance, as the new ruler is far too blunt and impatient to suit the other lords of the compact.

Silverymoon is defended by several forces. First are the Knights in Silver, the shining-armored warriors that patrol the city and the nearby lands. Officers of the Knights are well trained in tactics and military history, and have high opinions of their own abilities and those of their comrades—opinions that are very often borne out. They are bolstered by the Spellguard, a cadre of powerful wizards and sorcerers that train in battle magic. Last is the city's own *mythal*, the great field of magical force that prevents the inhabitants of the city from engaging in all manner of spellcasting. In particular, spells that summon flame, conjure creatures, or permit teleportation fail when their target is within the bounds of the *mythal*. Should a foe try to traverse the Moonbridge, the span can be willed (by the city's rulers, and certain others specially attuned to the *mythal*) out of existence, dropping attackers into the river.

No city's prestige was harmed more than Silverymoon's by the recent war and the subsequent dismantling of the Silver Marches. Though they tried to bolster the nearby cities, the Silvaeren were accused of providing insufficient and incompetent support to Sundabar, the surface population of which was entirely wiped out. In the end, all of the dwarven states stepped away from Luruar, and without the support of those kingdoms or the leadership that Alustriel provided at its founding, the confederacy collapsed. Taern Hornblade isn't as powerful a voice in the Lords' Alliance as Alustriel was, either, in part because his affection and respect for the former High Lady has been extended, in large part, to her sister Laeral, now the Open Lord of Waterdeep.

Despite reports of her death decades ago, rumors have recently reached the city that High Lady Alustriel is in fact alive and active in southern lands. Seemingly, she has contacted neither her son nor her former comrade, Taern Hornblade—though given how widely known Taern's hopeless love for the High Lady was, and the long years he took to overcome his grief, it's not certain how he would react upon receiving proof of her survival.

Silverymoon has nonetheless long been known as a safe haven for Harpers in the North, because the city doesn't see the aims of the Alliance as conflicting with Those Who Harp. Where other cities' rulers might see the presence of the Harpers as a threat to their authority, Silverymoon desires an end to tyranny as fervently as the Harpers do, and thus the greater good is served. At the same time, some Silvaeren believe that the city's tolerance of certain other members of the Alliance (some mention Mirabar, others Baldur's Gate) is somewhat naive.

THEWARDS OF WATERDEEP

Waterdeep has long been divided into several large regions called wards. To locals these are essential to Waterdeep, but outsiders often lose track of which ward they're in or what a ward's name signifies. The names of the wards suggest the contents of the buildings and the character of the activity in each one, but no laws exist that restrict a given activity or class of people to any specific ward.

Castle Ward. As the name indicates, Castle Ward contains Castle Waterdeep, Piergeiron's Palace, and many other public buildings of the city. This ward is home to mainly the wealthy or influential who can't count themselves among the nobility. Other structures are taken up by educational or religious concerns that primarily serve the city at large, not the residents of the ward.

Dock Ward. Most of the city's harbor area is located in Dock Ward, as are the businesses and warehouses that depend on the city's newly restored harbor. It's a crowded neighborhood of many winding streets, where folk are comfortable making deals that might in other places provoke the displeasure of the law.

Field Ward. Of relatively recent vintage, the Field Ward stands between the inner and outer north walls of the city (an area formerly used as a caravan grounds). This ward grew up in a messy, unregulated fashion and is home to many of the poorest residents of the city.

North Ward. Home to many noble villas, townhouses, and a great many inns, North Ward is the neighborhood of the respectably wealthy.

Sea Ward. Those whose fortunes are on the rise build their homes in Sea Ward, and they join many long-established noble families in residence. This area in the northwest of the city is home to much of the city's wealth, the location of the grandest villas of the city's noble families (except for those in North Ward).

Southern Ward. Stables, warehouses, and shops related to overland trade dominate Southern Ward. Most residents are hardworking folk that load and unload caravan carts, and otherwise perform low-paying work.

Trades Ward. A narrow slice of land between the Castle Ward and the City of the Dead, Trades Ward is the center of commerce for the city, with most of the smaller transactions and respectable trade taking place here.

City of the Dead. The city's walled cemetery, the City of the Dead is the only place in Waterdeep where it is legal to bury the deceased. It is used by many citizens as a public park during the day, a lovely green space of pretty mausoleums and grand statues in which to escape the city's hustle and bustle.

Undercliff. While not considered by many to be a ward of the city, the little villages and many farms that sprawl across the land east of the city were lawfully incorporated into Waterdeep when it moved a barracks and training facility to the area.

WATERDEEP

Rising from the shores of its deep harbor to ring the great mountain standing tall out of the Sea of Swords is Waterdeep, the City of Splendors and the Crown of the North. To all of Faerûn, this great metropolis stands as the pinnacle of what a great city might be, in wealth, influence, and stability. Here, the citizens work, the nobles sneer, and the great masked lords plot and scheme, all while merchants dance between them to collect their coins and continue profiting as best they can. Waterdeep's shops and merchants offer goods of every sort from every corner of Toril, and even the rarest of items can be procured, given sufficient coin and patience. Adventurers lacking one or the other can very easily find all manner of employment, from simple escorting of caravans, to guarding nobility, to investigating a ruin or rumor of monsters anywhere in the North.

Though it has stood for hundreds of years, Waterdeep is only now returning to its status of a century and a half ago. The recent disruptions began when the gods walked the Realms and slew each other before the eyes of mortals, until they walked back to their divine domains through the very streets of Waterdeep itself. Decades later, more deities began dying off, magic failed, and all manner of catastrophes started altering the very nature of the city. Lord Neverember wasted the city's navy and then, instead of rebuilding it, hired sailors out of Mintarn (and profited from the endeavor).

Now, the City of Splendors is on the mend. The harbor has been cleared of the broken ships that made up the former district of Mistshore, and Waterdeep again has its own navy. The city's Guard (its army), Watch (police force), Navy, and its famous Griffon Cavalry are all being reformed, but all of that might be a matter of years in the settling. A plague chased most residents out of the Warrens and Downshadow, and living or digging below the city's surface has been deemed illegal except by those authorized by the lords to do so. Somehow, even the air seems fresher. In the words of one wise moon elf matron (whose status as my aunt has positively no bearing on her wisdom), "Waterdeep is back to where it was when I was a lass."

Perhaps most surprising of the newest developments is the return of Laeral Silverhand to Waterdeep. Long thought dead, she reemerged only recently, and swiftly rallied the masked lords to support her supplanting of Dagult Neverember as Open Lord of Waterdeep. Very few remember Lady Laeral from her previous time in the city, but those elves who have been living in there for the last century claim she is more reserved than she once was. The new Open Lord doesn't speak of her family—any mention of her children, her late husband (the fabled Blackstaff, Khelben Arunsun), or any of her famed sisters is cause for her to cut short whatever conversation may be in progress at the time. Her relationship with the current Blackstaff, Vajra Safahr, is cordial, but the two are seldom seen in one-on-one conversation, and most think that Lady Laeral has little to learn from a mage who isn't nearly her equal.

As always, the Open Lord is selected and supported by several masked lords, who bear masks, robes, and

amulets to disguise themselves when publicly sitting in judgment or council, and who make policies for Waterdeep. Every Waterdhavian has suspicions as to whether this or that influential citizen is or isn't a lord of the city, and some are willing to make their beliefs public, but few who are confronted in such a way have ever claimed to be a lord, and none of those have also produced proof of that assertion.

Not hidden at all are the other lords of the city—the nobles of Waterdeep, whose high-nosed behavior and heavy-handed spending establish fashion in the city, which in turn creates trends all across the North for clothing, weaponry, favored trinkets, music, and any other preference that can be changed at a whim by those with enough coin to afford the expense. More than seventy-five noble families call Waterdeep home, representing between them all manner of business interests, rivalries, and internal strife.

Being a noble carries with it a great deal of advantage. Operating from one's place at the head of the economic and social hierarchy, a noble can easily lift a mediocre craftsperson out of obscurity, dash the hopes of a wealthy merchant of ever securing another contract within the city, or provide the backing an ambitious adventuring band needs to find fame and great wealth. The only true competition nobles face is from one another. Such rivalries are the source of much gossip and intrigue as





the nobles of Waterdeep always try to maintain at least a veneer of civility in their squabbles.

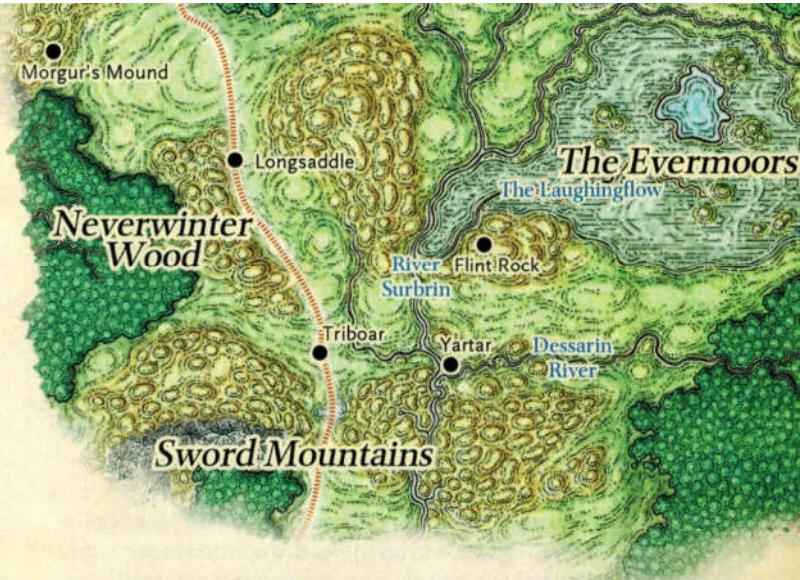
Although they seldom agree on much, one matter that all the noble houses see the same way is that their status should not be tainted by newcomers, and certainly not by anyone so brightcoin as to purchase one's way to a noble title. When during Lord Neverember's tenure it became legal for impoverished houses to sell their titles, and thus allow others to become noble, many leaders of the old-blood houses were apoplectic, particularly after some purchasers lost all their coin and sold their titles again within a season or two. Open Lord Laeral Silverhand has, to the relief of those leaders, seen the folly of this decision, and gathered enough support among the Lords of Waterdeep to not only reverse it, but to restore titles and lands to noble families who lost them through folly. The change has won her much support among the nobles. Now Zhents and Thayans and Baldurian merchants have coin enough to buy property within the city, if they choose, but that is no reason to award them noble titles and legal rights, instead of merely a mansion, for doing so.

YARTAR

Situated in the fork where the Rivers Surbrin and Dessein join near the Evermoor Way, Yartar is a fortified town that, were it not for its own petty, internal squabbles, might wield more influence among its fellows in the North. Currently, it is most remarkable for its barge-building operation (and that industry's importance to the commerce of other settlements) and its annual fairs.

Each summer, except in years when Shieldmeet occurs, a vast Hiring Fair is held in Yartar, during which all sorts of undesirable folk gather north of the town looking for work as guards, miners, farmhands, guides, or other unskilled laborers. For the most part, those who attend this fair are brutes, bandits, freeholders whose lands can no longer sustain them, or Uthgardt who wish to be among "civilized" folk for a short time—but occasionally, a strong hand or a skilled warrior can be culled from the bunch. While this event is going on, Yartar is overrun with visitors it would rather not welcome, who steal goods, sell wares in the street (sometimes those they have just stolen), meet unscrupulous contacts to hand off coin, information, or purloined items, and engage in the occasional spell duel. It's quite common for a new adventuring company to come into being at one of these fairs, when those who stand out from the crowd because they have legitimate skills to sell gravitate toward one another and decide to form a group.

In those years when Shieldmeet falls, the town is instead treated to a great festival on that day, sponsored mainly by the local temple to Tymora, the Happy Hall of Fortuitous Happenstance. The Shieldmeet festival features a number of games of chance, skill, and bravery, from dice and darts, to drunken running, to wrestling and other physical contests. Occasionally, the Tymoran priests use this festival to identify adventurers whom the goddess has called to a particular task, selected for a blessing, or otherwise marked for some undetermined destiny.



Whether during the Hiring Fair or the Shieldmeet festival, each summer at least one adventuring band seems to get its start in Yartar. Most fall into obscurity, but the Smiling Company—the still-active portion of a larger band of warriors who gathered in Yartar nearly a decade ago—still enjoys moderate success, and makes annual contributions to the Happy Hall.

Yartar is ruled by a Waterbaron who is elected for life. The current Waterbaron is Nestra Ruthiol, a hot-tempered woman who is wickedly calculating; though she is free with her words and her insults, she seldom takes action against rivals unless she is sure such can be done to the most efficiently painful effect. During my last visit to Yartar, accusations arose against the Waterbaron that she had murdered a man, Kaidrod Palyr, who was later revealed to have been her lover. His body was found in the river, with the soaked remnant of what appeared to be Nestra Ruthiol's favorite cloak. That she loudly and publicly argued with Palyr's wife, Tianshe, shortly before the accusations came to light did little to help her reputation, or the impression of her innocence. When she was finally cleared of the charges, Waterbaron Ruthiol made it clear that she didn't wish to speak of the matter again, and she would ensure that anyone who brought it up in official dealings would be quite unhappy with the results. Though there are whispers, it has not been mentioned in her presence since. Some blame the murder on the Hand of Yartar, the local thieves' guild, but I believe that Kaidrod was killed, and the Waterbaron was implicated, in order to free up the post for one of her rivals within the city.

It is conflicts and schemes such as this that keep Yartar from gaining prominence in the North. If the town can overcome its internal problems, take advantage of what its fellows in the Lords' Alliance can offer, and find a way to reap greater profit from its position along major trade routes—where it stands as the gateway to all the settlements of the northeast—Yartar might soon grow in size, wealth, and influence. Physical growth would require clearing terrain for further settlement and building another encircling wall to protect settlers—and additional guards hired to protect those who do the work.

With its location near two great rivers and its proximity to a third (the Laughingflow, forming a trio the

locals creatively call the Three Rivers), Yartar is a fishing town, and its tables have fish as fare at every meal. Fresh crabs, eels, and other river life are available both to eat and to purchase, and serve as a primary means of income for the fisherfolk of the town.

The other major industry of Yartar is barge building. Most of the region's river barges are built, or at least begin their service, in Yartar, and the works of the town's bargewrights are famous all up and down the Dessarin and its tributaries. It is the importance of Yartar's barges to the commerce of the North that earned the town a place in the Lords' Alliance, to ensure that Yartar doesn't fall to enemies and cause upheaval in the trade network along the rivers.

What can't be transported to or from Yartar by barge comes and goes by caravan instead, and the town's location makes it a key stop for most caravans passing between Waterdeep and Silverymoon. In Yartar, a caravan can arrange for swift repairs, replacements of wagon wheels, carts, or full wagons, or the replenishment of tack and other accessories.

Because Yartar has so few industries, and fewer close neighbors, its merchants are often in direct competition

with one another, and have neither the resources to seek new customers, nor the space or funds to explore new trades. As a result, a good deal of the gossip, thievery, and assault in Yartar has at its roots one merchant trying to get the upper hand on a rival, either through damage of goods, intimidation of workers, or theft of patrons and customers.

To curb and control rowdiness, the Waterbaron employs the Shields of Yartar, a mounted force of guards who police the town, keep order, and chase off the Uthgardt raids that occasionally menace the lands nearby. The Shields are housed in the Shield Tower, a fortified structure on the west bank of the Surbrin (the town sits primarily on the east), whose outer wall has frequently been torn down and rebuilt. It's rumored that guardian skeletons rise when unauthorized folk tread the ground between the walls, but no one has tested the area to see if its magic still functions; even if it doesn't, more than a hundred angry warriors charging out of the tower at trespassers is enough danger to scare people out of pursuing the idea. A fortified bridge connects the banks between the tower and the town proper.

More impressive than either the Shields or the Shield Tower is the Waterbaron's Barge. This massive vessel can carry two hundred soldiers or seventy-five Shields of Yartar with their horses. Its sides above the waterline are armored with iron. Behind its walls stand multiple crossbow contraptions, each able to fire a dozen bolts at once. When brought to bear against a force on the riverbank, the Shields loose two volleys against their enemies, then bring the Barge ashore and charge. No raiders have stood firm against such an assault.

In the center of town is the Waterbaron' Hall, a grand structure that is both the ruler's home and the location where she hears audiences. Feasts are often held here, though more often, the hall sees activity in its side rooms, where merchants dealing in large quantities of goods, or making deals and proposals that affect the entire community, can meet in comfort.

DWARFHOLDS OF THE NORTH

WHO AM I? SON, I'VE GOT HAIRS ON MY BACK LONGER than that little beard o' yours. *I fought with Emerus to retake Felbarr, and marched with every dwarf king of the North to win back Gauntlgrym. Lost half my foot to an orc's blade, and slew every damned one that got in my way marching home. If I want to sit and enjoy my old age now that we finally drove the orcs back, I'll do just that, and courtesy be damned. I've earned my rest. Your little lordling don't like it, let him come and tell me himself. I'm not getting up until I finish my ale.*

—Drorn Waranvil, to the envoy of the Marchion of Mirabar

The history of the dwarves in the North is a long and violent one, dating back more than six millennia. Before

FALLEN DWARVEN KINGDOMS AND THEIR MARKS

The North is littered with the remnants of many dwarven realms. Although much of the wealth at these sites has been plundered by monsters and adventurers over the centuries, evidence of the settlements and their borders remains graven on cavern walls, trail markings, and scattered coins. Some of these realms, and the marks that bear testimony to their presence, are detailed below.

Haunghannar. The oldest evidence of dwarven settlement in the North comes from the former site of Haunghannar. This small coastal realm arose nearly sixty-five centuries ago in the northern Sword Mountains and along the Sword Coast, then fell quickly and mysteriously some fifteen hundred years later. Some records suggest that many of the citizens, driven mad by the sea, sailed westward and never returned. **Mark:** A mountain, with a left-facing fish, surmounted by a seven-pointed star.

Gharraghaur. The dwarves of Gharraghaur were the original delvers beneath the earth at the site of present-day Mirabar. The kingdom was founded soon after Haunghannar but didn't last as long; twelve hundred years later it succumbed to a horde of ravaging orcs. **Mark:** Four vertical, diamond-shaped gems, three set in a triangle, with the largest in the center.

Besilmer. Nearly six thousand years ago, shield dwarves established an aboveground realm in the Dessarin valley that they named Besilmer. They were the builders of two noted landmarks on the Sword Coast: the Stone Bridge and the Halls of the Hunting Axe. Less than three hundred years after it came into being, Besilmer was overrun and destroyed by a horde of humanoids and giants. **Mark:** a wheel over a plow.

Delzoun. The great Northkingdom of the dwarves, Delzoun was carved out of the rock beneath the area known until recently as the Silver Marches. Founded soon after the fall of Besilmer, Delzoun remained a great power for nearly four thousand years, until orc hordes and subterranean monsters did it in. Many of Delzoun's greatest works, citadels such as Sundbarr and Adbar, survive and thrive yet today. **Mark:** a horizontal, double-headed hammer in a triangle of three sparkling gems.

there was a Standing Stone in the Dalelands, or a Waterdeep, or a Myth Drannor, there was the brief (in dwarven terms) glory of Besilmer, and the realms of Haunghdannar and Gharraghaur. Ruins now, to be sure, but these kingdoms lasted longer than almost any living realm of humans, even if their works have been forgotten by humans and dwarves alike.

The greatest and most recent of these dwarven realms was Delzoun, also called the Northkingdom. It stretched from the western edge of what was then the Narrow Sea (later, the Great Desert of Anauroch) west almost to present-day Silverymoon, and from the Ice Mountains to the Nether Mountains. Citadels Adbar and Felbarr were fortresses of Delzoun, and Mirabar, Mithral Hall, and Sundabar all owe their existence to that ancient kingdom or its descendants. Fabled Gauntlgrym, said to be touched by the presence of Moradin himself, was built by Delzoun's dwarves—first as a mine, and then as a city. It was the dwarves of Delzoun who built Ironmaster, too, and all the great mines and renowned forges of the North reside in the halls of the dwarves.

Now, when shield dwarves invoke the name of Delzoun, they are calling upon the glory of all their past accomplishments: every feat of architectural mastery, every fine blade or crushing warhammer forged, every kingdom and battle—won or lost—in defense of their people and the folk around them. The name is as much a battle cry and a badge of honor as it is a call into history, for although every dwarven settlement now has its own masters, kings, and queens, they all respect the memory of the great hammer of Delzoun and the glorious kingdom it represented.

The details in this section are drawn from the extensive teachings of Drorn Waranvil, a longbeard (dwarf elder) who is a retired veteran of the Iron Guard of Citadel Adbar and the Citadel Guards of Felbarr. Drorn fought in the orc wars of both this and the last century, and helped free Citadel Felbarr (twice) and Gauntlgrym before he put down his warhammer a few years ago and began to chronicle his experiences for the benefit of younger dwarves seeking to know more about their heritage and about the world of today from the proper perspective.

CITADEL ADBAR

In the extreme north of Faerûn, near the Cold Wood, lie the Ice Mountains. There, in the bitter cold, stands the eternal fortress of Citadel Adbar, the last great remnant of the Northkingdom, and glory of fallen Delzoun. For nearly eighteen centuries, Adbar has stood strong against every threat from every foe, and stood fast, to the great pride of its residents and our people throughout the region.

From the surface, Citadel Adbar looks less like a castle or a human city than a mountain carved to suit the purposes of the dwarves who live there. The two great towers that stand uppermost are ringed with vicious dragonspikes to keep large creatures from landing to attack the structures directly. The great chimney of the city's central foundry stands between them, belching smoke like a volcano about to erupt. Ringing the citadel is a host of platforms, battlements, and arrow

slits from where defenders can fire crossbows at anyone foolish enough to attack the city.

For centuries, Adbar has stood as the living monument of the Northkingdom. Already the main fortress of Delzoun when that empire fell, it only grew in importance to the dwarves of the region as other settlements were overrun by orcs, assailed by goblins, or simply disappeared. An orc horde hoping to take Citadel Adbar might rage against its walls, but to little effect, until the great, unyielding granite became the anvil against which they were smashed. The great drawbridge allowed none to pass except welcomed guests, and such guests were few indeed. Standing unconquered, it was the bastion of dwarven hope, glory, and trade.

But now, for the first time in memory, my fellow Adbarran seem truly frightened at the prospect of opening the citadel to any outsiders. Perhaps they are reacting to the recent losses of the war, or the lack of leadership shown by our new king, or mere war-weariness, but for whatever reason Adbar's gates are even harder to move with soft words than they have been in the past, and there are fewer traders coming out of the city nowadays.

The recent orc wars have cost the kingdom dearly, both in warriors and in leadership. In a short time, our long-ruling king, Harbromm, died. His unprepared twin sons shared the rule until the elder, Bromm, was himself killed by a dragon, leaving young King Harnoth with the rule of the ancient citadel.

What followed was a great bleeding of the realm. Much was required to break the North out of the great siege the Many-Arrows orcs held it under. There are also whispers that King Harnoth led his Knights of the Mithral Shield out into the field to vent his rage and grief on the orcs in ill-advised assaults, winnowing down the once great Knights to fewer than two dozen. The Iron Guard, Adbar's army, appears as strong as ever it did, but given the extent of the losses against the orcs, it would be little surprise if their newer recruits were more smiths than warriors, serving their realm out of a sense of duty rather than a desire for battle. I served in the Guard for a century, but I've yet to test the newcomers to see just what they're made of.

If you are fortunate enough to be granted entry to Adbar, be wary of walking around on your own. Within the citadel are traps, deadfalls, and other hazards in various places waiting for someone to approach a protected location incorrectly. A guide, if you can find one, is necessary for newcomers to get around safely.

Beneath the citadel proper, miles of dwarf-sized caverns form a confusing maze that frustrates most non-dwarf visitors. These tunnels are what remain of the early mining efforts inside the mountain. Below them lie the great ore mines of today, constantly being worked by crews of engineers and laborers.

By law, the mines are forbidden to visitors—even non-Adbarran dwarves—except in times of great emergency. So, given the impregnable nature of the fortress, no one not of Adbar has yet been privileged enough to witness what occurs down below. The citadel's Great Wheel, a most impressive sight even to a dwarf, is an ever-turning water wheel that provides power to keep



Adbar's foundries, mines, and other operations working at all times. Near the wheel is the Hall of Moradin's Forge, a place of worship that reminds every dwarf of the Soul Forger's strength and enduring protection. One can't help but feel safe in its presence, and a true dwarf is home in the warmth of Moradin's shadow.

Given the current state of the surface lands around the citadel, it is no surprise that Adbarran are even more suspicious than usual of caravans and visitors that approach the city by means of an underground route. One such road arrives from the west, connecting Adbar to Mithral Hall and Mirabar through the ancient tunnels of Old Delzoun. Another tunnel leads south from Adbar to meet the Lowroad, which connects the ruins of Ascore in the east to Citadel Felbarr in the west.

No matter where they come from, all roads leading to Adbar converge so that all travelers must confront the great pair of iron doors known as the Caravan Door. Like the rest of Citadel Adbar, this gate has never been breached. Mention the idea of that happening to an Adbarran dwarf, if you're looking to get a laugh.

THE DIRGE OF DELZOUN

The tale of the great Northkingdom of the shield dwarves, the Dirge of Delzoun takes more than a day to sing in its entirety. The song recounts the history of Delzoun, from its founding millennia ago to the dispersal of its cities and the settlement of the successor realms of dwarves in the North. It is performed only in Dwarvish, and no known written copies have ever been reported. Only a privileged few non-dwarves have ever heard the Dirge in its entirety, and dwarf bards who want to perform this epic must demonstrate great skill in both singing and history.

The current dirgekeeper is Ollyn Grimtongue of Citadel Felbarr, who was appointed by King Emerus Warcrown a century ago, and is the only dwarf permitted to add new lines to the ballad. It is believed that, now that Emerus has gone to the Halls of Moradin, Grimtongue is preparing a stanza honoring his former liege as a hero who rivals the champions of Old Delzoun.

CITADEL FELBARR

Among the eldest and grandest of the Delzoun holds, Citadel Felbarr was built more than three thousand years ago—a span of time beyond the ability of younger races to comprehend. With great wealth, obtained through profitable trade with Netheril and some of the older human settlements of the North, the dwarves forged themselves a mighty fortress.

Like most dwarven settlements, Felbarr was built around mining. With the fall of Netheril, the reduction of trade along the Lowroad, and signs that the mines beneath the city were reaching the end of their usefulness, the Felbarran abandoned the citadel after nearly two millennia, whereupon a force out of Silverymoon occupied the fortress shortly thereafter. Within half a century, the orcs had come to realize the weakness of the much smaller garrison, and Felbarr was taken by the savages following a four-month siege. The orcs gave the place their tribal name, and the Citadel of Many Arrows stood as a fortress for orcs for more than three hundred years.

The recent story of Citadel Felbarr is the story of my fallen friend, King Emerus Warcrown. In 1367 DR, Emerus led a force of dwarves to seize on the advantage when, to our surprise and delight, another orc horde assaulted the orcs inside the Citadel of Many Arrows. Biding his time until the invaders broke down the gates, Emerus vanquished both tribes of orcs and reclaimed the citadel for the dwarves. After a first, brutal winter, Citadel Felbarr was restored: its forges were relit, and the sound of dwarven hammers began ringing through its halls once again. It was a proud time when we welcomed the following summer with Felbarr back in dwarf hands.

In the most recent war, the orcs again took Citadel Felbarr, but with the help of King Bruenor Battlehammer and an alliance of dwarves from across the North, King Emerus again retook Felbarr, slaying every orc that managed to enter the city and the tunnels below. The grateful king and his loyal warriors then agreed to accompany Bruenor to Gauntlgrym, and there aided him in reclaiming that ancient city as well, but Emerus was mortally wounded in the effort. Bruenor honored

King Emerus by naming him the second king of restored Gauntlgrym (after King Connerad was granted the honor of first kingship posthumously), but for most Felbarren dwarves, this honor is an empty comfort, because their beloved hero-king has been taken from them.

Now ruling Citadel Felbarr are King Emerus's distant kin, King Morinn and Queen Tithmel, who were recently married in a union designed to join separate claims to the throne into one family. Tithmel's claim to the throne is the stronger by a small degree of kinship, but Morinn is a quieter, more thoughtful ruler. Queen Tithmel has ever been a warrior, and some Felbarren are afraid she may run headlong into the wrong battle before the couple can provide the realm with an heir, and so they hope that King Morinn's softer influence will help to temper her impetuous nature and keep the city strong through the trying times following the recent conflicts. Although the two monarchs share the rule of the city, and speak with absolute authority, their citizens are wise to listen to what both have to say before deciding how to act on royal edicts.

Most humans know Citadel Felbarr from a distance. They see only a great raised road winding through a vale of broken rock, brooded over by two barbicans known as the Hammer and the Anvil. Two other fortifications loom higher still over the road, embedded in the nearby cliffs and built atop them. These are the North Vigil and the South Vigil. Far beyond them, the massive Rune Gate stands at the end of the road to give entrance into Felbarr, but visitors rarely pass through it.

Like most dwarven cities, Felbarr exists almost entirely underground. However, since it has been invaded by orcs more than once, no accurate maps of the city's full interior are known to exist, preventing would-be attackers from gaining their information. Dwarves, even those visiting from other realms through the connections with the Lowroad, have little trouble finding their way around, but humans, especially those who can't read Dwarvish or the shorthand runes carved throughout the city, have a far more difficult time.

Following the war, most Felbarren applauded the dissolution of the Silver Marches. In its time of greatest need, no races other than dwarves moved even the slightest to aid Citadel Felbarr, when more assistance and better coordination might have prevented not only that citadel's fall, but Sundabar's as well. Felbarren merchants remain willing to trade with the cities of the North, and will aid the other dwarven kingdoms when necessary, but it is doubtful that Queen Tithmel will ever consider an alliance with humans like the one that created Luruar, even if King Morinn might.

GAUNTLGRYM

Gauntlgrym has a complex and contradictory history, the gist of it depending on who's doing the telling. Humans have one story, of what they know from recent years, but for us dwarves, Gauntlgrym is an ancient place, first delved as a mine in the earliest days of Old Delzoun. All sorts of myths persist about the great mithral doors of the city, but at its start, Gauntlgrym was simply a mine. When they delved too deeply, the

dwarves there discovered the presence of a great being of flame, sealed the mines, and left. Only later, when the humans begged the Delzoun dwarves to build one, was there ever a city in Gauntlgrym. It arose because, this time, the dwarves succeeded in harnessing the primal power of fire in the depths, thus creating the Great Forge that made the city possible. Or so the stories go.

Despite all the quests undertaken by adventurers down the centuries, none ever truly found the ancient city until the ghosts of Gauntlgrym's former denizens began calling to living dwarves to seek out the city. And some did—or tried to, anyway. Shortly thereafter, the orc wars began anew, and nearly every dwarf's attention turned back to the existing dwarfholds and the dangers those places now faced. Gradually, as the orcs were pushed back and the dwarven cities secured anew, those delvers began to recall their promises to their ancestors. Further, when the war ended, King Bruenor Battlehammer of Mithral Hall promised to lead the dwarves to Gauntlgrym and reclaim it for the dwarves of the North.

It took fierce fighting to drive out the creatures that had claimed the city from below, and no one is quite sure who or what—aside from the drow—had tried to occupy Gauntlgrym, but in the end, the dwarven armies prevailed, and Bruenor claimed the victory. King Emerus Warcrown of Citadel Felbarr was gravely wounded, and Bruenor proclaimed him the second king of Gauntlgrym before his death. When dear Emerus passed on, Bruenor assumed the rule of Gauntlgrym, once again abdicating the leadership in Mithral Hall.

There are some who think that King Bruenor has designs on a great, restored empire of Delzoun, with the dwarves of all the North—from Ironmaster to Adbar and Sundabar—swearing him fealty. Others fear that he will punish those settlements that didn't contribute warriors to the cause to retake Gauntlgrym, but those folk don't know the returned king very well. If he wants a reborn Delzoun, may Moradin and his children grant him the wisdom to do it right, and the fortitude to see it through. It's a throne I wouldn't wish on anyone.

THE CANTICLE OF GAUNTLGRYM

Passed down by dwarves throughout the North for centuries, the Canticle of Gauntlgrym is now something of an anthem for the reclaimed city. It is often sung on the road by dwarven travelers on their way to make a life in Bruenor's halls.

Silver halls and mithral doors
Stone walls to seal the cavern
Grander sights than e'er before
In smithy, mine, and tavern
Toil hard in endless night
In toast, oh, lift yer flagon!
Ye'll need the drink to keep ye right
At forge that bakes the dragon.
Come Delzoun, come one and all!
Rush to grab yer kin
And tell 'em that their home awaits
In grandest Gauntlgrym!



The rise of a dwarven city so close to the coastal powers of Neverwinter and Waterdeep brings about its own special opportunities and concerns. Surely, once they get their forges going properly, the dwarves will sell armor and weapons similar to the excellent pieces they forged in the eastern cities of Old Delzoun, and this merchandise may lessen the demand for goods from more distant dwarven settlements. In particular, Sundabar is worried that its weapons will no longer be sought after along the Sword Coast, and is looking southward for new markets in Elturgard and elsewhere.

Beyond the great mithral doors of the city lies the great Iron Tabernacle, the holy center of Gauntlgrym, which the priests of all the Morndinsamman are meticulously restoring to honor the gods. Every portion of the city has a road or passageway that eventually leads back to this site, a vast cavern of crisscrossing walkways and great stairs. In its lowest levels, the Tabernacle holds the resting places of countless of Gauntlgrym's dead. Scholars have set about cataloging the lineages recorded here, to give King Bruenor a more complete picture of the bloodlines of the city, and to determine whether any of the living clans have relations or honored dead among those interred.

Deeper still is the Great Forge of Gauntlgrym, where in times past hammers rang off adamantine anvils to forge wonders from every conceivable type of metal. Now the forge might be brought back to life again, and

soon—the priests and spellcasters of the city are working on a means of containing the great heat emanating from the Fiery Pit where the being of pure flame is contained, to harness the unquenchable fire as the dwarves of old did.

IRONMASTER

I've never set foot in Ironmaster myself, but I fought beside Storn Skulldark, a young warrior-priest of Clangeddin who was taking a sort of "vacation" from it in order to help reclaim Gauntlgrym. His descriptions of life in Ironmaster confirm much of what I've heard of the place, and so what I relate to you now is truth as solid as Moradin's anvil.

The dwarves of Ironmaster don't want you there, and they want little from the wider world that their traders can't bring back for them. Approaches to the vale in which their city lies are clearly marked with the symbol of Ironmaster: an anvil on a diamond. Such a mark is your only warning, and those ignorant of its meaning court death at the hands of dwarf patrols that will attack any interlopers. Some innocents have been spared and turned back, but no one should rely on the mercy of a dwarf of Ironmaster.

If you were to pass beyond the borders and into Ironmaster itself, you would behold one of the wonders of the world. The great Shaengarne river rushes through a deep canyon of rock and ice in a series of cascades and waterfalls, throwing up freezing froth as it bashes against massive spires of rock that rise from the riverbed. Ironmaster is built in these spires and into the walls of the canyon, the tunnels and towers strung together by high bridges and cliff-side walkways. To hear Storn talk of the place, you would think that dwarves scrabbling about at such heights through the open air was as normal as badgers in a burrow, but I don't mind saying I set aside my ale after he spoke of it.

Ironmaster owes its existence to the restlessness of Illestrogue Sstar, who left Citadel Adbar long ago with nearly a quarter of the population of the Northkingdom, headed for what is now Mirabar. By all accounts he was mad, and hoped to extend a dwarven empire to the sea. Once there, and settled, he grew restless again, and headed farther west with his troop, finally settling his nerves in sight of the sea over the Shaengarne River. There the dwarf leader died, and his heir demanded that the folk that followed him build a settlement in tribute to Clanmaster Sstar's grand vision of a dwarven empire. The dwarves found extensive deposits of iron in the hills surrounding their valley, and so named their city Ironmaster.

Ironmaster proved true to its name, and the dwarves have been tunneling out under to tundra for centuries, following the veins of metal. This brought them into contact with duergar of the Deepkingdom a generation back, and Ironmaster has been at war with them ever since. Storn was himself a veteran of many battles for tunnel territory, and despite being so young that not a hair of his beard was white, his knowledge of tunnel-fighting tactics rivaled my own.

Their war with the duergar isn't Ironmaster's only secret, however. My friend Storn wielded two silvered axes, as befits any devote follower of Clangeddin Silverbeard, but when I returned to him an axe he had thrown in the heat of battle, I noted its remarkable weight, and Storn told me that the blade was not steel beneath, but adamantine. I questioned him more about this, and his readiness to tell me of its origin speaks to both the abundance of adamantine among the Ironmaster dwarves and of my friend's innocence about the wider world. Apparently, the dragon-worshiping humans of the distant island of Tuern have long given raw adamantine mined from their island to the smiths of Ironmaster, and they render finished works of adamantine back to the Northlanders in return. Of course, not all the adamantine makes it back to the Northlanders, but since the humans are ignorant of the means of forging adamantine, they are likely none the wiser. What a trove of arms and armor must lie hidden beyond Ironmaster's borders! Ah well, surely they put it to good use against the duergar.

I don't think Storn will mind my sharing his city's secrets. You can go and ask him if you like. He'll no doubt enjoy another little "vacation" from the war in the tunnels.

MITHRAL HALL

The ancestral home of Clan Battlehammer, Mithral Hall was a place of great potential wealth when it was founded in the days of Old Delzoun. Dwarves of Clan Battlehammer left Citadel Adbar, heading west in the hope of finding mithral deposits hidden in the southern spurs of the Spine of the World. These they found, and so began the delving of Mithral Hall, with Clan Ironshield founding Settlestone nearby as a means of buffering the market for the products of the hall's ore.

Mithral Hall enjoyed centuries of profit before its delving permitted the shadow dragon, Shimmergloom, to break through into the world. A settlement of thousands was reduced to fewer than three hundred—all of them too young, too old, too weak, or too ill to fight—who fled to Settlestone. There, they waited for months for word from King Garumn that their lands were again safe. When messengers to the city didn't return, it was clear that Mithral Hall had been lost, and its dwarves headed north, first to Ironmaster, where they were treated with such distrust that they couldn't remain, and then to Icewind Dale.

When Garumn's grandson, Bruenor, was old enough, and sure of his path, he gathered allies to retake his former homeland, and went on a great many adventures with the group later known as the Companions of the Hall. At the end, Bruenor slew the dragon Shimmergloom and reclaimed Mithral Hall for Clan Battlehammer after almost two centuries.

After Bruenor regained the throne, his personal friends attracted some powerful enemies to Mithral Hall, including the drow of Menzoberranzan. This is one reason, his supporters claim, that the king abdicated in favor of his ancestor Gandalug Battlehammer: to protect the people from his personal enemies. Some of Bruenor's detractors claim it was wanderlust that made him leave, but none will bother (or dare) to ask him. In any case, when Gandalug died, Bruenor did his duty and resumed the throne.

Before Bruenor died, he was instrumental in gaining dwarven support for the Treaty of Garumn's Gorge, which brought peace between the dwarves and the orc Kingdom of Many-Arrows. When the orcs, in time, broke their treaty and made war on the North, he returned from the dead almost as though he had been summoned to rally the dwarves to defend themselves and punish their enemies. Some say he delayed receiving the rewards of Moradin's own Dwarffhome to return and aid his fellows and kinsfolk. Such sacrifice, such loyalty, makes a dwarf king worthy of the crown.

Bruenor Battlehammer, the Eighth and Tenth and Thirteen King of Mithral Hall, no longer leads Mithral Hall or the Battlehammer dwarves that live there. Since his return to life, he has refocused his attention on Gauntlgrym, and doesn't claim the kingship of his former home. Instead, the crown has been offered to General Dagnabett Waybeard, granddaughter of Bruenor's ally, the great general Dagna.

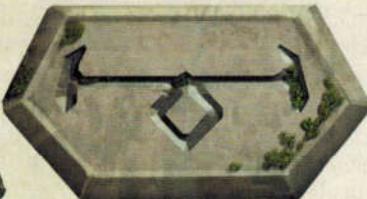
When last I visited Mithral Hall a few years ago, I passed through the rebuilt ruin of Settlestone, where a garrison of two hundred stands to protect the approach to the Mithral Hall. Once I reached the gates, the



CLAN BATTLEHAMMER



CLAN BLACKBANNER



CLAN BUCKLEBAR



CLAN FOEHAMMER



CLAN HORN



CLAN STONESHIELD

massive granite doors proved to be heavily guarded, and nearly impossible to open from the outside. Mithral Hall's defenders call themselves the Host of the Hall, a disciplined, well-armored cohort that is willing to defend the city to the last dwarf. The famed Gutbuster Brigade is part of the Host, battleragers who strike fear into any enemy intelligent enough to realize whom it is they face.

Travelers allowed inside the city are housed in upper-level guest chambers just inside the labyrinth of caverns known as the Maze. From there, paths lead down into the middle levels of the city, past its various furnaces, and onward to either the lower levels and deeper mines (where guests aren't permitted) or the undercity (where non-dwarf visitors are prohibited).

Despite its recent reputation and the growing legend surrounding its most famous king, Mithral Hall is much more a mine than it is a city. Like most dwarven realms, it lost significant numbers to the orcs, and saw its population further depleted by Bruenor's quest for Gauntlgrym and the resulting permanent relocation of some of his people. As a result, Mithral Hall's numbers are sorely diminished at present, and it remains to be seen whether its fortunes will follow suit.

SUNDABAR

Like Mirabar, Sundabar was a dwarven settlement atop which a human city was built. Sundabar's recent fall should serve as an example to my fellow dwarves of what can happen when the balance of power shifts toward the surface and into human hands.

The city is descended from the citadel of Sundabar, a stronghold of Delzoun constructed two thousand years ago around a strange volcanic rift that would come to be known as the Everfire—a mystical source of endless heat for the city's smithies and foundries that allowed Sundabar to produce works of great wonder. Sundabar was led by a Forgemaster, the smith most skilled at working with the Everfire. When one Forgemaster died or another surpassed his or her ability, leadership of Sundabar changed hands.

So it was until the fleeing remnants of Ascalhorn were pursued to the citadel's doorstep some time later. Then the Forgemaster of Sundabar aided the humans in fighting off the demons and other monsters that chased them. In recognition of a human saving his life during the fight, the Forgemaster permitted the refugees to settle on the surface, rather than forcing them to depart once the battle was done. The partnership that grew between dwarves and humans became renowned throughout the North, and the surface city of Sundabar was built up into a mighty fortress of commerce.

However, as the humans flourished above, the dwarf population dwindled, and eventually the Forgemaster was overtaken in prestige and influence by the Ruling Master of Sundabar, who came to speak for the human guilds and merchants of the surface city. One such ruling master, Helm Dwarf-Friend, was so beloved and respected that his descendants were able to crown themselves kings, something no dwarf before or since has dared to do in Sundabar.

King Firehelm, Helm's grandson, was the king in Sundabar when the city fell to the orc horde. He did not survive. Beyond that tragedy, the recent war did horrific damage to Sundabar and the humans on the surface. A dragon dropped great stones on many of the buildings above, and a good portion of the city's outer wall was destroyed. Most of Sundabar's military leadership was wiped out when the building they were meeting in was crushed. Despite the best efforts of Aleina Brightlance of Silverymoon's Knights in Silver to organize a defense, and the valiant efforts of the Sundabar garrison, orcs streamed into the city, slaughtering the human population on the surface and driving what few defenders remained into the caverns below, and from them many fled through the Underdark. The dwarves of the undercity barricaded themselves in the Everfire caverns, and waited. When the orc warlord Hartusk left only a token garrison behind in the city to slow pursuers, the dwarves emerged from below and set about slaughtering every orc and goblin in Sundabar.

Sundabar is now a dwarven city in its entirety; the human population is gone. Efforts to clear away rubble and debris from the attacks are slow, as most dwarves remain in the sheltered undercity, and those few who have duties on the surface have taken over the buildings

with the least damage, scavenging stones from ruined structures to reinforce those that can be salvaged.

Before the war, Sundabar's surface streets were cobbled smooth, but many of those roads have been destroyed by falling stones, torn up for ammunition or to repair walls, or simply neglected. Now, the surface city is a hollowed-out ruin. Some believe that the city above will be allowed to wither into oblivion, with the exception of the sturdy double wall that surrounds it (and which the dwarves have already repaired). The temples of human deities stand abandoned. The walls are patrolled by a few sharp-eyed sentries, whose duty is to report what they see and to turn away unwanted visitors.

In the center of the upper city, the Circle still stands around the ruin of the Master's Hall, ready to receive visiting caravans, livestock, and merchants. However, few such visitors arrive, and fewer still are welcomed, as Sundabar prefers to engage in trade nowadays only with other dwarven cities through the Underdark. Were it within the Forgemaster's power, he would see to it that all commerce entering and leaving the city do so by means of underground traffic, so that most surface trade routes could be abandoned entirely.

Sundarren trust of outsiders is low, and their assessment of humans lower still. During the war, of all the human cities, only Silverymoon made any attempt to aid Sundabar, and that aid was (to dwarven minds) far too little and too late. As a result, with the Silver Marches dissolving, Sundabar wasted no time withdrawing from the Lords' Alliance as well, officially severing formal ties with the human realms of the North except for those necessary for trade. Given that such trade is now a rare occurrence, most of the human realms see Sundabar as jealously guarding its wealth and cravenly hiding beneath the surface, while the rest of the region does what it can to recover from the recent conflicts. Sundabar's losses in buildings and in population have done nothing to diminish the contents of its overflowing coffers, and despite its current state, the city remains one of the wealthiest in the North, though most of that coin rarely leaves the city now.

The notion of kingship has come up among the dwarves in the undercity, but the Forgemaster has rejected the idea. Let the dwarves tend to themselves, surely, but there should be no king in Sundabar. I don't know whether Flamestoker's reticence is false modesty or true wisdom, or if he is waiting for a warrior-king to claim Sundabar as part of a larger realm.

THORNHOLD

West of the High Road and hard to the coast near the Mere of Dead Men lies what humans refer to as Thornhold. Once the keep of a petty warlord of the Margaster family of Waterdeep, it was captured and claimed by a paladin as part of the Second Troll War. For many years the Knights of Samular, an order of Tyrran paladins founded by one Samular Caradoon, used Thornhold as its base, though the hold remained the personal property of the Margaster family.

For a brief time a little more than a century ago, Thornhold fell into Zhentilim hands. When the Zhentilim marched through the Underdark to claim

Thornhold, they passed through the caverns of Clan Stoneshaft, which had lived below since before the time the surface city was erected by humans. Though the Zhentilim killed or enslaved many of the dwarves there, they failed to destroy the clan. The survivors soon escaped, regrouped, and retook Thornhold by force under their leader, Ebenezer Stoneshaft, with the aid of Samular's descendant, the Harper Bronwyn Caradoon. After the fortress was reclaimed, in a gesture of respect and gratitude, Caradoon bequeathed its custody to Clan Stoneshaft.

The dwarves of Thornhold are all of the Stoneshaft clan, and because tunnels from their home connect to the castle, they refer to the place as Stoneshaft Hold; they use "Thornhold" only when a non-dwarf in a conversation is confused and an explanation must be made. By habit and nature, Stoneshaft dwarves are secretive (even for dwarves), but nonetheless always eager to hear what's afoot in Waterdeep, particularly any doings involving the Margaster family, whom they see as foes who will one day attack their home to regain it or destroy it if they can't take it back.

To most humans, Thornhold is merely the fortress above the surface, a castle of gray stone with a thick, curving wall and a two-towered central keep. They don't know of the caverns below that lead to the Stoneshaft clanhold. The cliff facing the sea is so sheer that no wall need be built to protect that side of the hill on which Thornhold sits. The castle is utterly without adornment or ornamentation, and only crenellations and arrow slits break the solid face of stone. Within the castle, surrounding the bailey, are small buildings of wood and plaster that hold animals and are used for smithwork, candlemaking, laundry, wood repairs (including wagons and the like), and brewing beer.

Long ago, Thornhold was a profitable stopover for caravanners, adventurers, and other travelers journeying north along the High Road past or through the Mere of Dead Men. For decades, the expansion of the Mere in the calamities of the Spellplague cut off most travel along the High Road. During that time, the Stoneshafts lived in relative isolation, stockpiling their ore, refined metal, and crafts. Stoneshafts are known for the fine metal- and gemwork they craft, considered by most to be works of art worn as personal adornment.

The Margasters of Waterdeep believe that they still have a right to Thornhold. The fortress sits on the re-established High Road leading to Neverwinter, so it is no wonder that the nobles wish to profit from the fortress's location along that route. The Knights of Samular also show interest in restoring their outpost at Thornhold as a prelude to sorties into the Mere, and there is talk that these desires may lead to a curious alliance between the grasping human nobles and the high-minded paladins.

Stoneshafts fear the politics of powerful Waterdeep will lead to an assault on Thornhold. They have thus been preparing for siege by gathering supplies and reinforcing Thornhold's defenses.

Stoneshaft dwarves can taste the wealth, bustling energy, and constant excitement of nearby Waterdeep, and want to share in it. They don't want to be forced into isolationism, and kept away from Waterdhavian society

and the riches of trade. The Stoneshafts aren't blind to House Margaster's ambitions, and they know that they must bring in profits if they hope to weather the challenges to their home. They're very careful to avoid being caught alone, fearing kidnap or torture at the hands of hired agents of the Margasters eager to learn the secrets of their defenses. For the same reason, only the Stoneshaft elders know and plan all the details of those defenses, so any single dwarf doesn't know everything and can't reveal it.

Stoneshafts like and are interested in the full variety of clothing and fashions, music, jokes and current news and rumors, and household goods and tools that Waterdeep offers. They tend to favor maces and morningstars and other bludgeoning weapons, plain armor with full-face helms that conceal a wearer's identity and that have plates to protect the vital areas of a knocked-down dwarf, and spicy foods.

ISLAND KINGDOMS

WHAT MAKES ME SUCH AN EXPERT ON SAILING OFF THE *Sword Coast?* Well, *experience, for one. Survival, for another. I've been doing this longer than most of my readers have been alive, and this is the third version of this book I'm offering. I write one of these only every half-century, and if you think the purchase price isn't worth the heaps of coin you'll make by selling my work to your customers, you're a fool. Don't want it? Don't buy it.*

—Gardorra Burr, to a Waterdhavian bookseller

West of the Sword Coast lies the Sea of Swords, and beyond that the Trackless Sea, a vast expanse separating Faerûn from whatever lies to the far west. Between the shore and the unknown are a number of islands, some large and others so small they lack names of their own. These island nations trade—and war—with Faerûn and one another, just like any mainland nation.

The information below is drawn from *Fifty Years at Sea, Volume the Third*, by Gardorra Burr, a gnome sailor who has spent most of her two hundred years traversing the Sea of Swords.

MINTARN

I don't know what the people of Mintarn did to attract Beshaba's ire, but they surely have her attention. For as long as I can remember, Mintarn has lived in the shadow of the dragon Hoondarrh—called the Red Rage of Mintarn since he dwells on an island close by—but for just as long, the people of Mintarn have been able to purchase the dragon's mercy. Now a series of events conspire to threaten their power to pay the dragon, as well as their other aspirations on the Sword Coast.

Mintarn has long been a neutral ground for various forces—a place aloof from the conflicts between the city-states of the coast and the rivalries of the Northlander isles. Any ship—be it pirate, privateer, or merchant vessel—could dock at Mintarn and find a warm welcome. Many treaties were struck on its shores, and when peace couldn't be achieved, soldiers and ships of

Mintarn hired themselves out to various power groups, with no fear of retribution on Mintarn.

Not long ago, Mintarn was awash with coin. Dagult Neverember invested heavily in the island, creating a ship-building company, combat-training facilities, and even lending his coin to the yearly tribute to Hoondarrh when other means fell short. The White Sails company in which he invested grew to become Mintarn's preminent supplier of mercenary ships and soldiers.

Things only improved when Waterdeep wasted its navy chasing Northlander pirates. Then Neverember, acting as Open Lord of Waterdeep, relied on his connections to Mintarn to draft a new mercenary navy for the city. What's more, Neverember took it on himself to raise Neverwinter from the ashes, hiring more mercenaries of Mintarn to serve his needs as that city's Lord Protector.

With funds from two of the greatest cities of the Sword Coast filling its coffers, Mintarn knew a prosperity of which its people had never dreamed. It's true that the same tide that had coin flowing into Mintarn drew much of its young and vibrant people outward, but those they left behind were comforted by the knowledge that their family and friends didn't leave for war, but for much safer duties.

The trouble started, not surprisingly, with Hoondarrh. Though Mintarn made yearly tributes to the great wyrm and was always careful to neglect not a copper, old Hoondarrh was known to sleep for decades at a time, and the folk of Mintarn took their agreement with the dragon for granted. But something awoke him early a few years ago, and it was as if the red bastard could smell the gold coming into the island. Although Mintarn had made proper tribute, Hoondarrh landed atop Castle Mintarn, toppling two of its towers with his weight, and roared a demand for more treasure, right then, and in future tributes.

Of course, the folk of Mintarn scrambled to meet the impatient wyrm's demands. Even if they had all the soldiers shipped away to Neverwinter and Waterdeep, what could they hope to do mighty Hoondarrh?

Things got worse recently when Neverember was deposed as Open Lord of Waterdeep. The Lords of Waterdeep have decided to reestablish their own navy, and they've told the soldiers of Mintarn to leave the city or take a commission among the navy or the city's other armed forces. Now in Neverwinter, Lord Neverember has decided to do away with a mercenary force as well. He says he wants to instill a sense of civic pride among the folk of Neverwinter, but many in Mintarn see it as a betrayal. Neverember is a cunning man. I think with Hoondarrh active, the Lord Protector is simply cutting his losses. He didn't get the nickname Dagger just because his first name is Dagult.

Mintarn had been playing the game well, but now it finds itself backed into a corner with few moves left to make. The coin is no longer flowing into its harbors, and many of its best and brightest have decided not to return. There's talk of hiring adventurers to slay Hoondarrh, but Hoondarrh's hoard must be massive. If that's not enough of a draw to dragon slayers, then there's



no amount of money Mintarn could offer that would sweeten the deal.

I like Mintarn. It has cozy inns, and they make a brilliant green wine unique to their island. But, there are safer harbors during the current storm. Maybe in another decade or two I'll try Mintarn again.

In the case that you visit, here are a few other things you should know of Mintarn.

Every five or six years, a new tyrant—yes, that's what they call themselves—emerges on Mintarn, ruling the island kingdom in the name of preserving its status as a neutral ground and a free port. A few years ago, Her Tyrancy was Bloeth Embuirhan, the supposed great-granddaughter of a tyrant from a century ago. She ruled the island through its most prosperous days, but odds are that the folk of Mintarn (and maybe herself as well, if she has her wits about her) wants someone else on the throne now.

Despite its open harbors and many fine establishments, Mintarn remains a loosely settled island. There are farms and homesteads, to be sure, but also wide, open spaces between them, and enough land that anyone could make a small living if so inclined.

SKADAURAK

The Red Rage of Mintarn dwells in this mountain that rises from the sea north of Mintarn. I've never heard of any treasure hunters making it out alive, but those who

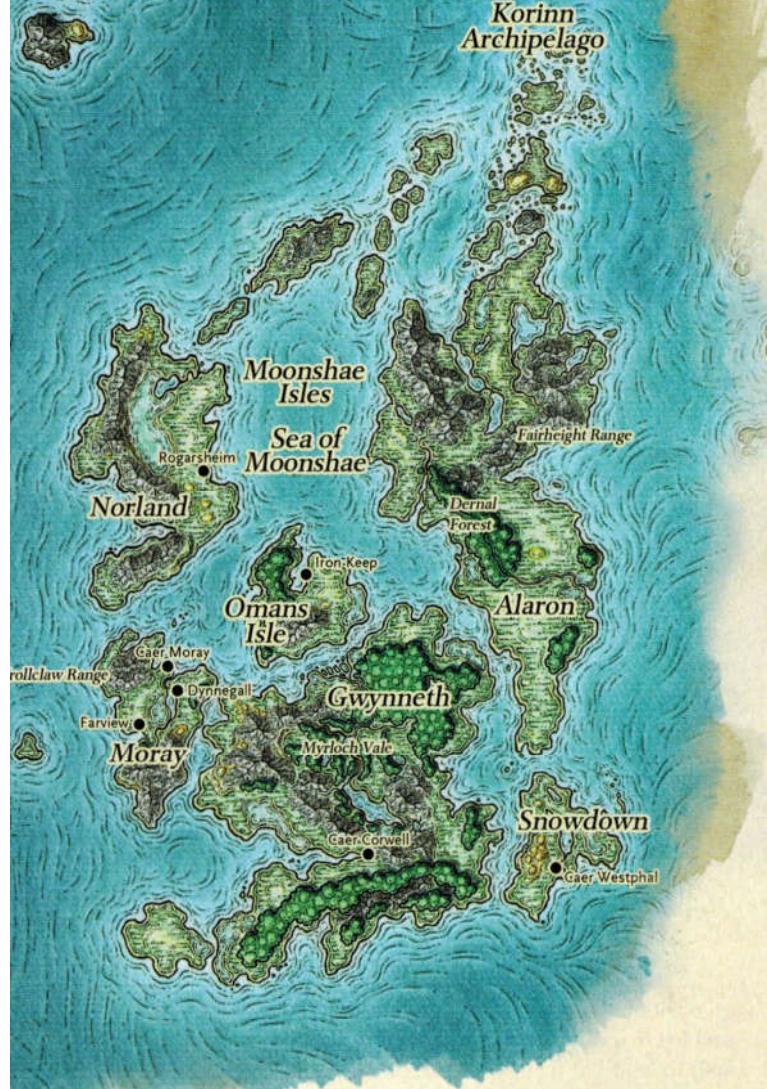
give tribute to Hoondarrh say they sail into a sea cave and leave it on a sandy beach within. More caves are said to lead out from that bay, one even going straight up into the ceiling. Sometimes the tribute carriers can hear Hoondarrh's breathing from one of the caves: great inhalations, exhalations, and deep rumbles of slumber. When they can't hear such noises, you might think folk of Mintarn would be inclined to explore Skadaurak, but as it was explained to me, the lack of the dragon snoring might mean he is away hunting somewhere, but it could just as easily mean he is present, watching, and holding his breath.

THE MOONSHAES

Cloaked in mists, the rocky cliffs of the Moonshae Isles rise high above the surf of the Sea of Swords, their tops clothed in ancient forests. The Moonshaes lie due west from Mintarn—and Baldur's Gate, and Candlekeep, and even Amn, for that matter: this great stretch of islands is nearly half as long as the Sword Coast, enclosing the Sea of Moonshae.

On the southern isles live the Ffolk, humans ruled by their High King, Derid Kendrick, from the fortress of Caer Callidyr on Alaron. The Ffolk worship a goddess they call the Earthmother; her druids gather in sacred groves on the islands. Some of these groves hold moon-wells, magical pools that the druids say the goddess uses as her windows onto the world.

The northern isles are the territory of the Northlanders, who spread south from Ruathym to settle here,



and have fought occasional wars with the Ffolk in the centuries that the two groups have uneasily shared the islands.

ALARON

The largest and most populous isle of the Moonshaes is Alaron. The Ffolk stronghold of Caer Callidyr overlooks a bay south of the Fairheight Mountains, at the northern edge of Dornall Forest. The forest is a perilous place, filled with goblins, worgs, and their ilk. The deeper one goes, the more otherworldly the woods become, with fey creatures leading travelers astray—or to their doom. Even the High King's rangers walk the forest with care.

Rumor has it the Rookoath dwarves of the Fairheight range—bolstered by Clan Rustfire of the isle of Gwynneth, and adventurers out of Callidyr—have won victories against the local orcs and their shadow dragon master. High King Derid hopes to forge an alliance with the dwarves, but thus far they have spurned the aid of the crown.

Meanwhile, Kythyss, a port town on the Great South Head of Alaron, has been hiring mercenaries to guard caravans running north to Callidyr. Caravan masters there are always looking for help, if you're willing to brave the road for a while.

GWYNNEATH

Over my lifetime, the isle of Gwynneth has become ever more fey and mysterious, home to the elven realm of Sarifal, under the rule of High Lady Ordalf.

Sarifal shares the island with the reclusive mountain kingdom of Synoria, the home of the Llewyr elves, plus a few small shield dwarf settlements, and the ruins of Caer Corwell, the former Ffolk settlement on Gwynneth. High King Derid wants to reclaim the old citadel and rebuild it as an embassy, but has yet to secure Lady Ordalf's consent to do so.

Gwynneth is also home to Myrloch Vale, a lush valley nestled in the mountains with the shimmering waters of the Myrloch to the south. Druid circles are active in the Vale, allied with the elves and the fey creatures of this area.

In the north of the island, High Lady Ordalf's son, Prince Araithe, leads the struggle against the darker fey of the forest of Winterglen. The prince is a pragmatist willing to accept aid in fending off his people's foes, and so has been known to allow adventuring companies to cross the Strait of Alaron and land on Gwynneth, if they pledge to aid the cause.

KORINN ARCHIPELAGO

The Korinn Archipelago is dozens of rocky, rainy, and windswept islands populated mostly by Northlanders, who herd sheep, fish the nearby waters, and occasionally go raiding or pirating. Dozens of separate settlements are their own mini-kingdoms with little that unifies them besides a shared Northlander culture.

There's no safe harbor for outsiders; you just have no idea what you are dealing with. For other Northlanders, the settlement of Westhaven on Pandira serves as a neutral ground where Northlanders of all stripes who ply the waters of the Sea of Swords might come to port and wait out a storm or resupply.

MORAY

To the west of Gwynneth, Moray is a land at war with itself. The embattled Ffolk of Caer Moray struggle to keep the port town open so that Dynnegall, farther inland, can receive vital goods and supplies.

These supplies sometimes include reinforcements to deal with the threats of the island, which are many and varied: the Black Blood tribe of Malar-worshiping werefolk, the giants of the Trollclaw Range in the north, and the ogres and orcs of the Orcskill Mountains in the south.

The Ffolk of Moray are loyal to the High King. They hope for a return to a unified Moonshaes under the

VALKUR, HERO-GOD OF THE NORTHLANDERS

While Northlanders revere many other gods—Auril, Umberlee, Talos, and Tempus, in particular—they see mighty Valkur as the most important. This hero-god is unique to the Northlanders and embodies the qualities that Northlanders most admire: fierceness, cunning, courage, strength, and sailing skill.

Kendrick banner and are determined to hold on long enough to see it.

NORLAND

North of Moray lies Norland, the stronghold of the Northlanders of the Isles. Much has happened among the Norls of late, weakening their grip on the Moonshaes, but I fear High King Kendrick lacks power to capitalize on it.

In recent years, a Northlander woman calling herself the Storm Maiden arose as a battle leader among them, which was unusual because Northlanders don't allow women to raid or fish. Said to be blessed by both Valkur and Umberlee at her birth, the Storm Maiden gathered great numbers of Norls to her banner, and it seemed she might contest the king for control of Norland. However, a decade ago, she seemed to be consumed by the power of Umberlee, and she drove her followers on a mad quest to control the Sea of Swords. When at last she was defeated at sea, she and her ship vanished into the waves. She is known to be unable to drown, and many people fear her return.

Rault the Wise, king of the Norls, lost both his elderly son Olfgaunt and grandson in battles against the Storm Maiden, leaving succession in question. He has a granddaughter of great spirit and wisdom, but in the male-dominated Northlander society—and so soon after the disastrous rise to power of the Storm Maiden—it is unthinkable that rule should fall to her.

OMAN'S ISLE

The last time I set foot on Oman's Isle was just after the Moonshaes had unified, and it was a peaceful, lovely place. It had sheep, farms, and fishing boats, and plenty of folk willing to trade the gold from their mines for goods from the mainland or other islands. Now, Oman's Isle is a blasted place controlled by giants, especially fomorians, that hurl huge stones at any ship that comes too near the coast. If you do make it to shore, bring friends, and plenty of weapons—it's a dangerous place, but might be worth the risk. I can scarcely imagine the reward Jarl Rault or High King Derid would offer to the adventurers who reclaimed the ruins of Iron Keep, once home to the isle's rulers.

SNOWDOWN

The little isle of Snowdown, south of Alaron, is a possession of Amn, where Lady Erliza rules from Caer Westphal. She is the second of her name, noted for her striking resemblance to her great-grandmother, the first Amnian ruler of the isle.

Since taking possession of the place, Snowdown's occupiers have cut down its woods, stripped its mines, and choked its waterways with the refuse of the over-worked Ffolk under their rule. Lady Erliza and her soldiers have ruthlessly put down several rebellions, and the Ffolk here refer to her as "Bloody Erliza." Some Amnians believe the isle is becoming more trouble to hold on to than its diminishing exports are worth, and further uprisings are almost certainly brewing amongst the Ffolk, quietly supported by Alaron.

NORTHLANDER ISLES

Well to the north of the Moonshaes and west of Faerûn are the home islands of the Northlanders, which exist as they have for centuries. The greatest of these islands, Ruathym, holds the oldest settlements the Northlanders claim, and from there, all manner of northern kingdoms and legends have sprung.

The Northlander Isles are scoured by strong winds and powerful waves, and also suffer biting, bone-chilling cold for most of the year. In deepest winter, the inlets are choked with ice, and fog lingers late into the day, if it breaks at all. Most wear furs to keep out the cold, and those going to war supplement their protection with thicker hides, and helms lined with wool or fur. They disdain magic and glorify battle, to the point that most communities grow restless when they don't have an enemy to fight.

Because the Northlanders are good at fighting and sailing, and perfectly willing to attack ships close to their shores, best to be cautious around any Northlander Isles, especially if you haven't been assured of safe passage, and often even then.

Northlanders pay homage to several deities, but they most honor Valkur, a hero-god of their own who exemplifies the qualities their warriors hold most dear. Take care not to question or insult this veneration in their presence.

GUNDARLUN

The fisherfolk and merchants of Gundarlung are more like their mainland cousins than most island folk. Unlike other Northlanders, they are less apt to start a fight with folk they don't recognize. Because of their more peaceful bent, you're more likely to be able to safely get fresh water and supplies in Gundarlung, though you should be prepared to trade generously during your stop.

More than a dozen settlements pay homage to the king in Gundbarg. They profit from the island's reputation as a safe stopover. Though Gundarlung might not provide the best seaworthy warriors, nevertheless ships that are looking to make repairs, take on sailors or sail-menders, or store large cargoes are likely to find their needs met here.

PURPLE ROCKS

If you seek shelter during a storm, you might find it in the many islands of the Purple Rocks. It was once my great fortune to find safe harbor at the port village known as Ulf of Thuger. The welcome I received was nearly as warm as I might have found among the Gunds, and I found the Rocklanders to be a fine audience for my tales of travel and adventure. However, something makes me think I shouldn't return.

On the day that the storm broke, I emerged from the longhouse in which I had been hosted and beheld a well-tended and organized settlement with green pastures and full fishing nets. The ship's crew and I were dealt with cordially by everyone, and the ship was already repaired and prepared for our leaving, the Rocklanders having apparently worked through the night to make it ready.

We left on good terms, and it wasn't until we were well away that we realized we all shared a strange apprehension. We had not seen much of women while we were on the island, which was to be expected since Northlanders typically house guests well away from the homes, farms, and forges that are the Northlander women's domain. But we also neither saw nor heard any children or young men, and never once did we see any old men or women. Indeed, I hesitate to say that any man among the Northlanders we met had a single gray hair on his head or in his beard. This strange fact, and the Rocklanders' weird custom of giving any human figure in their art the arms of their totem—a many-tentacled squid—makes me leery of a return.

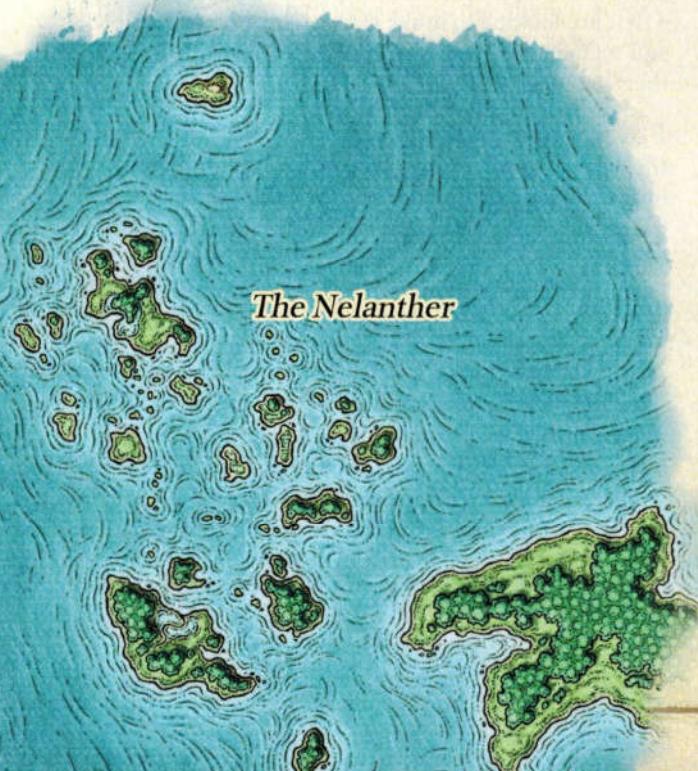
RUATHYM

The island of Ruathym is the ancestral homeland of all the Northlanders who live on the islands of the Sea of Swords and the humans who would go on to found old Illusk, now Luskan, and spread out as the Illuskan people. The warlike folk of Ruathym know they have this legacy, and they consider rule over other Northlanders and the cities of the coast to be their birthright.

Merchants can occasionally trade with Rauthym at its capital city, also called Ruathym, but I don't risk such a stopover if I can help it. One never knows when Ruathym is going to be at war, and any ship within sight of the island when it is will be fair prey.

TUERN

Well to the west of its nearest neighbor, the remote island of Tuern is host to violent folk who raid and pillage at will and seek to enslave any outlanders they capture on or near their island. They trust no magic of any kind, and offer tribute to the red dragons and giants that dwell in the high mountain caves of this place. They have five kings, with a High King supposedly enthroned in their capital of Uttersea, but like any sailor with sense, I've avoided the island by a great distance, so I can't tell you which bloodthirsty knave currently rules the roost.



THE WHALEBONES

The tiny outcrops that make up the Whalebones are so numerous it's impossible to accurately chart them all. Each has its own legends and its own (often self-proclaimed) king, and they battle one another incessantly in skirmishes where the casualties number in the dozens, at most.

The Whalebones are so called because of the scattered skeletons of those great sea creatures that litter the beaches of most of the islands. These bones are the only real commodity of worth these isles have—which means that anyone thinking to simply sail up and pluck ivory from the shores of the Whalebones is sorely underestimating how furiously its inhabitants defend their property.

ORLUMBOR

If you're looking to purchase or repair a ship, there is no better place to do it along the Sword Coast than in Orlumbor. The finest shipwrights in the world live here, and their joining work is among the reasons Waterdeep remained so strong for so many years. Even when much of the city's navy lay disabled in its harbor, the strong ships of Orlumbor proved sturdy enough that folk could live on and in them while the city recovered.

Orlumbor was once a simple shipwright island, supplying the city-states of the Sword Coast with vessels for their navies. Waterdeep in particular relied on Orlumbor to supply ships for its defense, making the island a wealthy and well-protected place in return. When Lord Neverember sank Waterdeep's navy in his fight against pirates, he arranged to hire mercenary ships to replace the force, funneling ill-gotten proceeds into his own pockets, and leaving both the coffers and the shipyards of Orlumbor high and dry. After Neverember's ouster, Waterdeep's business returned, and with it much of the isle's prosperity.

Reaching Orlumbor by ship is tricky because of the rocky, cavernous approach to the harbor. Once a ship navigates the route properly, it can find a wider berth, and any minor damage to the new visitor is happily (and cheaply) repaired by the Orlumbor dockworkers. These are folk born and bred to work on ships. The homes on Orlumbor are built into the caverns of the island, and just as well defended as the docks that are its life's blood.

More than once down the years, Waterdeep's protection has kept Orlumbor from falling to Mintarn, Luskan, Amn, or Baldur's Gate, all of which have sought to claim the islands and its shipyards for their own. None of these other places ever considered that Orlumbor might simply choose not to build ships for them, but thankfully, it's never come to that. Now, Orlumbor once again serves Waterdeep, in exchange for coin, foodstuffs, and other goods from Faerûn.

SOUTHERN ISLES

Off the coast of the southern realms of Faerûn, even south of the Moonshae Isles, are some smaller, less influential island nations. The Nelanther, just across

Asavir's Channel from Tethyr, is a land of raiding pirates. Farther south, some three hundred miles from the Moonshaes, is the fabled island of Lantan, birthplace of many odd inventions. Well south of there, beyond the jungles of Chult, is the mysterious island of Nimbral.

LANTAN

I had not visited Lantan for over a year when it happened, but the way most tell it, when magic failed utterly in this place, all the stored smokepowder and magical gewgaws in Lantan exploded, one by one, just as great waves washed over the island. Within a terrifyingly short time, Lantan was no more.

Or so the stories of survivors went. It appears now that Lantan was transferred to another world, much like Halruua. Halruua, though, had foreseen the calamity and taken time to prepare. Lantan was not so lucky.

The Lantanese were fascinated—some say obsessed—with building mechanical wonders. Though they employed magic from time to time, the whole island smelled like sawdust, grease, and freshly scraped metal, as shop after shop worked on refining its latest and greatest invention. The new creation might have been little metal knights that walk and fight and knock each other over, elaborate coffers with locks that latch themselves, or mechanical arms that copy what a scribe is writing onto a second sheet of parchment. During my past visits there, I'd seen all of those and more with my own eyes.

Were these gewgaws and trifles of help to the Lantanese when the whole world was ripped from under them? To whom did they turn when in that other world their prayers to their favored god, Gond, went unanswered? What happened in their century away, and now that they are returned, are they happy to be here, or does it seem like their world has once more been ripped away?

Some ships claiming to be from returned Lantan have appeared in ports along the Sword Coast, but from what I hear, the Lantanese who emerge from them are guarded and say little about their homeland. These traders seek to attain large quantities of raw materials such as various types of woods and metals, trading unusual gems and strange gold coins in return. Of their inventions, folks have seen little, but the few glimpses attained have fueled much speculation about Lantan's development of smokepowder weapons and greater willingness to blend magic with machinery. Indeed, Lantanese traders have reportedly offered many shield guardians in private auctions up and down the Sword Coast, and such golem-like constructs are usually the province of wizards, not tinkerers.

NELANTHER

Take an old salt's advice and beware the Pirate Isles of the Sea of Swords, the Nelanther. Here, all manner of seafaring or sea-dwelling creatures live, from lizardfolk and minotaurs to orcs and ogres, with a smattering of humans and others thrown in for variety. Where some pirates hold to their own code of conduct, the folk of Nelanther care nothing for rules, honor, or even good, neighborly sense: they attack each another as often



BANNER OF THE
KNIGHTS OF NIMBRAL

and as viciously as they do any passing ship or convoy. Simply put, the Nelanther Isles are a chain of reavers and raiders, who eke out a living fighting whomever they can find.

No one's ever bothered to count or name all the tribes of these islands, and I doubt anyone's going to start now. For one thing, it's a fool's errand: tribes split up or are destroyed at such a rapid pace that by the time you finished counting, you'd have to start over anyway. For another, it's dirty, dangerous work, and dealing with pirates is a task best left to swift ships, well-armed navies, and the kinds of fools that would want to count them in the first place.

If you do find out the name of a tribe in the Nelanther, be careful about mentioning it to another Nelanther ship unless you can confirm that the ship belongs to a friendly tribe. Even so, be advised that alliances are short as summer storms in these isles, and it's not likely you'll be around long enough to witness a new one being forged. Proclaiming your allegiance to a certain tribe might anger the one you're talking to.

Still, if you're looking for cheap, strong hands, Nelanther may be the place for you, but don't expect much in the way of loyalty or cleverness out of them. Hiring too many Nelanther sailors on a ship is just asking for your ship to be taken from you, sailed back to the islands, and given new life as a pirate vessel.

NIMBRAL

Ever seen an island simply disappear? That is, supposedly, what happened to Nimbral at about the time

Lantan drowned, or so they say. Four ship captains of my acquaintance claim to have seen it one moment, and then not seen it the next, and sailed straight through its former location as though it was never there.

Some claim that powerful magic moved or hid the island in a vast illusion. That I find believable, because the Lords of Nimbral have long been known for illusion and trickery. If any isle were to vanish into thin air, it would be theirs. Likewise, Nimbral's return is certainly within their capabilities, and perhaps this event is the climax of a trick so long and complex that even a gnome can envy its scope.

Nimbral today is much as it has always been: far-flung and secretive. Where the island went, what it did while gone, and why it came back all seem to be facts the Lords of Nimbral prefer to keep to themselves.

Nimbral is still ruled by its mysterious lords, a closely related family of archmages, master illusionists all. They in turn appoint the heralds, who proclaim the laws, and the Knights of Nimbral, fabled hippogriff riders clad in armor clear as glass but strong as steel. Don't let the fact that they are called knights fool you. The Knights of Nimbral have always acted as pirates when out on patrol over the seas, preying on ships that strayed close to their island.

What my captain friends were doing in waters so close to Nimbral they did not disclose. "Business" was all they'd say, but no one has business so far south as Nimbral, unless they expect to dock at the island. Alas, in the time since we last spoke, all those captains have died, and I can't question them further about what they know of the place.

If you have cause to sail south by Chult, keep a wary eye on the skies. It might not help, since the Knight of Nimbral have been known to appear out of nowhere, apparently invisible before they attacked, but it pays to be cautious when you're doing something foolish.

EVERMEET

What I tell you now is truth as pure as Garl's nugget, and the only reason I've written it in a book for all to see is that no one else shall ever achieve the feat: I stowed away on a ship bound for Evermeet, and my feet touched its blessed ground!

Any who're knowledgeable about the place might scoff at my claim, and those ignorant of it like as not think the deed not the feat of legend it was, so let me explain to those doubters among you what Evermeet is and why, by the end of my tale, you'll envy my boots.

A LITTLE PIECE OF HEAVEN

Legend has it—and so believes every elf I've ever met—that the island of Evermeet is not of this world, and that it never was. In ancient days, so long ago that even elves think of it as their mythic past, the elves of many nations sought a perfect homeland for their people. (That was the problem there, of course. You'll miss out on a wealth of beauty if you're always looking for the perfect gem.) Not finding it in the world, some elves (sun elves, I'd wager) looked beyond the world to create one. These High Mages gathered together to perform a mighty work of magic that would bring Toril into

contact with Arvandor—that's right, the mad fools actually wanted to bring into our world some of the lands in which their gods dwelt!

Tales differ on whether Corellon allowed this or was powerless to prevent it, but it happened, and calamity gripped Toril as a result. This was the first Sundering, and elves have always said it echoed through time. Recent calamities would seem to prove them right.

When things settled down, the elves realized their folly. For thousands of years, no elf dared set foot on Evermeet. But eventually Corellon must have forgiven his wayward children, for the oldest elves began to feel the call to the west.

Perhaps you've seen a moonbow hang over Selûne and heard the idea that it means an elf is being called to Evermeet. Well, that is no children's story. Ever met an elderly elf? How would you know, right? Well if you're ever honored to meet an elderly elf at such a time, you'll see a similar arc in each of the elf's eyes above the pupil. This is Sehanine Moonbow's way of guiding the elf to the afterlife. The arcs can blind the elf to this world, but they vanish when the elf enters the next, allowing sight of the elven heaven. Well that's exactly what happens in Evermeet, and the elf need not be dead to achieve it. Don't believe me? Well, I saw what I saw.

Some elves followed their aged kin to Evermeet, and soon a kingdom of elves dwelt in a heaven on Toril. For ages Evermeet was protected by mighty beasts, mighty magic, and the might of the Seldarine themselves. Elves of all types from all over the world journeyed to Evermeet seeking solace. And when the elves declared their Retreat from the world, where do you think they went?

Then the Spellplague struck, and some of that old elven High Magic must have unraveled. Evermeet became unmoored from the world and found itself instead in a sea of the Feywild, that strange realm of faerie that touches the world in mystical places. For a century, it seemed Evermeet was lost to the world. Venerable elves tried to hold on, hoping that this echo of the first Sundering might echo Evermeet's connection to the world once the period of calamity ended.

Their patience (who but an elf could have such patience?) was at last rewarded, when ships from Evermeet docked once more in Sword Coast ports.

SAILING TO THE WEST

Knowing all this and having just met a venerable elf who was preparing for the journey, how could I not take the opportunity to tag along? I felt a little bad about taking advantage of the elf's blindness and forcing him to leave behind some of his baggage, but it was the opportunity of a lifetime!

I overheard it said by the captain of the ship that Evermeet now somehow straddles all three planes: our world, the Feywild, and Arvandor. It touches them all, but exists fully in none of them. To find it, you must follow a pattern of stars until the stars change and then follow new stars. (I swear by Garl's nugget that's what he said!) Those who stray from the path are lost. How

I wish I could have asked the captain where the lost ships went! But I couldn't give myself away.

I had brought some food with me, since I didn't know how long I'd have to remain hidden aboard the ship. At the start of the journey, I pricked my ears up at every creak of the boards and at each elven voice, but after a time, lulled by the rocking of the sea, I fell asleep. The journey after that has a dreamlike quality. I know I must have awoken, eaten, slept, and taken care of other necessities—at least my food was all eaten by journey's end—but I don't recall the specifics. I only know that at some point the ship stopped, and someone took the basket in which I was hidden and placed it on a sandy beach.

WHAT I SAW

I felt it before I saw it. With the barest glimmer of golden light through the basket weave all that I could see, Evermeet took my breath way. Coiled in the basket like a snake, with cramps in every limb, I was desperate not to give myself away, yet I could feel the magic of Evermeet seep through my body, soothing aching limbs and easing guilty conscience. When I could breathe again, I gasped. And that was how the elf discovered me.

The blind elf, whose beloved treasures I'd displaced to take my journey, pulled me from his basket, and when he did so, his eyes were clear as diamonds and just as hard. I thought for sure that I was dead, and on seeing my surroundings, I can say with all my heart that I didn't care. Had the elf killed me on the spot, my soul would have gone to Garl and demanded a ship so that I could sail right back to Evermeet. My dumb wonderment caused the elf to turn and look, and he too was enraptured.

As to what we beheld, well, imagine a place of staggering natural beauty and impossible elven artifice, an alien realm as distant and beautiful as the stars, but as much a part of you as your own dreams—part heaven, part home.

I'd like to say we shared a moment there, the elf and I. Perhaps in recognition of that, he didn't kill me.

It was over all too soon. I was put back on the boat, returned to the world, and warned never to try anything so foolish again—on pain of death. And I don't think I will—at least not until I'm getting up there in years. Then I'll keep my eyes peeled for elves with cloudy eyes looking west!

Now, see? Wouldn't you have liked to have been a gnome's boots and touched Evermeet, even for just a few beats of the heart?



INDEPENDENT REALMS

I HAVE WANDERED THESE LANDS FOR LONGER THAN *you've been alive, caravan master. I say this not to somehow lord these years over you, but so that you understand that when I say your proposed "short cut" leads only to the bloody demise of yourself and your work hands, you will believe me, because I have seen others make the same assumption, and die the same deaths.*

—Aedyn Graymantle,
to Wundrith Parr, Waterdhavian caravan master

Though there are myriad nations, kingdoms, and city-states scattered across the length and breadth of Faerûn, it would be a dangerous mistake to assume that all of the lands in and between those places are tamed. Travel a short way beyond most civilized places, and one finds oneself in the midst of wilderness haunted by creatures deadly and foul.

The information below is excerpted from *Far from the Misty Hills*, a treatise on far-flung places in the North, composed by one Aedyn Graymantle, a moon elf ranger who hails from Everska. In her years of braving the wilds, Aedyn has acted as guide, caravan guard, bodyguard, and trailblazer.

BOARESKYR BRIDGE

Boareskyr Bridge stands on the Trade Way and is the only consistently safe crossing over the Winding Water for more than a hundred miles in either direction. This alone makes it remarkable, but there, in the midst of a wilderness with nothing to set it apart for greatness, a mortal man murdered Bhaal, the god of murder. This is no tall tale. Even a century after Bhaal's blood was shed there, the river's waters run black and foul for miles west of the bridge.

Adding to the location's sacred nature, Cyric, the man who killed Bhaal, was himself elevated to godhood. Although he proved to be a malign power, statues of both Cyric and Bhaal were erected on the ends of the bridge, the two gods facing each other (though it is said Cyric stabbed Bhaal in the back). About a century ago, fanatics of Mystra tore down the statues and flung their stones in the river, but fearing retribution for such sacrilege, the merchants who use the bridge pooled funds to have them rebuilt in grander style than before. Now each god stands atop his own decorated archway that serves as entrance to the bridge.

Boareskyr Bridge is named for a long-ago adventurer who built the original bridge and used it as the center of a small kingdom, which also bore his name, north and east of the Trade Way, though it lasted only a few decades before falling to threats from the Fields of the Dead. The bridge serves as a connection between the lands of the North and the Western Heartlands.

The enormous black granite bridge is wide enough that two wagons can pass one another going opposite directions, and its waist-high ramparts are thicker than some castle walls. On most days of the summer and

even during seasons less suitable for travel, merchant caravans cross the bridge and pilgrims come to pay homage, all beneath the protective gaze of the paladins of Elturgard stationed at nearby Fort Tamal.

FORT TAMAL

For many years, a ruined keep on the southern bank dubbed Bridgefort served as the campground for caravans passing over the bridge. Whether going north or south, caravan masters could anticipate a safe rest within the grassy space enclosed by the ruined walls, sharing the duties of keeping watch with other travelers.

Then in the midst of a crisis of leadership in distant Elturel, one of the heirs apparent for the post of High Observer, a paladin named Tamal Thent, went missing with her entire retinue near the bridge. Although an investigation was undertaken, no sign of Tamal or any of the others was discovered. Thavus Kreeg, Tamal's rival for the post, was elevated to the post of High Observer soon after, and one of his first declarations was that Bridgefort be rebuilt and given a new name in honor of lost Tamal.

A flurry of activity occurred around Boareskyr Bridge at that time, with the soldiers of Elturgard making frequent patrols of the road and surrounding lands while Fort Tamal was being constructed. Today things are fairly quiet at the bridge. The tradition of caravans camping at the bridge and pilgrims visiting it continues, but now people stay in a caravan ground around a small village that has grown up outside the fort.

Activity around the area is overseen by a curious mix of Companions of Elturgard. The Companions—all paladins of gods such as Tyr, Torm, Helm, and Amaunator—tend to be either young firebrands or grizzled veterans content to sit by a fire. Many of the veterans have been stationed at Fort Tamal since it was constructed, and they have families that live in the village outside its walls. Their more youthful counterparts come from all over Elturgard, but all seem to have been assigned to Fort Tamal after some act of insubordination. Perhaps it is hoped that time out on the frontier with their more experienced counterparts will cool some of the young Companions' zeal.

Certainly some of the young Companions I've spoken with see their post as a punishment. Boareskyr Bridge is far from the rest of Elturgard, and the caravans that camp at Fort Tamal never seemed to need such a robust guard before. Even the relative nearness of Najara seems to provide little reason for so many of Elturgard's mightiest defenders to be squandered on such a trivial task. For their part, the elder Companions talk of fulfilling duties and following orders, but to me they seemed too content.

A paladin should have drive. They have been granted the power of the gods for a reason, and surely that reason can't be to stand guard while merchants sleep. Then again, the High Observer is, by all reports, a wise and effective ruler. Perhaps he perceives threats at Boareskyr Bridge that I can't. Najara has been more active of late, despite its quiet exterior, I assure you. Dragonspear Castle to the north was once again the source of an internal incursion. And maybe there is something sinister about this place where a god of murder died and a god of lies is honored.

For my part, I sympathize with the young firebrands, and I counseled those to whom I spoke to look to the skies. In the time of Cyric's legendary battle with Bhaal, pegasi dwelt nearby. The magical creatures are said to favor those of pure heart and even allow themselves to be ridden by such folk when the cause is just. That favor might never be bestowed on the young paladins, but I'm sure the thought will provide them with some pleasant daydreams.

CANDLEKEEP

The great keep never fails to take my breath away: it stands on a volcanic crag a hundred or so feet from the coastline, a flat-topped spur of rough stone out in the midst of the surging sea. Imagine, if you can, the top of this crag hemmed in entirely by a tall wall. This wall is interrupted by several towers all the way around, and it encloses a large space from which even more of these same towers rise. Those who have seen this vista from above have said that it looks like nothing so much as a cake decorated with too many candles. The mist of sea-spray fills the air nearest the western walls, and in winter, this moisture can cause treacherous build-ups of ice. Sometimes entire towers along the western edge of the keep have to be abandoned for the season, they become so overtaken by frost.

From the center rises the largest and thickest tower of Candlekeep. If the other towers are well-wrought branches and blossoms, then this surely is the bole of the tree: strong, massive, and rising well above the perimeter structures. About the central keep a garden spirals in rising steps, and those lucky enough to enter the library proper do so by passing around and up through this green space to the keep's main door. However, most folk who visit Candlekeep see this structure only from the courtyard east of it, where the facilities for arriving scholars lie.

The only gate into Candlekeep stands at the end of the Way of the Lion, which is the only road that provides access to and from the outside world. The route extends from Beregost, leagues away, and winds a lonely path out on the peninsula where Candlekeep stands.

THE GREAT LIBRARY

Candlekeep is the largest repository of lore and writings in all the Realms (although my scholarly kin in Everska don't like being reminded of that). It was once the home of the great prophet Alaundo the Seer, and within its walls were written the Prophecies of Alaundo. Its vaults, it is said, contain hidden knowledge enough to make any person with the ability to discover and absorb it all powerful beyond compare. The problem with doing that, of course, is the same as with secrets in any other location: one must know that a secret exists before its details can be sussed out.

To that end, Candlekeep's vast library is something of a defense in and of itself: for every bit of hidden lore of potentially great power that lies within, there are thousands of inconsequential recipes, old songs, bits of history, journals of long-dead folk, and myriad other pieces of writing of no lasting importance save to the monks of this place, and the sages who come seeking such trifles.

Of course, before this treasure trove can be plumbed, one must gain entry to its hallowed halls. The cloistered scholar-monks of Candlekeep, who are called the Avowed, guard this place and work tirelessly to ensure the library's protection and preservation. Though they are friendly enough in a workaday fashion, they are also suspicious of all visitors to the library.

GAINING ENTRANCE

I have assisted more than one visitor with entry into the library, so I know the process well. The price of admission is the donation of a work of writing not already in the possession of Candlekeep. Though the monks refer to this offering as the "entrance-gift," it is a toll to be paid, and often a quite high one.

To most, this requirement might seem difficult or even impossible to fulfill. After all, how is the would-be visitor to know exactly what Candlekeep does and does not have in its labyrinthine stacks? To this end, most visitors come to Candlekeep with multiple books they suspect might meet with approval.

Fortunately for some, the donation need not be utterly unique. Some tome or treatise the library doesn't have in its archives is preferable, but the monks are open to a few other possibilities: rare editions, books with a great deal of history tied to them, even tomes with insightful (or just interesting) notes scribbled in the margins have all been accepted, as have the journals of folk who are well traveled or highly learned.

Most of those who come as petitioners to the gates of Candlekeep already know the cost of entry; those who don't are told of it at the gates, and turned away kindly if they have no such gift. Heralds; priests of the gods Oghma, Gond, Deneir, and Milil; certain archmages; and others acknowledged as "friends of Candlekeep" are permitted to enter without making such a donation (though such folk often contribute to the library's vaults as a matter of course anyway).

The great double gates of Candlekeep are as three times the height of a human, and wrought of strange black metal that seems to repel lightning and to be immune to magical divinations, according to at least one wizard I've accompanied here. Both of these panels are emblazoned with the castle-and-flame sigil of Candlekeep in their upper reaches. One of the two gates stands open far enough to admit visitors during the day, with the other kept shut.

Five purple-vestmented monks tend this entrance. One of them steps forward to greet those seeking admission, discussing with new arrivals their intentions and examining what gifts they have brought. As the first monk examines an offered gift, determining its title and provenance, a second gate guard performs a casting of the *message* spell. The Waterdhavian sage Waldrop tells me that the recipient of this spell is an Avowed in a room nearby with a massive tome that notes the books in Candlekeep's vaults. Apparently aided by magic of some kind, that tome-keeper determines if the library has the book being offered, and responds concerning whether the gift is accepted or not.

One of the priests of Deneir whom I regularly accompany to Candlekeep has mentioned truth-seeking



magics being at work on this threshold. The door-guard's fellows watch closely for any trouble, and other monks peer from the high towers that flank the gates, ready to summon help or lend magical support in case of attack.

Those who are admitted are referred to as "seeker," but also addressed by name if the monk knows it, or by "goodsir" or "goodlady" otherwise. Once a visitor is admitted, the monks at the gate part ranks to allow the seeker inside to the Court of Air. Visitors are instructed to cross that area and stand before the Emerald Door, where another monk receives them, offers them food, bath, and sleeping quarters, and arranges for each to meet a monk who will help to plan and then supervise the seeker's visit to the library.

THE COURT OF AIR

The Court of Air is aptly named. This cobbled courtyard is empty, containing neither tree nor well. Its southern wall is the southern wall of Candlekeep itself, with a number of fieldstone-wrought buildings intended for visitors' use built along it. Nearest the western wall of the courtyard stand two buildings: the House of the Binder, a large temple of Oghma with plenty of space to allow his faithful to camp and socialize, and the Baths, a public facility that draws water from the natural spring beneath the keep.

On the other side of the baths is the Hearth, a great eating-place and social hall for seekers, which has shrines to Deneir, Gond, and Milil built into it. The Hearth connects to the House of Rest, a structure with four-bunk rooms where seekers are assigned quarters upon their acceptance. Finally, next to the House of Rest, and built up against the eastern wall of the courtyard, are the stables, where mounts are housed and provisioned for the length of a seeker's stay, and the granary.

The northern edge of the Court of Air is made up of a wall into which are set twelve towers. These are the towers within which visitors are allowed to study.

The famous Emerald Door stands in the western wall. Here a Keeper of the Emerald Door stands at all times, assisted by a small group of under-monks who act as messengers and runners. It is the Keeper who officially welcomes newly arrived seekers, and makes arrangements for their stay. Only this door leads deeper into the inner ward; the other towers have entrances onto the Court of Air, but don't have points of egress into the inner ward and thus the rest of the library.

These court-facing towers in the north wall, called the "necessariums" by the monks, are the main places in which visitors interact with the treasures of Candlekeep. They are honeycombed with reading rooms and small gathering chambers, where monks may bring individual tomes to seekers to be read, and where seekers may consult with monks on further materials to enable their research. Despite being adjacent to other towers and having bridges to more distant ones, the chambers that guests can reach in the necessariums don't allow access to the rest of the keep.

WITHIN THE KEEP

Unfortunately, the foregoing is the extent of the information I have about the interior of Candlekeep. My personal experience is limited (as is the case with most visitors) to the Court of Air. Though the stories fly fast and thick in the Hearth about what lies beyond the necessariums, it is almost all conjecture and hearsay, with a heavy dose of fable, you can wager safely.

From the Court of Air, one can see that the tall towers that rise up above the northern court wall are interconnected by covered walkways. Many of these are roofed, but not walled, and monks—some of them under quite prodigious burdens of books—scramble to and fro along them. The passages are sometimes interrupted by small spiral staircases that provide access to higher and lower levels, and some of the larger walkways slope gently from one floor in a given tower to the different level in another.

The only other fact I know about Candlekeep's interior is that it extends even beneath the level of the courtyards, with staircases in the cellars of certain of the towers that lead down into the very bedrock of the pillar upon which the keep is built. A monk once confided to me that these caverns store emergency supplies and provide access to great wells, all of which would enable the great fortification to survive entire seasons—if not years—of siege.

THE AVOWED

The monks of Candlekeep are all cloistered scholars. Most of them have no magical power to speak of (though many of them are trained to know about such things); a notable handful, though, are spellcasters—either clerics of gods that represent the pursuit of knowledge or wizards. Even warrior-monks and paladins have been known among the Avowed, though never many at once.

The Avowed are the sworn servants of the great keep, each rigorously tested to weed out any deceit before being permitted to take the oaths of the order. The monks' first priority is the defense of the library's knowledge against those who would steal or destroy it, but also against natural effects that might do likewise, such as mold, wet, and decay. Many of the monks wield various kinds of magic items to aid in these endeavors, and Candlekeep's facilities include more than a few scriptoria to facilitate the copying of books becoming worn, binderies to repair the same, and even magical storage that preserve rare books from any further decay or damage.

I've never made a detailed study of the Avowed, as it's never been terribly needful for me to do so, but from my time spent in Candlekeep's Court of Air, as well as my conversations with Waldrop, I've picked up a few things.

The rank-and-file of the Avowed are divided into acolytes, who are newcomers to the order, and scribes, who tend to the majority of the work in the keep. Acolytes provide labor, doing the cleaning, lifting, and general sweating that a place of such size requires, and work at their studies, hoping to prove themselves and be accepted into the ranks of the scribes. The scribes do most of the archival labor required of the Avowed, and

often pitch in with hands-on efforts when a particularly large chore needs doing.

The master readers are the sages and elder monks who oversee the scribes and teach the acolytes. All are possessed of significant experience and dedicated to the great library, and it is from this group that individuals are chosen to fill in the upper ranks when positions open up.

Above the master readers are other high-ranking posts, each with specialized duty, from the Gatewarden who tends to the security of the keep to the Guide who instructs and educates the Avowed. Of particular note is the Chanter, who is responsible for continuing the ongoing recitation of the prophecies of the great seer Alaundo, who once made his home here.

I remember the first time I came upon the Endless Chant. It starts at the edge of one's hearing (I was one of the first in the courtyard to sense it), and slowly grows closer and louder. As it does so, everything else falls silent around you. In short order, a procession of Avowed arrive on the scene, and the only sound anyone can perceive is their echoing, sonorous chant. The Chanter or one of his subordinates (called "voices") leads this procession, and each of the Avowed is expected to lend his voice to the procession occasionally.

It was through my friendship with Waldrop that I met one of the eight Great Readers, the council of elder Avowed who oversee the operation of Candlekeep. She was tall, and I remember thinking that she was one of the most erudite folk I'd ever spoken with. Each of the Great Readers is given an arena of responsibility within the Avowed, usually a topic of scholarly importance, and acknowledged and treated as the foremost expert in that field.

Finally, above them all are two others: the Keeper of Tomes and the First Reader. Where the First Reader's focus is maintaining the integrity of Candlekeep's scholarship, and ever expanding its literary resources and base of knowledge, the Keeper governs the great library. The Keeper's word is law, quite literally—each Keeper's edicts are recorded for the edification of future Keepers, and all are maintained as ongoing traditions until changed by the word of a future Keeper. Waldrop tells me that traditionally the Keeper and the First Reader are supposed to have an antagonistic relationship, one focused on the cloistered monks and the enlightened goals of the library and the other on the mundane aspects of scholarship and Candlekeep's interactions with the outside world.

Although these high-ranking monks keep most visitors at arm's length, it isn't unknown for them to deal with adventurers directly when they need such services. While these scholars rarely have much coin to pay for the services of a company of venturers, they do possess the precious currency of Candlekeep: knowledge. I know of many companies who have been shown lore concerning lost ruins, then asked to brave some dangerous place and return with prizes that can be found only in that location. If the treasure that might be found in such places isn't enough of a reward, some Avowed are empowered to offer inducements such as procedures for

creating magic items and written copies of rare spells to sweeten the deal.

SERVICES

Those who come to Candlekeep are permitted to remain for one tenday before departing, and must remain away for at least a full month before returning. During this tenday, they may ask to read specific tomes known to be in the possession of the library, or they may ask the monks to find them tomes concerning certain topics. These works are brought to the reading rooms in the towers that face the Court of Air. Guests are permitted to ascend into those towers and read (but not copy) the tomes there, always in the company of one of the monks.

One of Candlekeep's main sources of income is the sale of books. Three kinds of such books exist: copies of tomes of nonmagical lore, copies of spellbooks and other magical formulae, and works of the Avowed.

Copied Lore. The copying and binding of a work of nonmagical lore in Candlekeep's library is generally performed at a cost of 100 gp or so (though quite large books are always more). This manufacture may take several weeks, particularly for large tomes, so it isn't uncommon for those who desire such a work to commission it in writing, along with advance payment, and then come to the gate to pick up the book, or pay an additional price to have it delivered.

Spellbooks. In contrast, magical books of spells and formulae cost much, much more—a spellbook might be priced at thousands or even tens of thousands of gold pieces. Each simple spell or cantrip in such a tome costs 25 gp or so, with the more complex and powerful spells fetching 150 gp or more each.

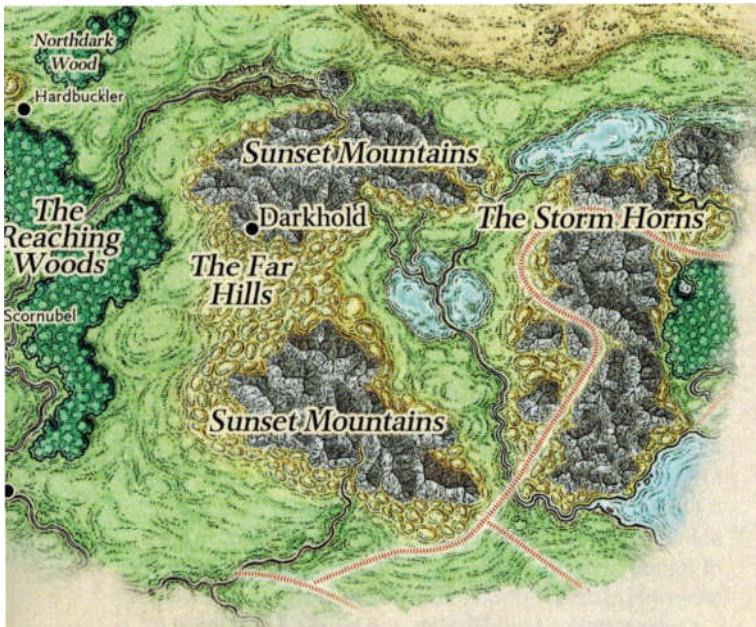
Works of the Avowed. Each year, the monks of Candlekeep release a small book stamped with the sigil of the keep, and credited to "The Avowed of Candlekeep." These books are always focused on singular topics, and contain short essays, excerpts, and other writings germane to the topic. They are sold at Candlekeep and by representatives in large cities for between 50 gp and 100 gp per book, though some are often resold for a great deal more.

Candlekeep also buys books and even sponsors adventurers on expeditions to seek out lost sources of lore across the Realms. The exchange of coin in such undertakings is, of course, open to the usual sort of negotiation.

DARKHOLD

I don't suppose you've heard of Darkhold. It's been many years since folk whispered the name of the place in fear. After all, the Zhentarim, the organization that gave Darkhold its evil reputation, are by all accounts no longer the cadre of thieves, assassins, and evil wizards they once were. And strangely enough, according to my source among the Zhentarim, that change in character can be traced right back to Darkhold. As it was told to me, it came about like this ...

Zhentil Keep was burning. The Citadel of the Ravens lay in ruins. The leadership of the Zhentarim died, were captured by the Shadovar of returned Netheril, or were in flight. The vaunted Black Network was shredded.



Cells of Zhentarim agents were cut loose, and without connections or direction, they dissolved or were crushed by rivals. The Zhentarim was no more.

Or so it seemed. There was one stronghold of the Zhents that had not fallen and whose leader never wavered in his dedication to the organization. Darkhold stands deep in the mountains of the Western Heartlands, and there the remnants of the Zhentarim quietly gathered. There they swore allegiance anew to the leader who promised to reforge the organization into something stronger than before.

The man to whom this new Zhentarim owed fealty was a dark knight known only as the Pereghost. The Pereghost had long led the armed forces of the Zhentarim at Darkhold, and his vision for the revival of the organization was along military lines. After a time of recruitment and training, the Zhentarim emerged from Darkhold not as conquerors or as bullying capitalists but as mercenaries willing to serve others instead of forcing them to serve.

In the years that followed, the transformation served the Zhentarim well. They earned a reputation for sterling service, and their ranks swelled. Those who knew of Darkhold thought of it as the headquarters of this new version of the Zhentarim.

Membership in the Zhentarim is difficult to assess, but my source told me they might have greater numbers now than before their organization's fall. New leadership for this larger group has led to a shift in focus. While still a source of capable mercenaries, the Zhentarim have diversified into mercantile pursuits. Zhent guards now ride alongside caravans of their own. And whereas a military organization served it well in the chaotic period after its fall, my source frequently described the Zhentarim as a "family" and leaders as "my good friend."

My source also spoke in awed tones of the Pereghost, as though that figure were still alive and a leader of Darkhold. The Pereghost is never seen without his full armor and a face-covering helm. If it isn't an elf behind the mask, then I suspect a series of humans might have masqueraded as the Pereghost during the past century.

DARKHOLD VALE

I was curious about my source's tale, and so when I had cause to be in the region, I made my way toward Darkhold. An enormous mountain peak called the Gray Watcher of the Morning looms behind Darkhold to the east, casting a great shadow over the keep from sunrise until nearly midday. Darkhold sits in a cleft in the side of the Gray Watcher, the highest point of permanent occupation in a relatively flat and defensible valley called Darkhold Vale.

Darkhold Vale contains a small settlement of the same name, consisting mostly of shepherds who tend their flocks in the high meadows of the Sunset Mountains, and a few farmers who coax fine crops from the soils that cling to the vale's fields. The settlement's main source of prosperity is the black stone quarry at the southeastern edge of the vale; the heavy carts groaning with slabs of stone for sale and the large, muscled workhorses that pull them are common sights here. The common folk of Darkhold Vale tend to be surly and suspicious of outsiders, though they are careful to avoid offense.

This settlement of about a hundred or so is utterly under the dominion of Darkhold and has seen some benefit from the situation: the vale folk see a great deal more traffic and trade than the little hamlet would ever expect otherwise. Until recently, all the caravans bound for Darkhold could seek sanctuary only in the shadow of the keep itself. Now the people of the vale have recently built both an inn, called the Wyvern's Rest, and a separate tavern, called the Rookery.

Some of the locals send to market bales of the thick, rich wool they shear from their sheep. Others make a living hawking the dandelion wine that Darkhold Vale has always produced, but only recently begun to sell abroad. The vale has a small militia, technically under the command of the Pereghost, but which answers to a local captain named Sulvarn.

To those who've come into conflict with the Zhentarim, living in a place so firmly in their power seems unthinkable, but the reality is that life is sedate here. Certainly, the soldiers in the castle aren't to be trifled with, but they hardly ever engage in the acts of petty cruelty that one expects from warriors serving a local lord. Those who misunderstand the Zhentarim often do so because they imagine them to be cackling villains in the vein of the Zhents of yore. In reality, they are pragmatic, willing to do whatever necessary to achieve their ends. But they have no need to terrorize the folk of Darkhold Vale, for one simple reason: they already control them.

In years past, these folk lived in fear and suspicion, with a hearty helping of racial prejudice; my first visit to Darkhold nearly a century ago was occasion for me to hear some of the vilest epithets attached to my kind that I've ever heard—even worse than those that fall from the foul lips of orc raiders in the North. The attitudes of the vale folk have changed over the years, however, no doubt due in part to the orders of the Pereghost when he reengaged the Zhentarim with the wider world.

DARKHOLD CASTLE

When I first beheld the great black walls of Darkhold, I thought all the legends about it must be true. On my second visit, I thought I'd try to confirm my suspicions.

According to legend, Darkhold's story began more than a millennium ago, when it was known as the Keep of the Far Hills. It was built as a summer capitol for the so-called "giant empires." Situated in the Far Hills, the castle was in a position to dominate trade routes north out of the Iriaebor Valley. It could also dominate river trade down the Yellow Snake Gorge.

The role of the so-called Giant Emperors is still a matter of conjecture and discussion today. However, there are some, scattered among the giant tribes of the North, who claim to be heirs to the ancient thrones. Whatever the truth of the empires might be, the castle itself was definitely built for giants. Its size and construction support no other explanation.

Legend has it that Darkhold was lost to the giants due to internal strife—a pair of brothers quarreling over their inheritance. Through poison, magic, and mercenaries, the brothers thinned the castle's population until only the brothers themselves were left. The two fought and mortally wounded each other, and each dragged himself off to die alone. The brothers' spirits are still said to stalk the castle, each still seeking his brother's destruction.

The keep was then occupied by a succession of owners, including a dragon of some repute, but it was not until a lich claimed it that the castle came to be known as Darkhold. The lich was called Varalla, and supposedly she conjured all manner of evil creatures to serve her, sending them out to dominate the lands beyond and establish an empire of evil. Varalla ruled Darkhold until the infamous leaders of the old Zhentarim—Manshoon and Fzoul—heard tales of her wealth in magic and gold. Lured by the promise of such rich rewards, the pair defeated her and claimed the castle for themselves.

Upon my arrival at the great gates to the fortress, I found that I was expected, as I must have been watched since entering Darkhold Vale—perhaps even before then. After a short wait, I was met by a seneschal, a forthright woman with a strong handshake, who warmly referred to the person who secretly supplied me with the history of the Zhentarim. I found myself taken aback by this because I had thought my source and I had spoken in confidence. As you no doubt have noticed, I've avoided mentioning the name, gender, or physical description of my source, for I swore an oath of secrecy. Besides my initial shock, my exchange with the seneschal was pleasant, and I was given a tour of some of the mighty castle.

When I asked about the legends of Darkhold's creation and occupation, she told much the same story as I have told, adding a few characters from its history that I hadn't heard of before. When asked about castle hauntings, the seneschal only smiled in reply. Although it seemed a genuine smile, I could wring no truth from it.

Of the castle's defenses, I can say little. My tour was limited. But I did note that, while some things on the giants' scale have been modified to suit humans (such as stairs and most doors), other things remain titanic. For

instance, I have no idea how they managed to open the gates for my entrance without the use of magic.

DENIZENS OF DARKHOLD

I didn't see the Pereghost during my visit, so I can't confirm anything about the man. But the seneschal and everyone else with whom I conversed spoke of the Pereghost in awed tones. Whatever the truth of this savior of the Zhentarim, he is apparently too busy to entertain curious visitors. While at Darkhold, I heard the name of another leader of some importance, Manxam, but my queries about this figure were redirected to other topics, and I didn't feel comfortable pressing the seneschal on the matter.

Of the rest of Darkhold I can relate only a little more. The Zhentarim maintain two war units within Darkhold: the Storm Watch, a cadre of veteran Zhentarim soldiers who act as heavy infantry, and the Gray Feathers, archers primarily responsible for the defense of the fortress.

These aren't the only forces Darkhold can bring to bear, however. The years when a contingent of giants lived in Darkhold are long gone, but in their place is an aerie of wyverns, bred and trained to defend Darkhold and to obey the Pereghost. Their trainer is a ranger named Grigarr, whose body is pocked with myriad scars from wyvern stings. The man is a greedy wretch who claims he is now immune to the wyverns' venom, after having been stung so many times. He loves telling stories in the Rookery about how he got his many stings, and thinks himself an entertaining storyteller because people listen and applaud. The truth is that the locals are terrified of him, so they humor him while he is in his cups.

ELTURGARD

Ah Elturgard! If any place in the world exemplifies humanity's potential for greatness, it is this nascent nation. Who could forget the shining sight of a host of its Companions, paladins all, riding out on the field, banners taught and snapping, breastplates and shields agleam with the symbol of Elturgard, and each bearing a holy symbol of his or her god—armor for the soul. We have no shortage of the good and the just among my people, but the sheer zeal and genuine bravado the Companions have in pursuit of righteousness seems to me something uniquely human. And it's not just those few touched by the gods who seek these high ideals; Elturgard's armed forces swell with men and women who aspire to join the Companions. They are the Hellriders, so named because long ago warriors of Elturel literally rode through a gate into the Nine Hells to pursue and destroy devils that had been plaguing their people. With these bright examples to look up to, is it any wonder that the common people of Elturgard also tend to be devout in their pursuit of justice and worship of the gods?

Oh how bright Elturgard's light burns! If only it could last. Humans are, after all, short-lived creatures, and fickle in their faith and attentions. Elturgard is the product of just a generation or two of humans, and it seems implausible that it will last many more. Sadly, I think I shall witness Elturgard diminish. But it was a miracle



THE CREST
OF ELTURGARD

that brought about the nation of Elturgard, and perhaps that divine provenance will preserve it.

It began, as all the great stories do, in darkness. Half a century ago, the city of Elturel was a petty power. It had claimed its neighbors' territory under various excuses, putting them under "Elturel's Guard." Then, the city's leader, its High Rider, was revealed to be a vampire. The extent of the vampire's network of charmed servants, undead allies, and willing sycophants took the Hellriders by surprise. An undead plague swamped Elturel, and although its Hellriders made some gains by day, in darkness the vampire and its minions inflicted cruel losses. Each night the good people of Elturel prayed to the gods that dawn might come more swiftly.

Then, on a particularly disastrous night when all seemed lost, dawn did come. A warm golden light suffused the city and surrounding lands, cast down from a golden orb that hung unwavering in the sky, so bright that it seemed a new day had dawned. Caught outside when this miracle appeared, the High Rider and his vampire spawn burned away to dust, and the other undead quailed in its illumination. In short order, Elturel was free.

When the true dawn came, the new sun remained. And it stayed in the sky through the next night, and the night after, and each night from then until now. While some called it Amaunator's Gift, none could say what god granted them this boon. Most saw it as a companion to the sun and to themselves, and so it is known as the Companion. This holy wonder brought pilgrims of all kinds to Elturel. The devout, the curious, the afflicted—all came to bathe in its warmth and see its blessed light

by night. Paladins had always been small in number among the Hellriders, but the Companion drew many to Elturgard, and the best among them was named High Observer to rule in the High Rider's place.

To maintain order among the many faiths of the paladins, a special knighthood was created, named after the Companion sun. These paladins swore to uphold the Creed Resolute, an oath of service to Elturgard and all good people. And thus Elturgard now has both the Companions and the Hellriders.

The post of High Observer is no longer occupied by a paladin, but by a priest of Torm named Thavus Kreeg, and this to me seems fitting. Paladins should be out in the world, using their divine gifts for the good of all, not signing documents behind some desk or dithering with dignitaries. High Observer Kreeg has ruled wisely and well these past forty years or so, but as a short-lived human, he is nearing the end of his years. When he passes or can no longer cope with the demands of his office, I hope that Elturgard can make a smooth transition to equally strong leadership. It is during such change and the struggles for power that result that humans often stray from the righteous path. Perhaps the light of the Companion will show them the way.

ELTUREL'S GUARD

Sometimes called the Kingdom of Two Suns, Elturgard encompasses Elturel, Triel, Scornubel, Soubar, and Berdusk. It also claims and protects many small villages and farms strung along the roads and rivers in the Western Heartlands.

The heraldry of Elturgard—the sun and a smaller companion sun surrounded in a blaze—is familiar to many of us along the roads that lead to and through Elturgard, for it also blazons the armor and flags of its two groups of guardians, the Hellriders and the Companions.

It might be fairly said that the only reason Elturgard can exist as a nation is because of these knights, for it faces threats from all around. The wilderness to the south is home to ravenous monsters, and the serpent kingdom of Najara to the north routinely sends agents—both raiders and spies—to test the strength of Elturgard. The knights can't afford to be anything but vigilant, and fortunately for the folk of Elturgard, they are just that.

I regard crossing the border into Elturgard as a relief, for it usually means the beginning of a safe haven, with a need to set fewer guards at night. Many adventurers find good cause to visit Elturgard, whether pursuing personal goals or seeking sanctuary from the dangers that surround the small nation. Additionally, the High

FORT MORNINGLORD

Several years ago, the entire complement of paladins at Fort Morninglord simply disappeared. The High Observer at the time ordered the fort, a day's ride west of Elturel, to be bricked up, and the curious forbidden entrance, for fear of what evil they might release into the world. The fort remains sealed today, and guards occupy a fortified encampment nearby. The camp serves as a base from which the paladins of Elturgard can patrol this area of the nation, and also as a deterrent to adventurers and other ne'er-do-wells who might otherwise try to find whatever is trapped in the fort's depths.