

An Entry-Level Accessory for All Levels

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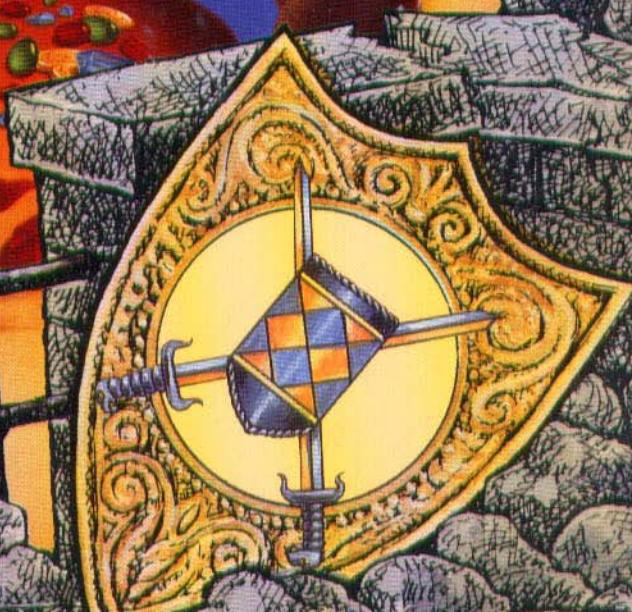
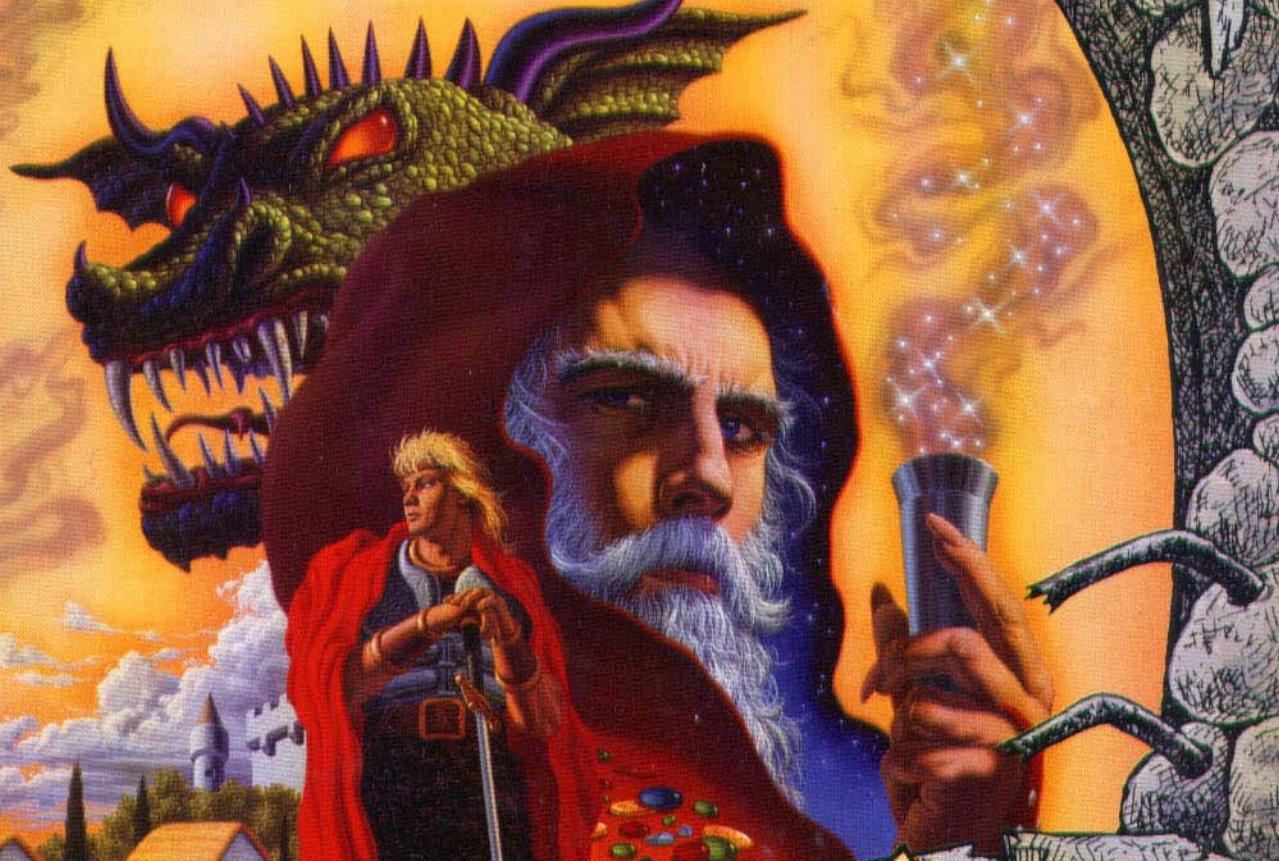
# Dungeons & Dragons



Official Game Accessory

## Thunder Rift

by Colin McComb

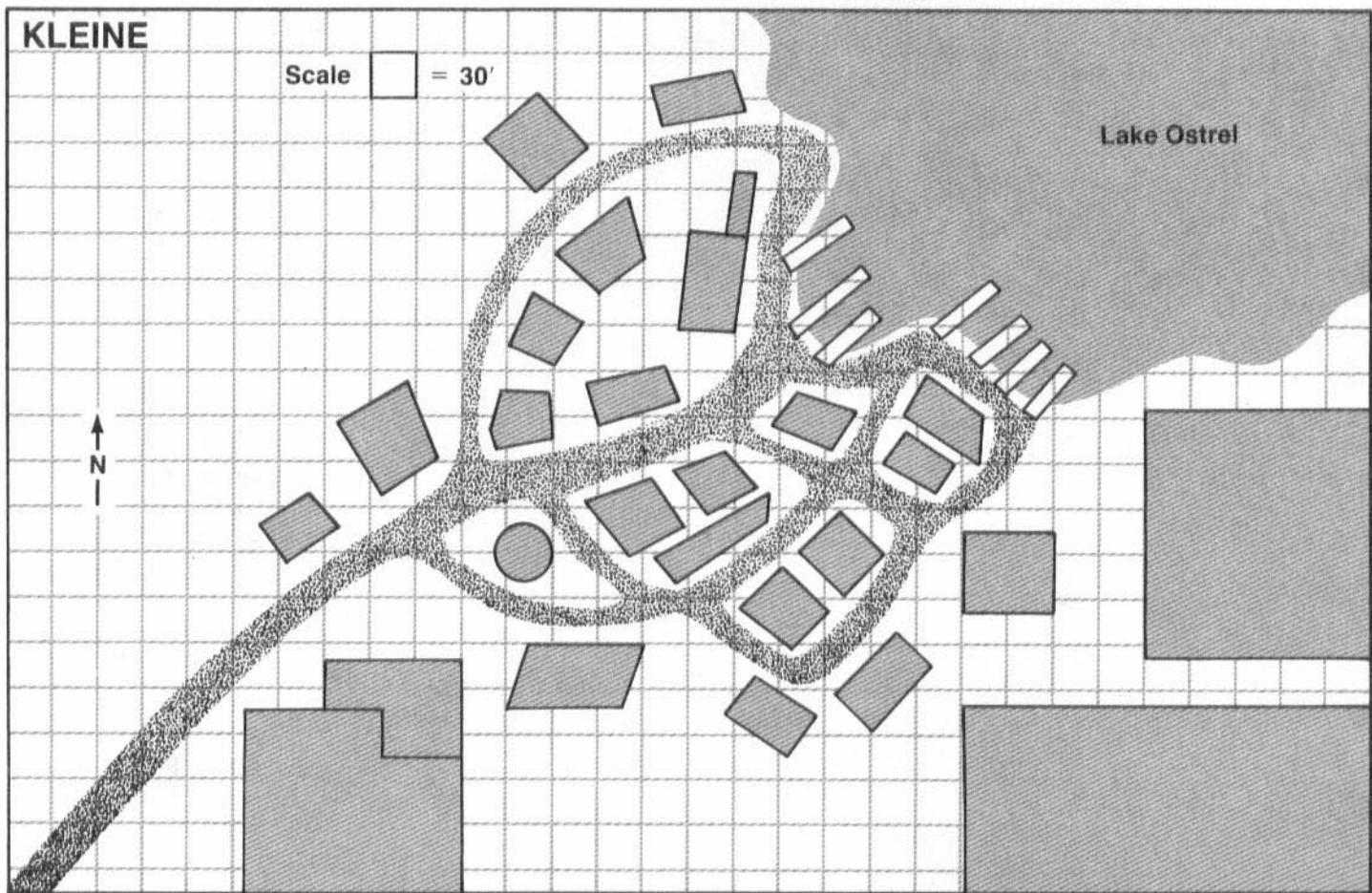


# KLEINE

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↑ N

Lake Ostrel



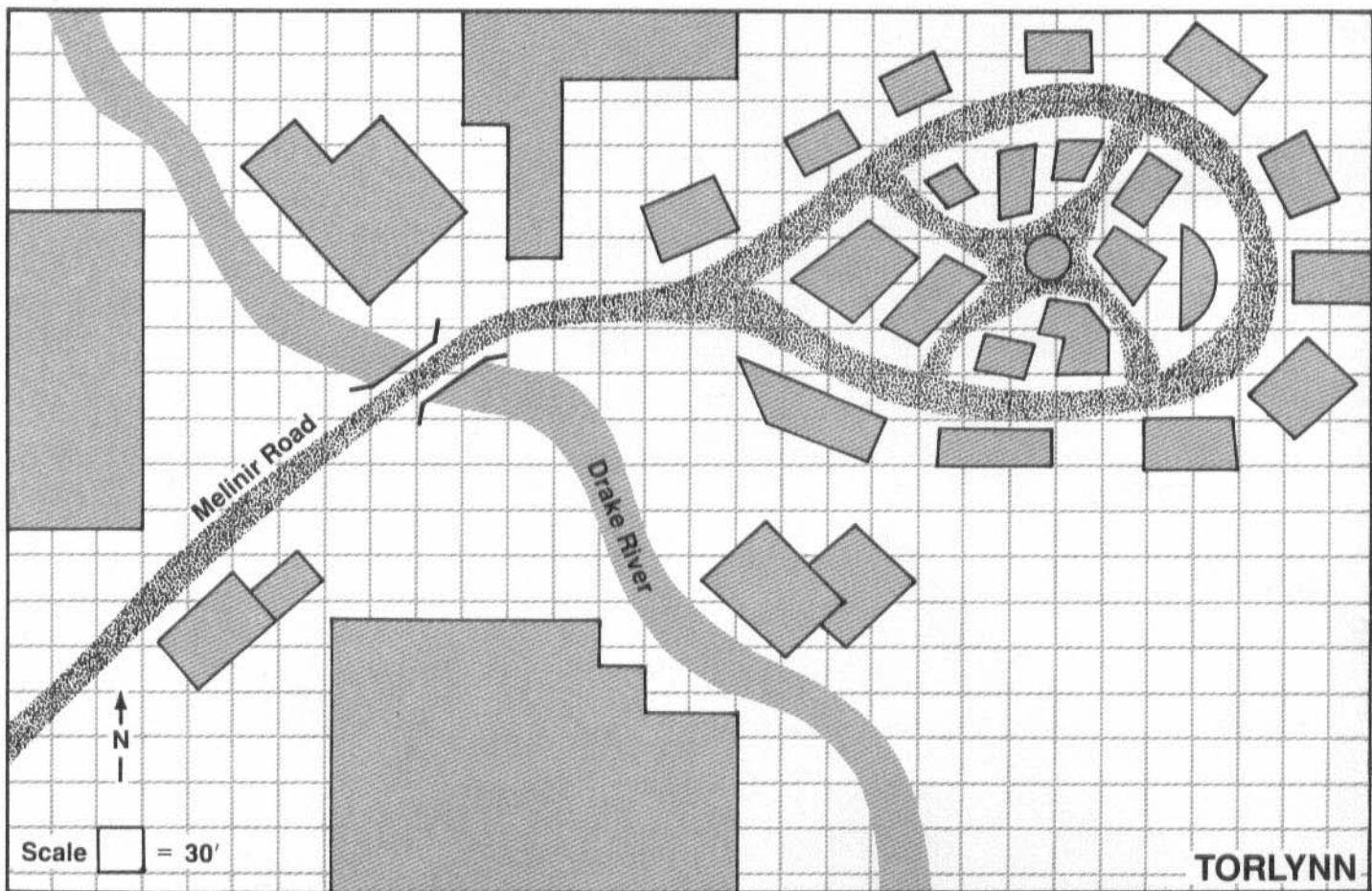
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Drake River

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# TORLYNN





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# INTRODUCTION

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Welcome to Thunder Rift, the valley of adventure! Within these pages, dungeon masters (DMs) and player characters (PCs) will find priceless treasures and fearsome creatures. In the forests or on the open plains, the valley of the Rift is full of surprises. Around every corner, beasts await unwary fools who pay no attention to their surroundings, but for those who come well prepared, the bounty of Thunder Rift is tremendous.

This book is intended for the DM's use *only*. Any players should stop reading at this point or else run the risk of spoiling whatever surprises the DM may have planned. The purpose of this accessory is to expand upon the basic rules that are found in the new D&D® Game Box. It also provides the beginning DM with an accessible background for characters, as well as a realistic setting for dungeons.

This product describes the canyon of Thunder Rift and those who dwell within it. From the Plunging Cataract Falls to the fog-shrouded Keep of the Black Knight, Thunder Rift should provide enough adventure to keep PCs busy for a long time.

Within these pages, the DM will learn about the general layout of the valley, about some of the creatures found therein, and other points that should be of interest to adventurers. There are also details of the three major settlements of Thunder Rift, allowing the PCs to interact with the local populations. The towns offer bases of operation for them, and they create a possible background setting for those players who want to make up a history for their characters. The PCs may choose to play descendants of the great adventurers who originally colonized Thunder Rift, or they may play travelers who have heard of the riches of the area and hope to take some of that wealth away with them.

Thunder Rift is not specific to any particular world, which means that it can be placed in any campaign setting that the DM chooses. Whether it is placed into a Known World or one designed especially by the DM, Thunder Rift can be located anywhere there are mountains.

## Why Wilderness, Anyway?

In the D&D Game Box, PCs simply arrive at their destination after traveling through an undescribed void. The only terrain that players encounter when using the basic rules is that of a dungeon. The purpose of the *Thunder Rift* game accessory is to provide an easy answer to the question, "Exactly where is this dungeon?"

Dungeons may be located in the hills, on a mountain-

side, in a deep and murky forest, or nearly anywhere else the DM can imagine and describe. While the location of the dungeon may not make much of a difference from the inside, approaching it from the outside can make its location very important. Half the fun and excitement of an adventure can lie in the journey to and from the dungeon. True heroes find action everywhere they go, not merely in cave and castle exploration. Who knows what dangers lurk beyond moss-hung trees or in boulder-strewn barrens?

*Thunder Rift* will allow the players and their characters to explore the next level of fantasy role-playing: the lands beyond the dungeon. The many parts of the great canyon to be explored will lend an air of authenticity to a DM's campaign by providing the extra detail necessary for more vivid gaming. If this seems mind-boggling at first, don't worry. Think of what follows as a big outdoor dungeon.

*Thunder Rift* does not give detailed descriptions of *every* area within the canyon. Rather, it provides a general depiction of places around which the DM may build his specific adventures. It provides enough data about the area to give the DM a good idea about the sort of terrain the area holds, what monsters live there, and it even relates a bit of local history. There are also many places that have not been detailed, leaving the region open for the DM to fill in. Most of the encountered monsters in Thunder Rift are detailed in the D&D Rule Book, in the Game Box. Special or individual monsters are detailed within this text.

The creation of a realistic road to adventure is an integral part of learning to DM effectively. Developing the lands of one's imagination can be a difficult task, but all good DMs strive for originality and creativity in every setting, spurring their players to new heights. The excitement and enjoyment of the PCs will be reward enough for the work involved.

## And What's This About Towns?

*Thunder Rift* provides a starting point for campaigns. A campaign is the continued adventures of one group of characters, seeking their fame, glory, and wealth. It joins their individual quests into a bigger picture, allows players to develop their characters, and gives the game a greater sense of continuity.

PCs in campaigns usually need a base of operations, a place where they can go to rest and recuperate between adventures. Owning a home in a town is an excellent way to accomplish this. On the other hand, if the PCs live life on the foot, rarely returning to the same place twice, rent-

ing a room in an inn still can provide them with a temporary headquarters.

Another primary function of a town is to provide the element of commerce. Farmers gather in the marketplace to sell their harvest and traders bring in and peddle their wares. In turn, inns offer rooms to those who are too tired (or, in some cases, too wise) to travel any farther, and shops sell all manner of goods.

Indeed, any item the PCs might need would be more readily available to them in a town; that is, anything that a typical villager might use (such as flint and steel, rope, or other staples) would not be difficult to find.

More exotic items (such as silver weapons for fighting lycanthropes), on the other hand, are often available only in large cities. Unfortunately, there are no big cities in Thunder Rift. There are several retired adventurers in the vicinity, however, who might be willing to part with such items—for the right price. Some of them even possess magical items that they might be willing to let go to a wily negotiating PC.

The price of any available item can vary widely from town to town. It can cost as much as twice the amount listed in the *Rule Book* or as little as half the listed price. This decision is, of course, left to the DM. If the PCs are carrying around too much cash and the DM wishes to relieve them of some of it, then the prices in town may skyrocket. (Perhaps a drought or a shortage of the items they need has occurred, boosting prices dramatically.) Likewise, if the PCs are very poor and the DM wants to give them a break, the supply of the items they seek might be too much for the village to support. (The shopkeepers would naturally have to lower their prices until the supply depleted itself a bit.)

Towns are more than just places for the adventuring party to heal and restock their equipment, though. They can be places of entertainment, sources of rumors for further exploits, and they can even supply adventures themselves! Towns provide great opportunities for role-playing, inspiring the players' imaginations and making the game more fun for everyone.

Towns also populate the DM's world. One must assume that characters do not exist in a vacuum, so they will inevitably have at least some contact with other people, called nonplayer characters (NPCs). NPCs abound in towns and cities, enlarging the world that the PCs explore. Whether at an inn or on the streets, in City Hall or at the stables, there are endless opportunities for role-playing with interesting townspeople. Every good DM will make effective use of NPCs. In a game based more on role-playing than simple treasure hunting, NPCs are the

linchpin of success. They often provide an essential element of supplying the PCs with information that they might not find anywhere else.

The DM must learn to take on the roles of many people, acting out each part as necessary and discarding each mask as the PCs encounter a new NPC. (If the PCs are likely to encounter a particular NPC more than once, the DM should jot down a quick note as a reminder of that NPC's personality. While it takes a bit more work, the players will respond well.) Not every transaction for each item needs to be acted out by the DM and the players, but haggling over the price of an item and possibly uncovering valuable information every once in a while adds to the spice of the game.

The PCs might learn something important if they take the time to converse with whom they deal, rather than blithely assuming that shopkeepers have nothing more to offer than their wares. Everybody in town has the potential to possess information important to the players. Perhaps the alchemist knows of a secret potion cache in the nearby hills, or he might be willing to hire the PCs to retrieve a potion ingredient for him. Maybe the dwarven blacksmith has knowledge of an ancient treasure horde in the mountains. Perchance there are plots against the PCs' lives, or rumors of a monster's lair nearby, or maybe even directions to the fabled ruins of an ancient castle. Only the DM's imagination limits the possibilities.

Of course, towns are not meant to be a mere convenience any more than are the NPCs who inhabit them. One must remember that towns are a part of a nation. They are a gathering place for dwellers in the surrounding territory, and they are often the seat of government for miles around. The DM should be realistic about towns. They are not simply tools for the PCs; rather, they are locales with their own identities. Each town has its own quirks and differences, like those that make the cities of the real world unique. These mannerisms will be reflected in the personalities of the townsfolk, in their attitudes toward one another and toward the PCs.

One strong indicator that the DM can provide, to let the players know that towns exist independently of them, is the existence of local law. Even the most rural village should be protected by at least a militia. Judicial systems may or may not be present, requiring citizens to take their legal claims to larger settlements (unless they enjoy vigilante justice), but there are almost always authorities.

If the PCs carelessly break the law (which varies from town to town), the DM should have no compunction about throwing them in jail. If they resist, the militia can

## INTRODUCTION

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appear to ensure that the PCs cooperate with the local authorities. (If the PCs happen to receive a few bruises during their trip to the jail, it would be no less than they deserve; they have brought it upon themselves.) Furthermore, the PCs may establish a reputation of being untrustworthy town wreckers, and they may have a hard time convincing potential employers of their good intentions. When they return from the wilderness, weary and in need of food and care, they may be driven from the streets where they carelessly unleashed mayhem. While this may sound harsh, the players *must* learn that their characters are not above the law, and they must coexist with the other inhabitants of the game world.

The DM can inject even more realism into the game if he provides some interaction between the various towns. After all, every town needs trade to survive; no village can exist without an influx and outflow of goods. This possibly could provide the PCs employment as caravan guards, or perhaps they could run the caravan themselves. The PCs might want to try their hands at playing merchants for a time. Once again, the possibilities are limited only by the imagination of the DM.

Even with this brief explanation of the use of towns, it should be clear that they can play a vital role in every game. They can provide a springboard to new adventur-

ing and fuel for ongoing campaigns. Building a town may involve a little more work for the DM, but it will surely prove infinitely rewarding for the players, and therefore rewarding for the DM, too. Any time the PCs encounter a new person, they will not merely be looking to see how much money they could make by killing him. Happily, their imaginations will be forced into play.

There is much more to an adventurer's life than crawling about in dungeons, hoping to strike it rich without dying. Encourage the players to treat their characters as though they have a real life—past, present, and future—and as though they have other concerns than simply getting rich and swinging the sword. What motivates the characters? What are the *other* reasons they have for adventuring? What creatures and people do they like and dislike and why? What do they enjoy doing when not adventuring? If the DM and the players can find answers to these and other personal questions, they will be able to take role-playing to its greatest potential.

With this said, welcome to Thunder Rift!



# Travel in Thunder Rift

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This section is designed to give the DM a general idea of the layout of the canyon of Thunder Rift. Ideas for adventures are included within the text, so the DM will have some ideas for what sort of events would be most fitting in that area. These ideas are intentionally nonspecific and are for the DM to flesh out.

Please note that the description of each area is fairly general. The DM must provide the precise details for the players. At first this may seem like an overwhelming responsibility, but as the task becomes more familiar, it will become easier to design the specifics, and it will be more fun as well.

Travel in the outdoors can be a complicated thing. So many factors influence the distance a person can move in a day that the system quickly becomes cumbersome. For simplicity's sake, assume that an unmounted person can walk 20 miles a day if he travels for 10 hours. Assume also that mounted travel halves the time to move the same distance. In other words, a man on a horse can travel 40 miles in 10 hours. Remember that poor terrain can slow a character to half-normal speed; the DM must use his own judgment in these matters. If covering 20 miles per day seems slow, picture carrying a heavy backpack, wearing armor, battling with assorted monsters, and then imagine trying keep up a brisk pace all day long.

Bounded on all sides by sheer cliff faces nearly half a mile high, with only a few paths providing exits to the rest of the world, Thunder Rift is a miniature world of its own. The Rift contains most of the major temperate land types: barren, rocky hills, sweeping grasslands, an occasional mountain, wide rivers, deep lakes, murky and mysterious swamps, and mighty forests. These features are strewn about the canyon rather haphazardly, almost randomly. The terrain hides a multitude of creatures—some beneficial, others dark and malevolent.

Only through exploration can anyone know all of Thunder Rift in detail, yet it is during this very exploration that many have lost their lives. Whether it is due to the creatures of the Rift or simply a misstep into quicksand, life in Thunder Rift is fraught with peril. Only those of stout body and keen wit will survive!

## The Farolas Hills

To the far north and west lie the Farolas Hills. The area received its name from a famous dwarf adventurer, the first dwarf to set foot in Thunder Rift. The hills here are smooth and evenly rounded, looking almost fabricated. The brown knolls are littered with sagebrush and small trees, and an occasional cave system pocks the slopes.

The hills terminate to the east in grassland and to the west against a sheer cliff face. There, the dwarven keep Hearth-Home is carved into the living stone of the cliffs, a foreboding presence over the entire area. The walls of the fortress are scarred with years of battle and the hills around it are scorched and blackened. The dwarves guard an exit from Thunder Rift in Hearth-Home.

Not only the dwarves are powerful in this area. After years of relative peace, the orcs have returned to the Rift from their hiding places, and they harass Hearth-Home whenever possible. Both dwarves and orcs vie for control of the Farolas Hills area, as it is ideally suited for both of them. Since each group holds a lasting enmity for the other (some would say a hereditary enmity), there is little chance that the two races will learn to coexist peacefully. It is much more likely that they will spend their lives trying to exterminate one another.

A road between the village of Kleine and Hearth-Home used to be free of trouble, and Kleine used to export many dwarf-made goods to the world outside the Rift. However, with the resurgence of orcs in the area, this route has become highly dangerous. Most caravans are not willing to risk the danger of orcish hordes to make their profits, so the road has fallen into disuse.

## Kleine and Lake Ostrel

To the east of the Farolas Hills lies the northern sector of the Great Grasslands. Here also lies the village of Kleine, on the shores of Lake Ostrel. The Plunging Cataract, a mighty, booming waterfall, feeds the lake. It is from the Plunging Cataract that Thunder Rift takes its name, for when the air is still, the crash of the water echoes throughout the Rift with a muffled roar. Fortunately for those who live in Kleine and the surrounding area, the thundering of the water is not excessively loud. Through some acoustical trick of the lake and the canyon walls, the blasting echo carries into the higher regions of the Rift rather than directly across the lake, leaving the noise bearable, even pleasant, in Kleine.

## The Burning Hills

To the east of Kleine, the Burning Hills dominate the land. The Burning Hills have taken their name from steam vents and geysers that dot the landscape. These volcanic remnants punctuate the jagged hills with occasional eruptions, often startling the unwary. The hills, although not overgrown with woods, are not entirely devoid of trees. Stands of birch and pine nestle in the

rocky terrain, making life a bit easier for the denizens.

Mostly kobolds and goblins live in this area, having been driven from the woods by their enemies, the elves. They currently manage to eke out an existence in the Burning Hills by raiding occasional miners who pass through the area, looking for gold and silver. The monsters' lives are nothing compared to what they were in the forest, but they remain comfortable and even content in the sulfurous airs of the Burning Hills.

The animals in the northern section of the Rift tend to be small ones such as rabbits, badgers, and squirrels. There have been bear and deer sightings here, but they are not a frequent occurrence. The birds here are often birds of prey, subsisting on the rodents in the area. There are also many scavengers, such as crows and magpies, who grow fat on the corpses of ambush victims.

### The Gauntlet Forest

To the east and south of the Burning Hills lies the Gauntlet Forest. This vast wood covers nearly a quarter of Thunder Rift. The density of the trees and the amount of light filtering through them varies enormously from area to area. The forest can be deep and thick, yet well lit by streaming rays of sunlight (as it is in its southernmost reaches), or it can be sparse, straggly, and dank (as it is on the borders of the Burning Hills).

There are many kinds of terrain within the Forest. There are jagged hills in the north, rifts and ravines along the riverbanks, flatlands to the west, and pleasantly rolling hills in the southeastern section. To the east, the ravines and hills jumble together, leading to steep bluffs and rocky riverbeds. This is caused by the proximity of the forest to the walls of the Rift, where falling rocks create quite an impact on the environment. There are rumors that a tribe of hill or stone giants has taken control of the eastern forest, finding it very hospitable to their kind.

The southern forest harbors a multitude of creatures, both natural and magical. In the elven-controlled parts of the forest, the animals live in harmony, working through nature's rhythms. Game trails wend their way around the trees, leading to peaceful, reflective pools in the midst of the woods. Birds chirp happily, their songs complementing the other sounds of a forest at rest with itself. The center of the elven lands represents a near-perfect tranquility.

However, in the rest of the forest, disruptive forces play havoc with the natural cycle. In fact, some magical force has recently perverted the very shape of the land so that confusing changes arise around every bend. Streambeds mysteriously flow into nothingness or hills fall away in

sheer drop-offs, allowing passers-by to gaze in wonder at the cross sections of earth that lie revealed.

Animals that inhabit those regions of wild magic are even more alarming. Many are dreadful crossbreeds between natural animals. While not all of them are exceptionally powerful, they are all singularly disgusting in appearance. It is in these parts of the forest that many evil monsters from the D&D® *Rule Book* dwell.

One of the few exits from Thunder Rift may be found in the Gauntlet Forest. By following a branch of the Drake River east to the wall of the canyon, one can find a narrow goat trail that leads up the steep cliff face. This route is impractical for any but a climber, and downright impossible for a horse or wagon.

### The Great Grasslands

The Great Grasslands stretch from the northernmost portion of Thunder Rift to almost the bottom third of the valley, if one disregards the occasional interruption of forested areas. "Grasslands" is a term that allows variance from dusty plains to fertile farmland; the Great Grasslands encompass both terrains and more.

The rolling hills of the prairie hide many surprises. The abundant grass grows up to four feet high, allowing easy concealment from pursuit or for ambush. Various battles in Thunder Rift have had their dramatic climaxes in the Grasslands. Now and then, a sharp-eyed explorer may find a rusty old piece of armor or even a still-serviceable weapon. The quality of the dwarven and elven smiths is such that these aged weapons often prove stronger than those forged by the most modern of human smiths.

Indeed, the current smiths will eagerly examine any of these weapons, hoping to learn ancient secrets of metallurgy. Some of them will even go so far as to hire parties to go out and search for these weapons. Occasionally, teams from competing smiths encounter one another while searching, resulting in a bloody confrontation. Anybody searching the Grasslands for the weapons of old will be wise to avoid these search parties or suffer the consequences. Each of these bands regards every item in the Grasslands as rightfully theirs, and those who take the items are considered thieves.

The rolling plains are home to numerous creatures. Herd beasts such as cattle and buffalo roam the prairies, as do quite a few horses. The animals roam the tranquility of the prehistoric battlefields, grazing next to the crumbling skeletons of ancient antagonists.

Among the tall grasses there are several tiny villages—few more than two or three families—surviving on the

crops they raise in the fertile lands around them. The wilder inhabitants of the area occasionally harass these farmers, but the settlers have erected strong defenses against marauders. Their combat prowess has become quite impressive; many of the best fighters in Thunder Rift come from farms in the remote areas.

The weather across the Grasslands varies greatly, a result of the winds that sweep down into the Rift from the surrounding lands. The rest of the Rift has some small protection against this weather, with hills or forest to break the worst of the winds, but the Grasslands have no such protection in their northern half. At one moment the sun could be shining brightly while the next might see it obscured by crazily skidding clouds.

### The Gloomfens

The Gloomfens lie south of the Farolas Hills. They are the former site of a warriors' academy, but the once-rich forest was reduced to a muck-filled swampland by a horribly destructive spell, turning one of the most beautiful areas of Thunder Rift into one of the ugliest. The entire area, from its eastern edge in the Great Grasslands to its western border at the walls of the Rift, has a curiously deformed appearance. The only trees in the Gloomfens are distorted and stumpy, resembling twisted parodies of humanity.

The still pools of water that collect after each frequent rainfall gather no buzzing insects, but accumulate only scum and algae. The puddles lie undisturbed, their brackish waters harboring no animal life. The murky waters are quite deceptive in appearance—some shallow-looking puddles are actually deeper than a tall man's height while deep-looking pools might be only shin high to a halfling.

There is little animal life in the Gloomfens. The very air in the fens is toxic. When entering the swamp, every creature must roll a successful saving throw vs. poison or suffer -1 penalties to their attack and damage rolls, as well as their Armor Class, while in the swamp.

The atmosphere in the Gloomfens is always humid and stagnant, and the ever-present mist swirls in strange hypnotic patterns. Occasionally the marsh will belch forth putrid gas, befouling the air with its stench.

A thin tributary to the mighty Drake River flows out of the Gloomfens, lazily trickling its way through the polluted fens until it collects into a wide, knee-deep basin and runs to its delta in the grasslands. Its source is a large pond at the base of the western canyon wall, out of which a cascade of water tumbles. Above lies a strange keep

with a waterwheel turning and creaking at its side. The stronghold is a mystery, for no living person will go there—or, if they have, they will not divulge its secrets.

### Brichtwood

To the south of the Gloomfens, in a box canyon, lies peaceful Brichtwood. Although the Gauntlin Forest is beautiful in many areas, it pales in comparison with the splendor of Brichtwood. The most comely areas of the Gauntlin Forest may be tended by the elves, but Brichtwood is a splendid example of how exquisite nature can be when left to its own ripening. The majestic trees of the forest are almost archetypal. They grow straight and tall, and their foliage is a glorious emerald green. The undergrowth is not cloying, and it often aids movement instead of hindering it. The game trails are distinct, leading to clear blue basins of water that dot the woods. The sunlight filters through the leaves, creating an ever-present feeling of dawn or dusk, depending on the time of day. Should clouds curtain off the sunlight, the forest fades to twilight shades, the brilliant colors of the vegetation tapering into soft shadows and pastel hues. The season never strays from an eternal summer. No matter if the clouds threaten; vernal warmth remains in Brichtwood. The harsh winters of the Rift never encroach upon Brichtwood, leaving it a pocket of beauty in an otherwise pitiless land.

The fauna consists mostly of deer and small animals. There is the infrequent fox, and a wolf pack runs through Brichtwood, feeding off sickly rabbits and deer that stray from their relatives, maintaining the natural balance. The animals are most definitely *not* shy, and some will directly approach humanoid intruders in this idyllic setting. Unless they are threatened by those intruders, the animals will never react with hostility.

In the middle of Brichtwood lies a magical spring that is at least partially responsible for the forest's beauty. At this spring wounds are healed, curses are broken, and diseases are cured. A small stream flows from the spring, richly nourishing the plants and animals that drink of it. Unfortunately, the water loses its magical qualities if removed from the spring, so its curative faculties cannot be transported away. The location of the spring is a closely guarded secret among those who know of it, for they do not desire the beauty of Brichtwood to be sullied by those who would seek the spring.

There seems to be some sort of agreement, among those who use the spring, that there be no violence committed near the waters. Anyone who violates this agree-

ment is dealt with most harshly; they are attacked and brought to the brink of death repeatedly, yet always healed by the spring at the last minute. Finally, the fools are dragged away from the spring to the edge of the forest, slaughtered, and left for scavengers. Brichtwood is a peaceful place, except when it has been violated. When aroused, the forest becomes deadly, seemingly sentient. Everything—plant and animal alike—turns against defilers, forcing them to flee or lose their lives.

### Grakken Wood

Due east of Brichtwood lies Grakken Wood. The towering trees of this timberland create an aura of unearthly power. They are of a prodigious height, dwarfing the tallest giant. The woods stand strong against the winds that rush across the Great Grasslands, exhibiting a vitality against all odds. Their thickly interlaced leaves allow only a bare minimum of sunlight to filter to the earth. Because of this, the forest floor is nearly devoid of undergrowth.

Within the forest, all is dark and gloomy. The remains of past attempts to “civilize” the forest spot the ground occasionally. These remnants are thoroughly decayed and smashed, as though some immensely strong creature had crushed them with a vengeance. The shells of some destroyed cabins offer little or no shelter from the rains that periodically sweep over the Rift. Although the density of the leaves overhead provides some cover from the initial blasts of rain, the sheer weight of the water eventually pours to the ground in torrents, drenching all who are not under more substantial cover.

Scattered about Grakken Wood are trees with huge claw marks, massive boulders that have been split into pieces, and other evidence of strength beyond human limits. There are trails worn deep into the earth by huge feet, and indications of battles between large opponents litter the area. Overall, Grakken Wood is a very dangerous place.

### The Melinir Area

The Melinir area is just east of northern Grakken Wood. Its hills are riddled with the ancient mines of dwarves and the more modern mines of humans. In the eastern portion of the Melinir area lies the town of Torlynn, a small hamlet in a wooded valley. Torlynn is just now recovering from the effects of an evil spell that created an eternal winter around the village. (If the adventurers are playing, and have not yet completed the recently released game adventure, *Quest for the Silver Sword*, then Torlynn still lies under enchantment, and its people are slowly abandon-

ing it. Otherwise, the villagers of Torlynn are now returning to their homes.)

The city of Melinir lies south and west of Torlynn. Melinir, situated on the shores of Lake Ganif, has the largest population in Thunder Rift. Lake Ganif itself holds the mysterious Mage Island, and its waters lap against the borders of the Black Swamp to the south.

### Marshwood

Marshwood, south and west of Melinir, lives up to its name. The ground is always damp, often collecting scum-laden pools of stagnant water. Large overhanging trees sink their roots deep into the soil, seeking drier ground in which to anchor themselves. The marshy ground hides few surprises. It squishes unpleasantly underfoot, soaking even water resistant boots. Each step raises clouds of small, stinging gnats that constantly fly into one's eyes and prove to be an immense irritant. The whole area is gloomy, dank, and thoroughly depressing. There are few places dry enough on which to camp in Marshwood, and there is no dry wood to be found for a campfire at all.

Marshwood, like Grakken Wood, contains the ruins of cabins. Settlers foolish enough to try to make a living from this land have long since passed away, most of them dying at the hands of lizard men who live nearby. Clearings typically surround these ruined cottages: the result of attempting to farm Marshwood. The land in these clearings is even softer than in other places in the marshlands because the vegetation cannot leech the water from these areas. Thus, the cabins are beginning to sink into the soft soil. Ponds have begun to form around these erstwhile homes; streams are gathering into the area. As more water accumulates, the ground sinks faster, leading to the flow of even more water into the low spots. Soon, the homes will be completely submerged.

Since lizard men have butchered the inhabitants, most of these abandoned houses still hold the possessions of their former owners. There are likely to be items of value in these houses, perhaps even some magical objects. The descendants and relatives of these people are sure to want back some of their “heirlooms.” Adventurers can make a bit of money and some notoriety by retrieving these things from under the snouts of the lizard men.

### The Black Swamp

The soft ground of Marshwood gradually gives way east to the real quagmires of the Black Swamp. The predominant trees here are slender willows and durable cypresses. The pools of Marshwood form interlocking courses that

drain slowly into the Swamp.

Due to the constant irrigation, the area remains eternally green, and its verdant growth dazzles the eye. The moss-covered trees hang over the murky waters, dropping their leaves and rotten branches into the pervasive muck throughout the area. Where the bayous give way to land, the ground is spongy and unstable. Patches of quicksand are common, leading to a quick death for the unwary. Although the swamp is not dangerous to those who know which spots to avoid, it is a veritable deathtrap to the uninitiated.

The insects here are even worse than they are in Marshwood. Not only are gnats a constant problem, but horseflies and mosquitoes persistently dog those who travel through the swamp. Only the leaves of a rare plant called dinsweed, rubbed liberally over one's entire body, can hold the insects at bay for a short time. Unfortunately, dinsweed very closely resembles poison ivy, so those not fully versed in plant lore may find themselves with a worse problem than insects.



Dinsweed

### The Horned Hills

The Horned Hills are lightly forested and hold many caves. Located directly east of the Black Swamp, one would think that the climate would be much more humid. This is not the case, however, for the canyon winds push most of the moisture back into the bogs. The weather here is fairly pleasant; the arid air provides much needed relief from the dank air of the nearby fens. The hills are rolling and soft, leading gradually to the canyon walls.

The Horned Hills provide an easy exit from the Rift—an even, smooth trail that a fully laden wagon can easily traverse. What's more, the area is nearly devoid of threats to the bustling caravan. On the other hand, those few threats that do exist can be terrible ones. . . .

### The Bone Hills

In the southwest corner of Thunder Rift lie the Bone Hills. Unlike the friendlier Horned Hills, the Bone Hills are a jagged, bleak, and harsh environment. The landscape is a product of constant erosion. The ravines are continually reshaped with every rainfall, when flash floods spill through the low land. The sagebrush that grows sporadically throughout the hills does nothing to alleviate the dismal view. Stunted trees cling feebly to life on the sides of ravines. Bone-white dust blows up in thick, choking clouds, quickly coating the lungs and the body.

There is reputedly an exit from Thunder Rift in this area, but no one has come to investigate it. The Bone Hills are the home of at least one dragon, and he lives in a cave situated in the walls of the canyon. The original wyrm was slain, but recent reports state that the silhouette of a new, huge dragon was seen winging toward the cave.

### The Drake River

The majestic Drake River flows throughout the entirety of Thunder Rift. Although it diverges in numerous places, the general direction of the river remains the same, flowing southward. From its origin in Lake Ostrel, it runs to the Great Grasslands and then splits into eastern and western branches. The eastern branch flows into the Gauntlin Forest where it is joined by a tributary running down from the Burning Hills. Further downstream, the East Drake separates; one arm flows east and is lost in the depths of the forest while the main course continues southward and is reunited with the western branch. The West Drake, in the meantime, continues southwest through the Great Grasslands where it is joined by the tributary from the Gloomfens before the current curves



back to the south, past the mountains of Wizardspire. A pure and icy creek runs down from Wizardspire and again swells the West Drake before flowing southeast into the Gauntlet Forest, to a confluence with the eastern branch.

The Drake continues south, through elven territory, and finally emerges into the Grasslands again, just north of the Melinir Hills. Here it diverges anew, and the eastern branch flows past Torlynn and into the Black Swamp. The western branch curves around the hills and partially into Grakken Wood. Once out of Grakken Wood, it is joined by the runoff from the magical spring in Brichtwood.

Just past the Brichtwood tributary, roughly half the river turns directly to the south. This water moves through more prairies before crossing the southern tip of Marshwood. It then flows east and south, through even more plains, and finally empties into the Bog of the Black Knight and leaves Thunder Rift. The other half of the Drake River flows past the city of Melinir and into Lake Ganif. A small stream emerges on the other side of the lake and flows into the Black Swamp. From there, it seeps through a ravine in the Horned Hills, following a path carved by centuries of passage.

It is not at all uncommon to see fleets of barges heading up and down the Drake, for the towns of Torlynn, Melinir, and Kleine must trade. Since the river is not, in most places, a swift body of water, bargemen do not find it difficult to pole up the river. In places where the Drake River takes a turn for rapids, the bargemen portage their crafts around the unnavigable areas.

One might think that various evil creatures upstream would try to foul the river, poisoning it so that those downstream could not use it. Indeed, a tribe of kobolds tried to do so in the past, but their toxins simply sank to the bottom and were otherwise diluted as the Drake traveled along its appointed course. All they accomplished was the poisoning of their own animals, upon which they relied for sustenance. Those who ate of the poisoned meat suffered horribly before dying, while those who abstained starved throughout the winter. The kobolds learned their lesson from this and now settle for littering the river with their refuse.

The Drake River is by no means the only water flowing throughout the Rift. There are many brooks, not indicated on the map, which are largely responsible for the irrigating the fertile areas of Thunder Rift. It is also from these streams that many animals slake their thirst.

# The history of Thunder Rift

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This section provides the DM with some idea of the history of the area. While this may not seem relevant to modern Thunder Rift, one must understand the forces that made the Rift. It also may give DMs adventure ideas for the ruins and other areas mentioned.

This section will also help the DM understand the various tensions that run rampant in the Rift today. This can provide clues for playing the roles of various characters. Why do dwarves and elves dislike one another? Why do mages and fighters traditionally scoff at the other? Perhaps the following history will offer some reasons.

## The Rift Wars

Long before humans came to this part of the world, dwarves and elves made their homes in Thunder Rift. Neither group bothered the other because they did not desire the lands of the other. After a time, however, their racial incompatibility began to wear on them. Since their basic attitudes and outlooks were so different, their infrequent encounters became less and less civil. Eventually, their leaders forbade their subjects to have anything to do with the other race. Feelings of mistrust and dislike grew as the years passed, eventually blossoming into hatred. Often, the younger, more hot-headed dwarves and elves disobeyed the orders of their elders. Members of each race began to stage guerilla raids on the other. Finally, the elves and dwarves declared an all-out war.

The elves, armed with powerful magic, reduced the fortresses of the dwarves to rubble. Their skilled archers also decimated the dwarven offense in the forest. Defeat for the dwarven army seemed certain, but the dwarves were not to be easily beaten. Exploiting the blustery winds of the Rift, the dwarves lit and burned large tracts of woods. Either to avenge the burning forest or to escape the mounting flames, the elves poured out of the woods in droves. As they emerged from the flaming trees, half-blinded by hot ash and choking smoke, the dwarves mowed them down. The blood of these two peoples ran thick in the Drake River.

Meanwhile, the truly evil humanoids, such as the orcs and goblins, capitalized on a chance to wreak havoc on two of their most hated enemies. They began to covertly destroy the villages of both elves and dwarves, knowing that the feuding creatures would blame each other for these atrocities. The young, the old, the crippled, and the infirm of both races began to feel the bite of both lawful and chaotic blades.

For a time, this ruse worked perfectly. The slaughter of the innocents served to inflame the passions of the com-

batants, and they fought all the more fiercely because of it. The elves and dwarves might well have exterminated one another, had not an elven child escaped the carnage in one of the orc raids and told his rescuers of the monsters who were actually responsible.

Then the elves and dwarves met under a flag of truce, where they agreed to set aside their differences and deal with the common enemy. Their combined forces were mighty enough to crush the hordes of evil humanoids. The goblins that remained alive fled into the Burning Hills and hid in the deepest holes they could find, and the orcs left the Rift altogether.

Now the dwarves and elves, their populations equally ravaged, withdrew from the war-torn plains and went deep into the mountains and forests to heal their wounds. In time, the dwarves made a new home in the Farolas Hills while the elves moved to the southern portion of the Gauntlin Forest. They actively avoided contact with all other races, save the halflings. (Neither the dwarves nor the elves hated the halflings for failing to join in the conflict—everyone knew that the talents of the halflings lay in different areas than battle.)

Humans came to the Rift at about this time, and seeing its natural splendor, they began to settle there. Men founded several towns and began to work to bring the Rift under their control. Castles were built in far regions of the valley and wizards found various parts of the canyon to their liking as well. The humans found great wealth in the area and were determined to exploit it to its fullest extent.

Eventually, the humans encountered the other races living in the Rift. At first the chance meetings between humans and the elves, dwarves, and halflings were extremely distant. Many feared that yet a new war would erupt, and all felt powerless to stop it.

Once again, as the tension between the basically good races mounted, the threat of evil beings reunited them. The goblins, a fruitful race, had begun to overflow the Burning Hills and to populate the northern arm of the Gauntlin Forest. The orcs also returned in force, to challenge the dwarves for the Farolas Hills. Each of the demihuman races might have been perfectly content to let the others be swept under the rising tide of evil humanoids, but the humans stepped forth and provided a unifying factor of leadership. In a new-forged spirit of cooperation, the alliance easily stemmed the onslaught. Although the allies could not remove completely the vile creatures from the Rift, they at least prevented the outright slaughter of the good races, one by one.

While victory earned the humans gratitude on the part of dwarves, elves, and halflings, it did little to lessen the animosity that the demihumans felt toward one another. They no longer plotted against one another, but they felt no kinship whatsoever. Even today they live strictly apart from each other, avoiding contact if at all possible. If and when they do meet, they are often brusque and rude.

### The Rise of the Quadrial

Through the years, kingdoms rose and fell outside of Thunder Rift, and refugees from the wars of succession came to the valley. Dispossessed knights, master thieves, powerful clerics, and assorted mages came to Thunder Rift and found it to their liking. Several of them led followers here, and they built villages on the ruins of the old towns. Some of these villages prospered under wise rule by their leaders while others failed miserably. A few made their livelihood by raiding the goods produced by the other villages. There were even those who negotiated with goblins and orcs.

Then, a strange plague struck the valley. It swept through the villages of the humans, into the burrows of the halflings, under the trees of the elven forests, and about the craggy fortresses of the dwarves. Despite the best efforts of healers from all of the races, much of the population of Thunder Rift died and rotted away. Even more strangely, evil creatures were not affected by the epidemic; indeed, the disease seemed to make some of them stronger for a time. This led some to assume that an evil wizard of great power had assisted the vile monsters in their cause, for they surely had the upper hand now.

Once again, the humans saved the good races of the Rift from total extinction. The greatest human clerics gathered their spells and prayers, and they cast their wills into the preservation of all their allies. Many of them, spent by this effort, slipped exhausted into death, but their magical and spiritual efforts finally triumphed, and the allies were able to hold off again the onslaught of the monstrous humanoids. The orcs and goblins were subsequently driven deep into the hiding places of Thunder Rift, and relative peace finally descended upon the canyon. The dwarves and elves began to rebuild their shattered communities anew while the humans and halflings invited settlers into the valley to repopulate their depleted numbers.

The historic Council of the Isle, containing representatives of all four races, was founded to discuss the peoples' collective future in Thunder Rift. They met on Mage Island (from which the Council took its name), in Lake Ganif. Noble and honorable delegates of the four con-

cerned races there laid the groundwork for a lasting peace. They wished to ensure that the Rift Wars (as the dwarf/elf conflict had come to be called) would never occur again. All of them understood that it would be quite some time before the dwarves and elves could live in harmony, but they were resolved to provide a foundation for a lasting accord.

As a symbol of the new-forged peace, the Council ordered the establishment of a group of heroes: a party that would travel throughout the Rift and dedicate itself to the disruption of the forces of Chaos. Each race was commanded to send one or two of its most notable champions to this party, effective immediately. The dwarves and elves were unenthusiastic at first, but soon the very best of every race began to vie for the honor of representing their people and homeland in this group. At last, the selections were made.

Representing the dwarves was Thragat Orc's-blood, a distinguished warrior who claimed over one hundred orcish kills to his name. The elves provided their best archer-wizard, Thessandria Starshine, whose skills with the bow and magic were beyond question. (Even some ambitious human mages had heard of her prowess and were eager to learn from her.) The humans offered two champions, a cleric and a thief. The priest, Father Patrius Timoris, had no equal in the healing arts, while the sneaky Gray Raven reputedly could find no trap or lock to confound his abilities. Finally, the famed halfling twins Korian and Dorian came from their hilly burrows to lend their nimble short swords to the cause.

Although their rapport was not instantaneous, the champions strove to accomplish the task given them. Strangely enough, the two who came to understand one another best were Thragat and Thessandria. Their areas of expertise did not overlap and they complemented each other's skills well. After many epic exploits, the group returned to Mage Island to report. Two of their number had perished while holding off a dragon onslaught at Torlynn. Gray Raven and Korian, defending the injured Thessandria, had met their demise at the claws of Ash the Red. Their sacrifice, however, allowed Thessandria to finish the wyrm with a well-placed spell.

With much ceremony and honor, the four survivors were established as the *Quadrial*, the generals of the Rift.

Since then, as members of the Quadrial have retired or perished, the Council has replaced them with the cream of young adventurers. An appointment to the Quadrial is the highest honor that can be offered an adventurer in Thunder Rift. The party is always made up of one member from each race—human, elf, dwarf, and halfling.

## A Fateful Union

Continuing in the spirit of bridging the gap between dwarf and elf, Thragat and Thessandria announced their marriage engagement when they retired from the Quadrail. This caused an immediate uproar from both the dwarven and the elven communities. The couple was besieged by angry family members, friends, and strangers alike. No one, it seemed, could adjust to the idea of an interracial marriage except the pair themselves.

Nevertheless, they were obviously in love, and both communities were forced to accept their union (although they would not embrace the idea). The wedding nuptials were a large affair, with noble representatives from every community in Thunder Rift present. Happily, there were no outbreaks of violence between the more conservative attendees, although several insults were coolly exchanged.

The whole of Thunder Rift awaited Thragat's and Thessandria's first child with great anticipation. However, treachery struck, and the couple was found brutally slaughtered in its home while Thessandria was still pregnant. Ironically, the evidence pointed to a dwarf-elf conspiracy, but all investigations were fruitless.

Nevertheless, the brutal murder of father, mother, and unborn child united the old adversaries in a sense of mutual shame. Since then, all formal hostilities between dwarves and elves have ceased.

## Sword vs. Wand

In the years that followed, Sir Jameson the Defender, a notable human warrior, established a fighter's academy in a box canyon just south of the Farolas Hills. His school grew and flourished, and other adventuring professionals saw that they could only gain by following his example. The mages established their school and sanctuary in a small group of mountains that pierce the Great Grasslands, atop a peak that would come to be known as Wizardspire. The clerics, in turn, established a temple and seminary in the town of Melinir, and the thieves founded guilds in Melinir and Torlynn (but only the Melinir branch would survive). Order descended upon the valley, and the many races settled down to their studies and to farming the lands.

Sadly, the peace was not to last long. Even though the humans had unified the valley and brought peace, they could not get along amongst themselves. With the threat of monsters fading into the distant past, various factions began to bicker over the balance of political power. The warriors and wizards were the first to quarrel openly.

Argument turned to blows, and the warriors and wizards went to war. Pleas for enlistment spread beyond the Rift and mercenaries of all classes joined the battle. The major fortifications of each side were destroyed. A fighters' keep that stood in the center of the once-fertile box canyon sank into swamps that the mages conjured. The wizards' retreat in the mountains, assailed by gargantuan engines of war, cracked and tumbled into rubble. Yet the fighting raged on. Steel sang and magic sizzled, but the war showed no signs of ending.

At last, when the mages sensed the waning of their powers, they unleashed a killing force that altered the face of the land. There was a forest that served as a barrier between the two lands, but it was reduced to a twisted, stumpy mockery of what it used to be. Everything in that area died or mutated hideously because of the fearsome sorcery worked that day. Most of the warriors perished as their territory sank into a desolate, bubbling morass of poisonous fumes. The entire box canyon became the site of the Gloomfens.

Those who survived wreaked a horrible vengeance on the sorcerers in turn: they waited a year to lull the magicians into a false sense of security, and then they moved. The wizards no longer expected to become objects of a fearsome slaughter, so they admitted a group of young men who petitioned for magic instruction. Then, the blood of masters and apprentices alike flowed thickly through the makeshift halls of the wizards' new retreat atop Wizardspire. It is said that nothing was left alive.

The assassins fled from the tower to the south and disappeared out of knowledge. Legends say that they still hide from the vengeance of any of the wizards' successors in the marsh in the southern tip of Thunder Rift, honing their fighting skills to a deadly edge.

It is well known that both the warriors and the wizards left behind considerable treasure caches. The fighters' legacy, unmatchable arms and armor of unknown make and origin, must still lie submerged in the Gloomfens. The ruins of the fighter's academy still lie in the swamp, too, and none have yet emerged from the fens carrying their riches. And the sorcerers, collectors and creators of great magic, may have left behind a hoard even more majestic. The treasures of Wizardspire still rest in the mages' vaults, yet none have been claimed by the adventurers of Thunder Rift. Perhaps it is because rumors abound of fell guardians, waiting to destroy all who would profane the sacred resting places. While all these riches may well be protected by fierce creatures, they still lie in wait for those who have the courage and ability to come and take them.

# The Major Settlements

While the dwarves have Hearth-Home in the Farolas Hills and the elves reside in scattered places throughout the Gauntlet Forest, the humans reside in more familiar settings. The three major villages of Thunder Rift (that is, those with more than 30 people living in them) are Kleine, Torlynn, and Melinir. Kleine, located in the north, is mainly an agricultural community, supporting its economy by raising cattle and other herd animals. Torlynn is mainly a lumber town that profits somewhat from the trade route to Melinir. As previously mentioned, Torlynn is only just recovering from its cold spell, and most of the place is abandoned. The burgomaster is anxious to have his town regain its status as the premier lumber town within a 100 mile radius. Melinir is the largest and most important town in the Rift. It is the trading center, partially because of its central location and partially because of its contact with the outside world. It also benefits from having a guild of every major class located within its boundaries.

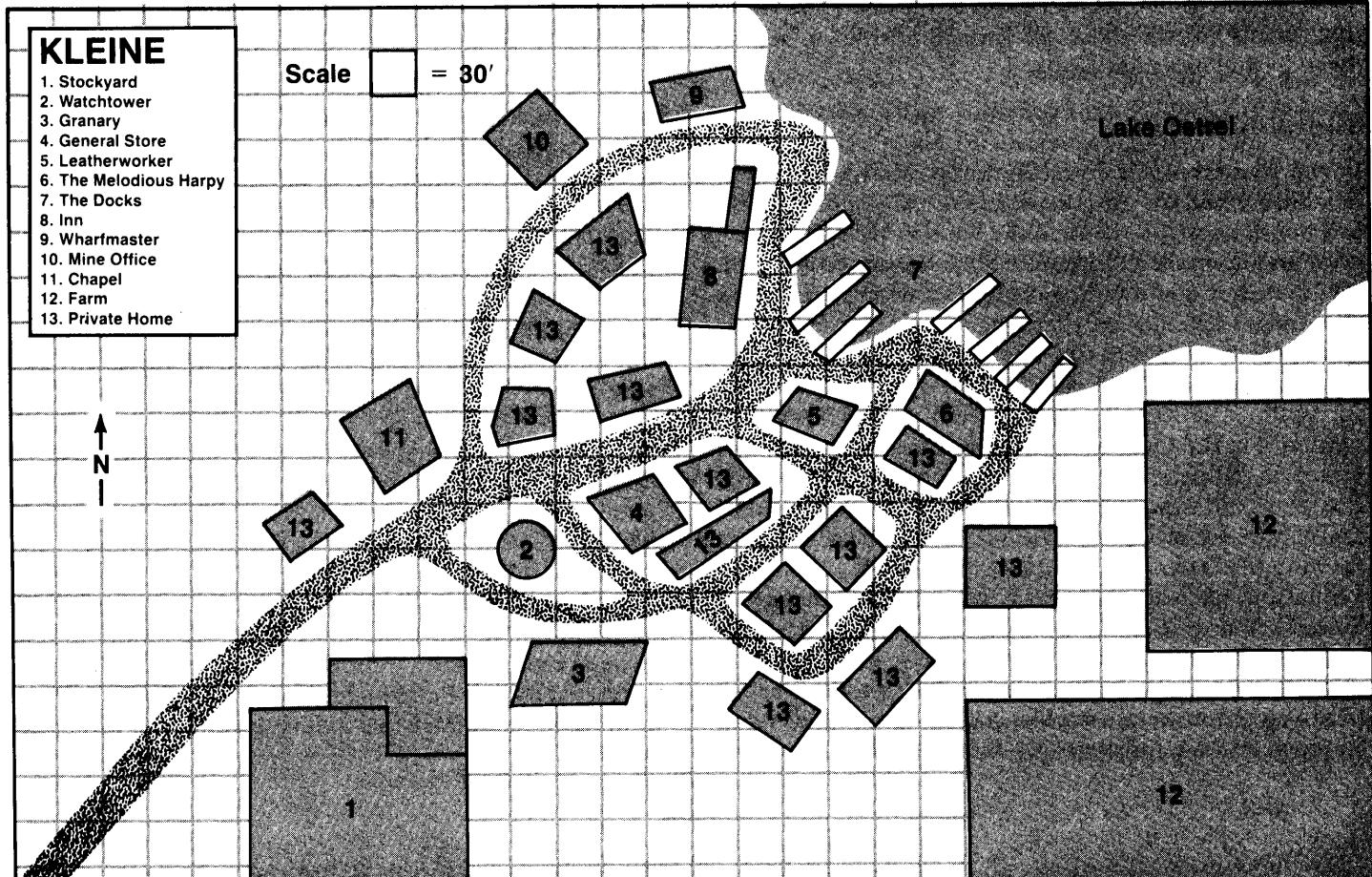
When making their character histories, the players can choose to have their characters originate in Melinir. On the other hand, they can play adventurers or merchants whose travels have brought them to Melinir. Whatever their reason for being in the town, Melinir provides a per-

fect base of operations for new adventurers.

The DM should feel free to modify the information presented here in whatever way he sees fit. If the DM feels that important buildings or NPCs have been left out, or that more information is needed in certain sections, he should by all means add to those sections. Fill in whatever is necessary to complete the area. Since every campaign is different, every DM will have different ideas of what the towns require.

## Kleine

Kleine rests on the shores of turbulent Lake Ostrel, taking its bounty from the waters and from the fertile land surrounding the lake. Those who sail the lake in small crafts quickly haul in an abundance of fish. The pure water, direct from the Plunging Cataract, seems healthy for the fish because their numbers never seem to lessen. Similarly, by farming crops or herding cattle and sheep, citizens can easily wrest their needs from the earth. The land in this northern region is exceptionally fertile, excellent for bountiful yields and healthful grazing. When the season is over, the farmers can bring their harvest and livestock into the town proper where they generally receive a fair price for their efforts.



The town also provides a tavern, the Melodious Harpy, for its hard-working (and no doubt thirsty) farmers. The Harpy is very popular among the citizenry of Kleine, and it has become the unofficial town hall. The Melodious Harpy is where the locals come to relax, blow off steam, and enjoy one another's company. The population of Kleine is almost exclusively human, but dwarves, elves, and halflings are always welcomed.

There is no smithy in Kleine. When the citizens need metal work done, they must either travel to Melinir or Torlynn, or they must put in an order at the trading post. The orders go out once a week and travel down the Drake River with trade goods. The smith in Melinir usually finishes the work in time to catch the upriver ferry, two weeks from the time he receives the orders. The Torlynn smith is usually faster since he receives a lesser volume of work from Torlynn's populace. However, his work is generally of lower quality than that of Melinir's smith.

As if to compensate for its lack of a smith, Kleine houses one of the finest leatherworkers in the valley. Given time and some decent leather, he can turn almost any hide into a durable work of art.

Kleine has most of the other things that make a town livable, including a general store, a chapel, warehouses, stables, and a decent inn. Kleine is a small town, though,

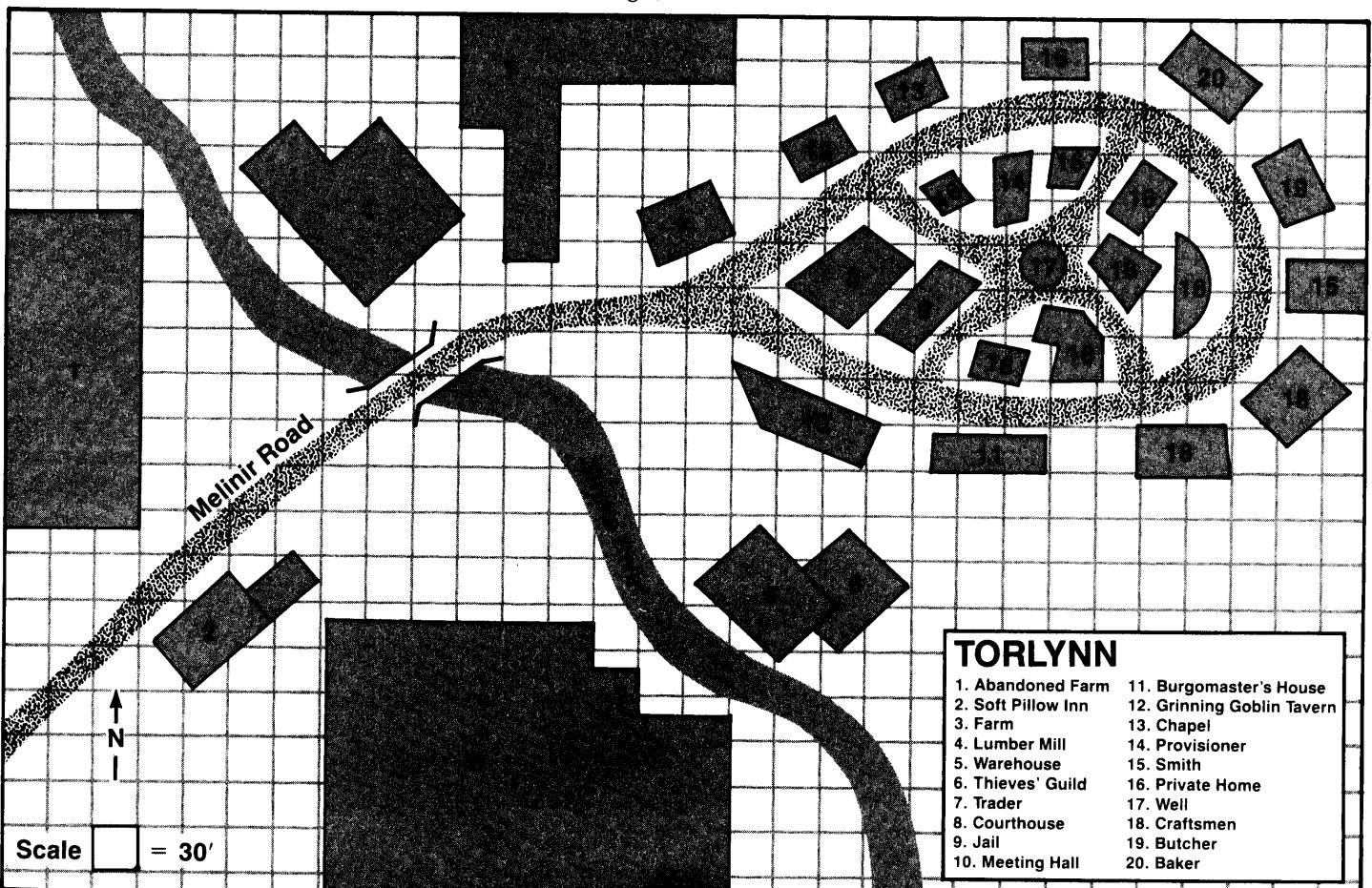
so the residents must travel to Melinir or even out of the Rift if they desire any city life.

The only trading route these days is downstream to Melinir. The ongoing dwarf/orc conflicts dissuade all but the most foolhardy merchants from traveling into the Farolas Hills. The best bet for safely selling one's goods is to send them down the river.

Kleine has a 50-foot-tall watchtower located on one of its winding streets. From here, the city watch (composed entirely of volunteers or those who have no other jobs) can make sure that any assault does not come unheralded. If the city is in imminent danger of being attacked, the watchman rings a bell at hand, whereupon all citizens rush to their homes, bar their doors, and ready their weapons. Although the city has never yet been under siege, they remain prepared for just such an emergency.

### Torlynn

This once-proud alpine town is now dilapidated and decrepit. Many of its homes are vacant, abandoned by their former owners when a foul magic crept upon the region (see the recently published D&D® game adventure, *Quest for the Silver Sword*). There are still a few humans living in the town—a group of survivors who are convinced that



the town is again destined for greatness. They may well be right, for the news of the enchantment's end is spreading throughout the Rift and people are beginning to return.

The town's layout is centered around the road to Melinir and the mines. The road makes a loop through the town and exits to the southwest. Most of the important buildings in Torlynn are along the Melinir road, which circles about the town well. The burgomaster's house is here, as is the town meeting hall and courthouse.

Also located around the circle are the businesses of the various craftsmen necessary for the town's survival. The butcher and the baker hold shop here, as do the carpenter and the smith. Each business has remained in town in spite of the severe drop in business caused by the evil magic.

The lumber mill has closed down since the people left because it no longer had a reason to produce anything, nor the power to do so. The thieves' guild, which operated out of a warehouse on the roundabout, closed its doors even before the disaster struck. They left some of their items behind, but also left traps armed to protect these items. Since the location of the guild is still a secret, no one has yet claimed these things as their own.

The chapel, established by clerics in the area, is still open, although it operates on a minimal budget. Thus, any healing that the party may need will cost them quite a bit of money (so that the chapel might defray its expenses). To raise money, the chapel instructs the children of Torlynn in reading, writing, history, and geography.

The farms in the area were hit very hard by the unnatural winter, and their crops withered and died in the harsh frost. Since many farmers had nothing to trade after the winter destroyed their livelihood, most of them moved from the area and into the Grasslands or down to Melinir. Now that the winter has ended, the untended farms have sprouted heavy growths. Those farmers who had faith in the burgomaster and remained have reaped the most bountiful harvests they have ever seen.

The Soft Pillow Inn and the Grinning Goblin Tavern are open again and business is beginning to boom as the people return. For a reasonable fee (5 sp), visitors can rest in the comfortable warm beds of the Soft Pillow.

Torlynn is a democratic little town, electing its burgomaster from the deserving citizens once every five years. The current burgomaster has held the office for several terms. He is a large, jovial fellow with a silver monocle. Despite his kindness, however, he can be firm and even brutal when he must perform his duties. He has only the good of the town at heart.

### Melinir

Melinir is a walled city of about 200 people. Humans and demihumans mix in the streets so freely that it seems as if no one even notices the difference. When they interact, everyone treats the others as equals. Melinir is a model town where it seems that no one hates anyone else. Some may be gruff and impolite, but they intend no real malice.

The town is divided into six sections. There are no walls separating these districts, but very little overlap occurs between each region's function. The first mayor of Melinir divided the neighborhoods into the residential area, the market, the merchants' quarter (which would also come to house the town's offices), and the warehouse district. Later, the wealthy and famous, who did not wish to live in "cramped quarters," built themselves an exclusive neighborhood in the southeast part of town. Finally, just before Melinir erected its walls, the clerics claimed a section just north of the wealthy borough.

The life-blood of Melinir is the trade that moves in and out of the Rift. Melinir is also a business center for the rest of the Rift. Virtually anything produced in Thunder Rift is available in Melinir. The Mayor and influential citizens will never do anything to jeopardize commerce. They eagerly help all merchants resolve their problems quickly and amicably. When trouble arises, the town guards are always available to provide immediate aid. Small wonder, then, that the town centers around the market, and that the market is in the center of the town.

To the north and west of the central marketplace lies the main residential section. The houses are not huge, but, for the most part, are larger than houses typical in other towns. The neighborhood is clean, well kept, and well lit. Vandals prevalent in larger cities are not to be found here.

In the northeastern section of town, wrapping itself around the market, is the mercantile district. Its shops provide nearly anything one could want, from exotic perfumes to common iron nails. Some items, of course, must be imported from outside the Rift, which makes them considerably more expensive. Most, though, can be produced at some location in the canyon.

The temple grounds lie on the eastern edge of the town. The walled security is proof against most intrusion. However, since the grounds are generally open to visitors, stealth in entering is largely unnecessary.

Directly south of the temple, three stately manors thrust their towers into the skies. Thick stone walls separate this area from the rest of the city, limiting the enjoy-

**Scale = 50'**

5

**MELINIR**

- = Road
- = Wall
- = Watch Tower

The map shows a complex layout of rooms and pathways. Key features include:

- Rooms:** 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26.
- Roads:** Represented by thick black lines connecting various rooms.
- Walls:** Represented by thin black lines forming room boundaries.
- Watch Towers:** Indicated by black circles at the corners of some rooms and along certain wall segments.
- Grid:** A light gray grid serves as the background for the map.

**MELINIR**

-  = Road
  -  = Wall
  -  = Watch Tower
  -  = Wharf
  -  = Water Wheel
  -  = Portcullis

## The Major Settlements

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ment of the grounds' beauty to the eyes of the privileged residents. Although the inhabitants do not appear to be too pretentious, they do seem to like their own space.

The warehouse district and the docks squat on the waterfront to the southwest. They hold the goods shipped to and from Kleine, Torlynn, and beyond. The warehouses hold nearly everything that must be sold in the market, for the merchants from outside the Rift need to store their wares in a safe place. Jewels, spices, and manifold other trade goods find a temporary home in the warehouses.

The founders of Melinir always intended to build walls around their town, for they realized that Thunder Rift is full of creatures who intend no good to humans. On the other hand, they were not eager to limit the size of the city. Thus, they delayed the construction of the walls and left the problem to future generations.

Eventually, the citizens elected a mayor who was intimately familiar with the dangers of the surrounding area. He immediately contracted the stone masons and engineers in the area, and construction on the walls began at once. It took a year and a day, but the masons finished their work in time for the town to defend itself against a gnoll attack. The city has not been again attacked since then, but the citizens remain grateful for the walls that protect them from the dangers of the open lands.

### Within Melinir

What follows is a description of some important places in the city of Melinir. Many locations also include NPCs who might be found there. When an NPC is listed, the following capsule summary of statistics will be employed:

**Name (Class and Level, Race):** Armor Class (AC); Hit Points (hp); Movement Rate (MV); Number of Attacks (#AT); THAC0; Damage per Attack (Dmg); Morale (ML); Alignment (AL); Experience Point Value (XP)

As DM, please remember that this town is *not* a dungeon, nor indeed should any other town be. Towns are places where people live and interact with one another. While a PC may indiscriminately hack and slash around the wilderness and in dungeons, towns are another matter entirely. A person who tries to decimate a village (or simply kills an NPC for his possessions) will find himself serving as a bull's eye for the town guards.

#### 1. Watchtower and Walls

Five watch towers allow the city guards to assess the state of the town and the lands surrounding it. Each tower

is equipped with a large brass bell, suitable for warning the town in case of impending invasion or fire. There are also magical speaking tubes that connect each tower to the Garrison (#2) and Guard Post (#3), so the sentries may warn of danger without frightening the town. The sentries are ever attentive to their duties, making it quite hard for anyone to sneak up on them. The walls, which surround all but the lake side of the city, are of granite and are 10 feet thick and 30 feet tall. The outer wall remains scarred from the confrontation with the gnolls, but the damage is superficial.

#### 2. Garrison

These two barracks house human, elf, and halfling guards—30 in all. They are ready to go on duty at a moment's notice. They have trained extensively in their weapons, and they can easily subdue most opponents.

**Human Fighters—Level 3 (10):** AC 6; hp 27, 27, 20, 19, 17, 16, 15, 14, 14; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; THAC0 18; Dmg 1-8 (sword) or 1-6 (crossbow); ML 8; AL Lawful; XP 35 each

**Elf Fighters—Level 3 (10):** AC 6; hp 18, 18, 18, 18, 18, 13, 10, 9, 8, 8; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; THAC0 18; Dmg 1-6 (bow or sword); ML 8; AL Lawful; XP 35 each

**Halflings—Level 3 (10):** AC 6; hp 18, 17, 16, 15, 13, 13, 12, 12, 11, 10; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; THAC0 18; Dmg 1-4 (sling) or 1-6 (sword); ML 8; AL Lawful; XP 35 each

#### 3. Guard Post at Gate

The main gate rests in the northern wall, allowing the entrance of the roads to Torlynn and the Whistling Cave (see page 31). The gate is actually a portcullis, a heavy iron grate that raises to a height of 15 feet—it looks (and is) immensely strong. The portcullis has iron spikes on the bottom that inflict 2d10 points of damage to anyone caught beneath them. The opening mechanism is in the Guard Post. Through a complicated series of levers and pulleys, a person can open the portcullis by turning a large, spoked wheel on the wall.

This is where a gate guard halts travelers who desire to enter Melinir so that he or she may inquire about their business, as well as turn away unsavory characters. There is always a guard on duty here, and he or she will not encourage anyone else to raise the portcullis.

#### 4. Town Hall

This building houses most of the important offices of Melinir: the Mayor's office, the courtroom, the tax office, and so forth. Since the building is clearly marked as an information and service center, it is often crowded with visitors seeking details about the town.

Day-to-day operations are handled by an elven scribe named Connor. He is overworked and underpaid, but still fairly friendly if occasionally scathing. His job includes answering questions of visitors, taking notes at town council meetings, and serving as a personal scribe to the Mayor. He can scribe a personal letter for 1 gp.

**Connor the Scribe (Cleric 3, Elf):** AC 6; hp 12; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; THAC0 19; Dmg 1-6 (mace); ML 8; AL Neutral; XP 35

The Mayor's job is even more harrying than Connor's. Although he is still a fairly young man, Mayor Valum appears to be about 10 years older than he actually is. Despite his busy schedule, he will always spare some time for those he counts as his friends. If Valum needs to hire adventurers for missions that benefit Melinir, he will treat the adventurers as peers. If they perform well on their mission, he will befriend them. One should not scoff at his friendship, as Valum is formerly a full-time adventurer himself, and is in fact a member of the famed Quadrial.

**Mayor Valum (Fighter 9, Human):** AC 0, hp 70; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; THAC0 12; Dmg 1-10 + 2 (*two-handed sword* + 2); ML 9; AL Lawful; XP 1,600

#### 5. Jail

This is the place where the law throws ruffians and troublemakers until their court appearance. The strong walls and cells of the entire building are magically enhanced so that it is nearly impossible for a prisoner to escape without significant outside help.

Justice in Melinir is swift and harsh. Since they are a relatively humane society for these times, they do not execute most offenders, and suspects are allowed a fair trial with the Mayor. The typical punishment for a "lesser" crime (such as theft) is a public flogging, the severity of which increases as the magnitude of the crime grows.

#### 6. Weaver

All manner of tapestries, rugs, clothing, and other woven goods can be found here. Stefan des Herbsts is an accomplished master of his craft. Anything commis-

sioned from him is usually completed within a week or so, depending upon his workload. Despite his obvious prowess at the loom, Stefan does not charge much for his goods, even for a weaving that many would consider to be art. He knows that his low prices and cheerful attitude will bring him much more money than he would get by raising his prices.

**Stefan des Herbsts (Wizard 1, Human):** AC 8; hp 3; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; THAC0 20; Dmg 1-4 (dagger) or spell; ML 8; AL Lawful; XP 35

#### 7. Smith

Shar the blacksmith is generally acknowledged as the best in Thunder Rift. Only the dwarves of Hearth-Home (from whence Shar comes) are considered as talented as she. While Shar's work is rather expensive, usually costing 2 or 3 gp more than the D&D® *Rule Book* price for an item, her work is worth it. She is a dour little dwarf, and she does not easily accept strangers as friends. Once someone has earned her trust, though, she is their friend for life. She will even set aside her work to adventure with a true friend, bringing along her *battle axe* + 2 and her *plate mail* + 1.

**Shar (Fighter 2, Dwarf):** AC 9 (without armor); hp 8; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; THAC0 19; Dmg 1-8 + 2; ML 9; AL Neutral; XP 35

#### 8. Butcher

The butcher's shop in Melinir is large, supplying meat to the entire area. The beef and mutton from the Rift is quite tasty, and there is a great demand for it outside the Rift. The prices are quite reasonable: a pound of beef costs 5 sp and a pound of mutton costs 4 sp.

#### 9. The Sarcastic Goat Inn

This is the finest inn in all of Thunder Rift. The large, three-story log building holds over 50 rooms. Each room has a comfortable feather bed and quilts woven by Stefan des Herbsts. The common room downstairs is well kept and has a pleasant ambience. This inn is very popular, and the tavern that is part of it serves some of the best drinks in Thunder Rift. The rooms cost 1 gp per night, and with food and drink service the price rises to 3 gp.

The innkeeper, Bediah Bulon, is a dwarf with unkempt hair and beard. He named the inn after a comment a friend made about him. While he is very caustic with his friends and employees, he makes sure his customers are as comfortable as they can be. Bediah keeps a strong box

## The Major Settlements

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under the bar (holding 500 gp), as well as his *war hammer* + 3, which he uses to deal with unpleasant customers.

**Bediah Bulon (Fighter 3, Dwarf):** AC 7; hp 27; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; THAC0 18; Dmg 1-6 + 3; ML 9; AL Neutral; XP 80

### 10. The Goat's Stables

The stables of the Sarcastic Goat keep the travelers' horses well fed and groomed. The stable boy, Hodie, has a wealth of information, for he overhears everything the wayfarers say and he remembers it. He knows nearly every rumor in Melinir, and for a small "tip" (1 sp), he will tell one rumor. Hodie is a very useful tool, for he can direct the PCs to whatever adventure the DM has planned.

**Hodie (0-level, Human):** AC 10; hp 3; MV 120' (40'); #AT 0; ML 6; AL Lawful; XP 5

### 11. Market

This is the commercial hub of Thunder Rift. Merchants from afar come to Melinir to buy and sell their goods. The amount of products here is quite astounding, and the prices are all very competitive. A few pickpockets move through the crowds, and they have honed their talents to a considerable degree. They are considered 4th-level thieves for their chances of success. Guards also circulate, hoping to catch these ruffians or other wrongdoers. Thus, crime is kept to a fairly low level.

### 12. Temple Sleeping Quarters

All visiting Lawful clerics are invited to stay in the temple's quarters, free of charge. Although the dormitory is open, there is plenty of quiet—clerics can easily meditate for their spells without fear of distraction. There is room for about 30 visitors (in addition to the permanent cells of the 10 temple clerics). In one cleric's room, a locked trunk underneath the bed holds silver candle holders from the temple's altar, worth 100 gp each. Whether the cleric stole them or he has been framed is up to the DM.

### 13. High Cleric's Quarters

This is the study and sleeping quarters of the head of the temple. She is a very busy person and is not often here. A locked trunk under her bed holds 500 gp, a golden plate worth 200 gp, and seven gems worth 100 gp each.

**Enora (Cleric 9, Human):** AC 8; hp 42; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; THAC0 16; Dmg 1-6 + 2 (*mace* + 2); AL Lawful; XP 2,300

### 14. Temple

The trails through the temple complex run through peaceful groves of trees, creating a feeling of relaxation and meditative silence. The temple itself is a large, open building. Tall windows let sunlight flow into the chapel.

The cleric in charge of maintaining the temple is Martin, a rotund fellow. He is a friendly man, always ready to help a person in need. Since the temple receives everything through charity, there is no charge for the services of the clerics.

**Martin (Cleric 5, Human):** AC 7; hp 19; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; THAC0 18; Dmg 1-6 (*war hammer*); ML 8; AL Lawful; XP 175

### 15. Library/Schoolhouse

This is a one-story stone building where the people of Melinir come to improve their knowledge. If using the library for research, the fee is 2 gp a day.

The building is also a schoolhouse. The temple agreed to provide for the education of the town's children in exchange for not having to pay taxes. During the day, all children under the age of 12 may attend classes. Attendance is up to the parents. The classes are held in a side room, keeping the library fairly quiet.

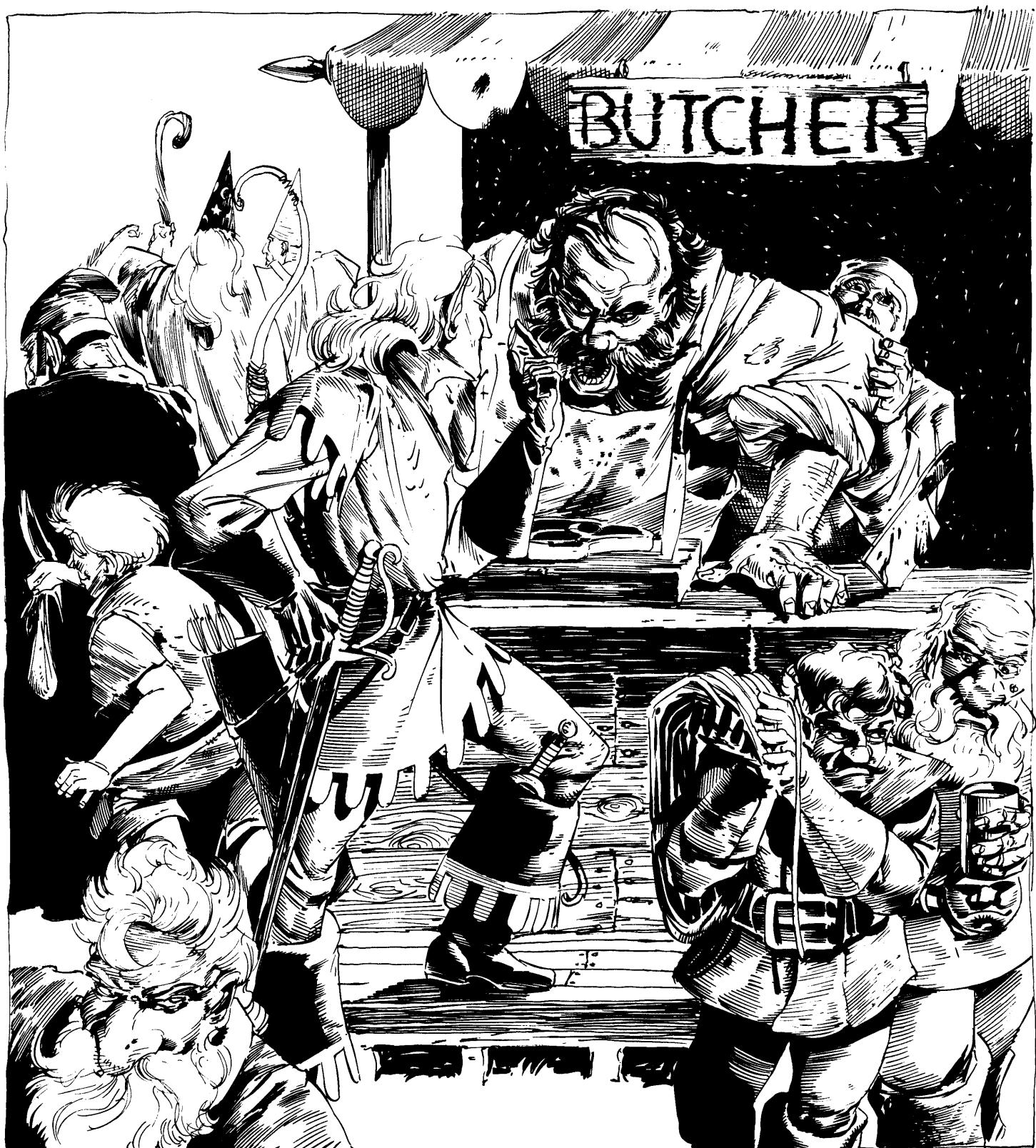
### 16. Moneychanger/Bank

With the influx of so many merchants from outside the Rift and the amount of money that changes hands in the Market, there is need for a moneychanger and bank in Melinir. The halfling Karyn fills this purpose admirably. Her building holds thousands of gold pieces, all protected by the best traps money can buy. Her experience as a thief gives her a unique perspective on guarding treasure. She is also a member of the Quadrial.

**Karyn (Thief 9, Halfling):** AC 2; hp 35; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; THAC0 16; Dmg 1-6 (*short sword*); ML 8; AL Neutral; XP 900

### 17. Sage

Pickman the Sage is the man to see when information proves elusive. Although he is not a counselor, he has a keen insight into human nature and divines peoples' secrets simply by observing them. He knows how to use the information at his disposal, and he can usually answer any question put to him within two days. If the subject is more esoteric, he will both charge more money and take a longer time to answer the question. He has a lifetime pass to every part of the library. Pickman has an irritating ten-



## The Major Settlements

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dency to ramble—it often takes more than 30 minutes to get a short answer from him. His price is normally 50 gp, but it can rise to 300 for a particularly difficult question.

**Pickman (Wizard 2, Human):** AC 10; hp 5; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; THAC0 20; Dmg 1-6 (staff); ML 8; AL Lawful; XP 35

### 18. Thieves' Guild

The thieves' guild is run by Black Thomas, a notorious robber and master of disguise. His greed is as legendary as his impatience with underlings. Since most thief guilds do not run exceptionally well when motivated by fear, the Melinir organization is not as dangerous as it could be. The guild is located in a warehouse sitting flush against the wall of the wealthy section in town. Black Thomas has an "understanding" with Nicholas Maybrush (see #24).

**Black Thomas (Thief 6, Human):** AC 3; hp 30; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; THAC0 18; Dmg 1-8 (sword); ML 8; AL Chaotic; XP 275

### 19. The Dancing Dragon Tavern

The Dancing Dragon Tavern is the place for trouble in Melinir. The guard does not often check on it, and it has become a haven for the underground. Anyone desiring contact with the shadier side of life probably should frequent the Dancing Dragon. The person to contact would be Ainrie, who poses as a serving wench. She knows quite a bit of information about the various places where one could easily obtain ill-gotten wealth, or be rid of it.

**Ainrie (Thief 1, Human):** AC 10; hp 4; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; THAC0 20; Dmg 1-4 (dagger); ML 8; AL Neutral; XP 10

### 20. Commons

The Commons is a wide park on the bank of the Drake River, just south of the residential area. It contains both wooded areas and open fields. The grounds are free for all citizens to use for whatever purpose they wish, so long as it does not adversely affect the area. Farm animals grazed in the Commons in the early days of Melinir, but nowadays it is most often used for recreation and relaxation. Occasionally, when the weather is good, the town sponsors musicians who play on the greensward of the Commons for the enjoyment of passers-by.

### 21. Miller and Baker

Some of the best bread in Thunder Rift is baked at the Mill. The big stone wheel grinds the grain exceedingly

fine, and Richard is an exceptional baker. He charges 1 sp for each loaf and he will bake specialty breads, upon request, for a bit more. Although he does not seem a very exciting person, he has a kind personality and a sharp intellect. He will happily accompany adventurers for a time, although he does not like to risk his life. Nevertheless, he feels that "baking bread becomes very boring after a while."

**Richard (Fighter 1, Human):** AC 9; hp 6; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; THAC0 20; Dmg 1-8 (sword); ML 8; AL Lawful; XP 10

### 22. Wharves

Fishermen and ferrymen dock their crafts here. There are always several boats moored at the piers, unguarded, should someone want to take one. Of course, unless the owner has been paid for the rental, this is an illegal act. The view across the lake is beautiful. Boat rental typically costs 1 gp per day, plus a 25 gp security deposit.

### 23. Warehouses

These large buildings store the goods of the merchants of Melinir, whether they are native to the town or hail from beyond the Rift. Some of the warehouses are equipped for cold storage—there is a constant odor of fish and other perishables around these areas.

### 24. Manor of Nicholas Maybrush

Nicholas Maybrush is a well-respected merchant of Melinir, one of the foremost traders and importers in the area. Few know that he actually obtains many goods by robbing other merchants' caravans, slaying the witnesses, and claiming the goods as his own. He seems to be a friendly fellow, and just in case anyone should investigate him, he actually does have some legitimate businesses. In reality, he is a backstabbing, two-faced villain.

**Nicholas Maybrush (Fighter 7, Human):** AC 3; hp 33; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; THAC0 14; Dmg 1-8 (sword); ML 9; AL Chaotic; XP 450

### 25. Manor of the Recluse

Nobody knows anything about the man who lives here—he could be anybody in town. The estate is full of priceless objects that no thief has yet succeeded in stealing. Black Thomas and Ainrie would be willing to pay quite a bit of money to find out who lives here.

## 26. The Base of the Quadrial

This home was built for the Quadrial by the grateful citizens of Thunder Rift, in recognition of their achievements and contributions. Only Mayor Valum and Karyn frequent the place, as the elven and dwarven members of the Quadrial tend to travel together in the wilderness. The house is full of mementos, such as a dragon head, weapons from fallen enemies, and various magical items. No thief has stolen anything from here although several have tried.

The DM should note that the Quadrial is perfect for rescuing parties that have gotten in over their heads. Singly, doubly, or as all four, the Quadrial moves throughout the Rift, fighting chaos where they find it. The DM can honor players by offering them membership in the Quadrial. Be sure that their exploits make them worthy and that their ethical character is suitable for membership.

## 27. Mage Island

Little is known about the famous Mage Island, other than that it is the original home of most of Thunder Rift's wizards. Since the magic-users who emerge from there are sworn to secrecy regarding its contents, no one else knows what it holds. Rumors say that a library there holds one of the greatest collections of books on magic in the world.

The island is owned by Geoffrey, who, as far as anyone can recall, has owned the Island ever since Melinir was founded. He seems a genial enough fellow, but few approach him because of his mysterious reputation.

**Geoffrey (Wizard 7, Human):** AC 6; hp 22 hp; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; THAC0 18; Dmg 1-4 (dagger) or spell; ML 8; AL Lawful; XP 1,250

## Additional NPCs

In Melinir, there are many NPCs who can serve the PCs in useful ways. Some can offer information while others will be willing to join the party in their travels. A few will even serve as dire foes of the adventurers. Of course, the DM is encouraged to create other thumbnail sketches of NPCs like those listed below. Wherever the PCs are likely to go, or wherever the DM is likely to lead them, an interesting NPC or two will bring that location to life.

**Daffyd the Wise (Cleric 5, Human):** AC 5; hp 20; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; THAC0 18; Dmg 1-6 (mace); ML 9; AL Lawful; XP 425

Daffyd is a somewhat oracular fellow. He wanders about Melinir, uttering strange phrases that, when considered in the proper light, often shed crucial light on an important subject. He will not join a party.

**Ap Hen of the Valley (Fighter 5, Human):** AC 2; hp 43; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; THAC0 16; Dmg 1-6 + 1 (one-handed bastard sword); ML 8; AL Lawful; XP 175

Ap Hen is a long-haired fighter who is a little on the wild side. He can often be found brawling in the Dancing Dragon, in jail after such a brawl, or wandering about town, laughing maniacally. This insanity is only an act to make people fear him. He will gladly join adventurers.

**Dara (Fighter 3, Human):** AC 9; hp 15; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; THAC0 18; Dmg 1-4 (club); ML 9; AL Neutral; XP 35

Dara is a rather barbaric person who dresses mostly in leather and fur. She is quiet (for a barbarian) and will not offer any trouble if none is offered her. She is a dangerous foe in combat and will join a party for glory.

**Lars Jase (Hit Dice 4, Doppelganger):** AC 5; hp 24; MV 120' (40'); #AT 2; THAC0 17; Dmg 1-3/1-3 (hands); ML 8; AL Chaotic; XP 125

Lars is actually a doppelganger, a shapechanger. He pretends to be the village idiot, but he is actually a very cunning foe. He will use his ability to spy upon foes who seem powerful. He can change his mannerisms as easily as he changes forms. He will join an adventuring party only if he is fairly sure that he can destroy them one at a time.



Dinsweed

# The Denizens of the Rift

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Considering the size of Thunder Rift, the number of creatures that dwell there is really quite extraordinary. The area is some sort of natural focal point for beings to gather. The terrain around the Rift seems to be a funnel for those passing near the canyon. Once there, they usually show no desire to leave. After all, nearly everything they could want is within a few miles. This desire to stay includes not only the humans, dwarves, elves, and halflings of the area, but also the various monsters that have found their way into the valley.

The following list is *far* from complete. The DM should feel free to modify it in any way he sees fit—it is the DM's campaign! The DM has the final say in all matters. If there are too many monsters to suit a particular campaign, simply eliminate some from the list. Likewise, if the PCs tear through all of them (not likely in a well-balanced campaign), feel free to add more.

## The Farolas Hills

In the north, the dwarves and orcs have been fiercely vying for domination of the Farolas Hills for centuries. Although the dwarves are generally better organized and are better fighters, the orcs have the advantage of numbers. Dwarves produce few offspring, but orcs are ex-



tremely prolific and view their kin as expendable. The orcs are thus slowly whittling the dwarves away. They believe that, someday, there will be no more dwarves to oppose them—unless hated adventurers foil their plans.

Anyone traveling in the Farolas Hills will almost certainly encounter a force of either orcs or dwarves, and encounters with orcs will definitely be in the majority. Occasionally, adventurers may witness remarkable pitched battles between these foes. The savagery of these engagements often shocks observers, for the dwarves and orcs spare no thoughts of pity for one another. Both sides welcome allies in their ruthless war, wanting only to eliminate the other as soon as possible.

## The Burning Hills

Goblins and kobolds swarm throughout the Burning Hills to the northeast. Their numbers are not so large that the nearby town of Kleine feels especially threatened, though. The monsters are, on the other hand, numerous enough to pose a very real threat to any who are so brave or foolish as to venture into their territories.

The goblins and kobolds are not the only threat in these hills. There is at least one pack of dire wolves that has gone bad, and they prey on any helpless or weak creature they find, be it deer or humans. (Since game is rather rare in these hills, the dire wolves will take whatever they can get.) Occasionally, goblins catch and “tame” some of these creatures, using them as mounts in their search for more victims. There are also mountain lions prowling in the hills, lying in wait for the unwary and searching for any food that might satisfy them. The crags and bluffs that predominate the landscape provide ideal cover for their surprise attacks. Indeed, many who were on their guard have been found mauled by huge claws and half-eaten.

## The Gloomfens and Wizardspire

In the Gloomfens, unnatural shapes are often seen through the constantly swirling mists that seem to hang over the swamp even on the brightest of days. Since there have been so many battles there, there are bound to be unclaimed dead bodies hidden amid the weeds and muck of the swamp. Considering the number of undead creatures that infest the swamp, it is a wonder that there are any living beasts there at all.

From time to time, small battalions of skeletons and zombies under the command of some unknown being have marched from the fens into the areas of the living.

There, they have laid waste those who stayed to defend their holdings instead of fleeing. None know the inspiration behind these attacks. Perhaps some Chaotic cleric has taken up residence in the Gloomfens and hopes to destroy any semblance of civilization.

On the other hand, the undead might well be the creation of the “Mad Mage,” who is said to dwell in Wizardspire. His power is rumored to be great enough to command the forces of the dead to perform his bidding. It is well known (these days, that is) that any who settle too near Wizardspire are likely to find destruction close at hand. Although none have settled there for a long while, the attacks from undead seem to coincide with the establishing of a new homestead. This could be sheer chance, for the undead may patrol the area even when there are none to witness their movement.

No one has ventured into Wizardspire for decades. Even those inclined toward adventure have avoided it for one reason or another. None can say why, but it seems as if someone has gone to a lot of trouble to make sure that no one becomes too interested in the Spire. A nameless, seemingly sourceless fear pervades the very fiber of any who dare intrude upon the lands held by the Mad Mage. This terror dissuades nearly all of those who decide to investigate the mysterious mountain. Only those who are brave of heart and spirit can hope to overcome the enchantment of Wizardspire. (Interested DMs and players can undertake this adventure in the forthcoming D&D® adventure, *In the Phantom’s Wake*.)

## The Great Grasslands

The Grasslands hold many creatures, a mixture of those who live in the surrounding lands. Orcs from the Farolas Hills are common, as are goblins and kobolds from the Burning Hills. Undead occasionally wander in from the Gloomfens while centaurs and harpies are known to leave the sanctuary of Brichtwood to explore the Grasslands. Owlbears, bugbears, and gnolls leave nearby Grakken Wood and Gauntlet Forest to hunt in the prairie.

Dwarves like to hunt their enemies down in the open plain, knowing that the orcs cannot hide there for long. Elves often chase the gnolls and bugbears from Gauntlet, harrying them until they fall to the predators of the Grasslands. There are also the ever-present human adventurers who know that the Grasslands can be a constant source of excitement. The plains near the towns, however, tend not to yield as many monsters, since the citizens of the towns work actively to keep this area free from intrusion. Many marauding monsters have learned the

hard way that these farms are not lightly defended.

## The Gauntlet Forest

In the vast Gauntlet Forest, the elves hold sections of the Forest securely under their sway, making them safe for those who mean the elves no harm. Other portions of the forest conceal dark contrasts to the elven light.

In at least one part of the forest, gnolls hold power. Once each season, they organize themselves into hunting bands of 10 to 15 members and travel throughout their realm. While on their hunts (which they use as a rite of passage), they systematically slay every creature they encounter. This process takes longer for some victims than for others, for the gnolls are particularly fond of torturing elves to death. Periodically, intrepid explorers may find the mutilated bodies of someone who imprudently wandered into a gnoll hunting party. The gnolls, swollen with courage by the ritual, often have the temerity to ignore the boundaries set by others, and a full-scale battle erupts. Since they regard it the ultimate proof of maturity to slay an elf, their feuds are most often with the elves.

The gnolls provoke fights with their neighbors, the bugbears. The gnolls and bugbears live in an uneasy peace, and these gnoll raids cause the bugbears to fly into fits of rage. They retaliate by slipping undetected past the typically lazy sentries into gnoll villages. There, they embark on one of two courses: either they slay every creature in the village, leaving the remains for the lax sentries to find, or they kidnap the females and young, taking them into a life of slavery. Though the gnolls and the bugbears generally do not actively make war against each other, choosing to save their strength for crushing elves, their routine bickering does a more effective job of limiting their growth than the elves could possibly hope to accomplish on their own.

The elves remain the dominant power through the south of the forest while the gnolls control the northwest and the bugbears terrorize the northeast, but there are many more races of creatures in the Gauntlet Forest than just these three. The horrifying wyvern is not an uncommon sight in these woods, and tales tell that there is more than one; indeed, there may be an entire nest! Furthermore, it is well known that there are places in Gauntlet where even the most thick-headed gnolls do not travel, for the spiders hold the lands there. Although spiders are not widely renowned for their intellect, there seems to be a malevolent force that binds them toward some common goal. Even those who do not fear the gnolls are afraid of this guiding force. This land, near the center of the For-

est, is customarily avoided by all who would travel through the wood.

The game in the Gauntlin is plentiful, and there are multitudes of monsters that plague the forest. Although they are too numerous to explore in detail, any traveler may rest assured that there are more beasts in the forest than one might expect from such a beautiful wood.

### Brichtwood

In Brichtwood's magical splendor, there are few things to directly threaten the casual wayfarer. Yet there remains an element of menace in the woods: an indefinable sensation that one is not wanted in the forest. The longer one stays, the greater this feeling becomes, until it feels as if the whole forest is conspiring against the intruder. Unless the invader of the verdant woodland proves himself a friend of the forest, the feeling of ill-welcome becomes too much to bear.

The truth about the forest is that it acts as an extension of the will of Bran ap Seamus, its unicorn protector (see page 32 for information on unicorns). His equine body is snow white and his horn is of the purest ivory. He works tirelessly to make sure that no evil force desecrates his precious forest—he has seen what happened to the Gauntlin Forest. He wants only to ensure that no “two-legs” destroy his forest or turn it into an armed camp. To this end, he nurtures the trees’ latent distaste for the two-legs into something nearly tangible. Thus, only those who can somehow demonstrate to the trees that they are no threat can immunize themselves to this magic.

Brichtwood also harbors a tribe of centaurs (see page 32). Although they are not openly antagonistic to those who impose on their sylvan lifestyle, they do not welcome interruptions. If someone harms any of their brood, or if Seamus asks it, they will hunt offenders tirelessly—unless the intruder flees the confines of Brichtwood, he is in mortal peril. The trees themselves will aid the centaurs in a quest for revenge if Seamus asks them to do so.

There is a small group of harpies in a cave in the northwestern wall of Brichtwood that has escaped extinction at Seamus’s horn only because their cave is easily defensible. They must fly from Brichtwood to hunt because the trees themselves would tear the harpies limb from limb. The harpies base themselves in the Brichtwood area because they know that few creatures are willing to pass through the domain of Seamus for petty revenge.

Sometimes monsters from the Great Grasslands and Grakken Wood wander into Brichtwood. Seamus strongly discourages these incursions and deals harshly with the

unnatural invaders. He tries very hard to maintain the purity of his sylvan paradise and, in his eyes, evil wandering monsters sully its beauty.

### Grakken Wood

“Fools venture lightly into Grakken Wood”—or so the saying goes. Its denizens generally are larger and more dangerous than those in any other region in Thunder Rift. Passers-by have often seen the shapes of huge creatures lurking within the murky woods, but few have ever stepped inside the border of Grakken Wood with one of these shapes in sight.

All reports indicate that ogres are the dominant monster in Grakken Wood, their number probably well exceeding 20. The sundered boulders and splintered trees attest to the ferocity of these creatures. They seem more than willing to vent their aggressiveness on those who trespass within the boundaries of Grakken Wood.

Strangely, the ogres have never emerged from the forest in the memory of anyone living in Thunder Rift. No one seems to know the cause of this, but it is a fact that they have not yet devastated the surrounding lands. Some rumors say that the ogres do not guard against intrusion into their forest, but that they protect against something *leaving*. The legends, alas, are strangely quiet about the nature of this menace.

Other creatures roam Grakken Wood as well. Most prevalent among these are the fierce owlbears, the creations of a mad or evil wizard. Whatever their origin, they remain very dangerous to heedless travelers. Their rending beak and claws can reduce a grown man to shreds of flesh in minutes, and they are constantly on the prowl for food. They, unlike the ogres, have no compunction about leaving the forest. For this reason, no farmer is so foolish as to establish a homestead nearby.

The owlbears and the ogres do not coexist peacefully. The sounds of their battles often pierce the night air; shrieks, howls, and roars destroy any semblance of peace the forest might provide. Since both roam throughout the forest freely, these clashes occur with alarming frequency. Anyone who walked into the middle of one these fights could well expect to suffer a rapid and painful death.

### The Melinir Caves

The caves in the Melinir Hills are home to a remarkable number of beings. The large map sheet included with this adventure accessory shows the location of only the most notable of these caves, but there are many, many more.

The old mines are home to a group of brigands—

humans and others who could not make an honest living. Instead, they have chosen to prey on those who would not support them voluntarily. Their leader, Nicholas Maybrush (see page 22), keeps a home in Melinir, for the townsfolk have not penetrated his disguise of business legitimacy.

Maybrush's underlings, who live in the mines, will venture no further into the caves than they must. They believe that the vengeful spirits of human and dwarven miners lurk in the depths, waiting to pounce on the spoilers of the hills. For this reason, the brigands never travel in groups smaller than three while in the caves.

Since he does not live in the mines with his underlings, Nicholas discounts their superstitious beliefs. He periodically sends search parties deep into the hills to seek out more treasure. Unknown to him, they travel only until their lantern light can no longer be seen from the main caves and then wait there for several hours. When they return, they report no luck. Nicholas suspects nothing yet.

The brigands hold control of their caves by setting up wind chimes within the tunnels. The wind that blows through the shafts jangles the chimes together. The mournful, eerie clattering of the chimes frightens most curious seekers from the area.

The brigands have accumulated a vast quantity of treasure. They intercept the barges that float down the river from Kleine, molest travelers, and liberate them from the burdens of heavy purses. They have become quite a nuisance to all wayfarers in the area, but few can do anything about them, due to their sheer numbers.

The villagers of Melinir and the merchants of Kleine have placed a reward on the head of the bandit leader. Since no one knows that Nicholas Maybrush is the brigand chief, his capture is not a likely event. With some detective work, however, the PCs might discover who he really is, but they had better be prepared to back up their claim with some evidence!

### The Torlynn Area

The original halfling community grew near Torlynn, with comfortable burrows by the river. When the humans arrived, many halflings moved into houses in Torlynn, to take advantage of the humans' protection. Those halflings who remained in the burrows outside the village were found dead one winter morning. Tracks of goblins, kobolds, and dire wolves were found in the bloodied snow. Even worse, there were tracks of some larger, unidentified beast. A permanent bounty has been offered for

the heads of goblins, kobolds, and dire wolves.

Aside from the typical goblins, kobolds, and orcs in the area, there is evidence that some sort of rat creature now occupies the upper reaches of the hills near Torlynn. As described in the D&D® module, *Quest for the Silver Sword*, a wererat and his ratling followers commandeered a dead mage's tower. Also, strange feline sorts of humanoids have recently taken up residence in the area. These beings, calling themselves "rakasta," have not yet threatened the villagers. They seem to be a nomadic tribe of creatures, but they apparently have found the area near Torlynn to their liking. (Their story can be found in the upcoming D&D adventure, *Rage of the Cat Men*.)

### Marshwood

Marshwood is home to numerous swamp creatures. The dominant power in the area is that of the lizard men, who have made their home in an abandoned fort. From here they initiate forays into the surrounding area, making their living from the land and other peoples.

Unfortunately for them, their supremacy in the swampy forest is challenged by the corpses of those whose bodies lie in the wood. The bodies, which arise from true death as ghouls, challenge the stronghold of the lizard



men nightly. These ghouls are unusual in that they retain the abilities and most of the intelligence they held in life. This makes them unnaturally fierce opponents. Their leader is a wight, formerly a 5th-level fighter whose name was Uchard Tonsha. His knowledge of combat tactics makes him a dangerous foe, and his touch drains a level of experience or a Hit Die from his victim. The lizard men are in danger of becoming extinct in this part of the Rift, leaving the ghouls dominant.

**Uchard Tonsha (Hit Dice 4, Wight):** AC 5; hp 20; MV 90' (30'); #AT 1; THAC0 17; Dmg energy drain; ML 12; AL Chaotic; XP 75

If the ghouls win the war with their lizard man enemies, they will spread like plague. Few things in the Rift could directly stop a ghoulish war, so the indirect method of halting them before they become powerful enough to be a threat is necessary. Since their numbers are replenished whenever a humanoid dies in Marshwood, the ghouls are in little danger of extinction. The ghouls can be killed in the fens, but the surest way to be rid of them is to lure them from Marshwood where their powers seem to diminish. Perhaps there is some sort of magical influence throughout Marshwood that causes the dead to rise, or maybe Uchard Tonsha is the key. Whatever the answer, someone needs to eliminate the ghouls before they grow to uncontrollable numbers and sweep through the Rift. On the other hand, if the lizard men are victorious, they will resume a life of licentious banditry. No matter what path adventurers choose, trouble will result.

### The Black Swamp

The bayous of the Black Swamp are not nearly as peaceful as they may seem. The placid, mossy waters hide a multitude of creatures. Some are natural while others are a vile parody of the creatures and plants around them. There are creatures that are humanoid-appearing piles of moss and vegetation, while others are reptilian, slimy imitations of humanity. Floating logs often turn out to be alligators or garfish that mercilessly attack those who inadvertently slip into the murky waters.

Some of the trees are carnivorous, collecting animal skeletons at their bases like little trophies. These horrendous trees can be counted upon to try for larger targets when the opportunity presents itself.

A strange mutation of the alligator has been seen in the Black Swamp recently. This creature crawled from the bayou and dragged a screaming fisherman into the turbid

waters of the swamp. Of the man, the searchers found no trace but tattered clothing. The creature, on the other hand, left a trail of destruction behind it, attacking several nearby houses and abducting one of the inhabitants. The search for a kidnapped girl is the number one priority for the swamp dwellers, and they would welcome any help.

Trolls are also a common sight in these quagmires. Their grossly deformed bodies are ideal for wading through the swamp, and few creatures dare to attack them. Their dominance in the deep swamp is unquestioned, but they seem to stay there most of the time. It is likely that they recall the times when humans came into the fens with fire and acid, and they now hide whenever a party of humans comes by. Of course, since they need to eat, they travel infrequently to the more populated areas of the swamp to snatch solitary wanderers. If they see a lone human in the bog, they will descend upon him in ravening fury. For this reason, those who dwell in the swamp generally tend to travel in groups of four or more.

An odd sort of lizard man has been making itself known in the area. Originally considered a peculiar mutation of the common lizard man, this creature, known as a "newt," has become much more common in the swamp since first seen. Little more of it is known, but many different reports of it have come to the public eye.

### The Horned Hills

Since the Horned Hills hold one of the few known entrances and exits into Thunder Rift, it is no wonder that some enterprising creatures have decided to profit from the trade into and out of the bountiful canyon. Three young minotaurs and their companion, a juvenile manticore, have established an interesting toll system: a quarter of your loot in exchange for your life. At first they were taking it all, but they eventually noted a marked decrease in trade. They then reduced the toll to half, plus one member of the caravan to eat, but trade continued to drop. Finally, they agreed to reduce tolls to one quarter of carried treasure, with the benefit of safe passage through the Horned Hills.

Since the minotaurs and the manticore are frightful adversaries, they have no problem in assuring safe passage out of the Hills. If some creature were to violate their assurances, the minotaurs would, no doubt, exact revenge. They want to be known as good business-minotaurs and will not tolerate anything that might interfere with their reputations. Since they plan on hiring themselves out as caravan guards at some point, they want to make people

sure of their honesty. It has not yet occurred to them that most employers do not employ known caravan raiders.

The minotaurs are reasonable creatures, as well as being fairly intelligent for their kind, and will surrender if it becomes apparent that they are about to be killed. If they are fairly certain that their enemies are dishonorable, they will fight to the death—it is far better to go down fighting than to die of a slit throat.

The only other creatures in the Horned Hills are goblins and small game that one would expect of a hilly area. The goblins are thinking of moving to an area where they may attack caravans with impunity. They are tired of living in the minotaurs' shadow, and they have found out the hard way that assaulting caravans which the minotaurs have allowed to pass only leads to grief. The goblins are a tribe of weaklings who will flee at the first sign of the battle turning against them.

### The Bone Hills

For a long time, the old cave of the dragon, Ash, lay unoccupied, his treasure long since stolen by looters. The Quadrial strived to keep Thunder Rift dragon-free, and they were fairly successful for a while.

However, news of Ash's death eventually drifted out of the Rift and spread among the dragon-kin. Word of it reached his fierce cousin, Scorch—a larger, nastier version of Ash.

Scorch winged his way to the Rift, more intent on protecting the treasure than avenging Ash, and was quite upset to find that it was missing when he finally arrived. In a fury, he killed several of the larger monsters of the Rift. This saved the citizens the trouble of killing the monsters themselves, but they would have rather faced those beasts than the incensed Scorch.

Scorch has since vowed to recover the treasure that he regards as rightfully his by inheritance (after all, he is the next of kin!). He is *absolutely* sure that everyone within a day's journey has taken possession of at least a portion of the booty. To recompense himself for his troubles, he preys upon the farmers and the occasional "stupid" party of adventurers, taking all their goods for himself. If he's in a good mood, he even might allow them to leave alive (but medium rare). Usually he's cranky, though, and the adventurers fare much worse.

His activities were duly noted by the former Quadrial, and they set out to teach the Wyrm a lesson. Unfortunately, they overestimated their abilities and underestimated his. The new champions of the Quadrial hope not to be so unlucky.



Scorch is an adult, huge red dragon. Only parties with large memberships and many levels should even think about confronting him. His cave complex itself is a devious warren of tricks and traps for the unwary. His senses are very keen, so it will be extremely difficult to sneak up on him, or to catch him unaware. This is, after all, a dragon that even the Quadrial fears.

**Scorch the Red Dragon:** AC -5; hp 102; MV 150' (50'), flying 360' (120'); #AT 3 or breath weapon; THAC0 1; Dmg 1-12 + 2/1-12 + 2 (claws, or claw and kick, or claw and tail slash) and 4-32 + 8 (bite) or damage equal to Scorch's current hp (breath weapon 3 times per day); ML 10; AL Chaotic; XP 9,575

Fortunately, Scorch is not a magic-using dragon, but he remains a terror in battle. He will usually attempt to use his breath weapon first: a cone of fire that extends 180' from his mouth to a width of 30'. A benevolent DM will find ways to discourage inexperienced players from challenging Scorch.

# RUMORS OF THUNDER RIFT

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These are rumors that permeate Thunder Rift. Most of them are common knowledge, and the DM may wish to establish some competition between NPCs and the PCs, as both scramble to retrieve the treasure.

The truth of any of these rumors is entirely up to the DM. They can be outright lies, partial truths, or exactly accurate. The DM may alter them as he wishes or disregard them entirely. Hopefully, these can be dropped into any campaign with little or no difficulty.

## 1. The King's Barge

It is said that there is a great treasure lying in the remains of a barge under the Plunging Cataract. Apparently, the barge was carrying the king and princes of a small land to meet the betrothed of the eldest son. They carried with them a substantial dowry, customary in this area, along with their magical armor and weapons.

In haste, they instructed the captain of the craft to waste no time in travel. The barge master foolishly interpreted this command literally and did not halt at nightfall, not even when a heavy mist arose from the surface of the river. The barge master ignored the warning signs of impending waterfalls, or perhaps he didn't notice them. In any case, it is said that the barge plunged over the falls and nothing more was ever heard from the king.

That royal treasure still lies under the falls, free for those who have the courage and means to take it, or so the rumors say. Countless explorers have met death seeking this wealth, and no one has found any proof of the tale.

## 2. Raven's Ruin

A sprawling dungeon complex, called Raven's Ruin, lies to the extreme east in the Burning Hills. Apparently, a master thief named Raven made Thunder Rift his home after a long adventuring career. Using a combination of brutality, magic, intelligence, and diplomacy, he enlisted the aid of goblins and kobolds in the construction of his keep. When he was finished with them, he drove them from his halls without payment for their work. After years of retirement, he has disappeared. Perhaps he is dead or maybe just in hiding. Now, the goblins and kobolds have returned to Raven's Ruin, and those who have a taste for adventure might find it profitable to pay a visit to the Ruin. (This scenario can be played out in the recently released D&D® module, *Assault on Raven's Ruin*.)

## 3. The Wailing Plateau

The Wailing Plateau lies in the Gauntlin Forest, a remnant from the days of the ancients, a brooding chunk of

rock. It sits squarely in gnoll territory. The plateau is a large block of granite reaching at least as high as the walls of the Rift, with a base nearly half a mile wide on each side. Passages large enough for a grown man to crawl through honeycomb the entire structure. Apparently, some of these passages extend all the way through, for elves who have ventured into gnoll territory claim that they have seen the sunrise through it.

The Wailing Plateau receives its name from the howls it emits when the winds shriek about it in stormy weather. Some claim that the wailing is simply because of the wind blowing through the passageways, as if the plateau were a giant wind instrument. Others cling to the belief that the plateau is some sort of spiritual torture device, or that creeping, brutish monsters inhabit it.

To add to the mystery, bluish lights flicker about its upper reaches when the moon shines bright and full. Whether this is an inherent quality of the plateau, or if it is some supernatural agency, it serves to keep the curious far away. Indeed, the gnolls and bugbears shun this place, not bothering to justify their primitive fear of it. The elves, while more rational, do not approach it willingly.

If one wanted to examine it closely, it could be quite a struggle simply to get there. The gnolls have established a watch to ensure that nothing escapes from there, and they take this duty seriously. Of course, most of them are superstitious rabble, so if an adventuring party could arrange scary enough special effects, the gnolls might very well break and run. (Then again, they might bring back reinforcements. . . .)

Once past the gnoll cordon, the PCs will have ample opportunity to examine the plateau. What they find there is entirely up to the DM, but it ought to be a startling surprise.

## 4. The Keep of the Black Knight

While the undead here are not as prolific as they are in the Gloomfens, they are still a distinct problem in the bog. They arise from the dripping muck to confront any who dare the passage along the Drake River to the Keep of the Black Knight. Little is known of the Knight or his minions. The very layout of his castle grounds and, indeed, the question of his existence are still unknown.

The legends say that this is the last stronghold of the fighters involved in the wizard/warrior conflict (see page 13, "Sword vs. Wand") and that the Black Knight is a descendant of the assassin-fighters. They say that he has made killing an exquisite and bloody art and that to cross him means certain death. Even more terrible stories whis-

per that his servants are fiends called from some unknown plane. Not all stories agree with each other, and so the truth will never be learned until someone finds out for himself. (This adventure is taken up in the upcoming D&D® module, *Sword and Shield*.)

### **5. The Terror in the Mines**

The mines in the hills near Melinir are the subject of much speculation these days. It seems that the shafts are the home of a particularly vicious band of brigands. These bandits prey on the weak and defenseless, bringing their booty back to the safety of the caves. The lore in the area holds that the dwarven mines and caves are home to a race of supernatural beings whose eternal sleep has been uninterrupted . . . until now.

The locals seem to think that the bandits have disturbed the rest of something that should never have been awakened. They fear that, unless someone manages to induce the bandits to move from the cave, the lives of everyone in the area will be forfeit. Whether these stories hold any truth is something a bold party of adventurers will have to discover for themselves.

### **6. The Whistling Cave**

The Whistling Cave, to the north and west of Melinir, is yet another area of mystery. The dwarven shafts and their human additions create an intricate, interlocking network of tunnels and pits. There are only two known entrances into the Whistling Cave, but there must be secret entrances, for creatures continue to emerge from the cave even when watches are posted at the entrances.

When the wind blows across the gaping mouth of the cave, the whole underground system resonates and produces an eerie, mournful whistle. This, combined with the stories of the history of the cave, is usually enough to deter exploration of the cavern network by the locals.

The history of the Whistling Cave has been one of turmoil, strife, and hatred. Ever since the early days, when the dwarves were mining the Melinir Hills, the cave was an object of antagonism. Everybody involved in the mining of the area became mysteriously surly. Since dwarves are naturally sullen, no one remarked on this for quite some time, until the human miners began fighting among themselves.

Soon after, the dwarves suddenly ended their excavations. They gave no explanation, but simply packed up their tools and returned to the Farolas Hills. The humans, eager to capitalize on this unexpected windfall, moved in within the month. Soon the humans, too, became cantankerous after they began their operations.

Only after several dwarven skeletons had been found in the mine, during a search for a vanished party of miners, did the humans think twice about their new business acquisition. When the search party finally found the missing miners, they discovered that all the bodies had been viciously hacked apart, as with a pickaxe. The only explanation they could think of was that some malevolent force was at work in the Cave.

These days, the locals tell their children that the whistling and howling from the cave mouth are the voices of vengeful spirits and slain miners. Whatever the truth, the Whistling Cave remains an object of fear and hatred.

### **7. The Ruins of Kraal**

The Ruins of Kraal, in the Black Swamps, are universally shunned by the inhabitants of the area, but they cannot say what causes this mysterious aversion. Although they make their living from the swamps and fear none of its natural creatures, they will not approach the Ruins of Kraal. Once a stronghold of Law, it sank into the Black Swamp decades ago. A strange race of reptile-like men claimed it as their home and now defend it fiercely against those who attempt to retrieve the riches of its former inhabitants. (The upcoming D&D® adventure, *The Knight of Newts*, will detail this quest.)

### **8. The Haunted Tower**

Stories of the rampages of undead creatures of the Gloomfens never fail to frighten the settlers of Thunder Rift. The stories of the fens, themselves, are even more fearsome to these normally stolid peasants. The subject that frightens them most, however, is that of what lies in the very back of the fens.

Occasionally, through the swirls of the constant and putrid fog, a tower of strange design is visible, high in the wall of the canyon. The waterwheel next to it creaks even over the noise of falling water, and eerie lights glow about its spires on moonless nights.

Some claim, in hushed tones, that the spirit of Sir Jameson the Defender (see page 13) has taken residence here, plotting revenge against those responsible for his demise; never mind that they all must be long dead by now. On the other hand, isn't the same thing said of Wizardspire? The local ghost stories declare that the two enemies are at still each other's throats, even in death.

*The Haunted Tower* adventure pack, on sale in October of 1992, provides the answer to these rumors.

# New Monsters

## Centaur

Armor Class:	5
Hit Dice:	4 (L)
Move:	180' (60')
Attacks:	2 hooves/1 weapon
Damage:	1d6/1d6/by weapon
No. Appearing:	2-20 (2d10)
Save as:	Fighter 4
Morale:	8
Treasure Type:	A
Alignment:	Neutral
XP Value:	75

Centaur appear human from the waist up, but they have the body and legs of a powerful horse. They form small tribes and make their homes in dense woods. If their tribe is attacked, the males will attempt to protect the women and children, but the women are perfectly capable of defending themselves.

Centaur can attack with either their hooves or with a weapon in a round. They use weapons fashioned from woodland materials, such as clubs, bows, and lances. When using those weapons, they gain a bonus of +1 to hit and damage because of their great strength. They are also fond of employing long bows.



## Unicorn

Armor Class:	2
Hit Dice:	4* (L)
Move:	240' (80')
Attacks:	2 hooves/1 horn
Damage:	1d8 each
No. Appearing:	1d2
Save as:	Fighter 8
Morale:	9
Treasure Type:	Nil
Alignment:	Lawful
XP Value:	125

Unicorns appear as beautiful horses with a long horn growing from their foreheads. They are elusive and shy, but they fight fiercely in defense of themselves, their forests, and those under their protection. Unicorns are considered by many to be the essence of magic. The deep forests that they protect are, with few exceptions, places of powerful sorcerous conditions. In combat, unicorns attack with their mighty hooves and magical horn, crushing and impaling their foes. A unicorn can also *teleport* up to 360' away once per day.

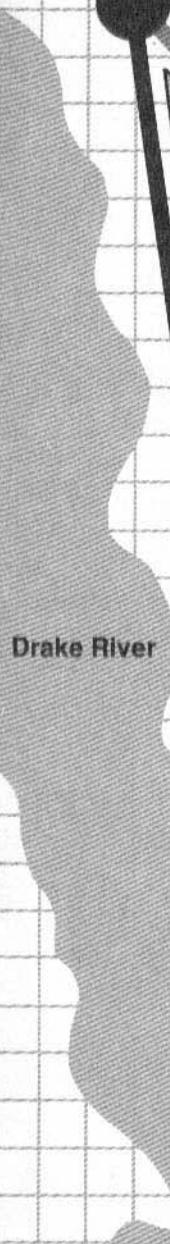
Only maidens of pure heart can ride a unicorn; the unicorn will fight all others who attempt to use it as a mount. Unicorns are solitary creatures, but do not discourage the company of other good creatures.



# MELINIR

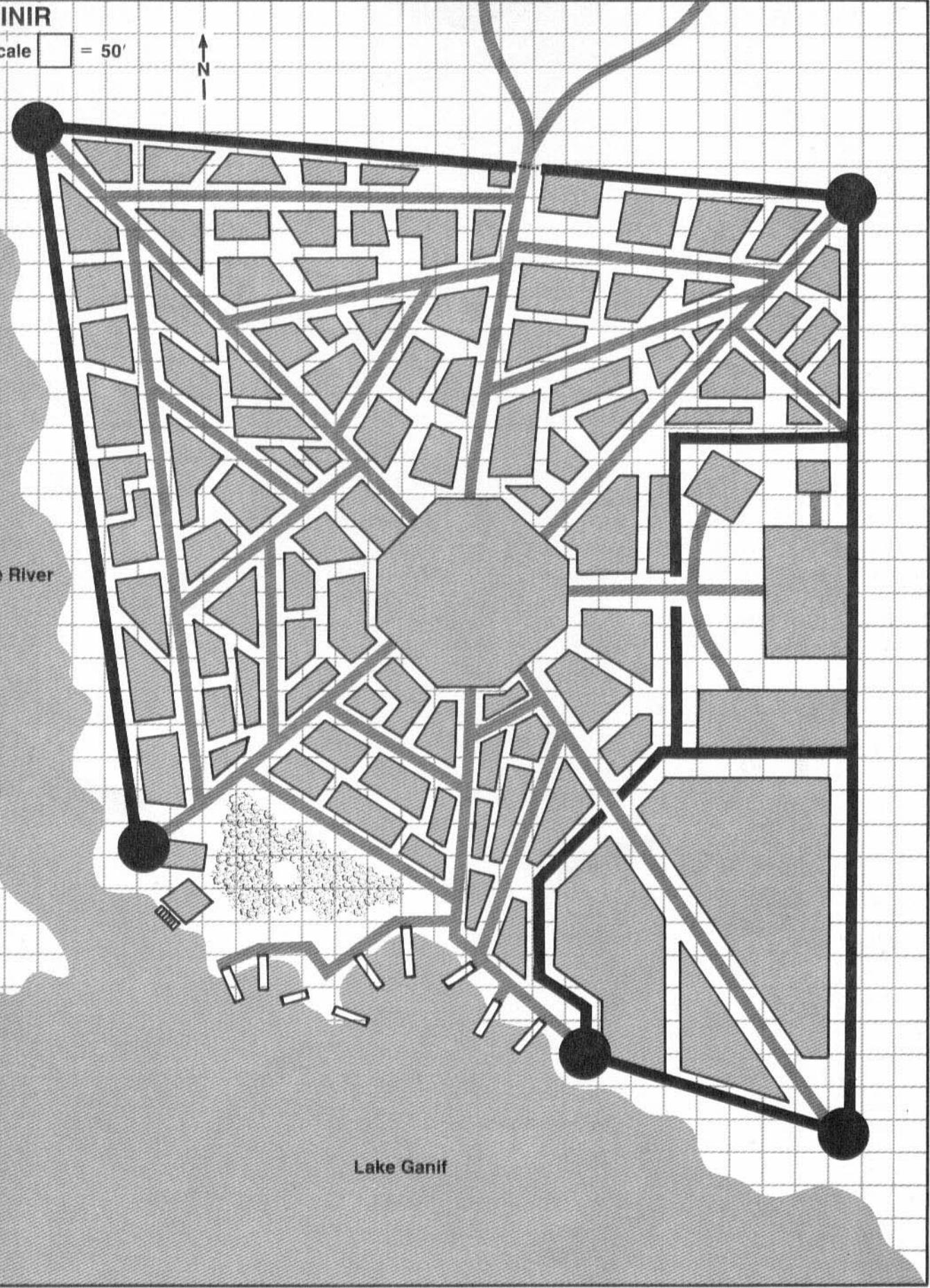
Scale  = 50'

N



Drake River

Lake Ganif

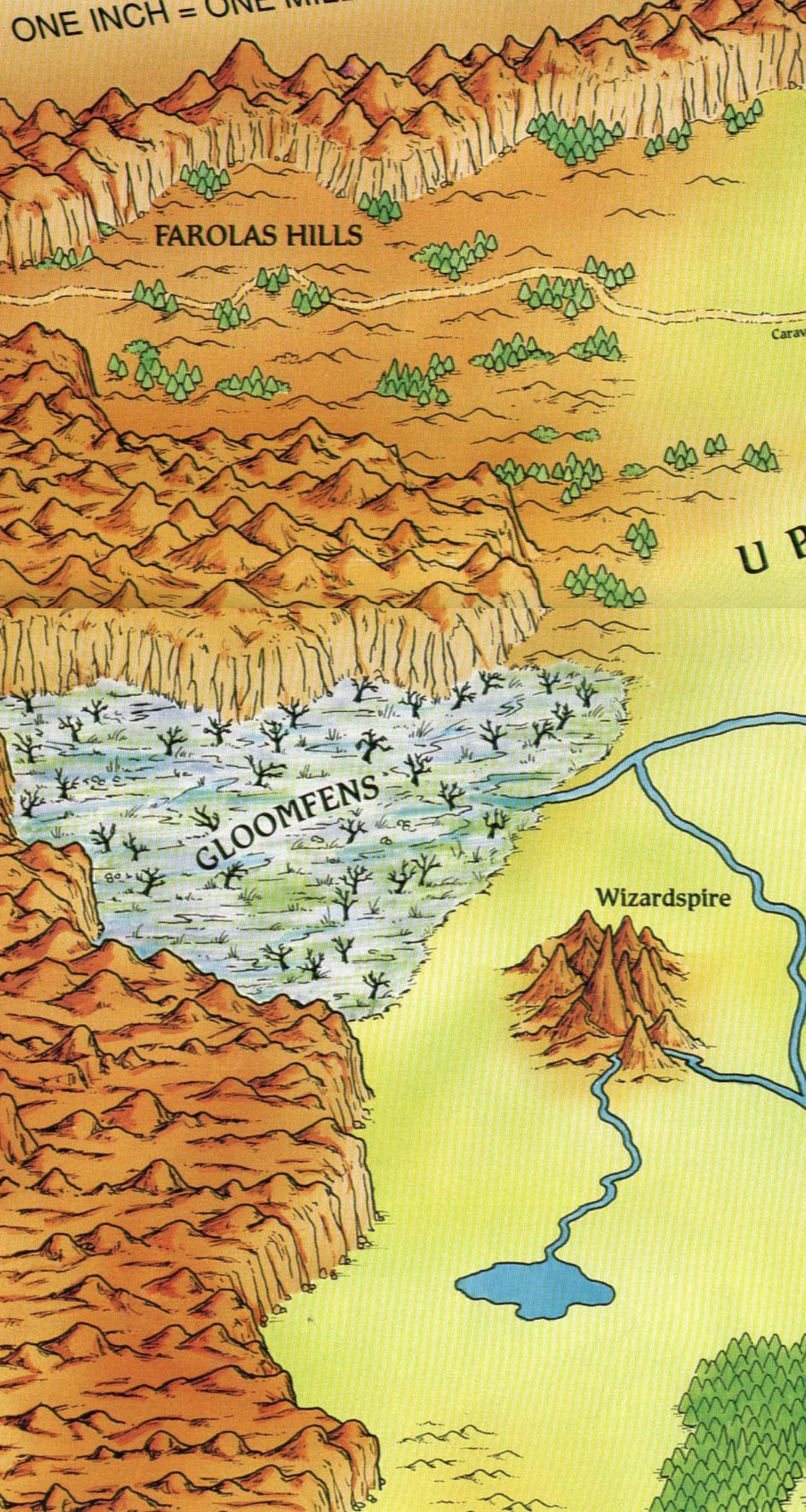


# THUNDER RIFT

ONE INCH = ONE MILE

## UPPER GREAT GRASSLANDS

FAROLAS HILLS



GLOOMFENS

Wizardspire

Caravan Route

Drake River

BURNING HILLS

Raven's Ruin

Lake Ostrel

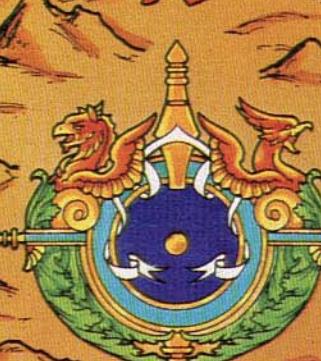
The Plunging Cataract

Kleine

GAUNTIN FOREST

The Walling Plateau

N



BRICHTWOOD

GRAKKEN WOOD

The Dark Pit

LOWER GREAT GRASSLANDS

THE BONE HILLS

The Monolith

THE HORNED HILLS

Lake Ganif

Mage Island

Melin

Old Mine

Melinir

Abandoned Mine

Torlynn

Drake River

The Whistling Cave

Melinir Hills

Brickwood

Crakken Wood

Gauntlet Forest

Lower Great Grasslands

Upper Great Grasslands

Thunder Rift

Caravan Route

East Drake River

West Drake River

Gloomfens

Burning Hills

Hearth-Home

Plunging Cataract

Lake Ostrel

Wizardspire

Glooms

Farolas Hills

Caravan Route

Plunging Cataract

Lake Ostrel

Wizardspire

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Farolas Hills

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Official Game Accessory

## Thunder Rift

by Colin McComb

SCANNED BY: JACK D. KNIGHT

**CALLING ALL BEGINNER DUNGEON MASTERS AND PLAYERS:  
IT'S TIME TO LEARN WHAT LIES BEYOND THE DUNGEON! THE  
GREAT CANYON OF THUNDER RIFT IS FILLED WITH ADVENTURE**

Now that you've had a taste of treasure hunting, are you ready to discover the road to and from adventure? Enter Thunder Rift and you'll find the excitement that lies outside the dungeon. From the Plunging Cataract Falls to the Keep of the Black Knight, the Rift offers a miniature world filled with friends and foes alike.

*Thunder Rift* offers the novice Dungeon Master a rich environment in which to begin a campaign. He or she can run the companion modules designed for use with this accessory or create entirely original scenarios that only require a place to be played out. There are lots of adventure ideas built right into the text, and lots of space for inventive DMs to "do their own thing." Player characters will find the Rift to be an excellent home turf, and they can get to know the valley while they are getting to know their characters and the game.

- Recommended for beginner DMs and players—no level restrictions
- For use with both the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® Game Box and the D&D® Rules *Cyclopedia*
- Comes with a large, colorful map sheet
- Acts as the setting for numerous TSR adventure modules, but remains completely self-contained, a perfect setting for any adventure
- Thunder Rift can be placed into any world in which the DM sets the campaign

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