

# ENVIRONS OF WATERDEEP

## NEW HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION FOR USE WITH *CITY OF SPLENDORS: WATERDEEP*

*City of Splendors: Waterdeep* provides the most in-depth description to date of the famed city of Waterdeep in the *FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting*. The book also offers new prestige classes, feats, monsters, and magic items. But space did not permit an exhaustive description of the areas around Waterdeep, so author Eric Boyd has provided a complete description and history of those areas in this web enhancement.

As always, feel free to adapt the material presented here as you see fit to make it work with your campaign.

## Preparation

You (the DM) need the D&D core rulebooks—the *Player's Handbook*, the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, and the *Monster Manual*—as well as *City of Splendors: Waterdeep* (CoS:W)—to utilize the material in this web enhancement. *Environs of Waterdeep* also draws on material from *Champions of Ruin* (CoR), *Champions of Valor* (CoV), *Draconomicon* (Drac), *Epic Level Handbook* (ELH), *Fiend Folio* (FF), *FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting* (FRCS), *Lost Empires of Faerûn* (LEoF), *Monster Manual II* (MM2), *Monsters of Faerûn* (MoF), *Player's Guide to Faerûn* (PGtF), *Power of Faerûn* (PoF), *Serpent Kingdoms* (SK), *The Fright at Tristor* (TFaT), and *Underdark* (Und). Other parenthetical notes refer to the map key in this web enhancement or in *City of Splendors: Waterdeep*. The information presented here utilizes the D&D v.3.5 rules.

## credits

**Design:** Eric L. Boyd  
**Editing:** Penny Williams  
**Typesetting:** Nancy Walker  
**Cartography:** Rob Lazaretti  
**Web Production:** Bart Carroll  
**Web Development:** Mark A. Jindra  
**Graphic Design:** Robert Campell, Cynthia Fliege, Dee Barnett and Jen Page

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# features of waterdeep's Environs

Although the City of Splendors does not formally claim any territory outside its walls, the Lords of Waterdeep have always kept a close watch over the region stretching from the Mere of Dead Men to the mouth of the River Delimbiyr, and from the Sea of Swords to the Dessarin Vale. The lands surrounding the City of Splendors make up the Waterdeep region discussed in the *FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting* and the *Player's Guide to Faerûn*. In addition to the human-dominated city, this region includes dwarfholds in the Forlorn Hills and the Sword Mountains, the moon elven lands in and around Ardeep Forest, and the lower Delimbiyr and Dessarin valleys.

The environs of Waterdeep are commonly divided into nine distinct sections: Ardeep, Delimbiyran, Elembär, the Forlorn Hills, the Lower Dessarin Vale, the Mere of Dead Men, the Northern Coast, the Southern Coast, and the Sword Mountains. Each of these regions includes human thorps and hamlets, dwarven clanholds, and elven steadings, most of which are too small to warrant mention. However, their total population exceeds that of Waterdeep by a factor of two (in summer months) to ten (in winter months).

In general, Waterdeep's environs sport at least one community every 20 square miles, although small thorps are much more concentrated in the lower Dessarin Vale. Human communities, located primarily in the open lowlands, are surrounded by lands used primarily for farming and herding. Elven communities usually lie within small woodlands, which the Fair Folk tend much as a human farmer tends his fields. Dwarven communities, mostly located in the Sword Mountains and the Forlorn Hills, rarely leave clear aboveground footprints, except in the immediate vicinity of underground excavations. The less common lightfoot halfling and rock gnome communities resemble human and shield dwarf communities, respectively.

## Ardeep

At various points in history, the Realm of the Deepening Moon was a vassal of the elven empires of Aryvandaar, Shantel Othreier, and Illefarn. Circa -1,100 DR, Illefarn fragmented into three realms: Ardeep, Ilyanbruun, and Rilithar. At its height, Ardeep encompassed the lands between the Sword Mountains and the lower Delimbiyr Vale.

The rulers of Ardeep were known as *laranlors* (masculine) and *laranlas* (feminine), elven terms meaning regal lord and regal lady, respectively, and used to denote the king or queen of an elven vassal realm or minor kingdom. Laranla Fildaerae "the Night Flame" died in the Year of Ashen Faces (-395 DR) and was succeeded by her grandniece, Imdalace. When Laranla Imdalace disappeared in the Year of the Slaked Blade (4 DR), rulership of Ardeep passed to her kinswoman Embrae Aloevan. Laranla Aloevan became a Chosen of Mystra and Sehanine in the Year of Frostfires (292 DR). Shortly thereafter, in the Year of Promise (308 DR), she descended into madness and death, consumed by the silver fire of Mystra.

Aloevan's successor, Laranlor Ruardh Lightshiver, forged the Alliance of Illefarn with the shield dwarves of Dardath (now the Forlorn Hills) in the Year of the Cantobele Stalking (342 DR). In

## MAP KEY

### waterdeep

- 1 Waterdeep (capital)

### Ardeep

#### Ardeep Forest

- 2 Crypts of the Deepening Moon (ruin)
- 3 Dancing Dell
- 4 Glen of Aloevan
- 5 Green Glade
- 6 House of Long Silences (ruin)
- 7 House of Stone (ruin)
- 8 Nandar Lodge (ruin)
- 9 Phylund Hunting Lodge (fort)
- 10 Reluraun's Tomb (ruin)
- 11 Floskin Estates
- 12 Harpshield Lands
- 13 Dungeon of the Shield
- 14 Talmost Lands
- 15 Talmost Keep (ruin)

### delimbiyran

- 16 Delimbiyran (ruin)

### duchy of daggerford

- 17 Daggerford
- 18 Black Helm Tower
- 19 Mount Illefarn
- 20 Laughing Hollow
- 21 Sword Hills

### elembär

- 22 Moon Tower of Elembär (ruin)

### forlorn hills

- 23 Crumbling Stair (ruin)
- 24 Watchers of the North
- 25 Torstulok (Hall of Grand Hunts, Firehammer Hold) (fort)

### lower dessarin vale

- 26 Amphail (village)
- 27 Death Shallows
- 28 Dolblunde (ruin)
- 29 Goldenfields (city)
- 30 Maiden's Tomb Tor (village)
- 31 Gauster Creek
- 32 Sarcrag
- 33 Stump Bog

### northern coast

- 34 Circle of the Deepening Moon (ruin)
- 35 Thornhold
- 36 Redcliffs
- 37 Red Rocks
- 38 Alsapir's Rock
- 39 Hall of Reflected Moonlight

### southern coast

- 40 Bryndraeth Estate (fort)
- 41 Roaring Dragon House (fort)
- 42 Zundbridge (bridge)
- 43 The Selpir
- 44 Rat Hills

### sword mountains

- 45 Hall of Whirling Blades (ruin)

### mount araddyn

- 46 Olothontor's Lair (ruin)

### mount helimbraar

- 47 Marune's Stronghold (fort)

### mount sar

- 48 Hespheira (ruin)
- 49 Nasaq Estates (fort)

### mere of dead men

- 50 Mere of Dead Men



the Year of Trials Arcane (523 DR), this combined region became Phalorm, the Realm of Three Crowns. Ruardh ruled as the elf king of Phalorm until the Year of Melding (557 DR), when he fell against a horde of hobgoblins at the Battle of Blunted Fangs, near the site of present-day Dragonspear Castle. His successor, King Ellatharion, ruled until the Year of the Immured Imp (604 DR), when he vanished along with a contingent of elves and halflings last seen pursuing an orc horde into the High Forest. The last elf king of Phalorm (and hence Ardeep), Lathlaeril "Leafspear," died in the Year of the Jester's Smile (612 DR) at the Battle of Firetears, which was fought south of modern-day Tribobar against the orcs of the illithid-led Everhorde. Sickened by the endless warring, most of Ardeep's moon elves abandoned Phalorm in the Year of the Lamia's Kiss (615 DR) and took ship to Evermeet.

The elven realm of Ardeep was refounded in the Year of the Curse (882 DR), when the area was resettled by moon elves from Eærland who had fled the demons erupting from Ascalhorn. The Alliance of Illefarn was briefly reborn as well, but the Eærlandi elves quickly withdrew because of rising anti-human sentiment. The moon elves dwelt in quiet fellowship beneath the boughs until the Year of the Moonfall (1344 DR), when most of the remaining moon elves heeded the call of the Retreat and departed for Evermeet.

## Ardeep forest

The tall blueleaf, duskwood, and weirwood trees that compose the remnants of this ancient forest lie between the Dessarin and Delimbiyr river valleys. The interior of Ardeep Forest is filled with ridges and breakneck gullies cloaked in thick vines and shrubbery. Wild boars roam through the mists that pervade the forest, and ruins lie hidden beneath forest loam and stands of faintly glowing mushrooms. Named Faraway Forest for its distance from Evermeet, this wood has stood forlorn and empty since the departure of Ardeep's moon elves via many covert voyages aboard the *Morning Bird*, a ship owned by Mirt the Moneylender (FRCS, CoS.W).

More than one floating castle has been seen above the forest, but neither the identity nor the interests of the inhabitants have ever been determined. Places of interest beneath the boughs include the Dancing Dell (3), the Green Glade (5), the House of Long Silences (6), and Reluraun's Tomb (10). (See LEoF for further information on these sites.)

When the Fair Folk departed the Realm of the Deepening Moon, they left behind baelnorns (MoF) and green wardens (MoF) to guard the ancient elven legacies they left behind. With no moon elves to keep the forest's inhabitants in check, however, various monsters—including assassin vines, kobold tribes, nyths (MoF), tendriculous, thirsts of stirges, and other creatures—have moved into Ardeep Forest during the years since the Retreat.

## Crypts of the Deepening Moon (2)

In the depths of Ardeep Forest lie the Crypts of the Deepening Moon—the royal vaults of ancient Ardeep—which are said to hold the remains of many *laranlors* and *laranlas*, as well as the fabulous elven artifacts with which they were interred. These rumors of great wealth draw many mercenary adventuring bands, some of which have been hired by Waterdeep's various noble houses to plunder the crypts. But since the crypts are guarded by a trio of moon elf baelnorns (MoF) and a legion of green wardens (MoF) that inhabits the surrounding woods, no such expedition has ever returned.

## Phylund Hunting Lodge (9)

In the Year of the Bloodbird (1346 DR), Lord Urtos Phylund I built a stone hunting lodge in the western depths of Ardeep Forest. Ever since, the family has used this building as a base from which to launch carefully planned hunting expeditions for wealthy Waterdhavians. The object of such hunts is always a rare and fantastic creature brought in from elsewhere in Faerûn and released just prior to the event's commencement. Lords Urtos I and Urtos II have both made small fortunes hosting such events—enough to consider establishing similar camps in the Sword Mountains or the Forlorn Hills.

No one has yet noticed that these hunts never take place during nights of the full moon, or that Lord Urtos II always visits the Phylund hunting lodge on such nights for a "private hunt." In fact, Urtos II is an afflicted werewolf, and he stays at the lodge during the full moon to ensure that his transformations and subsequent hunting harm no one. Thus, visiting the area of the lodge during such nights is unusually dangerous.

## TEARS OF ALOEVAN (4)

In a sylvan glen deep inside Ardeep Forest lies a mystical pool of water guarded by an otherwordly dragon. Within the clear waters of this pond is a *portal* that leads to a cloud of magic known as the Tears of Aloevan, which is located in a pocket plane.

Once the Chosen of both Sehanine and Mystra, the moon elf queen Aloevan descended into madness, consumed by the silver fire that raged within her. Upon her death, her spirit was trapped in a nimbus of silver fire that prevented her from passing on to Arvanaith. Upon realizing her situation, seven clerics of Sehanine created a link between the natural world and the spiritual limbo in which Aloevan was trapped. Throughout the intervening centuries, Sehanine's priests have labored to ease the mad queen's torment by recreating the long-lost Court of Silver Fire within her pocket plane. But still the laughter of Aloevan (CG female ghôst [augmented moon elf] Chosen of Sehanine/Chosen of Mystra wizard 19) is tinged with madness, and she clings to the vestiges of her sanity thanks only to her ever-present attendants.

Passage between the two realms is restricted to solar eclipses. Whenever one of Aloevan's seven attendants is ready to pass on to Arvanaith, another cleric of the Moonlit Mystery travels to the Tears of Aloevan by way of the mystic pool to serve in her stead. Although many others have sought entrance to Aloevan's court, none have returned to tell the tale, so no one knows whether anyone not called there by Sehanine has ever succeeded in entering.

## Floshin Estates (11)

Halfway between the town of Daggerford and Ardeep Forest, Lord Elorfindar Floshin maintains a graceful, ridgewise manor that dates back to the days of ancient Illefarn. Tended by moon elf retainers in the employ of the House Floshin, the Floshin Estates encompass an expanse of lightly wooded land generally used for animal husbandry and the cultivation of rare native plants.

**Elorfindar Floshin:** Lord Elorfindar Floshin (NG male gold elf fighter 1/wizard 5/eldritch knight 10) is a dignified sun elf with bronze skin, golden-blond hair, and green eyes shadowed with the wisdom of many years. Elorfindar wears magic elven chain mail with a simple elven cloak and carries his ancestral blade, *Elfhost* (+3 defending longsword).

Although he does not mind the company of other races as much as many of his brethren do, the aging elf knight has other reasons for remaining behind in Faerûn. Few now realize that in the days of the Siluvanedē, House Floschin gave rise to one branch of fey'ri. In penance for the sins of his ancestors, Elorfindar has taken it upon himself to guard the many *portals* in the House of Long Silences, which lies in the depths of Ardeep Forest.

Elorfindar's gold elf wife remained with him in his self-imposed exile for six centuries, but she died more than two centuries ago, after presenting him with four children. Elorfindar has since taken three human wives from the Waterdhavian nobility and had several more children.

## Harpshield Lands (12)

The small kingdom of Harpshield was one of the successor states to Delimbiyran, the Kingdom of Man, located along the southeastern verges of Ardeep Forest. In the Year of the Circling Vulture (942 DR), after ferocious drow raids up and down the Sword Coast had decimated the realm's population, the survivors fled to Nimoar's Hold at the invitation of Warlord Gharl. The descendants of Harpshield's royal house are now members of House Majarra, and the family's royal origins have largely been forgotten. The western Harpshield Lands, which now lie within the territory of the Floschin Estates, have reverted to the ancestral claim of the Fair Folk.

## DUNGEON OF THE SHIELD (13)

The dungeons of Harpshield Castle lie largely forgotten and unexplored in the southeastern fringe of Ardeep Forest. The fact that the entrance lies beneath an arch adorned with the Harpshield crest accounts for the popular name given to the place in bards' tales. A handful of monsters

have taken up residence in the dungeons from time to time, and recent reports speak of a tangle of gricks that now lairs within.

## NANDAR LODGE (8)

At the extreme southwestern tip of Ardeep Forest lie the foundations of a hunting lodge built by House Nandar of Waterdeep in the Year of the Black Buck (1226 DR). Though the lodge was repeatedly attacked by moon elves, the scions of House Nandar returned to it time and again. Eventually, however, the patience of the elves won out, and the lodge was abandoned. All that remains of it today are the cellar pit, a few stones, and a natural spring that flows into the forest before draining away into a sinkhole.

## TALMOS LANDS (14)

Like Harpshield, the small kingdom of Talmos was one of the successor states to Delimbiyran. Located along the northeastern verges of Ardeep Forest, Talmos was also abandoned to drow raiders in the Year of the Circling Vulture (942 DR). Unlike Harpshield, however, the Talmos lands have remained in the hands of the royal house's descendants, who are now members of the Waterdhavian nobility. The Talmos clan maintains several small hunting lodges in the territory, and crofters in the house's employ watch over scattered flocks of sheep and shaggum (cattle).

## TALMOS KEEP (15)

The royal seat of fallen Talmos, never reclaimed by the descendants of House Talmos, now lies in ruins. Today it is home only to the ghosts of those tortured to death by the drow.

## TALMOS

House Talmos, one of Waterdeep's leading clothiers and furriers, manages extensive trapping and fur-trading operations in the North and lucrative silk operations in Calimshan. Its members are closely associated with the League of Skinners & Tanners and the Solemn Order of Recognized Furriers & Woolmen.

**History:** House Talmos traces its history back to the Kingdom of Man. First ennobled by King Javilarh II of Delimbiyran for service in the waning days of Phalorm, members of this family once ruled the Barony of Talmos on the southeastern edge of Ardeep Forest. After the fall of Delimbiyran, Baron Delsinger Talmos declared himself King of Talmos, joining the ranks of numerous petty nobles who claimed sovereignty over their own holdings. The family ruled its small kingdom for nearly three centuries, until unrelenting drow raids in the Year of the Circling Vulture (942 DR) forced both rulers and subjects to abandon Talmos for the relative safety of Waterdeep. There House Talmos quickly joined the merchant nobility, becoming in time one of the older and more powerful families of the city.

**Plots & Intrigues:** In the Year of the Unstrung Harp (1371 DR), Lady Hyara Talmos died under mysterious circumstances, shortly after she had embarrassed Lady Hlanta Melshimber by revealing some of her youthful indiscretions. To everyone's horror, Lady Hyara arose as a ghost (NE female ghost [augmented Chondathan human] aristocrat 12) and continued to play the role of family matriarch. Although the Lords have recognized Lady Hyara II as

head of the clan, she dares not assert her authority because the ghost still holds sway over the family. Numerous attempts to destroy Lady Hyara's ghost, secretly funded by her two youngest children, have failed. Each time, Lady Hyara has returned, blaming her hated foe—Lady Hlanta Melshimber—for the treachery. Unbeknownst to all including the ghost, the only way to lay Lady Hyara to rest permanently is to recover the crown of Talmos, thought to have been hidden amidst the ruins of Talmos Keep during a drow raid, and place it atop her remains.

**Hyara Talmos II:** Hyara (LN female Chondathan human aristocrat 3), daughter of Lady Hyara and Lord Pallin of Cormyr, is the young, untested matriarch of House Talmos. This thin, sour-looking woman has long lived in the shadow of her formidable mother, and that poisonous relationship has continued even after the latter's death. Hyara still shows no signs of rebellion against the continuing influence of her mother's ghost, leading many to whisper that her misery is what binds the elder Hyara to this world.

**Pallin Talmos:** The father of Hyara II, Pallin II, and Delaea Talmos, Pallin is the former Lord-Consort of House Talmos and a minor noble of Cormyr. Although he stood by his increasingly dissatisfied wife in life (and drowned his sorrows in drink), he was wholly unprepared for her to continue haunting him after death. Pallin is now a pitiable figure who lurks in the shadows of Waterdeep's taverns, spilling his sad tale to anyone who buys him an ale.

From time to time, hordes of fiendish spiders erupt from the ruins to bedevil the surrounding region. Some scholars suggest that a *portal* from a drow temple in the Underdark may be discharging spiders that have been summoned during religious ceremonies into the ruins.

## delimbiyran

Originally named for the Kingdom of Man and its capital city, the northern bank of the lower Delimbiyr Vale, just west of the Forlorn Hills, is still known as Delimbiyran. (The history of this lost realm is given in *Lost Empires of Faerûn*, along with descriptions of the Shining City of Delimbiyran [16], the Laughing Hollow [20], and Mount Illefarn [19].) Much of the Delimbiyran region, including the town of Daggerford, lies within the Duchy of Daggerford, and residents of the duchy are considered part of the Western Heartlands region.

### **black helm tower**

This fortified compound squats atop a low hill located about a day's ride north and east of Daggerford (17). It is home to Ghelimar Firefrostarr (NG male Tethyrian human bard 1/fighter 10), current holder of the Black Vizor office in the High Heralds. Ghelimar is rarely in attendance because his position requires much traveling and magically assisted communication.

The Black Vizor is deeply involved in the current politics of western Faerûn, keeping track of intrigues, changing attitudes, treaties, and shifting balances of power. He also keeps records of all peace treaties and formal declarations of war, and reports on their fulfillment to the Heralds, the Lords' Alliance, and the Merchants' League. Ghelimar does grant audiences when he is in residence, but he is careful not to undercut the office of Falconfree (CoS:W) in Waterdeep, which is currently held by Scirkhel Wands.

### **delimbiyr, the river shining**

This clear, cool, fast-flowing river runs more than a thousand miles from its headwaters in the Nether Mountains to the Sea of Swords. Its largely navigable waters are mint-sweet and safe to drink. The river is home to many szorp—brown, troutlike fish whose white flesh is quite tasty. In fact, szorp is a favored delicacy in Waterdeep's finer taverns.

## Elembar

The open lands between Ardeep Forest and the Forlorn Hills are known as Elembar, after the kingdom that once claimed them. In the Year of Risen Towers (146 DR), humans founded Elembar and its capital city of Delimbiyran in the unclaimed lands between the moon elven kingdom of Ardeep and the shield dwarven kingdom of Dardath. Northern and central Elembar fell to an orc horde in the Year of the Fortress Scoured (511 DR) and eventually became the Elembar of today. (A description of Stoneturn, the House of Stone, can be found in *Lost Empires of Faerûn*.)

### **MOON TOWER OF elembar (22)**

Little remained of Elembar's northern settlements after the invasion of an orc horde shattered the realm. One notable exception, however, is the Moon Tower of Elembar, an ethereal spire visible only on the nights of the full moon. Thought to have been the domicile of Elembar's mage royal, this mysterious figment has spawned many fanciful tales. The Moon Tower of Elembar can be accessed via the Border Ethereal, but the magic-laden ruin is well guarded by the ghosts of its defenders, the ancient constructs that still keep watch over it, and an advanced (6-HD) ethereal marauder that uses the place as a lair.

### forlorn hills

The slow collapse of dwarf-ruled Dardath in centuries past eventually gave rise to the name that the hills east of Ardeep Forest now bear. Also known as the Fallen Hills, the Forlorn Hills are cold and empty, home only to scattered flocks of wild sheep and the leucrotas (CoS:W) and wyverns that prey upon them. Ruins and abandoned mines are scattered throughout the rolling landscape, largely hidden from creatures flying above by the shadows of sheltering tors and the cloying mists that rarely burn off before midday.

### **crumbling stair (23)**

The Crumbling Stair is all that remains of Taeros, a grand, turreted mansion that once stood proudly amid fanciful gardens adorned with fountains and pools. The house sprawled along a curving ridge in the heart of the human-ruled barony of Loravatha. Originally built by a merchant lord, Taeros became a school of arcane study for young lasses seeking to master sorcery under the direction of his widow, the sorceress Ybrithe. Twenty years after the founding of the school, the mansion was torn apart by southern mages seeking to plunder whatever they could. But before they could seize Ybrithe's treasures, a latent magic trap blew apart the ridge, Taeros, and all the surviving attackers.

The Crumbling Stair now rises up from broken lands overgrown with scrub woods. The weathered staircase, made of green-veined white marble, rises six or so steps into the air from a dark hole at its base. Beyond this aperture is a long corridor with a few attached rooms that once served as extensive cellars. The fore chambers are home to the maddened ghost of one of the attacking wizards and some sort of creature—possibly an all-consuming hunger (Und)—that leaves glowing slime-trails on the walls, floor, and ceiling. In addition, the phantom of a half-elf sorceress sometimes appears to point out collapsed tunnels and forgotten secret doors leading to a large warren of catacombs, which are said to be home to some sort of beholder.

### **Torstultok (25)**

Torstultok, or the Hall of Grand Hunts, is a temple-fortress of Haela Brightaxe. The place is well known among the Stout Folk of the North for the all-dwarf and mixed-race adventuring companies its inhabitants sponsor to reclaim long-lost dwarven relics from orc-held halls.

Torstultok lies within a sprawling complex of tunnels and grand halls beneath the eastern end of the Watchers of the North (24)—the line of tors that marks the northern edge of the Forlorn Hills.

Torstultok was known as Firehammer Hold before the Fallen Kingdom fell, and much treasure is still ascribed to the latter name in the tales of the North. Those same legends claim that the dwarves of Firehammer Hold perished in a plague shortly after the founding of the Kingdom of Man, but in fact the dwarves' numbers had dwindled over time, and the leaders of the hold planted false evidence of a deadly plague to increase the security of the dwarves who remained.

An unexpected consequence of this action was the arrival in subsequent centuries of treasure-hungry adventurers seeking long-lost hoards of dwarven gold. To assuage the anger of such would-be plunderers, the dwarves hired them to seek out other dwarven holds that they knew to be occupied by orcs. From this tradition evolved the hold's current role as a clearinghouse for battle-loving dwarves and adventurers of other races who sought glory amidst the ruins of long-fallen dwarven kingdoms. In recent times, Haela's clergy have even begun to lure adventurers to the temple deliberately with ancient-looking, incomplete maps and other enticing items. Such a map may be found on the walls of a not-so-secret hidden room in the Singing Sprite—a slate-shingled, many-gabled stone inn located in the bowl at the center of the three hills upon which the village of Secomer is built.

## lower dessarin vale

The lower Dessarin Vale is a wide, fertile basin through which great volumes of water and commerce flow. The land slopes up north toward the Sword Mountains and east toward the Forlorn Hills, forming a vast flood plain in between. The region is heavily farmed and dotted with thorps and hamlets almost too numerous to count. One place of particular interest along the banks of the River Dessarin is the Death Shallows (27; see CoR).

## dolblunde (28)

In the Year of the Leaping Centaur (232 DR), several gnome and deep gnome clans led by Olbrent Handstone built the subterranean city of Dolblunde near Maiden's Tomb Tor (30). Dolblunde became a duchy in the Realm of Three Crowns in the Year of Trials Arcane (523 DR), when Phalorm was founded. The city was sacked by the Horde of the Wastes in the Year of the Shattered Scepter (614 DR) and abandoned thereafter.

Today the ruined city serves as the lair of Daurgothoth (male black great wyrm dracolich wizard 20/archmage 5), First-Reader of the Cult of the Dragon. The Creeping Doom, as he is known to many, is one of the most powerful arcane spellcasters in Faerûn, second only to Larloch and the Chosen of Mystra. Tunnels link the lost city with the so-called Bandit Tunnels beneath Maiden's Tomb Tor, certain passages in the vast dungeon complex of Undermountain, and a flooded tunnel leading from the muddy bottom of the River Dessarin. To discourage intruders, the undead wyrm has placed many traps and undead servitors in the smaller, gnome-created passages surrounding the great caverns of his lair.

At the heart of Daurgothoth's chain of caverns is a side passage large enough for a dragon to fly down. This tunnel is guarded by a wall of Large skeletons (the remains of a tribe of hill giants, still armed with their greatclubs) with orders to attack all beings other than Daurgothoth himself. Above them hangs a death tyrant with similar instructions.

Some distance beyond these guardians, the tunnel ends in a closed stone door that is actually a stone golem with orders to attack anyone other than the dracolich who tries to open it. On the other side of this door lies Daurgothoth's spellcasting chamber—a vast, ravaged cavern almost half a mile in length. Its scorched and scarred walls and the broken stone heaped on its floor give mute evidence of the magical experiments he conducts here.

A smaller tunnel leads off one side of this cave and doubles back on itself several times before opening into the gem-filled cave where Daurgothoth sleeps and broods upon a huge pile of bones. In addition to serving as a bed, this grisly pile affords him raw material for some bone-related attacks he is currently researching.

Though rumor holds that a secret, walled-away chamber built to hold Daurgothoth's host lies adjacent to this cavern, only two lesser caves appear to branch away from the main one. The first of these is a treasure vault crammed with all manner of magic, statuettes, coins, and the like. The second is a storage room in which the dracolich keeps his spellbooks, the magic items he knows enough about to feel safe in using, a smooth-walled prison pit into which he drops living creatures that he wants to keep for later, and a vast collection of odd substances that might serve as material components—including the pickled corpses of such large monsters as dragon turtles, purple worms, and remorhazes, as well as several kinds of dragons.

## Amphail (26)

The village of Amphail, famous for its horse breeders, lies on the Long Road, a good three-day ride north of Waterdeep through rolling farmlands. By night or in a snowstorm, a traveler can locate this quiet, beautiful village by the thick stands of duskwood and spruce that cluster along the road nearby. In summer, the stench of horse manure gives outsiders ample evidence of the town's presence.

At the heart of the settlement is an open space known as the Malanderways, where several side streets meet the Long Road. In the center of this square is a black stone statue of the great Shalarn, a war stallion bred in Amphail decades ago. Other notable landmarks include the Horse Pond, the Old Dead Rowan (a tree as large as some cottages), and the ruins of the Laughing Bandit Inn.

Amphail was named for Amphail the Just, one of Waterdeep's early warlords who had estates here. Although all traces of his keep are long gone, legend holds that Amphail still rides the area in spirit form, frightening away trolls and hostile barbarians.

Amphail's horse farms have traditionally equipped the noble families and armies of Waterdeep and Neverwinter, as well as merchants and satraps from Amn and Calimshan. Amphail grays (see *Champions of Valor*, page 154) are famous across Faerûn as intelligent, loyal, and hardy personal mounts. Most soldiers, however, prefer the larger, more powerful, glossy black chargers that Amphail's breeders produce.

The various Waterdhavian noble families who keep stables here—most notably the Amcathra, Ilzimmer, Jhanscil, Roaringhorn, and Tarm families—have traditionally been major breeders, and the whip-wielding Ilzimmer racing teams that frequently thunder up and down the Long Road are grudgingly tolerated by the locals. The independent stable masters Ohm "Steelhand" Oglyntyr, Rorth Baldasker, and Elraghona Selembur are also noted breeders.

The extensive holdings of the Eagleshield clan include a farm where sick animals are nursed and a shop where tack of the finest sort is made and sold. The Ammakyl family—the richest in the region by far—is Amphail's dominant producer of grain and vegetables. Ammakyl caravans are a regular sight on the road from Amphail to the City of Splendors.

Notable businesses in Amphail include the Stag-Horned Flagon tavern, the Stone Stallion Inn, and Mother Gothal's Festhall. Other places of interest include Ammakyl Flowers and Foods (a produce shop), Blodhlar's Wares (a hardware shop), Eagleshield Fine Horse Leathers (a tack store), Elboar's Finest (a winery), Golaund Sester's (a rooming house), Hagala's Manyturrets (another rooming house), Halan Shauluth's (a bakery), Imbryl's Cloaks (a garment shop), Maerlbar Eggs and Fresh Fowl (a fowler), Pelost Galathaer's (a carpenter), Shrunedalar's Secrets (a boutique), and Ulvinhand Smithy.

**Amphail (Village):** Conventional; AL NG; 200 gp limit; Assets 6,000 gp; Population 600 [850 including outlying farms]; Mixed (humans 384 [544], shield dwarves 60 [85], elves [all types] 60 [85], lightfoot halflings 30 [43], half-elves 30 [42], gnomes [all types] 18 [25], half-orcs 12 [17], others 6 [9]).

*Authority Figures:* Lord Warder Briiathor Alougarr (see below).

*Important Characters:* Dlara (see below), Mother Gothal (see below), Krivvin Shamblestar (see below), Thorn Tlassalune (see below).

The other citizens of Amphail are too numerous to enumerate.

*Notable Exports:* Agricultural produce, fine horses.

*Briiathor Alougarr:* Lord Warder Briiathor (LN male Tethyrian human fighter 4) is a stout, muscular man with a closely trimmed beard and level, gray eyes that see much. He generally eschews armor and ceremony, preferring to wander about Amphail on foot at all hours. Briiathor remains a member of Waterdeep's city guard, although he is officially retired, and he is absolutely loyal to Piergeiron (CoSW). Briiathor is also an old battle-companion of the Blackstaff (FRCS, ELH, and CoSW) from the Wheel of Blades adventuring company and has occasionally hidden persons or items for him.

*Dlara:* This 8-foot tall, dusky-skinned warrior (LN female Chultan human rogue 5/fighter 4) enjoys watching and participating in tumbling and acrobatics, and she has a delightful sense of humor, though she seldom speaks. Dlara is very popular among the young noblemen of Waterdeep for her willingness to wrestle with them. These bouts take place on stage at the festhall, with both combatants wearing little more than plenty of oil. Dlara often wins, since she can easily pick up an average human male and throw him across the room.

*Mother Gothal:* "Mother" Gothal (NG female Tethyrian human rogue 10) is the elderly proprietress of her own festhall. Once a dancer of striking beauty in Baldur's Gate, she managed to steal enough money to retire to a life of ease in Waterdeep. There she hired adventurers to free some slaves secretly held by her neighbors, the Oloskar family, and was forced to flee with the former slaves across Faerûn, killing the clan members who pursued them. In the end, only Gothal and one slave—Dlara—survived. Eventually the pair returned to Amphail and started a festhall. Mother Gothal delights in hearing people's dreams and schemes and often offers good advice.

*Krivvin Shamblestar:* Krivvin (NG male Illuskan human commoner 8), the tavernmaster of the Stag-Horned Flagon, is a stocky, silver-haired, soft-spoken man who has seen nearly eight decades. Largely retired now, he passes his days in a back corner of his tavern, observing those who come and go. He has an excellent memory for faces and the favored drinks that go with them, and a keener ear than most realize. Krivvin has long served as a Harper friend and as the eyes and ears of the Lords of Waterdeep. Mirt the Moneylender is a regular visitor and one of Krivvin's oldest friends.

*Thorn Tlassalune:* This longhaired, engaging, would-be minstrel (NE male Tethyrian rogue 9/bard 1) owns the Stone Stallion Inn. His lute-playing has improved, but he was never a luthier's apprentice from Amn, as he claims. In fact, he's a thief from Tethyr who stole

a great deal of money from the crown during the Ten Black Days of Eleint and then fled. Thorn has five daughters by his late wife, but he has recently remarried. His new wife, Phelansheene (CG female Illuskan sorcerer 5), was long trapped in ghostlike form by the curse of a Red Wizard. A wizard of the Arcane Brotherhood in Luskan finally freed her in exchange for Thorn's agreement to serve as the brotherhood's eyes and ears in Amphail. As a result, Thorn has remained in Amphail, despite his inclination to become an adventurer. Thorn also acts as a fence for adventurers seeking to unload certain illicit items in the village.

## Legacies of Dalrosz

Mother Gothal's festhall was once the country house of Dalrosz Kothont, an eccentric old nobleman who turned his back on the high society of Waterdeep and relocated to Amphail. His own family spurned him because of his interest in the necromantic arts, so he lived out his days here alone, experimenting with captured outlaws and cadavers in a quest for immortality. Kothont also experimented with certain augmentations of the human form, such as extra limbs, eyes added to the back of the head, and the like.

After Dalrosz disappeared, a dozen or so of his experiments escaped to live in the hills near the village. Local rumor maintains that their weird descendants—misshapen mongrelfolk (FF) with tentacles, extra arms and the like—still roam the region around Amphail, preying on mountain animals and the occasional unlucky traveler.

Dalrosz's house eventually fell into the hands of an adventuring band from Waterdeep known as the Five Ready Blades. The members of this company used the place as their headquarters for only a season before disappearing without a trace. Rumor holds that they never left the home at all. Some villagers think they were killed by Dalrosz, who is said to dwell in heretofore-unknown catacombs beneath the festhall in the form of a ghost or lich. Others believe the band left via a hidden portal and never returned.

## Tomb of the Maiden King

In the depths of Horse Pond—a placid, muddy pool filled with frogs and water lilies—lies the submerged entrance to the tomb of Raulbaera "the Maiden King" Bloodhand. The descendant of Ulbaerag Bloodhand, she claimed the lands near present-day Amphail and established the settlement of Rowan Hold there. According to legend, Raulbaera sleeps forever on a stone bed with the sword of the Maiden King on her breast.

Adventurers have entered the pond on several occasions, but none have reported finding the tomb's entrance. But several years ago, one company failed to return from the pond. Shortly thereafter, a number of undead skeletons emerged from the water and stalked through the village, strangling several residents before they were hacked apart. The truth of what lies below the surface of this placid pool remains unknown.

## Dessarin, the River

The cold, deep River Dessarin rises in the Star Mounts of the High Forest, then joins many other streams and rivers before flowing into the Sea of Swords just south of Waterdeep at Zundbridge. Its waters are navigable for much of its length. The river is home to the silver shalass—a fish that has become a delicacy across the North—as well as catfish, coldwater crabs, and small brown fish known as lout.

## Gaustar's Creek (31)

This small, fast-flowing stream has cut a narrow but deep gorge along its route, which lies 100 miles northeast of Waterdeep and ends where its waters merge with the River Dessarin. Various creatures—including a long-established thirst of stirges—have scratched tiny caves and tunnels into the soft rock of the gorge.

This small creek was named for the dwarf Gaustar Jadehammer, who is said to have buried a large chest of precious gems somewhere along its banks in the Year of the Sunset Winds (1309 DR). Forced from their delves in the Year of the Wandering Waves (1293 DR), his people were harried by orcs all the way south and slaughtered one by one. Because the treasures of Clan Jadehammer have never surfaced, most believe that they are still buried somewhere along the gorge.

## Goldenfields (29)

Also called the Granary of the North, Goldenfields is a walled abbey of Chauntaea that lies south and west of the Sumber Hills. Founded by High Harvestmaster Tolgar Anuvien in the Year of the Bridle (1349 DR), Goldenfields has grown from a small farm lost in the rolling sweep of the grassy Dessarin meadows into the largest abbey of Chauntaea in Faerûn. Now considered the agricultural backbone of the North, it supplies Waterdeep and many other inland settlements with food. As an official member of the Lords' Alliance, Goldenfields enjoys good relations with Waterdeep and the other cities of the North. The Great Mother is said to be very proud of Goldenfields, and her adherents claim that she watches over it personally, guiding her workers through dream-visions and aiding defenders with timely bolts of lightning or earth tremors.

Encircled by stout wooden walls, this fortified farm complex is as large as a small city. Its holdings sprawl across 25 square miles of countryside, encompassing fields of grain and vegetables as well as a community of more than five thousand devout worshipers. The sheer size of the tillage makes Goldenfields a frequent target for raids by goblinkin, trolls, and barbarians. Thus, mounted patrols consisting of twenty or more adventurer-priests constantly scour the surrounding lands, seeking out brigands, trolls, goblinkin, orcs, foraging monsters, and other evils to fight. They challenge all folk they meet but don't fight unless they are attacked or encounter obviously evil creatures, such as drow or orcs.

The High Harvestmaster welcomes the services of adventurers who serve either Chauntaea or Lathander if they are willing to pledge loyalty to the abbey, but most such wanderers soon depart, bored with a life of endless patrolling. Adventurers of other faiths who are weary of danger or on the run from justice are welcome as well, but they may stay only as long as they work in the fields and defend the abbey when called upon.

**Goldenfields (Small City):** Magical; AL NG; 15,000 gp limit; Assets 400,000 gp; Population 5,324; Mixed (humans 5,111, halflings 106, half-elves 54, others 53).

**Authority Figures:** High Harvestmaster Tolgar Anuvien (see below).

**Important Characters:** Szuszalan "the Warrior Maid" (see below).

The other citizens of Goldenfields are too numerous to enumerate here.

**Notable Exports:** Grain and agricultural produce.

**Tolgar Anuvien:** High Harvestmaster Tolgar (NG male Tethyrian human cleric 16/divine disciple of Chauntaea 3) is a gray-haired veteran of many an adventuring campaign with the Company of Crazed Venturers. His deeply expressive, wrinkled face

is tanned and weathered, as is his nearly bald scalp. These days, he favors the humble vestments of a devout Chauntean, though he sported fancier clothes in his adventuring days. Tolgar is quick-witted and possesses a dry sense of humor, but he earned both of his nicknames: "The Patiently Vengeful" and "Beholderslayer."

As the abbey's importance to the North has grown, Tolgar's influence and stature have also increased. He is now considered the equal of such rulers as Lord Nasher of Newwinter and High Lady Alustriel of Silverymoon (FRCS), and he is in nearly constant communication with Khelben "Blackstaff" Arunsun and Piergeiron of Waterdeep. Tolgar continues to expand Goldenfields toward the strategic Ironford river crossing, with the goal of eventually extending its borders to the eastern bank of the River Dessarin. Recently, the High Harvestmaster has become a silent investor in the Bargewright Inn, having arranged for the abbey to inherit the business after Feston Bargewright's death.

The High Harvestmaster possesses a vast amount of personal wealth, which he stores in a variety of secret caches located in Piergeiron's Palace (C75), in Tolgar's private house in Waterdeep (C80), in or near the Inn of the Dripping Dagger (T3), in Malchor Harpell's Tower of Twilight (just west of Longsaddle), and in other places. Goldenfields used to constitute a significant drain on his treasury, but now it adds to his riches with each passing day.

**Szuszalan:** Known as the "Warrior Maid," Szuszalan (CG elderly female Chondathan human fighter 15) is a friend and advisor to Tolgar. Because of her advanced age, few now recognize her as the founder of the Company of the Fiery Fane or the author of *Walking on a Swordblade*. Even fewer realize that she was once a member of the famous Circle of Steel, an all-female adventuring band whose members explored Myth Drannor in their youth and lived to tell the tale.

**Bralagar Winterhand:** Bralagar (CG male Illuskan human fighter 12) is the jolly, rotund Seneschal of Goldenfields. Beneath his graying hair and ample girth lurks the heart of a dashing warrior. Indeed, he was an early member of the Company of Crazed Venturers, and he adventured with Tolgar in his youth. Bralagar now holds the security of the abbey in his hands, and all adventurers who serve Chauntaea by patrolling the borders of Goldenfields report directly to him.

## Maiden's Tomb Tor (30)

This bare, high peak is named for Nalethra of the Winged Spear, a princess of the Black Boar tribe who attacked Waterdeep in the Year of the Defiant Salute (1076 DR). Nalethra and the last of her bodyguards were laid to rest in a cairn beneath the tor by Waterdeep's army, in honor of their valiant campaign. The peak is also the destination of a one-way painting portal constructed by Sword Herald Murald in Suzail's Palace of the Purple Dragon.

In the Year of the Prince (1357 DR), the Black Spear kobolds—a tribe with more than 450 members led by a chief named Kuthil—took up residence in the caverns beneath this tor. Waterdeep's guard discovered the kobolds' presence in the Year of Maidens (1361 DR) and staged several attacks on them with the aid of various mercenary groups. Clearly outmatched, the kobolds fled into the many subterranean passages beneath the tor, never to be seen again. The attackers sealed the tunnels with rock and patrolled the area heavily for a few years, but eventually abandoned the practice when the tor remained secure.

Unbeknownst to Waterdeep's defenders, the Black Spear tribe still dwells within the tor, armed with magic weapons plundered from Nalethra's cairn. After the tunnels were sealed, the tribe began

scouting in the Underdark for a regular food source. Their explorations led them into the territory held by the illithids of Ch'Chitl. After a few initial skirmishes, the two groups forged a pact that allows the kobolds to retain their independence in exchange for acting as aboveground spies for the mind flayers. For their part of the bargain, the illithids used their psionics to carve new tunnels leading from the caverns beneath the tor to the surface, far from the watchful eyes of the Waterdeep guard. But since the illithids have "gifted" the leaders of the tribe with various illithid grafts (FF) over the years, Kuthil's followers are unlikely to escape the status of thralls for much longer.

## RASSALANTAR

The hamlet of Rassalantar is a caravan watering stop, but the ever-present fog and the nearby Stump Bog make it an unpleasant off-road campsite. The settlement consists of half a dozen walled farms, centered on a spring-fed pond that drains into a stream to the east. This waterway eventually empties into the Stump Bog.

A bridge spans the stream just a pace or two north of the Sleeping Dragon Inn, which stands across the road to the east of the pond. The innkeeper, Thrun "Spider" Samallahan, is a close friend of Durnan of Waterdeep (CoS.W), and rumor has it that one of the girls working at Thrun's inn is actually a gold dragon in human shape. Thrun scoffs at this tale, but it never goes away for long.

The remnants of an old cellar serve as the inn's midden heap. Unbeknownst to most, a sealed archway in the cellar wall is actually a keyed two-way *portal* leading to the cellars of Mirt's Mansion (C52) in Waterdeep.

Rassalantar is currently under Waterdeep's protection. Sixty guards, quartered in barracks just off the road behind the Sleeping Dragon Inn, patrol the Long Road from the gates of Waterdeep to a cairn a half-day's ride north of Amphail Village. They rotate back to duty in Castle Waterdeep once a month.

**Rassalantar (Hamlet):** Conventional; AL LN; 100 gp limit; Assets 1,000 gp; Population 200; Mixed (humans 128, shield dwarves 20, elves [all types] 20, lightfoot halflings 10, half-elves 10, gnomes [all types] 6, half-orcs 4, others 2).

*Authority Figures:* Civialar Gheldarm Tassor (LN male Tethyrian fighter 6), Armar Blaskos Ulraven (LN male Chondathan fighter 4), and Armar Timmer Longschal (LN male Tethyrian fighter 4).

*Important Characters:* Yamid Osterim (LE male Chondathan human fighter 5, merchant and Zhentari captain), Thrun "Spider" Samallahan (CG male Tethyrian human commoner 5, innkeeper of the Sleeping Dragon Inn).

The other citizens of Rassalantar are too numerous to enumerate here.

*Notable Exports:* Agricultural produce.

### RASSALANTAR'S KEEP

An age ago, the warrior Rassalantar built a keep just west of the present settlement. The ancient structure now lies in ruins, cloaked by a narrow, dense strip of gnarled trees known as Keep Woods. Visiting tramps, doppelgangers, and less savory monsters often take shelter in the ruins for periods of time.

## SARCRAG (32)

This small, jutting crag of bare rock provides a perfect natural lookout. On a clear day, some 60 miles of territory is visible from here, and on clear nights, campfires can be seen 90 miles off to the north

or east. Sarcrag also serves as a warning beacon for Waterdeep. From its heights, northern patrols can signal the approach of attackers.

Sarcrag is said to be haunted by "the Howler," a bansheelike creature that is never around when adventurers come seeking it, but always seems to attack the weak or unwary. Leucrottas are also a persistent problem in the area, and their presence is the main reason that guards from Waterdeep and Goldenfields patrol the road north as far as the trail that heads east to Ironford.

According to popular legend, some bandits once buried a fabulous treasure at the foot of Sarcrag. Historical records verify that an armed force escorting the person and regalia of King Jasur of Tethyr was ambushed by bandits just north of Waterdeep in the Year of the Ormserpent (1295 DR). Waterdeep's armies tracked down the bandits, surrounded their position, and slaughtered them the very next morning, but they were too late to save the king. Jasur's body was found stripped of its orb, scepter, bejeweled crown, and sword of state.

The fate of the royal treasures remains unknown to this day. The soldiers of Waterdeep's guard swore that no one could have escaped through their lines because their mages had been casting divination spells all night to prevent magical escapes or attacks. Likewise, Waterdeep's air cavalry had searched for any escaping marauders from griffonback, but to no avail. Many hopefuls have since continued the search for King Jasur's treasure, but to date none have found the lost riches.

## STUMP BOG (33)

This vast, sprawling bog is named for the numerous rotting stumps that rise from its still, green waters like blackened teeth. Algae-covered, muddy waters drain into this marsh from the River Dessarin, just south of Goldenfields. Since the trees here were cut by enterprising woodcutters centuries ago, frog-fisherman, outlaws, and Waterdhavian ne'er-do-wells have been the only humans to enter this bog. Over the years, these waters have embraced the corpses of countless orcs from the Black Claw horde, as well as numerous bodies dumped here by agents of Waterdhavian noble families seeking to dispose of their political enemies. Many wounded victims of the region's outlaws have gotten lost in the Stump Bog and met their deaths by falling into the sticky morass and drowning.

In addition to small bands of outlaws, the Stump Bog is home to many unpleasant creatures, ranging from swarms of common leeches and slugs to their larger and more exotic cousins. In addition, will-o'-wisps, mudmen, and undead creatures haunt the deeper reaches of the bog, emerging only at night to hunt in the surrounding region.

## MERE OF DEAD MEN (50)

This vast salt swamp stretches along the Sword Coast west of the Sword Mountains. Seldom visited by civilized races, this desolate, insect-ridden place is home to many fell creatures. The mere gained its name from an incident involving the armies of Phalorm, Uthtower, and the Horde of the Wastes. After the King of Uthtower beseeched the realm's former mage royal to save his kingdom from the orcs the lich Iniavv caused the sea to rise up and flood the whole area, drowning all three armies, as well as the folk of the realm.

Travelers along the High Road often undertake grueling, continuous hikes spanning three days and nights just to avoid camping near the Mere of Dead Men. During the night hours, will-o'-wisps bob over the mere along this stretch of the High Road. Legends speak of floating islands in the midst of the mere and of lizardfolk commanded by liches, as well as darktentacles (MM2) of gargantuan proportions, doppelgangers, yuan-ti slavers, temples to inhuman gods, giant leeches (TFaT) with bullywug riders, and the great black dragon Voaraghamanthar. (Unbeknownst to all, Voaraghamanthar has an identical twin named Waervaerendor, and the two wyrms are both CE male adult black dragons.) The flooded remains of several rich castles and manor houses also jut up from the mere, with only their uppermost spires and battlements showing above the dark, still waters. These sites include Castle Naerytar, Holk House, Mornhaven Towers, and Wolfhill House.

## Northern Coast

The rocky uplands north of Waterdeep are owned by various Waterdhavian noble families and held by crofters in their employ. Although a few hardscrabble fields dot the landscape, this region is used primarily for grazing large flocks of sheep and herds of goats. Communities in this area tend to be very small, and each is home to just a handful of families. Although the guard keeps the monsters that come down from the Sword Mountains and the Mere of Dead Men in check, a dragon could wing in from the sea at any time to grab a quick snack.

### circle of the deepening moon (34)

This ancient circle of moss-covered standing stones is believed to date back more than two centuries to the wan days of Ardeep. At one time, the boughs of Ardeep Forest sheltered the circle, but now the stones stand exposed atop a gently sloped, grass-covered hill.

The only magic still within these stones is a keyed, one-way, variable *portal* leading to a random location within the underground forest known as Willowwood on the fourth level of Undermountain. The *portal* can be activated by stepping inside the circle while the clouds cast a shadow over them.

### Thornhold (35)

The fortress known as Thornhold lies west of the High Road along the coast, just south of the Mere of Dead Men. This gray stone edifice is set against and near the top of a hill that sweeps up high before descending in a sheer drop to the sea. A thick wall with a curving sweep surrounds the two tall towers of the central keep.

The fortress is devoid of adornment, and its plain walls are broken only by narrow arrow slits and evenly spaced, wood-shuttered crenellations atop the walls. Inside the wall, clustered around the bailey, are numerous small, wood-and-plaster buildings used for holding animals, brewing beer, smithwork, laundry, repairing wagons, and making candles.

Thornhold was the keep of a petty warlord named Brunyundar Margaster until the paladin Samular Caradoon and his followers seized it in the aftermath of the Second Troll War. Although the Holy Order of the Knights of Samular maintained it as a chapterhouse for many years, the fortress of Thornhold remained the personal property of the Caradoon family, as recorded in deed at the

Herald's Holdfast. After the death of Hronrulf of Tyr in the Year of the Banner (1368 DR), the fortress briefly fell into the hands of the Zhentarim. But Hronrulf's daughter, Bronwyn Caradoon, reclaimed the stronghold with the aid of the *rings of Samular* and the artifact known as *Kezefbane*. Instead of returning tenancy to the Knights of Samular, however, Bronwyn allowed the shield dwarves of the Stoneshift clan to occupy Thornhold. Clan Stoneshift continues to operate the formidable redoubt to this day as a merchant stopover—the last along the High Road before the dangerous dash past the Mere of Dead Men.

### red rocks and redcliffs (36, 37)

The coast north of Waterdeep rises to a height of nearly 200 feet above sea level before drifting down to the lower elevations of the Mere of Dead Men. The cliffs along this stretch of coast are known as the RedCliffs for the distinctive hue they assume in the light of the setting sun.

Off the coast are thousands of tiny islets known collectively as the Red Rocks. Most of these landforms are sea stacks carved by the relentless waves of the Sea of Swords, but some are little more than boulders peeking up above the waves. The Red Rocks have sunk countless ships over the centuries, so sailors tend to give the area a wide berth. Fishermen frequent these waters, however, since they are home to an endless variety of fish and shellfish, many of which are highly prized by the diners of Waterdeep.

Many dangerous predators—including several shrieks of harpies and a few swoops of perytons—also dwell in the Red Rocks. In recent years, fisherman have had to avoid the northern Red Rocks altogether because the area has become the hunting grounds of a manticore allied with a pack of seawolves.

### Alsapir's Rock (38)

Alsapir's Rock was named for a long-ago fisherman who died when his boat was dashed apart against it during a storm. The tiny island lies off the coast just north of Waterdeep, so close to Mount Sar that it doesn't even appear on most maps and charts.

In the island's western face, the sea has carved a many-armed tide-water cavern that once served as the home of Gaulauntyr (FRCS). Although this complex no longer holds the dragon's fortune in gems, it still contains a captive deepspawn (LEoF), whose offspring can't escape from the caverns thanks to the watery entryway. The monsters this creature births include rothé (FRCS), deer, and boars, plus various other prey animals suitable for Gaulauntyr's appetite. But the cavern lacks any food for these beasts, so now that Gaulauntyr is gone, they regularly starve to death.

### Hall of reflected moonlight (39)

The chapterhouse of the Order of the Blue Moon stands atop a jagged spur of rock amidst the Red Rocks, just north of Waterdeep. The fortress is quite small, capable of holding at most sixty persons, but twenty knights can ably defend it. The islet is linked to the mainland by a rocky sandbar, visible only at low tide, which links up with a narrow trail that eventually joins the High Road.

The Hall of Reflected Moonlight consists of three stout towers linked by a triangle of inner walls and encircled by a roughly oval outer wall. Landbound creatures must approach across the sandbar and climb a series of narrow stone steps carved into the face of the Redcliffs. This staircase bends back and forth and passes through five gates before reaching the lower portions of the structure. Waterborne creatures can approach via a sea cave on the western side that is large enough to dock a small ship. However, the only way into the castle proper is up a narrow shaft that houses a winch-driven elevator.

Before it was claimed by the Order of the Blue Moon, the fortress was known as Black Logan's Keep. According to legend, Black Logan was a contemporary of one of Waterdeep's early warlords, though exactly which one remains unclear. After the two had a falling out, Black Logan fled to his keep, forcing Waterdeep's army to besiege the stronghold for more than a year. The siege ended when Black Logan died of heartstop and his men threw the body over the wall. Angered that Black Logan had escaped justice, the warlord had the body brought back to Waterdeep, put on trial, hung, and then drawn and quartered.

It is said that Black Logan's vengeful ghost still haunts the keep. If the tale is true, the Knights of the Blue Moon must have reached some accommodation with the spirit, since no supernatural strife is apparent to visitors.

## Southern Coast

South of Waterdeep, the coast slopes down to the sea via a maze of gullies carved by countless tiny streams. Although the region is frequently lashed by fierce tempests blown in from the Sea of Storms, scrubby trees peek up from sheltered ravines here and there. The shore is marshy only near the outflow of the Selpir, and the only beach of note has been transformed into the Rat Hills.

## Byndraeth Estate (40)

This sprawling, stone villa lies within a wooded copse some 5 miles east of Waterdeep's South Gate. Originally owned by the crimelord Carril Byndraeth, the estate passed to his wife Brianne (Co&W) after his murder. Although Brianne spends the bulk of her days in her personal tower in the city (N75), she returns to the Byndraeth Estate at least once every tenday to rest and think.

Since Carril's death, the Byndraeth Estate has been the target of repeated theft attempts. Rumors speak of a vast fortune in gems and magic accumulated by the crimelord during his lifetime and hidden so well that even his widow cannot find it. Whether such stories are true or not, they do serve a purpose by allowing Brianne to observe Waterdeep's most skillful rogues in action.

## Roaring Dragon House (41)

Located just 1 1/2 miles south and east of the South Gate and surrounded by a stout stone wall is the Roaring Dragon House—Waterdeep's newest gambling den. Built to allow gambling, brawling, and beast fights outside the reach of the watch, the Roaring Dragon offers no food, no rooms, and a menu of overpriced drinks. Even so, however, it does not lack for excitement during the nighttime hours. The Harbright family owns both the High Flagon Gambling House (\$76) and the Roaring Dragon House.

## Zundbridge (42)

Named for its creator, the wizard Zund, this squat, massive stone bridge spans the River Dessarin, extending the main caravan road south from Waterdeep toward Amn and the Caravan Cities of the Western Heartlands. Zundbridge has held firmly for nearly a century, even through the roaring spring floods of the Dessarin, without requiring any repairs.

Waterdeep's forces patrol the road as far as Zundbridge and maintain a guardpost there—a double-walled castle situated on a rocky outcropping above the river gorge just southeast of Waterdeep. The inner wall protects the garrison buildings, and the outer wall encircles a vast field where caravans can rest while their wares are inspected by Waterdhavian customs officers. In fact, most trading costers own permanent "yards" here for their caravans. Also within this outer bailey is the Red Rune Inn, whose kitchen staff is rumored to make the finest shalass stew in all Faerûn. The outer bailey's north gate opens onto a drawbridge controlled from within the gate towers. "Judge" Kazardun, a former mercenary (LG male shield dwarf fighter 8) commands the guard here. The post is also equipped with a flight of three griffon steeds to give Waterdeep advance warning of any important visiting delegation or attacking force.

The other purpose of this guardpost is to stop adventurers who come in search of a stone golem said to have been used by Zund in the construction of the bridge. According to legend, the golem was left at the bridge upon Zund's death, and it can be taken by any who can divine or stumble upon the secrets of commanding it. Over the years, many such seekers have dug around the bridge's moorings on both banks, swum beneath the span, and even tried to pry stones out of the arches. The commanders of Waterdeep's guard fear that if the bridge were left unguarded, these zealous, would-be golem owners would soon demolish it.

Unbeknownst to most golem-seekers, one of the arches beneath the bridge is actually the terminus of a two-way keyed portal from the city of Nagarr (shown on some maps as Kagarra) in Sespech on the Nagawater (SK). The Zundbridge golem disappeared through Kiouthun's portal long ago and is now an overlooked piece of statuary standing in a park in Kagarra.

## Rat Hills (44)

This area was once a barren, windswept pebble beach, with crashing waves that rolled endlessly in the shallows. For almost a mile out to sea, the seabed lies 5 or fewer feet from the surface of the water. In older days, ships used to beach here for repairs, and lumber barges pulled up at this spot for loading. But as Waterdeep became rich enough to suffer raids, its people began to see this easy landing place as a danger to their safety—and a free alternative to Waterdeep's harbor.

A rough shantytown came into being here in the Year of the Groaning Cart (1267 DR), and the Shadow Thieves quickly moved to control it. Upon their restoration to power, the Lords saw the danger and acted swiftly, calling the guard out in force in the Year of the Wagon (1273 DR). They drove out the inhabitants of "the Beach," as the area was known, slaughtering those who resisted and setting fire to all that would burn. The guards then camped on the spot until the fires had died down and used fortified patrols to keep the area clear. Under their protection, Waterdeep's citizens began to bring their garbage to this area in wagonloads—a task performed today by the Dungsweepers' Guild—rather than burning it directly outside the city walls. Within a few years, the accumulated garbage piles became known as the Rat Hills—a name that is still in common usage. At

their largest, the Rat Hills covered an area almost 4 miles in length and up to a mile in width. But in the Year of the Shield (1367 DR), the Rat Hills Conflagration reduced the size of the hills by half and drove out many of the previous inhabitants.

As the name suggests, these tangled hills of refuse are infested with rats. Scrub trees and gnarled creepers climb everywhere, rooting in the rotting garbage and the bits of soil that have accumulated on the heaps. The reek is indescribable and foils all attempts to track by scent or to smell anything but the strongest perfume. The monsters living in the hills make it too dangerous for the dungsweepers to carry garbage into the interior, so fresh garbage is simply piled at the outer edge of the hills daily, resulting in a net growth of almost half an acre per year. Even with many of the bolder creatures scattered by the fires, the Rat Hills remain a dangerous place for humanoids and a relatively safe haven for numerous monsters.

The guard patrols the nearby trade road and protects the daily convoy of Dungsweepers' Guild garbage wagons but otherwise leaves the Rat Hills alone, allowing them to grow at their own pace. Efforts to bolster the guard presence near the Rat Hills have slowly faded because Waterdeep's guard is stretched too thin to keep a close eye on the situation.

Commonly encountered monsters in the Rat Hills include rat swarms and all manner of individual rats and dire rats, plus kobolds, lacedons, lizardfolk, nyths (MoF), wererats (CoS:W) of the Plague Rats, will-o'-wisps, and various forms of undead. Rarer monsters sometimes seen within the region include advanced otyughs, beholders, catoblepas, doppelgangers, gulughydras (MoF) leucrottas (CoS:W), shambling mounds, and independent wererats. The Rat Hills Conflagration drove most of the doppelgangers of the Unseen (CoS:W) out of the Rat Hills and into the city.

### THE RAT'S MAW

Somewhere within the Rat Hills, buried beneath a hill of noxious garbage, is a small temple of Talona operated by the Plague Rats. The Rat's Maw, as it is called, consists of a warren of twisting tunnels carved through the garbage connecting a handful of larger "rooms" that serve as nests for the resident rats. At the heart of the hill is a rectangular room with stone walls. This former basement, dug for

"the Beach" prior to its destruction, serves as the temple's main shrine. Sacrifices to the Mother of All Plagues involve infecting a victim with as many diseases as possible and then keeping him just barely alive and in excruciating torment for as long as possible.

### The selpir (43)

This slow, quiet creek drains Ardeep River and South Ardeep River south of Zundbridge. Lizardfolk occasionally lurk in the mouth of its marshy source, but the merfolk who congregate in this area have largely driven the reptilian humanoids from the Selpir Marsh.

Over the centuries, the waters of the Selpir have breached many of ancient Ardeep's tombs. Overgrown and forgotten even by the Fair Folk and the Stout Folk, these tombs have yielded their smaller riches to the relentless water. Patient searchers can sometimes find such treasures in the streambed, but most of the more valuable treasures are still trapped in the now-submerged tombs.

## SWORD MOUNTAINS

North of Waterdeep, the Sword Mountains march north toward the Neverwinter Woods. Although not militarily significant, this range shields the Dessarin river valley and the High Forest from the worst of the storms that blow in from the Trackless Sea. The western flanks of the range are home to orcs, bugbears, kobolds, leucrottas (CoS:W), and other dangerous creatures. Self-styled bandit lords, such as Amalkyn the Black and the wizard Helduth Flamespell, have long-established holds in the region. The southern peaks are home to stone giants and more fearsome menaces, as well as sylphs on the high ledges and peaks. The Sword Mountains are littered with ruins dating back to the orcish empire of Uruth Ukryst and the dwarf and gnome clanholds that preceded it.

### Hall of whirling blades (45)

The Hall of Whirling Blades is a fallen temple of Haela Brightaxe that was dug into the foothills of the southeastern Sword Mountains, just west of Amphail. Now occupied by the Sixblade Orc

## Tainted dangers

Contact with the disease-ridden garbage in the Rat Hills requires a DC 12 Fortitude save to avoid contracting the malady known as darkrot. Exposure may consist of immersion in or excessive contact with the dark, evil-smelling water of the Rat Hills (be it rainwater pools in the interior or the water of the coastal shallows), contact with the garbage on dry land, or eating the meat of a creature inhabiting the region. A saving throw must be made once for each such contact, or once per minute of prolonged contact, such as swimming in the shallows, bathing in a pool, or climbing atop a pile of garbage. If the garbage is excessively disturbed (by digging, explosive spell-casting fire, or a violent physical fight), every creature in the vicinity must make an extra, immediate save for each such disturbance.

Furthermore, a creature must make a DC 16 Fortitude save each time it ingests the water in the Rat Hills to avoid contracting blinding sickness. Dilution with clean water or wine grants a +5 circumstance bonus on the save, and boiling it grants a +10 circumstance

bonus. Eating the meat of a creature inhabiting the region requires a DC 16 Fortitude save to avoid contracting this disease, but cooking the meat first provides a +10 circumstance bonus.

Because of the countless insects swarming in the fetid air above the garbage and stagnant pools, every creature in the Rat Hills has a 5% chance per minute of being bitten by a disease-carrying bug (DC 12 Fortitude save to avoid contracting filth fever). Anyone injured while in the Rat Hills must also make the same saving throw.

Creatures that inhabit the Rat Hills are immune to blinding sickness, darkrot, and filth fever.

**Darkrot:** Your breathing becomes labored and takes on a hissing sound, and large, black patches form on your skin. You remain contagious until cured.

*Infection:* Contact; DC 12; *Incubation:* 1d2 days; *Damage:* 1d2 Str, 1d2 Con.

Tribe, the Hall of Whirling Blades is famed for six separate *blade barriers* that come into being, one after the other, using the cached blades of the temple as whirling weapons.

## INIARY'S TOWER

Iniary was a mighty archmage of ancient Uthtower who became a demilich in undeath. Some say he still guards the ruins and his subterranean spell libraries. Many, however, believe he was destroyed decades ago by an adventuring band known as the Company of the Howling Wolf. In recent years, the Knights of Samular established an outpost here, but it was abandoned after the paladins were set upon by Voaraghananthal and his twin (see Mere of Dead Men, above).

## MOUNT ARADDYN

Located just north of Mount Sar, Mount Araddyn is easily accessible only from the High Road.

### OLOTHONTOR'S LAIR (46)

Olothontor the Minstrel Wyrm (LE male very old blue dragon) dwells on the western flank of Mount Araddyn, high above the High Road. His lair lies behind the ruins of an old stone mansion originally built for the brother titans Endrigul and Roevrynn Taluth, and later taken over by the self-styled Gnome King Karlus "Goldgoblet" Dlinshoulder as the seat of his court. In the wake of repeated orc raids, the place was abandoned. The rear rooms of the mansion are now open to the sky, allowing the Minstrel Wyrm to fly in and out. A cavern in the cliff face behind the mansion leads into the dragon's lair, which lies on the far side of a deep chasm heated by a volcanic flow. Olothontor is entranced by music, and he demands regular visits by traveling bards, from whom he commands repeat performances.

## MOUNT HELIMBRAR

Mount Helimbrar, the southernmost peak of the Sword Mountains, was named for one of two great fomorian giants who lived in the southern Sword Mountains before they were slain by an early warlord of Waterdeep. Mount Sar, the second most southern peak, was named for Helimbrar's twin.

### MARUNE'S STRONGHOLD (47)

The infamous necromancer who seeks to rebuild the Shadow Thieves Guild in Waterdeep has laired for more than three decades beneath the base of Mount Helimbrar, undiscovered by Waterdeep's city guard. Although he spends the bulk of his time in the City of Splendors, Marune still returns to his longstanding lair from time to time, usually to craft new magic items or research new spells. The lair is always well defended by a variety of undead, and the spell trigger traps that Marune has placed there summon all manner of monsters to battle intruders.

## MOUNT SAR

Mount Sar, the second most southern peak of the Sword Mountains, was named for one of two great fomorian giants who lived in the southern Sword Mountains before they were slain by an early warlord of Waterdeep. Mount Helimbrar, the southernmost peak, was named for Sar's twin.

## HESPHEIRA (48)

Centuries ago, the village of Hespheira lay in the shadows of Mount Sar, but in the Year of Lathander's Light (1024 DR), unknown magics shifted the village and all its inhabitants to the Plane of Shadow. Many villagers were rescued by the paladin Dahaerlin of the Burning Brand and the Brotherhood of Light after fierce battles with a powerful shadow dracolich named Umbralax, who dwelt in one of that plane's mysterious Darklands. The fact that Dahaerlin never returned leads many to believe that he won the group's escape at the cost of his own life.

In the Year of the Shadowkin Return (1136 DR), the ruined village of Hespheira returned to Faerûn, wrapped in a cloaking cloud of blackness. Shadowy, wraithlike creatures began attacking inhabitants of the surrounding region, drawing out the Knights of the Aster. In the shadows of the village, members of the order battled Umbralax and the wraiths. But although the shadowy invaders were destroyed at great cost, thanks to the magic of the *rod of Lathander* (CoS:W), the dracolich's phylactery was never found.

In the years since the Battle of Hespheira, isolated reports of disappearances in the region have come to light, leading some to speculate that a *portal* to the Plane of Shadow remains active in the area. Some claim that the shadowy village still periodically returns to Faerûn, but if so, it has never returned long enough to threaten the surrounding region.

## MELAIRRIN

High on the slopes of Mount Sar lies a warren of caves leading deep into the mountain's heart. Gulyaikin Dzrund, "the Mad Dwarf," dwelt therein nearly nine decades ago, and some believe that he lives there still. Gulyaikin was noted for fits of berserk glee during which he delighted in killing all sorts of passersby by rolling large rocks onto the High Road below and catapulting boulders at fishing boats offshore.

The warren of caves is now home to Harshnag the Grim (CoS:W), a frost giant and member of the Gray Hands. Harshnag's caves are linked to Blackstaff Tower (C6) via a large-sized, two-way, keyed *portal*.

The deepest caves of Harshnag's lair lead down to a dwarf-built citadel in the heart of the mountain. Once known as Melairrin, the complex fell to the orcs of Uruth Ukryst early in the history of that realm, giving them a secure base from which to dominate the southern Sword Mountains. In the Year of the Dracorage (1018 DR), the caverns of Melairrin were taken over by a black wyrm named Shammagar, who claimed it as his lair. The black dragon dwelt therein for several centuries before Asilther Graelor (CG female half-wood elf rogue 9), longtime companion of Mintiper Moonsilver, stole much of his hoard. Fearing further thefts, Shammagar abandoned Melairrin and relocated to an offshore island.

The caverns of Melairrin still retain traces of their various owners, but they are now home to a wide variety of monsters that have crept up from the depths below. Harshnag reports encountering small bands of half-black dragons of orcish ancestry from time to time, suggesting that Shammagar's progeny may still dwell below. Older reports speak of a vampire lairing in the depths and a one-way *portal* linking the Sundered Throne (UM L1) to the dragon's lair in the depths of Melairrin. The vampire Rorrina, dual, (daughter) of Tuvala of Clan Stoneshift (CE female vampire [augmented shield dwarf] cleric 10 of Abbathor), does indeed exist and is a servitor of Artor Morlin (CoS:W and Dungeon #126-127).

## NASAQH ESTATES (49)

East of the High Road, in the valley between Mount Sar and Mount Helimbrar, lie the Nasaqh Estates. Four generations of Nasaqh lords have ruled this valley, but the current Lord Nasaqh (LN male Illuskan human aristocrat 9) may be the last of his line, considering that he is growing older and has not yet produced an heir. The Nasaqh holdings are known for producing "seawine," a potent liqueur popular among Waterdeep's merchant elite.

Within the holdings of Lord Nasaqh lies the Agrivar estate. Consisting of more than 100 acres of fertile fields, old woodlands, and a stone manor house set on a rise overlooking the land, the Agrivar estate is held in trust for Priam Agrivar (LG male Illuskan human paladin 10 of Tyr), a noted adventurer and part of the crew of Dwalimar Omen's *Realms Master*.

## About the Author

Eric L. Boyd has been a fan of the Forgotten Realms product line since the first time Elminster graced the pages of DRAGON magazine. When he's not playing the role of software development manager or dad, Eric enjoys writing about Faerûn late into the night and knitting together obscure bits of Realmslore. Eric has written or coauthored nearly a dozen books about Faerûn and contributed to many more. His most recent credits include *Faiths and Pantheons*, *Races of Faerûn*, *Serpent Kingdoms*, *Champions of Ruin*, and *City of Splendors: Waterdeep*.