A Nentir Vale Gazetteer

A fan guide to the Nentir Vale setting.

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# Introduction

The Nentir Vale was the default setting of D&D 4th edition, created as a starting point for DMs wanted to create their own homebrew world, with just enough fluff to justify the existence of everything within 4th edition (i.e., races, classes, monsters, gods, planes, etc.) without any meta-plot baggage to tie experienced DMs down or confuse new DMs who may have never read campaign books or novels detailing the Forgotten Realms, Dragonlance, Eberron, Greyhawk, or one of the myriad other D&D settings. Many of the details of the Nentir Vale were left intentionally mysterious and vague, leaving tons of room for the DM to world build, filling in the blanks with their own ideas.

The Nentir Vale is a setting where you’ll find small, isolated “points of light” surrounded by the darkness of the untamed wild. The centers of civilization are few and far between, and the world isn’t carved up between nations that jealously enforce their borders. Roads are often closed by bandits, dangerous demihumans, wild animals, or monsters. The common folk of the world look upon the wild lands with dread. Few people are widely traveled—even the most ambitious merchant is careful to stick to better-known, secure roads. In such a world, adventurers are aberrant. Commoners view them as brave at best and insane at worst. But such a world is rife with the possibility for adventure, and no true hero will ever lack for a villain to vanquish or a quest to pursue.

**What do you need to use this Gazetteer?**

All you’ll need to play a campaign in the Nentir Vale using this Gazetteer is the *Dungeon Master’s Guide*, the *Player’s Handbook*, and the *Monster Manual* books of the D&D edition of your liking.

Other official D&D products that may enhance your experience include:

* Monster Vault: Threats to the Nentir Vale (a sandbox book)
* Starter Set (Red Box) – Twisting Halls (adventure)
* Dungeon Master’s Kit – Reavers of Harkenwold (adventure)
* Monster Vault – Cairn of the Winter King (adventure).
* Keep on the Shadowfell (adventure —)
* Thunderspire Labyrinth (adventure)
* Pyramid of Shadows (adventure)
* Orcs of Stonefang Pass (adventure)
* Madness at Gardmore Abbey (strongly recommended adventure)
* Hammerfast: A Dwarven Outpost Adventure Site (a mini-campaign setting providing full information about the city of Hammerfast)
* Vor Rukoth: An Ancient Ruins Adventure Site (a mini-campaign setting providing full information about an ancient ruined city to the south of the Nentir Vale)
* Into the Unknown: The Dungeon Survival Handbook (it provides information about the Underdark below the Nentir Vale)

hile this gazetteer is edition neutral, the Nentir Vale was created as the core world of D&D 4th edition, and some elements of that edition (such as certain races, planes, etc.) are intrinsically tied with its history and theme. While many of these features were included in the D&D 5th edition rules, making easy for any DM to run a Nentir Vale campaign using those rules without too much work, if you’re using earlier editions rules, you have to adapt those features to the system you’re using.

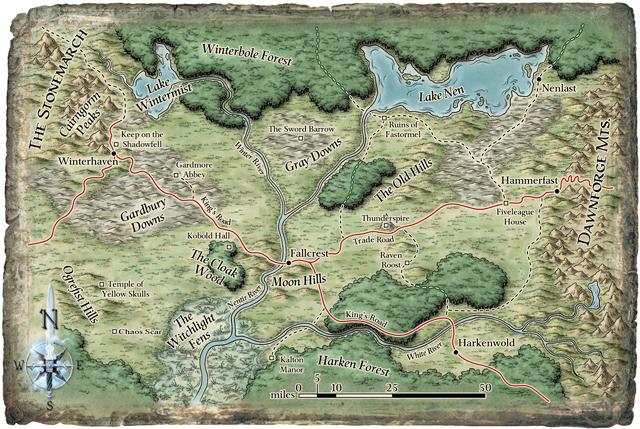
## Credits:

Thanks to Wizards of the Coast for distributing the Dungeons & Dragons game, for creating the Nentir Vale setting in the 4th edition era. If you like this fan-work, please support D&D by purchasing its official products.

Many thanks as well to the people in The Piazza forums, for encouraging me to this Gazetteer despite my terrible English to the people of tribality.com, for the useful information I’ve found their website. Special thanks to Tim Baker of The Piazza for helping me with the proofreading.

And last but not least, special thanks to those DMs I don’t know, but created useful wikis or websites about their campaigns in the Nentir Vale, as some of that information was also used for the creation of this Gazetteer.

# The Nentir Vale

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When the human empire of Nerath was at its height, about three hundred years ago, the Nentir Vale stood as the northernmost extension of that great realm. Would-be settlers navigated the Nentir River through a trackless swamp or forged their way through a thick forest that separated this area from the rest of Nerath. At the end of their journey, they came upon a pocket of rolling grassland and light woods more than a hundred miles wide and ringed by mountains and forests—a frontier area that held both promise and peril for those who braved it.

Several settlements sprang up in the area. between these outposts of civilization turned into well-traveled roads, and most of the towns flourished over the next two hundred years or so.

Then, nearly a century ago, chaos and ruin came to the Nentir Vale when an orc horde called Clan Bloodspear swarmed down out of the mountains to the northwest. By this time, the empire of Nerath had crumbled, and the hardy souls of the ale no help from the south. Before the Bloodspear War was over, much of the Nentir Vale had been ravaged. When the orcs finally withdrew, they left behind a broken and battered land.

The Vale is now mostly empty, with a handful of living villages and towns scattered over a wide area of roughly twenty five hundred square miles. Abandoned farmsteads, ruined manors, and broken keeps litter the countryside, remnants of the fallen empire and even older civilizations that came before. Bandits, wild animals, and monsters roam freely throughout the ale, threatening anyone who fares more than a few leagues away from one of the surviving settlements. Travel along the roads or rivers is usually safe—usually, but every now and then travelers come to bad ends between the towns.

# Geography of the Nentir Vale:

The majority of the Vale is large stretches of open meadowland, copses of light forest, gently rolling hills, and the occasional thicket of dense woodland and heavy undergrowth. The downs are hilly grassland, with little tree cover. They are steeper and more rugged, and include light forest in the valleys and saddles between the hilltops. While the Nentir Vale is a northern land, it sees relatively little snow—winters are windy and bitterly cold, and the Nentir River is too big to freeze except for a few weeks in the coldest part of the year. Summers are cool and mild.

### The Cairngorm Peaks:

This small mountain range provides a sheltering barrier between the Nentir Vale and the savage monsters of the Stonemarch. Kobolds and goblins infest the eastern part of the mountains, enjoying the same protection from the more terrible monsters of the western reaches.

Perhaps most significantly, the green dragon Vestapalk makes his lair in these crags, and the kobolds of the Greenscale tribe hunt the foothills and the neighboring terrain under the dragon's aegis. The kobolds know enough to stay out of the high mountains, which are the domain of the fearsome perytons and the bizarre aberrations known as mooncalves.

The denizens of the Cairngorm Peaks will be the first to know if—most would say when—the orcs of Clan Bloodspear decide to emerge from the Stonemarch and again brutalize the Nentir Vale.

* **Keep on the Shadowfell:** Long ago, soldiers from Nerath built a strong fortress over a rift leading to the Shadowfell, near the town of Winterhaven, hoping to prevent shadowy horrors from entering the world. The old keep lies in ruins now, and a new generation of cultists has secretly taken up residence here. They seek to undo the magical wards sealing the Shadowfell rift.
* **Sunderpeak Temple:** Located in the northern mountain of the Cairngorms, this temple was dedicated to the gods of good, constructed with the purpose of safeguard a powerful artifact. However, a black dragon named Blightborn attacked Sunderpeak Temple at the head of a small army. Blightborn claimed the ruined temple as his lair, and has been digging in with its remaining servants ever since.
* **The Iron Gauntlet’s hideout:** The headquarters of a band of hobgoblins mercenaries and slavers, located in a mine on one of the southern mountains of the Cairngorms.
* **The Miser's Pit:** A mad dwarf named Goldrun Coinkeeper discovered this deep shaft hidden in the Cairngorm Peaks. A narrow stair at the edge of the shaft descends at least 500 feet through the earth, leading eventually into the vast expanse of the Underdark.
* **Winterhaven:** Hard under the Cairngorms at the west end of the Nentir Vale lies the remote village of Winterhaven, surrounded by a few miles of farmland and pastures.

### The Chaos Scar:

A long, wide valley between the Ogrefist Hills and the Witchlight Fens, the Chaos Scar was carved by the fall of a massive meteor—in truth, a cosmic horror from the Far Realm—400 years ago. The arrival of this fallen star was fraught with ill omen, and the place now seems a dark magnet for all that is evil, drawing horrific monsters and people of malign character to make their homes in the valley. Rulers have tried to contain the threat of the Chaos Scar in the past, with little to no success. A long-forgotten king erected a wall, now known as the King’s Wall, across the valley's mouth. It still stands, partly in ruins, its gates open and unguarded.

The Chaos Scar itself is death to most who wander in. It is filled with evil and riddled with caves both natural and tunneled by generations of monstrous denizens. The weakest settle near the mouth of the valley and the plain beyond, while the strongest lair closer to the valley’s terminus. Strange features have been raised, or have simply appeared, within the Scar—circles of standing stones, bizarre towers, grotesque cottages, and other more otherworldly features.

* **Hallowgaunt:** This keep, built around the meteor in the heart of the Scar, is crowned by a perpetual storm of black clouds and crackling lightning. It’s the headquarters of the mysterious Brotherhood of the Scar, a group of worshipers of Bane that rule over the valley without opposition.
* **Restwell Keep:** Also known as the Keep on the Borderlands, this citadel just outside the King’s Wall has kept a sentinel’s post over the Chaos Scar for 400 years.
* **Wenly Halt**: A small village that has endured on the edge of the Chaos Scar, just outside the southern edge of the King’s Wall.

### The Cloak Wood:

This small forest to the west of Fallcrest is infested with several tribes of kobolds, the most prominent of them being the Skull Kickers tribe. A young white dragon named Szartharrax also lives in the forest, enjoying the adulation of the tiny pests.

* **Kobold Hall:** The wreck now known locally as Kobold Hall was once the estate of a minor lord who came to the Nentir Vale to establish his own demesne. Ruined during the Bloodspear War, the old castle has been abandoned for almost a century and kobolds now lurk in its depths.
* **Vanamere’s Tower:** The ruined tower of the elf wizard Vanamere stands alone at the southern reach of the Cloak Wood.

### The Dawnforge Mountains:

Named for the legendary mountain at the eastern edge of the world where Moradin is said to have crafted the sun, the Dawnforge Mountains define the eastern boundary of the Nentir Vale. Beyond the mountains, the land grows quickly wilder, for only a few settlements were ever established that far from Nerath's capital and even fewer have lasted to the present day.

The foothills to the east of the mountains are infested with trolls, hill giants, ogres, goblins, and orcs—most of them members of the Weeping Skull tribe—making trade with those remaining towns dangerous and difficult. In the aftermath of the Bloodspears' invasion, these monsters have grown bolder and more aggressive. Several bands of goliaths range throughout the mountains as well. Most of the time, these goliaths wander above the tree line to keep clear of monsters and travelers. Apart from the dangers of bandits and monsters, the rough terrain, perilous slopes, and bitter cold of the mountains present equally deadly threats.

These mountains also hide dragons—foremost among them the three-headed monstrosity that calls herself Calastryx. The dragon is slumbering, still affected by a curse placed on her centuries ago, but fears are growing stronger that her reemergence is near. Like Vestapalk far to the west, she too has a tribe of kobolds that are fanatically subservient to her. The Emberdark kobolds can hardly wait till Calastryx wakes up, and they actively work to make that happen.

* **Castle Inverness:** A ruined castle in the southern slopes of the Dawnforges.The four outer towers of Castle Inverness still stand above its ruins. They lean at different angles like tombstones guarding neglected graves, jutting from the ivy-choked rubble that was once the walls of a mighty fortress. Castle Inverness is one of the three infamous "ghost towers" of the Nentir Vale, but unlike the other two, it is not merely a focus for the activities of undead. Even without the appearance of the Ghost Tower, Castle Inverness has long been shunned by the locals. The legends of its tyrannical rise, and of the supernatural perils that remain after its fall, are still the stuff of bard songs and tavern tales.
* **Dawnforge onastery**: A hidden monastery located in the mountains beyond Hammerfast, which serve as the headquarters of a sect of dwarven worshippers of Moradin known as the Kuldar. The Kuldar includes orders of holy warriors such as the elite Hammers of Moradin to the sacred Soulforged knighthood.
* **The Deep Guides' River**: A river that runs from the Dawnforge Mountains and deep into the Underdark, which a loosely confederated group of enterprising adventurers use to ferry people back and forth from the Underdark.
* **Dungeon of the Fire Opal:** The ruins of a monastery stand on the northern slope of one of the Dawnforge Mountains. This was the home of the monks of the Enlightened Flame once, but after they were slain by marauding gnolls, the dungeon was left abandoned until recently. A small group of bandits led by Serlek Undertow currently occupy the dungeon's entry chambers now. Those bandits are members of Carthain's gang, a group of bandits that normally operates in Hammerfast.
* **Dwarven Steads:** There are many minor dwarven towns carved in the mountains of the Dawnforges, some of them connected to the Underdark.
* **Forgepeak:** This massive peak towers over the surrounding mountains. Visible from across the entire Vale, Forgepeak has never been scaled. The red dragon Calastryx slumbers within its lair hidden in Forgepeak. Thar, a dragonborn champion of Gruumsh, seeks to awaken and bind the dragon to the service of his god.
* **Glimmer Peak:** This small settlement is the center for mining in the area south of Hammerfast. Glimmer Peak sits along the shores of Glimmer Lake. Rumors persist that the palace of a fey lord long ago sunk beneath the lake. To this day, fishermen sometimes report vague images of a grand, ruined fortress deep within the water. The stories are true, and the ruins hide kuo-toas, undead eladrin, and fabulous treasures.
* **Hammerfast:** A dwarven hold cut from the rock of a deep vale in the Dawnforge Mountains. Hammerfast is the largest and wealthiest settlement in the region, as well as the only city in the Nentir Vale. The Trade Road runs through the citadel gates and continues eastward beyond the Dawnforge Mountains. The dwarves have to share the town with a tribe of orcs, as part of the divine compact forged between the gods Moradin and Gruumsh. Hammerfast is governed by a council of masters, each the leaders of one of the town’s powerful guilds.
* **Highpeak:** This small fortress cut into the high slopes of a northern mountain is the center of mining operations in the Dawnforge Mountains. The settlement is well stocked with supplies and heavily guarded. A number of mines work veins of gold in the area, although the threat of monsters always looms over the operations. In addition, lone prospectors willing to brave the wilderness scour the land for new finds. The miners of Highpeak eagerly hire adventurers to guard their caravans along the Iron Road or to defend their latest find. The proximity of Stravalla's Tower provides an ever-present threat, and more than one mining expedition has fallen to trolls or werewolves.
* **Lake Dunmere:** This body of water has a number of small fishing villages along its shores. A large manor house and village once stood beside Lake Dunmere, but both were destroyed by the Bloodspear orcs during their invasion. The ruins of the manor and village still stand, as do the cellars beneath them.
* **Rushing River:** Few travelers use the major waterway in the region, because many monsters lurk along its banks and the difficult terrain makes patrols impossible. Bandits are the only beings who risk traveling by river, since it allows them to escape with booty while avoiding guard patrols.
* **Trade Road and Iron Road:** Two roads cross the mountains in this region. Both are kept in good repair by the dwarves, although in winter the constant snows make them nearly impassable. Adventurers can travel along the road at full speed. Although not frequented by monsters that live among the hills, the roads are still a magnet for bandits and other threats.
* **St. Allabat:** A ruined monastery once belonging to a band of knights of Nerath, hidden in the remote mountains of the Dawnforges. The only inhabitant of the temple is an angel, Remliel, who guards a holy relic known as the Sun’s Sliver, the only weapon in the world that can destroy a winter archfey.
* **Stravalla's Tower:** Just south of Mount Starris, a valley cuts a scarlike line through the Dawnforge Mountains. Despite the summer heat or the bitter winter cold, a forest forever thick and lush fills this valley. Travelers smell Summerdown Valley long before they see it, as the blooming flowers cast a perfume on the wind. Despite its appearance, the valley is a place of grave danger. A powerful hag, Queen Stravalla of Winter's Mourning, dwells within this place. In her crystal tower, she surveys the verdant garden that is her realm. Trolls, werewolves, and murderous fey heed her beck and call, and within the ever-verdant forest shamble the animated corpses of those who dared enter her realm. Clad in rusted armor and covered with sickly sweet orchids that grow from their decaying flesh, these sentinels make quick work of those who blunder into Summerdown Valley.

### Gardbury Downs:

The site of Fallcrest's failed attempt to hold back the Bloodspear orcs ninety years ago, Gardbury Downs is said to be haunted by the spirits of the fallen defenders of the Nentir Vale. Remains of that ancient battle litter the Downs—broken swords, shattered armor, and old bones. Travelers on the King's Road rarely see any sign of ghosts, but the folk of Winterhaven know better than to wander out on the Downs at night. Orcs from the Stonemarch also appear in the Gardbury Downs from time to time, circling the Cairngorm Peaks to raid into the Nentir Vale.

* **Gardmore Abbey:** This striking ruin is a large monastery that has lain in ruins for almost one hundred fifty years. The abbey was dedicated to Bahamut and served as the base of a militant order of paladins who won great fame fighting in Nerath's distant crusades. As the story goes, the paladins brought a dark artifact back from a far crusade for safekeeping and evil forces gathered to assault the abbey and take it back. Extensive dungeons lie beneath the ruins, which might still conceal the hoarded wealth of the old crusading paladins.
* **Baron's Hill:** This small town is located on the western end of the Gardbury Downs, along the King’s Road and south of Winterhaven. Recently it has been leeched of all color and is cast in tones of grey.

### Gray Downs:

This area of fog-shrouded low hills serves as the principal headquarters of the Gray Company, loyalists of old Nerath that dedicate themselves to finding magic items and other treasures lost when the empire fell.

Treasure hunters and explorers find the Gray Downs covered with burial mounds dating back to ancient times when primitive humans lived and hunted here. The hill clans are gone, but their spirits live on, guarded and shepherded by the undead creatures known—for good reason—as hounds of ill omen.

* **The Sword Barrow:** This large burial mound stands near the middle of the Gray Downs. The Sword Barrow gained its name because scores of rusted blades of ancient design are buried around its edges, blades pointing inward; a visitor can turn up several in a few minutes of looking around. The blades seen completely ordinary, not hinting at the old warding magic that surrounds the place. Explorers who approach the place might be accosted by the Barrowhaunts, a band of former adventurers who delved into the Sword Barrow and didn't come back alive.

### Harken Forest:

This large woodland stretches from the Nentir River to the mountains and extends for miles to the south. It separates the Nentir Vale from the more populous coastal towns of the south. In this expansive wooded area along the ale's southern edge, any tree might conceal a threat—or danger could come from the tree itself, if it happens to be one of the treants that watch over the deep forest. The Harken treants are bitter enemies of their counterparts in the Winterbole Forest. Allied with the Harken treants is a group of elf druids who call themselves Harken's Heart. Laboring under an ancient curse, the druids are effectively trapped within the forest, and they spare no effort in their attempt to protect it.

A strong goblin keep called Daggerburg lies somewhere in the southwest reaches, not too far from Kalton Manor; the goblins sometimes raid the river-traffic moving along the Nentir, or send small parties of marauders to Harkenwold's borders. An elf tribe known as the Woodsinger Clan roams the eastern portions of the forest. They occasionally trade with the humans of Harkenwold and keep an eye on travelers along the old King's Road. They have a long-standing feud with the Daggerburg goblins, and the goblins keep to the western parts of the forest to avoid swift and deadly elven arrows. However, the goblins are growing more numerous and have become bolder in recent months.

The northernmost arm of Harken Forest is the temporary headquarters of the Hunter Spiders. This group of drow was stranded on the surface years ago when the tunnel back to their home city of Erelhei-Cinlu collapsed. They have a reason to believe that concealed in this area of the forest, which they call Spiderhaunt Thicket, is another passage back to the Underdark. Until they find it, the drow guard their adopted territory against intruders.

Perhaps the most dangerous threat to the Forest is the red dragon named Cazzak “the Blessed”, that had settled in the hills east of Harkenwold and believes all he can see from his lair to be his realm. He is trying to convert his “subjects” to the worship of Tiamat, by any means necessary.

* **Dal Nystiere:** The ruins of an Eladrin settlement accessible only through magical portals.
* **Harkenwold:** Half a dozen small villages lie along the upper vales of the White River. Among those settlements are Albridge, Dardun, Desul Torey, Duponde, Easthill, Harken Village, and Tor's Hold. Together, they make up the Barony of Harkenwold—a tiny realm whose total population is not much greater than Fallcrest's. The people of Harkenwold are farmers, woodcutters, and woodworkers; little trade comes up or down the old King's Road. The barony has drawn the attention of the Iron Circle, an army of mercenaries and followers of Asmodeus from a city far to the south. The band's leader, Lord Vhennyk, sees Harkenwold as a vulnerable spot where he and his soldiers can gain a foothold for an eventual invasion of the entire Vale.

The Gravelstokes, one of Nerath's most prestigious families when the Empire was as its height, rose to prominence by perfecting the art of assassination. Today, what's left of the family is sequestered in an unassuming mansion in the Harkenwold area while they prepare to regain their lost influence by once again offering their murderous services to the highest bidder.

* **Kalton Manor**: Back in the days Nerath was settling the Nentir Vale, minor lords in search of land to call their own established manors and holds throughout the area. Kalton Manor was one of these, a small keep raised about two hundred years ago. Now in ruins, stories tell of treasure—the old Kalton fortune—hidden in secret chambers beneath the keep.
* **Riverslye Homestead:** A small halfling commune located near the White River in the Barony of Harkenwold.

### Lake Nen:

The largest body of water in the Nentir Vale, Lake Nen stretches for nearly fifty miles (80 km) across the southern edge of the Winterbole Forest. The eastern end supports the nearby village of Nenlast, whose residents ply the waters for fish that they trade with the dwarves of Hammerfast, and other groups. The frigid waters of Lake Nen hide a mystery. On certain nights, fishers out too late on the lake hear singing—beautiful, ethereal music that fills them with longing. Some never return to their homes, others return forever changed, haunted by their experience. It is said that the boundaries between the world and the Feywild grow thin when the full moon's light dances on the water, and the music of the faerie court of the Prince of Thorns filters out over the lake.

The shoreline of the northwestern end of the lake is part of the dominion of the Frost Witches, an eclectic group of magic-users who pay homage to the evil elemental prince Cryonax. The witches wield the power of cold to brutal effect, whether recruiting new members into their fold or kidnapping innocents. Although small groups of Frost Witches might be encountered anywhere within the Winterbole Forest, the largest concentration resides in the headquarters along the lake's edge that the group calls Cold Camp.

Adventurers who explore the lakeshore might come upon a band of dragonborn, part of the group known as Dythan's Legion, as they search for clues to the location of an ancient Arkhosian enclave named Rolaz-Gaar, believed to be in this area.

* **Nenlast:** This tiny human village lies at the east end of Lake Nen. The folk here make a meager living by trading smoked fish to the dwarves of Hammerfast. They also deal with the Tigerclaw barbarians of the Winterbole Forest. When the wild folk choose to trade, they come to Nenlast to barter their pelts and amber for good dwarven metalwork.
* **Ruins of Fastormel:** Once a prosperous town on the shores of Lake Nen, Fastormel was destroyed by the Bloodspear orcs and has never been resettled. The town was ruled by a Lord Mage (the most powerful wizard in town claimed the ruler's scepter), and the Mistborn Tower of the last Lord Mage still stands amid the ruins of the town. The tower is shrouded in a strange silver mist that never dissipates, no matter what the weather would otherwise dictate.

### Lake Wintermist:

The fog that blankets Lake Wintermist is a year-round phenomenon, belying its name. The lake is inhospitable for most creatures, but those that thrive in frigid climes. White dragons frequently appear in the northwestern part of the lake, particularly in the dead of winter when they seek out mates. The lake provides ample supplies of fish for the Tigerclaw barbarians of the Winterbole Forest and a few homesteads along its southern shore.

From time to time, someone passing through this area might come across an angry troll—or perhaps even a pair of them. The twin troll brothers Hurly and Burly both lair in caves not far from the lake—despite the fact that they can't stand each other. When they get into one of their family feuds, anyone who crosses their path could become a target of their rage.

* **Mistwatch:** Huddled against a hillside on a stony shore, Mistwatch has an exquisite view of Lake Wintermist’s cold water. A sleepy town, blessed with riches pulled from the unyielding stone in the nearby Cairngorm Peaks, grown rich from timber cut from the Winterbole Forest, and fed well on trout and salmon drawn from the clear, mist-covered water, has grown eerily quiet in recent months due to an undead curse. Mistwatch, totally covered in mist, is in the process of transforming into a domain of dread.

### Moon Hills:

Arrayed to the south and east of Fallcrest, the Moon Hills are fairly tame. The countryside for scores of miles around is dotted with abandoned homesteads and manors from the days of Nerath, some of which were once the homes of well-off eladrin families. The surrounding ridges shelter several small valleys where farmers and woodsfolk live; few are more than six or seven miles from Fallcrest.

This cluster of rugged terrain between the Nentir River and the King's Road is not rife with monsters and other villainous types, thanks mainly to the proximity of Fallcrest and the vigilance of its town guard. But goblins and human bandits are fairly common beyond the town.

The people of Fallcrest tell stories about the Dark Drake of the Moon Hills, a sinister reptile that leads a pack of other evil drakes. These tales get more and more dramatic in the retelling—even though few claim to actually have seen one of the creatures. The hills also occasionally play host to terrors that wander out of either the Witchlight Fens or the Harken Forest, including lizardfolk, giant spiders, and other random monsters in search of new prey.

* **Fallcrest:** Amid the Moon Hills, Fallcrest is a hub for travel throughout the Nentir Vale, as it stands at the intersection of the Nentir River and the ale's two major trade routes the old King's Road that runs north and south, and the dwarven Trade Road from the east. While the town guard does a capable job of protecting the populace from raiders that emerge from the surrounding wilderness, the biggest threats to Fallcrest's welfare come from within the town itself. One such threat is the Fell Court, a band of outcast tieflings that have gained a foothold in Fallcrest thanks to the subterfuge of their leader, Melech Ambrose. Melech's dream is to take control of the town and use that success as a springboard to spread the tieflings' influence throughout the ale.

At the same time, a gang of miscreants known as the River Rats are carving out their own realm in Fallcrest's lower-class districts, and their leader also has designs on expanding the organization to other communities. A rival gang, The Honest Few, while still a new group, is slowly increasing its influence in the upper class districts as well.

* **The Twisting Halls:** Ages ago, a group of minotaurs built a grand temple in a cave of a hill south of the land that will become Fallcrest one day, dedicated to four gods of good and law. In the deep recesses of the temple, the minotaurs guarded a dark secret: a hidden shrine to the demon prince Baphomet. The gods of good cursed the temple and its corrupt priests, and eventually it fell into disuse and ruin. Over time, monsters made their lairs in the shelter of its stone halls. The white dragon Farallax is currently the most powerful inhabitant of the halls.

### Ogrefist Hills:

Partially framing the western edge of the ale, this area has few redeeming qualities in the eyes of those who know of the place or have visited there. These desolate hills are said to be accursed by an ancient evil. During Nerath's height, several minor lords tried in succession to establish manors in these hills, but none lasted more than a single year.

Somewhere in these hills hides the mouth of a tunnel leading up from the Underdark that the drow known as the Hunter Spiders used to reach the surface. When the tunnel collapsed a mile underground just a few years ago, the Hunter Spiders became stranded in the ale. It's not known whether the tunnel could be reopened from this side.

A detachment of the corps of dragonborn known as Dythan's Legion is active here, exploring rumors that a remnant of the old Arkhosian Empire lies somewhere in the caverns beneath this area.

* **Kiris Dahn:** This human town located at the far end of the Ogrefist Hills was by goblins eight years ago, who renamed it **Gorizbadd**. The town quickly fell into ruin, since goblins were far more interested in vandalism than in proper maintenance. A faction of kobolds took over the slums, since the goblins live mostly in what were once residences for the wealthier people of Kiris Dahn.
* **Temple of Yellow Skulls:** This mysterious temple, nestled among the rugged hills, might be the most infamous location in the area. Legend tells that a rakshasa prince summoned demons to this ancient shrine and bound them to his service by imprisoning their vital essences in gold-plated human skulls. None of these have yet been recovered from the ruins, but the story persists. Deep caverns beneath the ruins lead all the way down to the Underdark, and from time to time dangerous monsters of the deep places emerge here and prowl the nearby lands.

### The Old Hills:

Though the hills themselves are no older than any other geographical feature in the Vale, the Old Hills bear signs of the first human settlements in the region: ancient ring-forts built by the same hill-tribes that erected the barrows in the Gray Downs. The remains of these ancient forts appear across the entire length and breadth of the hills, from near Nenlast to Raven Roost and Fiveleague House, both of which were built atop old ruins.

Nowadays, the area is firmly in the grasp of the vicious Blackfang gnolls. Slavishly devoted to the demon god Yeenoghu, the gnolls emerge from their burrows in the hills to kill or waylay travelers. Many of their captives are taken underground and sacrificed in the Well of Demons at the center of the gnolls' many-chambered lair.

Other rumors concerning an older series of ruins spring up from time to time. These tales, always told in whispers, speak of the ancient necropolis of Andok Sur. The place, if it exists at all, is said to be holy to the followers of Orcus. The ruins of the City of the Dead, according to the rumors, are buried beneath the oldest section of the Old Hills.

* **Chad'Maragh, the Dark Magic Forge:** An abandoned and seemingly forgotten dwarven forge near a cliff that was constructed long ago, it houses a magical portal to the Feywild. It was created to hinder the eladrin ability to step between the natural world and the Feywild by a long forgotten dwarven king. It's custodied by the magical floating skull of an undead dwarf.
* **Fiveleague House:** Fiveleague House is more properly known as the Fiveleague Inn, a popular resting place for travelers heading to or from the ale's larger communities, located a day's journey (five leagues) farther east from Hammerfast. It's a strongly built innhouse surrounded by a wooden palisade. The proprietor is a big bearlike human named Barton. Barton makes a good show of joviality, but he's secretly allied with the bandits of Raven Roost and sends them word of travelers worth robbing who will be continuing west toward Fallcrest.
* **Raven Roost:** An old estate house known as Raven Roost Manor sits on a piece of prime land just north of the Harken Forest. The place is almost impossible for someone to approach without being seen—and that's just how the Raven Roost bandits like it.

The manor has recently been taken over by a group of criminals and cutthroats under the leadership of a trio of shadar-kai named Samminel, Erzoun, and Geriesh. The bandits have a reputation for cruelty and mercilessness that extends far beyond the area in which they practice their grisly trade. They secretly deal with Barton, the proprietor of Fiveleague House, giving him a cut of the take when he tips them off about wealthy travelers on the Trade Road.

* **Trade Road:** This dwarf-built highway is the most heavily traveled thoroughfare in the ale—which means it carries enough bounty to support more than one gang of thieves. Merchants and pilgrims who manage to avoid the notice of the Raven Roost bandits still have to contend with the Wolf Runners, a widely feared band of humans and wolves that work together in an uncanny fashion along the length of the Trade Road.
* **Thunderspire:** The tallest natural spire in the ale, Thunderspire Mountain lies on the southern fringe of the Old Hills. Its top forever encased in a raging storm, Thunderspire is a majestic sight, even without considering what lies within its depths. Beneath Thunderspire lies the ancient minotaur city of Saruun Khel. The minotaur kingdom fell almost a hundred years before Fallcrest was established, when a struggle for succession led to a vicious civil war.

The mysterious order of wizards known as the Mages of Saruun control the caverns beneath Thunderspire Mountain that made up the minotaur city. In a grand plaza called the Seven-Pillared Hall, the mages and their acolytes provide a place for natives of the Underdark to barter goods with surface-dwellers, as merchants passing along the Trade Road sometimes take shelter here. All the while, the ages continue to seek out more of the artifacts and treasure left behind by the minotaurs.

Beyond the relative safety of the Seven-Pillared Hall, however, curious explorers can run into bandit gangs, gnoll tribes, undead, and various denizens of the Underdark that aren't as congenial as those encountered within the purview of the Mages.

### The Stonemarch:

A rugged land of stony hills and deep gorges cut by white-rushing rivers, the Stonemarch is home to tribes of dangerous humanoids and giants. Orcs, ogres, giants, and trolls haunt the farther reaches of these barren lands. Every century or so, Gruumsh's insatiable thirst for bloodshed and conquest calls the orcs of the Stonemarch from their deep holes and whips them into a frenzied mob. They swarm over the Cairngorm Peaks and into the Nentir Vale by the thousands, turning everything in their path to ash and ruin. The last assault came ninety years ago, and the ravaged earth has not yet fully healed. The people of the ale, ill prepared for another rampage, are desperate for new heroes to halt the impending invasion.

* **The Fanged Jaws of Kulkoszar:** A great orc-warren that lies in the northern part of the wasteland. Over the years, Clan Bloodspear has extended the original cavern into an extensive warren furnished with forges, arenas, and slave pens. The current chieftain of Clan Bloodspear is Msuga, the Orc Queen, who rules over hundreds of fierce warriors.

### Winterbole Forest:

The vast expanse of the Winterbole Forest defines the northern border of the Nentir Vale and the limit of Nerath's expansion at its height. It is home to a multitude of monsters and villains, among which a few stand out as the would-be masters of the domain.

The white dragon Bitterstrike holds sway over a large part of the forest. Several of the Winterbole's denizens, most notably the Tigerclaw barbarians and the Frost Witches, pay fealty to the dragon. They keep her pacified and help her when she demands it, but none of them are truly and honestly on her side.

Even a dragon with an army of vassals could not hope to control the entire forest—and in fact the Tigerclaw barbarians consider themselves the real power to be reckoned with in the Winterbole. This wide-ranging band of humans and shifters were never brought under Nerath's sway, and remained uneasy neighbors of the empire at its height. They claim to be descended from a great primal spirit known as the Hunter of Winter, from which they draw their fighting skill and their determination. They trade with the people of Nenlast at times, but in harsh winters they have also been known to attack the village and simply take the food and weapons they need.

The Frost Witches are not nearly as numerous as the Tigerclaws, but their desire for domination is no less strong. Clenderi, the witches' leader, would like nothing better than to convince Bitterstrike to join their cause in service to Cryonax.

The coniferous treants of the Winterbole Forest contribute some of their ranks to the cadre of Bitterstrike's vassals, and they typically stand with the dragon when it becomes necessary to put down an incursion into the forest by humanoids. But their true enemies are the treants of the Harken Forest. These two groups harbor an enmity that dates back to the time when the two forests were a single expanse of green that covered nearly the entire vale. Bitterstrike also have some satyrs as her vassals as well.

* **The Howling Forest:** There is a region in the north of the Winterbole Forest that the locals call the Howling Forest. This region is generally avoided by the neighboring dwellers due to its vicious beasts and the trolls which come from the central regions of the Winterbole Forest to hunt game. Very few ruins remain in the wood, but Fey Passages can be found by those who know where to look. Every midnight, the ruined eladrin city of Shinaelestra shimmers into existence deep in the forest. Its rangers take advantage of this savage hunting ground, patrolling the depths of the black forest and pitting themselves against the mortal monsters who hunt its twisted paths. When dawn comes, Shinaelestra worldfalls back to the Feywild.
* **The Pyramid of Shadows:** In the depths of the Winterbole Forest, this bizarre extradimensional space full of weird monsters and strange magical effects holds creatures from all planes of existence since the Dawn War. The Pyramid of Shadows is one of many infernal prisons created to confine powerful beings. It exists beyond space and time, appearing in multiple places in the world and planes beyond.

The space within it knows nothing of the passage of time. Just like a prism splits light into its component colors, the pyramid split the prisoners’ life force into free-willed splinters, each one containing a fragment of the power of their former selves. With their power spread among various splinters, the prisoners couldn’t hope to break free from the pyramid.

Each of the pyramid’s three levels is home to multiple factions of creatures. Each new arrival tries to find a place among the existing inhabitants, or to carve out its own living space. Eventually, the pyramid adapts to the creatures trapped within it, providing a living space approximating their natural environments. Since its prisoners don’t need to compete for resources, they coexist in an uneasy truce.

* **The Winterguard Prison:** Criminals whisper of an inescapable prison of blue ice built atop a snow-covered mountain far to the north of the Nentir Vale. They say that its cruel fey inhabitants magically encase prisoners inside its icy walls, freezing them alive forever. Despite the inevitable exaggeration that comes with spreading rumors, the stories are true.

The Winterguard Prison is located somewhere in the northern reaches of the Winterbole Forest, and dates back to the time of the long lost eladrin empire of Cendriane. Created in the mortal world to house dangerous prisoners of the Kinstrife War (the ancient war between the first elves), the prison is still functional and now houses both ancient elven criminals and more recent criminals of all races. The Winterguard, an order of swordmages, is charged with administering the prison and they patrol the Nentir Vale and beyond in order to apprehend dangerous criminals and to new recruits for their order.

### The Witchlight Fens:

At the confluence of the Nentir River and the White River, a great swamp stretches for miles. This marsh is territory coveted by few intelligent creatures, for one principal reason: Shadowmire. As elusive as he is deadly, this black dragon considers the Witchlight Fens his realm, and most of those who enter the swamp are not interested in contesting that claim.

Savage lizardfolk hunt these fens, occasionally emerging from the swamp to skirmish with the Woodsinger elves of Harken Forest. The lizardfolk manage to live in harmony with the dragon, and some of the Witchlight lizardfolk tribes have come to worship him.

Near the eastern edge of the fens, where the wetland merges with Harken Forest, the lizardfolk of the Mistkiller tribe frequently skirmish with bands of Daggerburg goblins that make forays out of the forest.

A number of ruins related to the ancient empire of Bael Turath can be stumbled upon by those who explore the depths of the swamp. Some of these have been occupied by newer groups, including lizardfolk and goblin tribes, but others are so mysterious and have such an air of malignance as to drive all but the most desperate or depraved from their presence.

* **Githzerai enclave**: A small village populated only by githzerai, near the White River.
* **Renefik:** This halfling enclave has a population of Ren Clan members who work the local watercourses as traders and guides. Renefik’s neighbors view the halflings as self-serving and a bit greedy, but as far less of a threat than most creatures that dwell in the swamp. The enclave consists of four multistory buildings, with the lowest level serving as an enclosed dock, the second level as a storehouse, and the upper floors as living quarters. The enclave is lightly fortified, which means that it more defensible than most holdings in the area.
* **The Ghost Tower of the Witchlight Fens:** One of the three infamous “ghost towers” of the Nentir Vale appears in the swamp, near Kalton Manor.
* **Treewater:** A village of about fifty people, mainly humans and half-elves, Treewater has ten buildings, consisting of small dwellings (little better than shacks) and a few stores and storehouses. It stands along the edge of a small, round lake, tied to the larger Nentir River by a narrow waterway. Treewater hosts trading days several times a year, when regional residents can buy and sell goods and acquire hard-to-find items.
* **Witchlight Hermitage:** A small hermitage that lies near the Nentir River, along the ever-changing borders of the Brackmarsh lizardfolk tribal lands. It is operated by a priestess of Pelor, Ofeen Nole, who works to counteract the effects of the mire connections to the Shadowfell and the evil influence exerted by the black dragon Shadowmire.

### The Underdark:

The Underdark is a network of subterranean tunnels, caverns, seas, and rivers that spans the entire world. Lightless but far from lifeless, the Underdark is home to a dizzying array of creatures, from the underground fortress of dwarves and duergar, to the civilized but unforgiving drow, to carnivorous monsters and aberrant creatures from the Far Realm that haunt the darkness.

There are many tunnels that connect the Underdark to the Nentir Vale: The Misers' Pit in the Cairngorm Peaks, the Seven-Pillared Hall in Thunderspire Mountain, and the tunnels of the Deep Guides in the Dawnforge Mountains are the most known to learned scholars. The foremost explorers of the Underdark in the Vale are the members of the loose organization called the Deep Guides. These talented survivalists, scouts, cartographers, and navigators range throughout the depths, ensuring open lanes of travel. Motivated by both a desire for exploration and the patronage of wealthy merchants, these trailblazers of the Underdark bring civilization into the Night Below.

* **The Vault of the Drow:** A gleaming but sinister gem, the Vault of the Drow is one of the most spectacular and awe-inspiring locations in the Underdark. It lies directly beneath the Nentir Vale, and only one known road gives access to the area.
  + **The Black Tower:** A great mound of rock and crystal that guards the only known entrance to Erelhei-Cinlu, the city of the drow. Soldiers patrol the area at all times.
  + **Erelhei-Cinlu:** The greatest drow city on the Underdark, Erelhei-Cinlu is a metropolitan hub of political intrigue, rivalries, and secrets. Female drow known as the matron mothers rule their noble houses through intimidation and magical might. Arcane academies train favored male drow as potent spellcasters specializing in necromancy and nethermancy. The vast majority of the males, though, are considered inferior and relegated to militia duty. These small military forces are led by a house's weaponmasters, elite soldiers who have demonstrated leadership and courage in defense of the city.

## The Echoes of the World

Inextricably linked to the natural world are two parallel planes: the Feywild, also known as the Plane of Faerie, and the Shadowfell, or the Plane of Shadow. Those worlds are the closest of the planes to the mortal world.

Despite vastly different astronomies and alternative names for stars, the architecture of the heavens remains constant in those echo planes. While stars are bright in the mortal world and in the Feywild, in the Shadowfell the night sky all its own. It seems a void of inky blackness with illusory stars that deceive the stargazer, but by careful observation, dead stars, long ago faded from the mortal world, glimmer in dull solidity in the Shadowfell, the only real stars there.

### The Feywild

The Feywild is a verdant, wild twin of the mortal realm. Towering forests sprawl for a thousand leagues. Perfect amber prairies roll between pristine mountain peaks soaring into the flawless clouds. Emerald, turquoise, and jade green seas crash along endless beaches. The skies are a perfect blue not seen in the mortal world—until storms come, coal dark thunderheads boiling with fierce winds and torrential rains. In this world, arcane power thrums through every tree and rock. All existence is magical.

Those who wander its enchanted roads discover miracles and wonders undreamed of in the mortal world. In the Feywild, the laws of science, logic, and reason defer to the arts of magic, story, and rhyme. Ordinary animals and objects converse as eloquently as any worldly mortal. Enchanted forests wander across the landscape like herds of roving sheep. Glorious castles perch on mountain spires that touch the starry heavens, and a bold traveler can board a vessel to a fey palace on the moon. Fairies anoint the dewdrops on morning flowers, and in the evening, satyrs play their gentle pipes to lull the world to sleep.

Yet for all its dreamlike splendor, the plane can be as perilous as the Elemental Chaos with its random explosions of stone and fire, and as deadly as the life-sapping Shadowfell. Here wicked hags place everlasting curses on their enemies, change mortals into toads, and blacken the moon in their flight across the midnight sky. Capricious fey play careless games with mortal lives. Underground caverns sprawl the length of the Feydark, the equivalent of the Underdark, and in these dark places, fomorian tyrants, brutal cyclopses, and hateful drow await the day when they will overthrow the surface dwellers.

Those who are drawn to this realm of enchantment and danger must take care, for wonders and horrors beyond imagining lie around every bend in the woodland road.

* **Al'Bihel, the City of Stairs:** A ruined eladrin city on the Feywild that was inhabited by cursed spider-drow until recently, when they were annihilated by the forces of the First Lord Thrumbolg. Its former ruler, the eladrin Arcane Lord N'ehlia, have plans to rebuild it. It's located near the fomorian realm of Mag Tureah, and appears every certain time on the mortal world, somewhere in the Old Hills, in the Nentir Vale.
* **Amethystra:** Once a part of Cendriane, Amethystra is a city of alabaster and crystal that floats atop a cloud. It spends most of its time in the Feywild, but sometimes appears temporarily in the mortal world after specially violent storms. Those who brave its wonders in search for treasure often find themselves enchanted by the city, compelled to contemplate its unearthly beauty forever.
* **Astrazalian, The City of Starlight:** This magnificent eladrin city is the crown jewel of the eladrin realms, the incarnate dream and the envy of every mortal race. Appearing on the hillsides of a green island on the natural world in the first day of spring, it is the fey realm most well known to the inhabitants of the mortal world. At the end of the summer the city returns to the Feywild, and is located in the sea known as the Kingdom of the Sea Lords. During autumn and winter, savage fomorians besiege Astrazalian from their Feydark borderlands in hopes of plundering the city and using it as a base from which to raid the natural world. Astrazalian is ruled by Lady Shandria, an eladrin warlord and a distant niece of Queen Tiandra of the Court of Stars.
* **Brokenstone Vale**: This forested valley and the mine-riddled mountains that surround it are the province of werebeasts of all kinds, given free range by an ancient pact with the Court of Stars. In tiny hamlets on the boundaries of this realm, civilized lycanthropes can trade with merchants under the watchful eye of werewolf lord Viktor Mazan. Underneath Brokenstone Vale lies an entrance to the fomorian kingdom of Harrowhame.
* **Cendriane:** In the midst of a dark, twisted forest as old as the world stands the abandoned city of Cendriane, its crystal towers rising through the treetops like polished skeletal fingers emerging from the earth. Formerly the greatest city in the Feywild, Cendriane is now a ruin, having been devastated during the ancient wars fought by the drow, eladrin, and elves. Giant spiders, displacer beasts, and owlbears make their lairs in mansions where noble eladrin once dwelled, and sometimes by night terrifying specters drift through the streets.
* **Cyndaria:** An invisible eladrin city beyond a waterfall near The Maze of Fathaghn. Its ruler is the powerful Sidhe Lord Toveliss E'teall.
* **Feywild trails:** Collective name for the trails and roads that crisscross the Feywild. Travelers who stray from these paths might fall prey to dangerous creatures such as fey panthers, hags, or worse.
* **Harrowhame:** This underground fomorian kingdom is built on the slave trade. Its ruler, King Bronnor, is as mad as any fomorian, but he can be negotiated with—occasionally. The lycanthropes of neighboring Brokenstone Vale often serve Bronnor as spies and assassins.
* **Mag Tureah:** The largest of the subterranean fomorian realms, Mag Tureah is ruled by King Thrumbolg, the First Lord. Although the military stronghold raids and pillages competently, the biggest challenge for Thrumbolg is mapping and testing the many planar portals found throughout the tunnels of his underground kingdom. To this end, he employs slaves in his portal tests and is always looking for more subjects with arcane knowledge.
* **Mithrendain, The Autumn City:** Once a great fortress of the long-lost empire of Cendriane, Mithrendain has blossomed into a beautiful eladrin forest-city whose buildings seem to grow naturally around the trees, and where time is almost non-existent. Here, time drifts by as gradually as the first tentative falling leaves of autumn. However, Mithrendain has a dark secret: the central sections of the city were built atop a now-sealed tunnel that leads to the Feydark. This entrance to the underworld is heavily protected by the Barrier Sentinels, an order of magical warriors that protects the Citadel Arcanum, the fortress guarding the entrance to the Feydark, and the mysterious Watchers of the Night, the secret police of Mithrendain.
* **Nachtur, the Goblin Kingdom:** Along the overland route between the eladrin realms and the goblin kingdom of Nachtur lies a great expanse of wilderness.This goblin kingdom, under the rule of the hobgoblin wizard Great Gark, is one of the more civilized of its kind, but is also one of the most dangerous nations of the Feywild. The underground realm engages in diplomatic matters with many lands, and its goblin mercenaries serve anyone who meets their price.
* **Plains of Echoing Thunder:** This open country of rolling hills and grassy plains is the stomping grounds of centaur tribes. Due to the centaurs' devotion to Kord, storms are particularly common in this region.
* **Porpherio's Island:** Also known as Porpherio’s Garden, this enchanted island-home located near the Isle of Dread in the kingdoms of the Sea Lords, was created by Queen Tiandra and Lord Oran of the Green Court for a pair of lovers long time ago. Now is home to the mysterious wizard known as the Green Man.
* **Senaliesse:** In the center of the Feywild’s primeval forest grows a massive stand of ancient silver trees. The forest at the base of these trees seems completely undisturbed. This silver grove is Senaliesse, the home of Queen Tiandra of the Court of Stars. Here, the archfey of the Court of Stars gather to confer, revel, and scheme. Courtiers and petitioners from every realm in the known universe, overburdened with wondrous gifts, come to beg the Summer Queen's favor.
* **Shinaelestra, The Fading City:** Shinaelestra is a city of rangers, and they long ago decided to let the forest reclaim the ancient walls. Many of Shinaelestra’s towers are broken, barely rising above the thick overgrowth of the forest. The ranger Lord Calenon Thray governs Shinaelestra lightly. Some say he is the greatest eladrin ranger of them all. Every midnight, Shinaelestra appears in the midst of the Howling Forest in the mortal world, and each dawn it returns to the Feywild. The greatest threat to Shinaelestra is the fomorian realm of Vor Thomil.
* **The Isle of Dread:** Somewhere above the coral kingdoms of the Sea Lords rises a tropical island ringed with treacherous reefs and storm-tossed seas. The sands of its beaches are as dark as the jagged obsidian mountains in its center or the plumes of smoke spewing from its volcanoes, and its coasts are littered with the wreckage of ships. Sinister stone ziggurats break the canopy of verdant jungles blanketed in clouds of steam. Unseen beneath the dense foliage, enormous reptiles of the primeval world hold sway. The Isle of Dread is also the home of the dreaded Su monsters, dangerous treetop predators created by the wizard Halkith. Su monsters use their psychic link to monitor events that transpire on the island, including keeping tabs on the island's population of yuan-ti.
* **The Lake of Dreams:** This lake, known for the glass-like stillness of its waters, is located in the middle of a particularly dark forest. The woods are rumored to be the personal fiefdom of Razcoreth, the green dragon better known as the Whispering Wyrm. It’s said that those who submerge in the waters of this lake have their memories completely erased.
* **The Maze of Fathaghn:** There is a place in the Feywild where the trees grow close together and the twisting brambles are as tall and thick as living walls. Here the trees speak their secrets in the faint whisper of rustling leaves. The woodland path loses its way among shifting copses and the trunks of wandering treants, and playful nymphs and dryads lure unwary travelers along twisting detours to shady glades from which they will never emerge.
* **The Murkendraw:** The Murkendraw is a swamp the size of a sea, infested with feymire crocodiles as large as the flat bottom skiffs that float among the putrid detritus. Fat, bloodthirsty marsh flies, some the size of dogs, buzz through the late afternoon air. Thunderstorms cover the area for days at a time, riddling the swamp with lightning, and hags such as the infamous Baba Yaga exult in the unbridled chaos.
  + **Murkroot Trade Moot:** Somewhere beneath the sodden soil at the edge of the great Murkendraw Swamp, a secret hides from the angry nobles of the Summer Court. Lost to all but those who have been there before, this place remains beyond the reach of those who would destroy, conquer, or exploit it—at least until someone who has been there betrays it. The Murkroot Trade Moot is an underground bazaar of the illegal and the illicit in the Feywild, a black market of things the Sidhe lords don't want the people of their realms to know about.
* **The Spiral Tower:** The site of the last battle between the drow, the elves and the eladrin. The original tower was destroyed in that ancient battle, and a new tower was built atop the ruins. This new tower serves as an academy for wizards and tacticians.
* **The White Well:** This pool, said to be the demesne of a powerful archfey known as the Lady of the White Well, is amidst a serene forest that seems to exude deep sorrow. Legends say that she grants the ability to control the powerful magic of the night to those who seek to win her heart.
* **Vale of the Long Night:** Beneath the oppressive snowfalls that drown the land in a crystal white ocean of winter, the Fortress of Frozen Tears rises from a high glacial spire like a jagged icicle. The constant glow of the ever-full moon shines down on frozen lakes, gnarled and barren orchards, and lonely, snow-covered mountains. The stars burn coldly overhead, as distant and pitiless as billions of icy snowflakes poised in the everlasting darkness, waiting to descend. Eladrin with an affinity for winter live in the wilderness around the Prince's fortress , but they give their liege a wide berth.
  + **Fortress of Frozen Tears:** Located in a desolate icy waste, the Fortress of Frozen Tears is the seat of power for the Prince of Frost, mightiest of the winter fey. His contempt for mortals is legendary, and his rivalry with the summer fey is bitter, but he still receives ambassadors from distant lands.
  + **Winter’s Heart:** The demesne of Koliada the Winter Witch, one of the archfey of the Winter Court. It is connected by a Fey Passage to the Dawnforge Mountains in the Nentir Vale.
* **Vor Thomil:** The nearest fomorian kingdom to Shinaelestra, Vor Thomil endures at the whim of its mad Queen Connomae. Captured travelers are forced to perform for her entertainment as poets, singers, actors or gladiators.

### The Shadowfell

The Shadowfell is the dark echo of the mortal world, a twilight realm that exists “on the other side” of the world and its earthly denizens. A place of deep shadows, of familiar yet alien landscapes, of vistas that snatch the breath, and of mind-rending visions, the Shadowfell is the gloomy reflection of the natural world. It is a plane dimmed and dulled by a pervasive and insidious pall. The home of the dead, the realm of the forsaken, a haven of the lost and the twisted, the birthplace of wretched creatures famous for their grief and sorrow—the Plane of Shadow is all this and more.

The Shadowfell is more than just a mirror, even as darkly cast and twisted as it is. This plane is the destination of souls loosed from their bodies. It is the domain of the dead, the final stage of the soul’s journey before moving onto the unknown. For this reason, the Shadowfell draws the attention of any with an interest in death. The power and allure of this place even drew the Raven Queen from the Astral Sea to take residence among the spirits, to govern them, and to monitor their movements as they await the inexorable pull of dissolution.

The Shadowfell is a bleak realm that houses both the dead and those among the living who have embraced a dismal existence there. As a shadowy reflection of the world, the Shadowfell can manifest differently to visitors. The plane is an amalgam of differences and similarities to the world. Each person finds something both recognizable and disturbing in its grim landscape.

The Shadowfell is in a state of flux. These alterations can be dramatic or subtle: A giant sinkhole might swallow up a swath of land, or a path that leads through a forbidding mountain range might alter its course to descend into the Shadowdark. the equivalent of the Underdark. These transformations can be physical. but they can also be a by-product of the plane's ability to warp the memory and imagination of those who walk its shadowed paths. Creatures sometimes perceive time differently in the Shadowfell from how they do in the world. Rather than passing with the rise or fall of thee sun, time moves based on the gloom infecting one's mind. If a person succumbs to depression and apathy, time seems to slow to a crawl. If one sinks into the deepest depths of despair, time seems to stop entirely.

* **Darkreach Mountain Range:** The Darkreach Mountains stand as the remnants of an ancient primordial named Volunt, slain by the shades of the Shadowfell in the Dawn War. The Darkreach is divided in two by the Gorge of the Mourning Mist, a valley covered in impenetrable fog. To the south, a cluster of tall and spindly mountains called the Claw slash at the sky and support only the hardiest of life. To the north lie the Teeth: stouter, snow-capped peaks offering more manageable terrain but harsher weather. The Claw and the Teeth supposedly represent the last physical remains of Volunt's body. Each of these sections of the range is perilous to both spirit and flesh. Any who live and adventure in the mountains must be desperate, crazy, or extraordinarily driven.
  + **Yandere:** A hidden githzerai monastery built into the side of one peak of the Claw.
  + **Fellwroth Village:** The village of Fellwroth, the ancestral home of House Fellwroth of Gloomwrought, rests in the foothills of the Teeth. With their noble manor in the City of Midnight now seemingly abandoned, the shadar-kai of Fellwroth live here on the edge of civilization.
  + **Kazzak'tul:** This ancient structure was clearly intended for war on a large scale before it was abandoned long ago.
  + **The Frozen Path:** The main passage through the Teeth is a narrow gap covered by ice blizzards.
* **Dead's Man Cross:** Innumerable paths and dirt roads cut through the wild places of the Shadowfell. No one is sure who built these roads, when, or why. Many of them twist back on themselves repeatedly or end at the edge of a cliff or against a featureless wall of stone. Only a few roads lead somewhere that anyone would consider useful. No matter how long a road lies unattended, plants can never take root on it. A corpse at the center of Dead Man's Cross, simply and unromantically called the Dead Man, is said to have been a former high priest of Nerull, condemned to an eternity of servitude by the Raven Queen upon her elevation to godhood. The corpse gives a warning when something is about to enter the Shadowfell. With a sound of creaking leather, the Dead Man's head slowly swivels to look at the location where a creature will arrive, moments before it appears.
  + **The House of Black Lanterns:** A wandering inn that travels across the Dead’s Man Cross. Inside, a well-trained staff sees to the needs of guests. These folk are amiable to travelers, ready to answer questions about the Shadowfell and provide basic services. They hesitate only when questioned about how they came to work at the inn, quickly finding excuses to change the subject or disengage. The inn offers shelter for travelers and easy transport across the Shadowfell, as well as a place to share news and swap dark tales.
* **Domains of Dread:** Scattered throughout the Plane of Shadow are places hidden behind thick walls of mist, places ruled by dark and deeply troubled beings bound to the plane by dreadful curses. These isolated pockets within the Shadowfell are called Domains of Dread. A creature that passes through the curtain of mist into a Domain of Dread becomes trapped there —a prisoner of the darklord who rules the domain.
  + **Darani:** One of the oldest cities of Nerath, it was transformed into a Domain of Dread and sent to the Shadowfell after Magroth the Mad was defeated by the hero Krondor, which in turn was killed by his own brother, Kalaban.
  + **Death of Innocence:** The only remaining temple of Nerull. When the Raven Queen became a full-fledged goddess, she transformed Death of Innocence into a Domain of Dread and sealed its borders.
  + **Graefmotte:** A Nerathi city transformed into a Domain of Dread after its lord killed his own son rather than see it slain in the last battle of the Empire of Nerath.
  + **Histaven:** Also known as the Withered Lands, this is a relatively young Domain of Dread, having existed for less than a century. Ruled over by the self-deluded tyrant Count Artius and plagued by the constant assault of a wretched dark paladin known as the Rag Man.
  + **Monadhan:** A Turathi town transformed into a Domain of Dread after the dragon Arantor killed its innocent and defenseless inhabitants, and afterwards betrayed and killed his protégée, the dragon Imrissa, during the Arkhosian-Turathi wars.
  + **Sunderheart:** Once known as Harrack Unarth, this city was the pleasure garden of the Empire of Bael Turath. After the assassinations of the nobles Ivania Dreygu and Vorno Kahnebor, Harrack Unarth suffered from a major curse where births had deformities, and where a storm covered the city for a long time. While the usual robbers attempted to loot the city and armies attempted to reoccupy it, the ancient curses came to light and the city was transformed into a Domain of Dread..
  + **The Endless Road:** Formerly known as the village of Tranquility in the natural world, it was transformed into a Domain of Dread after its village elder, Eli Van Hassen, forced his daughter to falsely accuse a noble hero of ravishing her, and having the innocent man beheaded.
  + **Timbergorge:** Once a Fey Demense of the Treant Silvermaw, this plane has since slid into the Shadowfell and was transformed into a Domain of Dread.
* **Gloomwrought, the City of Midnight:** Standing alone on a long stretch of desolate shoreline, Gloomwrought is a dirty port with a huge swamp in one side and a sea on the other. Inside its high, encircling wall, the city is cramped and dismal place. Although the City of Midnight is one of the few strongholds of civilization in the Shadowfell, it is neither a safe settlement nor a pleasant one. The citizens of Gloomwrought come to the city or stay in it for simple reasons, but rarely good ones. Among them are the inscrutable Keepers, a bizarre race of caretakers found throughout the city. Although the Keepers exhibit no discernible reason for their work, they are thought to be responsible for the upkeep and continued existence of the City of Midnight.
* **Letherna:** The forbidding realm of the Raven Queen, Letherna lies in the frozen north of the Shadowfell. Here the spirits of the dead are drawn to seek their ultimate fate. Wherever their mortal bodies perished, most souls inevitably come to Letherna and pass through the Raven Queen’s stronghold. It is not a place for the living. And yet, despite it’s vast array of dangers and powers, adventurers come to Letherna seeking ancient treasures or the fulfillment of great quests. The vast, frozen mountain range that makes up Letherna has few navigable routes to it or through it. A great valley called the Bleak Fallow lies in the northeastern part of the domain, where an even greater mountain once stood. At the southern end of the ring of mountains around Letherna is the temple of Zvomarana, guarding entrance from that direction. Deep in a canyon in the extreme northwest lies Farad Exitis, where the Raven Queen’s exarch, Vorkhesis, presides over pilgrims who would prove their faith by embracing the god’s greatest tenets in a difficult trial.
* **Oblivion Bog:** Lying to the north and west of Gloomwrought, Oblivion Bog has been a fearful place for as long as anyone can remember. Rotted signs lead up to the bog, suggesting it was once habitable, but now the region is a murky swampland that extends for miles. Oblivion Bog lies along a direct line between Gloomwrought and Letherna. and though most travelers wisely skirt around the swamp, a few are brave or foolish enough to try a shortcut through it.
  + **Forsaken Hamlet:** Only a few buildings remain of the village that stood in the heart of Oblivion Bog, and they are slowly sinking deeper into the swamp.
  + **Hexus Commune:** A coven of black-hearted hags has turned the northern fringe of Oblivion Bog into their personal fiefdom.
  + **Mirehide Tribe:** The lands of a tribe of bullywugs stranded from the natural world that now calls Oblivion Bog home.

### The Planes Beyond

The mortal world and its parallel planes exist between two great infinite expanses—the Astral Sea (also known as the Outer Planes) and the Elemental Chaos (also known as the Inner Planes). These planes are levels of reality in which countless specific locales exist like finite islands adrift in the infinite—the various astral dominions and elemental realms of Gods, Primordials and Demon Lords.

For those planes of existance, use the ones of your favorite D&D edition.

## Demographics of the Nentir Vale

It only covers the most important settlements of the Vale.

### Harken Village

Referred to as Harken by the locals, this village is the largest settlement in Harkenwold.

**Population:** 212 another 100 or so live in the countryside around the village. The people of Harken are mostly humans, halflings and dwarves.

**Government**: The human noble Jonn Stockmer is the baron of Harkenwold. He oversees justice, defence and laws within six villages and surrounding countryside that makes Harkenwold Barony. The baron appoints village elders to help with daily governing of the Harkenwold.

**Defense:** Harken Village has no standing defenses, but 30 or so able-bodied warriors can be raised from population. If the need arises, the baron can call up to 150 militia at need from the whole Harkenwold.

**Inns:** Aunt’s Nonnie Place, which has common room as well as rooms for rent, is run by the halfling Nonnie Farwhere. While not proper inn, it is the closest thing to one you’ll find in whole of the Harkenwold.

**Taverns:** Cliffside Brewery, run by dwarven family, not only brews its own ales but also sells its products to taverns in Fallcrest and Winterhaven.

**Supplies:** Harkenwold Trading Station.

**Temple:** House of Faith, which caters to worshippers of Pelor, Moradin, Erathis and Sehanine.

### Winterhaven

Built in the shelter of the Keep on the Shadowfell during Nerath's height, this village stands as a feeble light at the edge of civilization.

**Population:** 977. Most villagers are farmers and herders who live outside the walls, and most are human.

**Government:** Ernest Padraig, the lord of Winterhaven, is descended from the noble family that ruled the area under edict of the old empire.

**Defense:** The Winterhaven Regulars are a core group of ten soldiers who perform guard and police functions in and around the Village. Padraig can muster a force of about fifty civilians, given a day's notice, to supplement this tiny force if the village is threatened.

**Inn and Tavern:** Wrafton's Inn serves as the public house for the region.

**Supplies:** Bairwin's Grand Shoppe has variety of items for sale, occasionally a low-level magical item. Also, once a week, the official Market Day is celebrated in the Market Square of the village. Farmers sell produce, hunters hawk smoked meats, villagers sell crafts, and sometimes a trader from the east sells implements or costly goods.

**Temple:** A large stone structure is the village temple. Of the several deities worshiped by locals, Avandra, goddess of luck and change, is the most prominent. The temple priest, Sister Linora, runs services in the temple three times per week, and can offer sacrifices to the entire pantheon when called on to do so, but otherwise she is not often present.

### Hammerfast

Hammerfast is the only city of the Nentir Vale, where the living dwell among the dead. The buildings are converted tombs and sepulchers, cleared of rubble and refurbished to serve as homes and businesses.

**Population:** 12,000. Hammerfast's population consists mostly of dwarves, with a significant population of orcs.

**Government:** Three guilds—the trade guild, the lore guild, and the craft guild—rule Hammerfast. Each guild elects three members to the Town Council. The Council then elects a High Master. The current High Master is Marsinda Goldspinner, a representative of the Trade Guild.

**Defense:** A full-time force of about 100 warriors defends the city, manning thick, stone walls and a number of towers equipped with catapults and ballistae. In addition, outsiders are allowed only in the Gate Ward. The rest of the city is accessible only with permission from the guard.

**Inns**: The Arcane Star provides high quality but expensive accommodations. Rondal's Inn offers a cheaper, though shabbier, alternative.

**Taverns:** The Foundation Stone is the most popular tavern for travelers in town. It offers cheap food and drink, along with entertainment such as knife throwing tournaments and a popular local game called giant's feet.

**Supplies:** An open air market in Hammerfast's Gate Ward offers a wide variety of goods, though it is difficult to predict which caravans are in town at any given time. Boltac's Goods is a more reliable source of adventuring gear, but its owner is renowned for his greed.

**Temples:** The temple of Moradin, with the pool of fire that burns before it, is an important center of the faith in the Nentir Vale. The priests craft items at the Forge of Life all day and night. Hammerfast also has temples to Gruumsh (the Black Spire), loun and Pelor. However, all temples are in the city's inner wards, rather than the open Gate Ward.

### Fallcrest

A small town built from the ruins of a larger city, Fallcrest is the crossroads of the Nentir Vale.

**Population:** 1,350; another 900 or so live in the countryside within a few miles of the town. The people of Fallcrest are mostly humans, halflings, and dwarves, but travelers of all races pass through on occasion.

**Government:** The human noble Faren Markelhay is the Lord Warden (hereditary lord) of the town. He is in charge of the town's justice, defense, and laws. The Lord Warden appoints a town council to look after routine commerce and public projects.

**Defense:** The Fallcrest Guard numbers sixty warriors, who also serve as constables. Moonstone Keep is their barracks. The Lord Warden can call up 350 militia at need.

**Inns:** Nentir Inn; Silver Unicorn. The Silver Unicorn is pricier and offers better service; the Nentir Inn sees a more interesting clientele.

**Taverns:** Blue Moon Alehouse; Lucky Gnome Taphouse; Nentir Inn taproom.

**Supplies:** Halfmoon Trading House; House Azaer; The Market Green; Naerumar's Imports; Sandercot Provisioners; Teldorthan's Arms.

**Temples:** Temple of Erathis (Erathis, loun, Moradin); Moonsong Temple (Sehanine, Corellon, Avandra, Melora); House of the Sun (Pelor, Kord, Bahamut).

### Duponde

Duponde is a town on banks of the White River. Large areas within crumbling walls have been abandoned in the last hundred years, especially in southern half of the town. Heavy undergrowth and trees grow in and among the dilapidated houses.

**Population:** 1000 inhabitants.

**Government:** Lady Celice Arnaud is Duponde’s hereditary ruler. She is an outspoken human woman of sixty years who keeps four watchmen and a handful of servants and clerks in attendance. Duponde’s guard answer only to her, but Lady Arnaud allows Grimbold to manage the town’s defences.

**Defence:** Marshall Grimbold leads town guards. Their number is small, no more than twenty at maximum.

**Inns & Taverns:** The Old Owl Inn is operated by Tilda, a human woman about fifty years of age, who employs several cooks, barkeeps and stable hands.

**Supplies:** The General Store is operated by grumpy dwarf named Krugan. He has standard adventuring gear for sale, as well as common magic items.

**Temples:** The Chapel of Peace is attended by Brother Zelan and two young acolytes. Zelan is an old, fat, stubborn Pelorite with a blustering manner, but he's wiser than he lets on.

## Coins and currency

Merchants and adventurers alike use the gold pieces as the standard unit of currency for most transactions. The exchange of large amounts of money might be handled by letters of credit or gems and jewelry, but the value is always measured in gold pieces. The common people of the world deal more widely with silver pieces and copper pieces. A gold piece is worth 10 silver pieces, and a silver piece is worth 10 copper pieces.

People use copper, silver, and gold pieces daily. Many of the world's ancient empires also minted platinum pieces, and merchants still accept them even if most people never see them. They're most common in ancient treasure hoards. A platinum piece is worth 100 gold pieces.

A piece is a coin about an inch across, and weighs about a third of an ounce (50 pieces to the pound). Gems and jewelry are a more portable form of wealth favored by adventurers. Among commoners, "portable wealth" usually means cattle (with one cow worth about 1 gold piece in trade).

In fantastic realms beyond the natural world—such as the cities of the Feywild and similar markets—astral diamonds are used as currency for transactions involving staggering amounts of wealth. One astral diamond is worth 100 platinum pieces, or 10,000 gold pieces. An astral diamond weighs one-tenth as much as a piece (500 astral diamonds weigh 1 pound).

Other uncommon form of currency is the residuum, the magical substance that results from disenchanting magic items. It’s a fine, silvery dust that some describe as concentrated magic, useful as a generic component for magical rituals and complicated spells. In some exotic locales, residuum is traded as currency, measured by weight and carried in small metal vials. It’s a convenient way to transport large sums of wealth; 10,000 gold pieces worth of residuum weighs as much as a single gold piece and takes up only slightly more space, so 1 pound of residuum is worth 500,000 gold pieces and fits in a belt pouch.

## Customs of the Nentir Vale

Though the old ways are vanishing, many Nerathi faithful have created new customs to honor what was lost.

* Before dining or setting out on a great task, face toward the Nerath that was and the Flame Imperishable that will forever be (to the south of the Nentir Vale), and honor their dignity with a moment of silence.
* Wear a sash of blue, the color of Elidyr’s reign, across your shield to honor his sacrifice.
* Allow no harm to be done to eladrin women to respect Empress Amphaesia.
* Kill carrion-flies whenever you find them, for they are the messengers of the Ruler of Ruin.
* Speak the name of the gold dragon Ayunken-vanzen when undertaking brave deeds in order to evoke its strength.
* When you meet a Nerathi descendant, place your hand over their heart to feel the still-beating soul of the empire.

## Holidays of Hammerfast

Hammerfast celebrates four holidays tied to its history.

**Dragon’s Day**

In the middle of summer, when days are at their hottest, the people of Hammerfast celebrate the defeat of the dragon Calastryx by the wizard Starris in a battle that took place nearly 300 years ago. The Trade Guild constructs an elaborate puppet of the dragon that stretches nearly 30 feet in length. The puppet leads a parade through the city, while the folk of Hammerfast gather along the streets to throw rocks at it. Punching a hole in the puppet is said to bring good luck for the coming year. The parade winds up at the temple of Moradin, where the puppet is cast into a pool of fire.

**Siege Day**

Early in the spring, the residents of Hammerfast set aside a day to remember the attack that devastated the city. The citizens return indoors by sunset, since walking abroad at night is said to bring terrible luck on this particular day. At midnight, a spectral horde of orcs rushes through the streets, reenacting its attack.

**Founder’s Day**

When fall approaches, Hammerfast celebrates the last of the warm days with a great festival. Revelers don elaborate costumes and parade through the streets, and every family in the city offers cakes, cookies, and other treats to passersby. Within their costumes, the rich and powerful mix anonymously with the common folk. The offerings of food between neighbors represent the city's unity.

**Festival of the Eye**

Although the tension between the priests of Gruumsh and those of Moradin always simmers, it never boils over. The Festival of the Eye provides an outlet for that tension. Each year, in the dead of winter, the priests of Gruumsh erect a massive tent outside Hammerfast. Champions of Gruumsh come from across the Nentir Vale to do battle in ritualized combat to establish their rankings. Although some matches are to the death, most end with one combatant unconscious. In addition to these duels, the warriors of Gruumsh accept challenges from all comers. Priests of Kord, local roughnecks, and anyone else looking for a fight are welcome to take part. Matches range from one-on-one duels to chaotic brawls.

The festival lasts for a week. The priests of Gruumsh consider their champions' victories as important omens for the coming year. The priests of Moradin encourage hotheaded paladins and clerics to participate in hopes of embarrassing their rival priests.

## Languages of the Nentir Vale

There are ten languages used by the people of the Nentir Vale and the surrounding regions. These languages are transcribed in different scripts, most of which are alphabets. Goblin is the only language of the world that lacks its own script, owing to the brutal and barbaric nature of the goblin race. The Giant language uses the Davek runes of the dwarves, dating from the dwarves' long servitude to the giants.

The gods have their own language, Supernal, which they share with their angelic servants. When a god or angel speaks Supernal, it can choose to speak so that any creature that understands a language can understand this divine speech, as if the speaker used their own languages. Immortals who speak Supernal can understand speech and writing in any language. The Supernal script is a system of hieroglyphics.

The primordials have their own language as well, with none of the special qualities of Supernal. The titans and giants adopted a debased version of this language for their own tongue, and Abyssal is a form of Primordial warped and twisted by the evil at the heart of the Abyss.

The Deep Speech is a language related to the alien communication of the Far Realm, used by creatures influenced by the energy of that place beyond the world and the planes. It uses the Rellanic script because the drow were the first to transcribe it, since they share Underdark haunts with aberrant creatures.

### Words of Power

The Supernal and Abyssal languages are both actual languages used to communicate, but they also include words of power—words whose syllables contain the raw magic of creation (in the case of Supernal) or primordial evil (Abyssal). Player characters can't know these languages initially. They might eventually learn the basics of communicating in these tongues, but without mastering these mighty sounds. Mortals who learn Supernal don't gain the ability to have their words universally understood, but they do learn to read the Supernal language and to understand immortals speaking in that language, even if the immortals have not chosen to make themselves understood to all listeners. Texts containing these words in either language could unleash powerful effects—and these tomes or scrolls might be relics in their own right.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Language** | **Spoken by (examples)** | **Script** |
| Common | Humans, halflings, tieflings | Common |
| Draconic | Dragons, dragonborn, kobolds | Iokharic |
| Dwarven | Dwarves, galeb dhurs | Davek |
| Elves | Elves, eladrin, fomorians | Rellanic |
| Giant | Giants, orcs, ogres | Davek |
| Goblin | Goblins, hobgoblins, bugbears | Common |
| Deep Speech | Mind flayers, githyanki | Rellanic |
| Primordial | Efreets, archons, elementals | Barazhad |
| Supernal | Angels, devils, gods | Supernal |
| Abyssal | Demons, gnolls, sahuagin | Barazhad |



### Speaking like a dragonborn

Dragonborn have a number of distinctive idioms, oaths, and proverbs. You can use some of these to spice up your character's vocabulary, making sure that everyone at the table remembers your character is a dragonborn.

* "Three and One!" (*Tesjendar!*) A common dragonborn exclamation, it refers to the three gods of Arkhosia's Imperial temples and the emperor, called the Golden One.
* "By my clan and honor" (*Uth vethindas en thuris*) An oath or interjection, this is a solemn expression of what's most important to a dragonborn.
* "Not all scales shield a dragon's heart" (*Thricanda molik litrem vethiejir damstrix*) A proverb expressing the fact that things are not always what they seem—and in particular, a threat is often not as dangerous as it first appears. Often used as a reminder to courage.
* "Io's Blood" (*Vethio ierjir*) Another exclamation, it's also a subtle reminder that even the mighty Io could be slain—an exhortation to humility or to courage.
* "Every lair has two ways out" (*Thurisvant eth donsjeret*) There's more than one way to accomplish any given task, and a window opens for every closed door.
* "Stop straddling the chasm" (*Pokesthajar kharasj*) Choose a side, get off the fence, make a decision.
* "Bahamut's Breath!" (*Vethisvaerx Bahamut!*) Considered somewhat irreverent, this oath is commonly used to express frustration, but can also refer to cold weather.

### Speaking like a tiefling

Tieflings have lived with humans and other races for centuries, but their often ostracized families and communities have kept alive traditional sayings from Bael Turath and created new expressions unique to members of the race. When you play a tiefling, you can use these phrases to bring your character to life at the table.

* "By the Nine Gates!" The expression serves as an oath or a curse that tieflings typically use in a moment of surprise, shock, or awe. It refers to the nine magical gateways said to have existed in Bael Turath, one for each layer of the Nine Hells.
* "Never trust a tiefling's promise." Surprisingly, tieflings have adopted this derogatory statement as their own. Tieflings say it to one another as a reminder of the promises their ancestors swore to the devils and of how even such blood-sworn soul oaths could be broken.
* "A vizier's career." This phrase indicates a very short span of time. One of the last emperors of Bael Turath rapidly cycled through advisors, executing them so soon after their appointments that its was said you wouldn't "have time to eat a slice of cake in a vizier's career."
* "Every house stood alone, and all fell together." Tieflings use this slogan to remind one another of the need for cooperation. Obviously, it makes reference to the noble tiefling houses of old. It often helps to dissuade individualistic tieflings from the hubris of going it alone.

## Religious beliefs the Nentir Vale

The peoples of the Nentir Vale and the surrounding regions believe in multiple powers.

### The Gods of the Pantheon

Only the most learned scholars of the Vale know about the Dawn War, a primeval war at the genesis of the World, between the gods and the dreaded primordials, god-like beings from the deeps of the Elemental Chaos. The gods fought to stop the primordials from destroying the world and were able to gain a narrow victory. The primordials were imprisoned, but the threat they present remains.

The gods of the Pantheon (as they are commonly known) appear in dreams and visions to their followers and wear countless different faces, and artwork depicting them shows them in a variety of forms. Their true nature is beyond any physical form, as they alone of all creatures in the universe consist only of astral essence. The gods are creatures of thought and ideal, not bound by the same limitations as beings of flesh. Corellon is often depicted as an eladrin, but he is no more an eladrin than he is a fey panther—he is a god, and he transcends the physical laws that bind even angels to their concrete forms. This transcendence allows the gods to perform deeds that physical creatures can't.

Gods can also make physical forms for themselves with a moment's effort, and they do when the need arises. In these forms, they can fight and be fought, and they can suffer terrible consequences as a result. However, to destroy a god requires more than merely striking its physical form down with spell or sword. Gods have killed other gods, and the primordials killed many gods during the Dawn War. For a mortal to accomplish this deed would require rituals of awesome power to bind a god to its physical form—and then a truly epic battle to defeat that form.

The most powerful servants of the gods are their exarchs (demigods). Some exarchs are angels whose faithful service has earned them this exalted status. Others were once mortal servants who won the station through their mighty deeds. Asmodeus has devils as exarchs, and both Bahamut and Tiamat have granted that status to powerful dragons. Every exarch is a unique example of its kind, empowered with capabilities far beyond those of other angels, mortals, or monsters.

In the Nentir Vale, commoners and adventurers would often revere (or pay lip service to) more than one deity at once, praying to different gods at different times such as Bahamut for protection, Avandra for safe travel or the popular Pelor for fertile crops. Clerics and paladins more often serve a single deity, championing that god’s particular cause in the world. The most commonly worshiped gods in the Vale are the good and neutral ones, as well as Bane, even if he is an evil god, because he is considered a god of the civilized peoples. The other evil gods are revered mostly by monsters and barbarian tribes, and secret cults to them aren't unheard of in some cities as well.

Except for the chaotic evil gods (Gruumsh, Lolth, and Tharizdun), all deities are enemies of the demons, which would rather destroy the world than govern it.

#### Asmodeus

**Alignment:** Lawful Evil

**Areas of Influence:** Power, domination, tyranny

**Holy Symbol:** Three triangles in tight formation

Asmodeus is the evil god of tyranny and domination. He rules the Nine Hells with an iron fist and a silver tongue. Aside from devils, evil creatures such as rakshasas pay him homage, and evil tieflings and warlocks are drawn to his dark cults. His rules are strict and his punishment harsh:

● Seek power over others, that you might rule with strength as the Lord of Hell does.

● Repay evil with evil. If others are kind to you, exploit their weakness for your own gain.

● Show neither pity nor mercy to those who are caught underfoot as you climb your way to power. The weak do not deserve compassion.

#### Avandra

**Alignment:** Chaotic Good

**Areas of Influence:** Change, luck, trade, travel

**Holy Symbol:** Three stacked wavy lines

The good goddess of change, Avandra delights in freedom, trade, travel, adventure, and the frontier. Her temples are few in civilized lands, but her wayside shrines appear throughout the world. Halflings, merchants, and all types of adventurers are drawn to her worship, and many people raise a glass in her honor, viewing her as the goddess of luck. Her commandments are few:

● Luck favors the bold. Take your fate into your own hands, and Avandra smiles upon you.

● Strike back against those who would rob you of your freedom and urge others to fight for their own liberty.

● Change is inevitable, but it takes the work of the faithful to ensure that change is for the better.

#### Bahamut

**Alignment:** Lawful Good

**Areas of Influence:** Justice, honor, nobility, protection

**Holy Symbol:** Dragon’s head in profile, facing to the left

Called the Platinum Dragon, Bahamut is the lawful good god of justice, protection, nobility, and honor. Lawful good paladins often revere him, and metallic dragons worship him as the first of their kind. Monarchs are crowned in his name. He commands his followers thus:

● Uphold the highest ideals of honor and justice.

● Be constantly vigilant against evil and oppose it on all fronts.

● Protect the weak, liberate the oppressed, and defend just order.

* Kuyutha, the demigod of the dragonborn,was the last paladin from the ancient empire of Arkhosia. Kuyutha did his best to gather and protect the scattered dragonborn clans after the empire's fall. In recognition of Kuyutha's ceaseless efforts to safeguard his people, Bahamut make him one of his demigods and bade him train a new order of knights on Mount Mertion itself. Since that day, Kuyutha has acted as Bahamut's ambassador to the dragonborn race. He crisscrosses the world, shepherding dragonborn clans that find themselves in dire straits and brokering honorable accords when two clans have a dispute they cannot resolve. Kuyutha also seeks out the bravest among the dragonborn to train with him on Mount Mertion—and takes the vilest dragonborn villains to face their judgment before Bahamut.

#### Bane

**Alignment:** Lawful Evil

**Areas of Influence:** War, conquest

**Holy Symbol:** Claw with three talons pointing down

Bane is the evil god of war and conquest. Militaristic nations of humans and goblins serve him and conquer in his name. Evil fighters and paladins serve him. He commands his worshipers to:

● Never allow your fear to gain mastery over you, but drive it into the hearts of your foes.

● Punish insubordination and disorder.

● Hone your combat skills to perfection, whether you are a mighty general or a lone mercenary.

#### Corellon

**Alignment:** Chaotic Good

**Areas of Influence:** Arcane magic, spring, beauty, the arts

**Holy Symbol:** Starburst

The chaotic good god of spring, beauty, and the arts, Corellon is the patron of arcane magic and the fey. He seeded the world with arcane magic and planted the most ancient forests. Artists and musicians worship him, as do those who view their spellcasting as an art, and his shrines can be found throughout the Feywild. He despises Lolth and her priestesses for the leading the drow astray. He urges his followers thus:

● Cultivate beauty in all that you do, whether you're casting a spell, composing a saga, strumming a lute, or practicing the arts of war.

● Seek out lost magic items, forgotten rituals, and ancient works of art. Corellon might have inspired them in the world's first days.

● Thwart the followers of Lolth at every opportunity.

* Corellon, alongside his bride Sehanine, is the head of the Seldarine, the fellowship of brothers and sisters of the woods, that dwell in the court of Nath Seldarie. Revered by elves and eladrin alike, these gods watch over and protect their favored scions. Among their known members are Erevan Ilesere, the Fey Jester, demigod of tricksters and mischief; Fenmarel Mestarine, the Lone Wolf, demigod of rangers; Shevarash of the Black Bow, demigod of fury and vengeance; and Hanali Celanil, demigoddess of romantic love and beauty.

#### Erathis

**Alignment:** Lawful Neutral

**Areas of Influence:** Civilization, invention, laws

**Holy Symbol:** Upper half of a clockwork gear

Erathis is the lawful neutral goddess of civilization. She is the muse of great invention, founder of cities, and author of laws. Rulers, judges, pioneers, and devoted citizens revere her, and her temples hold prominent places in most of the world's major cities. Her laws are many, but their purpose is straightforward:

● Work with others to achieve your goals. Community and order are always stronger than the disjointed efforts of lone individuals.

● Tame the wilderness to make it fit for habitation, and defend the light of civilization against the encroaching darkness.

● Seek out new ideas, new inventions, new lands to inhabit, new wilderness to conquer. Build machines, build cities, build empires.

#### Gruumsh

**Alignment:** Chaotic Evil

**Areas of Influence:** Turmoil, destruction

**Holy Symbol:** Unblinking triangular eye with bony protrusions

Gruumsh is the chaotic evil god of destruction, lord of marauding barbarian hordes. Where Bane commands conquest, Gruumsh exhorts his followers to slaughter and pillage. Orcs are his fervent followers, and they bear a particular hatred for elves and eladrin because Corellon put out one of Gruumsh's eyes. The One-Eyed God gives simple orders to his followers:

● Conquer and destroy.

● Let your strength crush the weak.

● Do as you will, and let no one stop you.

#### Ioun

**Alignment:** Neutral

**Areas of Influence:** Knowledge, prophecy, skill

**Holy Symbol:** Crook shaped like a stylized eye

Ioun is the neutral goddess of knowledge, skill, and prophecy. Sages, seers, and tacticians revere her, as do all who live by their knowledge and mental power. Corellon is the patron of arcane magic, but Ioun is the patron of its study. Libraries and wizard academies are built in her name. Her commands are also teachings:

● Seek the perfection of your mind by bringing reason, perception, and emotion into balance with one another.

● Accumulate, preserve, and distribute knowledge in all forms. Pursue education, build libraries, and seek out lost and ancient lore.

● Be watchful at all times for the followers of Vecna, who seek to control knowledge and keep secrets. Oppose their schemes, unmask their secrets, and blind them with the light of truth and reason.

#### Kord

**Alignment:** Chaotic Neutral

**Areas of Influence:** Storms, strength, battle

**Holy Symbol:** Sword with a lightning bolt cross guard

Kord is the chaotic neutral storm god and the lord of battle. He revels in strength, battlefield prowess, and thunder. Fighters and athletes revere him. He is a mercurial god, unbridled and wild, who summons storms over land and sea; those who hope for better weather appease him with prayers and spirited toasts. He give few commands:

● Be strong, but do not use your strength for wanton destruction.

● Be brave and scorn cowardice in any form.

● Prove your might in battle to win glory and renown.

#### Lolth

**Alignment:** Chaotic Evil

**Areas of Influence:** Spiders, shadows, lies

**Holy Symbol:** Eight-pointed star with a web motif; also, a spider

Lolth is the chaotic evil goddess of shadow, lies, and spiders. Scheming and treachery are her commands, and her priests are a constant force of disruption in the otherwise stable society of the evil drow. Though she is properly a goddess and not a demon, she is called “Demon Queen of Spiders”. She demands that her followers:

● Do whatever it takes to gain and hold power.

● Rely on stealth and slander in preference to outright confrontation.

● Seek the death of elves and eladrin at every opportunity.

#### Melora

**Alignment:** Neutral

**Areas of Influence:** Wilderness, sea

**Holy Symbol:** Seashell with a wavelike swirl

Melora is the neutral goddess of the wilderness and the sea. She is both the wild beast and the peaceful forest, the raging whirlpool and the quiet desert. Rangers, hunters, and elves revere her, and sailors make offerings to her before beginning their voyages. Her strictures are these:

● Protect the wild places of the world from destruction and overuse. Oppose the rampant spread of cities and empires.

● Hunt aberrant monsters and other abominations of nature.

● Do not fear or condemn the savagery of nature. Live in harmony with the wild.

**Alignment:** Lawful Good

#### Moradin

**Areas of Influence:** Creation, artisans, family

**Holy Symbol:** Anvil

Moradin is the lawful good god of creation and patron of artisans, especially miners and smiths. He carved the mountains from primordial earth and is the guardian and protector of the hearth and the family. Dwarves from all walks of life follow him. He demands these behaviors of his followers:

● Meet adversity with stoicism and tenacity.

● Demonstrate loyalty to your family, your clan, your leaders, and your people.

● Strive to make a mark on the world, a lasting legacy. To make something that lasts is the highest good, whether you are a smith working at a forge or a ruler building a dynasty.

* Moradin is the leader of the shining host known as the Morndinsamman(the shield brothers of high), which includes the demigods Berronar Truesilver, Moradin’s wife and the Mother of dwarven society; Clangeddin Silverbeard, demigod of honour in warfare, and patron of dwarf warriors; Dugmaren Brightmantle, demigod of discovery and invention, and patron of scholarship; Dumathoin, demigod of mining and underground exploration, and protector of the dwarven dead; Gorm Gulthyn, demigod of defense and watchfulness, and guardian of all dwarves; Haela Brightaxe, demigoddess of battle and luck; Marthammor Duin, demigod of exploration and patron of dwarves who have left the clanholds to explore the world; Sharindlar, demigoddess of healing and mercy; and Vergadain, demigod of commerce and wealth.

#### Pelor

**Alignment:** Neutral Good

**Areas of Influence:** Sun, summer, agriculture, time

**Holy Symbol:** Circle with six outwardly radiating points

The neutral good god of the sun and summer, Pelor is the keeper of time. He supports those in need and opposes all that is evil. As the lord of agriculture and the bountiful harvest, he is the deity most commonly worshiped by ordinary humans, and his priests are well received wherever they go. Paladins and rangers are found among his worshipers. He directs his followers thus:

● Alleviate suffering wherever you find it.

● Bring Pelor's light into places of darkness, showing kindness, mercy, and compassion.

● Be watchful against evil.

#### The Raven Queen

**Alignment:** Lawful Neutral

**Areas of Influence:** Death, fate, winter

**Holy Symbol:** Raven’s head in profile, facing left

The name of the lawful neutral goddess of death is long forgotten, but she is called the Raven Queen. She is the spinner of fate and the patron of winter. She marks the end of each mortal life, and mourners call upon her during funeral rites, in the hope that she will guard the departed from the curse of undeath. She expects her followers to abide by these commandments:

● Hold no pity for those who suffer and die, for death is the natural end of life.

● Bring down the proud who try to cast off the chains of fate. Punish hubris where you find it.

● Watch for the cults of Orcus and stamp them out whenever they arise. The Demon Prince of the Undead seeks to claim the Raven Queen's throne.

#### Sehanine

**Alignment:** Chaotic Good

**Areas of Influence:** Trickery, moon, love, autumn

**Holy Symbol:** Crescent moon

The chaotic good goddess of the moon and autumn, Sehanine is the patron of trickery and illusions. She has close ties to Corellon and Melora and is a favorite deity among elves and halflings. She is also the goddess of love, who sends shadows to cloak lovers' trysts. Scouts and thieves ask for her blessing on their work. Her teachings are simple:

● Follow your goals and seek your own destiny.

● Keep to the shadows, avoiding the blazing light of zealous good and the utter darkness of evil.

● Seek new horizons and new experiences, and let nothing tie you down.

* Alongside Corellon, Sehanine is at the head of the Seldarine, the fey pantheon.

#### Tharizdun

**Alignment:** Chaotic Evil

**Areas of Influence:** Annihilation, madness

**Holy Symbol:** A spiral

Tharizdun is the chaotic evil god who created the Abyss. His name is rarely spoken and even the fact of his existence is not widely known. A few scattered cults of demented followers revere him, calling him the Chained God or the Elder Elemental Eye. Tharizdun doesn't speak to his followers, so his commands are unknown, but his cults teach their members to:

● Channel power to the Chained God, so he can break his chains.

● Retrieve lost relics and shrines to the Chained God.

● Pursue the obliteration of the world, in anticipation of the Chained God's liberation.

#### Tiamat

**Alignment:** Lawful Evil

**Areas of Influence:** Wealth, greed, vengeance

**Holy Symbol:** Five clawed star

Tiamat is the lawful evil goddess of wealth, greed, and envy. She is the patron of chromatic dragons and those whose lust for wealth overrides any other goal or concern. She commands her followers to:

● Hoard wealth, acquiring much and spending little. Wealth is its own reward.

● Forgive no slight and leave no wrong unpunished.

● Take what you desire from others. Those who lack the strength to defend their possessions are not worthy to own them.

* Kurtulmak, one of the servants of Tiamat, is the demigod of the kobolds, and they claimed he gave them life.

#### Torog

**Alignment:** Neutral Evil

**Areas of Influence:** Underdark, imprisonment

**Holy Symbol:** A *T* attached to a circular shackle

Torog is the neutral evil god of the Underdark, patron of jailers and torturers. Common superstition holds that if his name is spoken, the King that Crawls burrows up from below and drags the hapless speaker underground to an eternity of imprisonment and torture. Jailers and torturers pray to him in deep caves and cellars, and creatures of the Underdark revere him as well. He teaches his worshipers to:

● Seek out and revere the deep places beneath the earth.

● Delight in the giving of pain, and consider pain you receive as homage to Torog.

● Bind tightly what is in your charge, and restrain those who wander free.

#### Vecna

**Alignment:** Neutral Evil

**Areas of Influence:** Undeath, secrets

**Holy Symbol:** Partially shattered one-eyed skull

Vecna is the neutral evil god of undead, necromancy, and secrets. He rules that which is not meant to be known and that which people wish to keep secret. Evil spellcasters and conspirators pay him homage. He commands them to:

● Never reveal all you know.

● Find the seed of darkness in your heart and nourish it; find it in others and exploit it to your advantage.

● Oppose the followers of all other deities so that Vecna alone can rule the world.

#### Zehir

**Alignment:** Chaotic Evil

**Areas of Influence:** Darkness, poison, serpents

**Holy Symbol:** Snake in the shape of a dagger

Zehir is the chaotic evil god of darkness, poison, and assassins. Snakes are his favored creation, and the yuan-ti revere him above all other gods, offering sacrifice to him in pits full of writhing serpents. He urges his followers to:

● Hide under the cloak of night, that your deeds might be kept in secret.

● Kill in Zehir's name and offer each murder as a sacrifice.

● Delight in poison, and surround yourself with snakes.

### Common rites to the deities of the Pantheon

The people of the world and planes worship the deities in different ways. The next ones are common practices in the Nentir Vale.

* When you are proven wrong, write down two copies of the truth you discover, keeping one and taking the other to a shrine to loun.
* After you take fruit, herbs, or wood from a forest, trace a star in the soil so Corellon's magic can replace what you've taken.
* Swear by Bahamut when you make an oath to bring someone to justice.
* When you agree to an alliance or a business arrangement, interlock your fingers like the teeth of two gears—forming the symbol of Erathis.
* Etch Avandra's symbol on a path to indicate a safe course or on a building to show it is a safe house.
* Shout at the heavens during a storm to prove your bravery to Kord.
* Wear golden jewelry during the day and silver at night, to please both Pelor and Sehanine.
* Inter a raven's feather with a corpse to keep undeath from claiming the body.

**History of the Nentir Vale**

Recorded history began around two thousand years ago with the founding of the southern dragon and dragonborn empire of Arkhosia. A few centuries later, in the east, the human empire of Bael Turath arose. Both nations had a policy of expansion, and soon conquered most of the known world. However, while Arkhosia expanded its territories mostly through peaceful means, with the aim to spread civilization, knowledge and security to untamed places and ignorant peoples, Bael Turath expanded its territories by force, enslaving the conquered nations. Soon, the power hungry nobles of Bael Turath began to lose control over their empire and swore to retain their rule even at the cost of their humanity. Summoning devils from the Nine Hells and using evil rituals to seal infernal pacts, they became the first tieflings.

By that time, the Nentir Vale—a land that wasn’t part of of the two empires yet—was populated by savage tribes of humans, elves and monstrous humanoids. The oldest traditions tell that in this bygone age, the Vale was a great forest named the Nentir Forest. Nentir Forest had little to fear from dragonkind, because Malorunth the Eternal Ash, a powerful archfey, extended its protection across the entire region, and all its inhabitants bowed before the forest's venerable sovereigns, the treants.

The first eladrin who ventured into the Nentir Forest were the members of the Winterguard, an order of swordmages from the eladrin realm of Cendriane who constructed a prison in the Winter’s Rise, a mountain located in the northernmost region of the forest, to sequester the most dangerous prisoners and criminals of the Kinstrife War —the ancient war the eladrin and elves fought against the drow—, including a powerful archfey whose name has been erased from history. After the fall of Cendriane at the end of the war, the members of the Winterguard remained true to their original mandate, thought they began to recruit members among the humans and demihumans tribes of the forest to replenish their numbers.

After the Kinstrife War, the elves abandoned the Feywild in self-imposed exile and came to the natural world. The first elves that inhabited the Nentir Forest settled in the southern regions, the land now known as the Harken Forest.

One spring evening, Malorunth inexplicably fell silent, withered leaves falling in droves from his brittle, petrified branches. With Malorunth's passing so too fell the vale's protective mantle. Scores of dragons infiltrated the woodland, triggering the first of several titanic confrontations between wyrm and treant.

When the so-called War of Endless Branches finally ended, the great wood stood divided. Even though dragons' fire had razed large swaths of woodland, it was festering suspicion and doubt that ultimately divided the treants. With little evidence to back their claims, some deciduous treants openly blamed the conifers for the Eternal Ash's demise. Soon, heated words bred violence, and civil war engulfed the forest.

The treant fellowship ripped apart, creating a deep rift that endures still. In the wake of the treant civil war, most conifers migrated into the northern wood, known today as Winterbole Forest. Reaffirming suspicions of their betrayal, the Winterbole treants turned their veneration to the Prince of Frost. The deciduous treants continue to revere Malorunth, whose petrified trunk stands enshrined in the heart of Harken Forest. Harken treants cling to the belief that the Eternal Ash will return to them, but only if his murder is avenged. And as with the forest divided, the region came to be known as the Nentir Vale.

When the treants of the Harken Forest declared war the treants of the Winterbole Forest, the elven druids known as the Harken’s Heart lent their aid to the Harken treants with such zeal that many began to see them as dangerous, even other druid sects. After the war ended, a powerful druid master named Eyton cursed the Harken's Heart druids, severing them from their primal power source. Angered by Eyton's actions, yet fearing his power, the Harken's Heart druids appealed to the goddess Melora for aid. She altered their curse—now known as the Harken's curse—to affect them only if they were outside of the Harken Forest. Despite having regained limited power from the curse, the Harken's Heart druids have continued to seek an end to it.

The ancestors of the orcs that are known now as the Bloodspear Clan defeated the ancient iron dragon Kulkoszar and established themselves in the Stonemarch, while the human tribes of the Eastern Valley, in the Old Hills, founded the city of Andok Sur, a necropolis dedicated to the demon prince Orcus, where the barbarians interred their enemies while still alive. Eventually, the vampire lord Zarguna turned Andok Sur into a vibrant City of the Dead, and gained control of almost the entire eastern region of the Nentir Vale. The gods saw Andok Sur as a threat to the natural world—a threat they could not abide. At the height of the city’s power, a great earthquake rocked the Old Hills and the City of the Dead fell into the earth and was buried to be forgotten by time and history.

The other relevant human group of the Vale of that time was the Tigerclaw barbarians. They claim to be direct descendants of the primal spirit Hunter of Winter, a powerful sabertooth tiger that placed its mark upon them in the savage dawn of the world, eons before the first human empire rose from the dust. As the lorekeepers tell it, the barbarian chieftain Hota Swiftstripe was hunting near a glacier when he encountered the spirit and both battled, until Hota won. Hota didn’t kill the beast, however, and for that he was blessed by Hunter of Winter, who transformed him into a shifter. All the Tigerclaws shifters believe to be Hota’s descendants.

The Nentir Vale was also the occasional target of the archfey Koliada, the Winter Witch. Every few centuries she came from the Feywild and attacked the Vale in her bid to make the mortal world one of eternal winter, summoning strange armies of fey and wicked mortals that have kneeled before her will, and subjugating and destroying the tribes of barbarians and humanoids that lived in the Vale.

It’s also known that the Pyramid of Shadows, a multi-dimensional prison created by infernal powers to keep dangerous and powerful individuals trapped in an eternity of suffering, already existed by this time. The prison “door” on this world was anchored in the northern exten of the Winterbole Forest.

Legends of this remote era also tell about an eldritch jewel known only as the Soul Gem, is believed fallen from the sky and landed in the foothills near the Dawnforge Mountains.

Eventually, the expanding borders of Bael Turath collided with those of Arkhosia. Ideology, culture, and ambition smashed together and no common ground could be found between the two empires. Both nations descended into hundreds of years of warfare, and many of those battles were fought in the Nentir Vale. The Arkhosian and Turathi ruins that dot the Vale date from that time. Finally, after desperate and ill-considered acts of war that nearly destroyed the known world, both empires collapsed, leaving chaos and a new dark age in their wake.

In the centuries following the collapse of Arkhosia and Bael Turath, smaller communities began to flourish in the lands once claimed by these empires, eventually becoming powerful nations unto themselves. Kingdoms such as the elven Solaneillon, dwarven Mithralfast, and the barbarian Karkoth arose to fill the vacuum of power left by the two ancient empires. And then, at the age of fifteen, the legendary Emperor Magroth founded the empire of Nerath, after defeating the gold dragon Ayunken-vanzen in the lands that would became the capital city of Nera, lighted the legendary Flame Imperishable, and led the growing Nerathi legions on decades-long marches of expansion that claimed most of the known world within his lifetime..

For all his successes, however, Magroth was filled with ambition and soon pledged himself to the demon prince Orcus, who made Magroth immune to all non-magical weapons in return for dead warriors to bolster his Shadowfell armies. As Magroth turned the Nerathi legions against enemies real and imagined, he became a ruthless ruler, and the people began to calling him Magroth the Mad. When his despotic rule was as peak, Magroth was killed by the hero Krondor, ending his reign of terror, but transforming the city of Darani in a domain of dread when Krondor's brother, the knight-commander Kalabar, killed his own brother while trying to save the evil emperor.

Empress Amphaesia, the eladrin princess Magroth had married after he defeated one of the Sidhe Lords of the Feywild, guided the empire through the turbulent years after Magroth's demise. After she mysteriously vanished, Nerath brought a long period of peace as wise emperors brought justice and order to a world still ravaged by Bael Turath’s iniquities.

By this time, the Nentir Vale was a thinly settled borderland, home to quarrelsome human hill-chieftains and remote realms of humanoids such as dwarves and elves. Giants, minotaurs, orcs, ogres, and goblins plagued the area, and ruins such as those on the Gray Downs or the ring-forts atop the Old Hills date back to these days, as also do the stories of the human hero Vendar and the dragon of the Nentir.

The most powerful inhabitants of the Vale at the time were a commune of dragons who lived in the Dawnforge Mountains. These dragons considered themselves rulers of the Vale and constantly raided the groups of nomadic people that were attempting to settle the land. Among them, the most dangerous was a three-headed red dragon named Calastryx.

Among the monstrous humanoids, the minotaur kingdom of Saruun Khel, located in the deeps below Thunderspire Mountain, held dominion over most of the Vale. At the height of its power, a battle for the throne erupted into a vicious civil war. Out of anger at the minotaurs’ growing devotion to the god Torog, the demon prince Baphomet cursed them with mindless fury. The minotaurs battled one another until only a few survivors remained. Saruun Khel was abandoned and eventually forgotten.

Another powerful nation in the Vale of that age was the kingdom of a tiefling warlord known as Karavakos. He had struck a pact with infernal powers for an army to defend his land from both monsters and a rebellion, and soon his kingdom expanded to rival Nerath, thanks to the might of his army. When he tried to invade the Feywild, however, he was defeated by the lords of the fey and imprisoned in the Pyramid of Shadows along with his eladrin consort, a princess known as Vyrellis. His kingdom disappeared soon after that.

years ago, a massive meteor fell in the Ogrefist Hills, creating the valley known as the Chaos Scar. The meteor was in fact the heart of an entity from the Far Realm known as Shoth-Gorag, who was nearly killed by other Far Realms entities and had to flee that plane to save its life. After wandering across the void between worlds for an eternity, it eventually found the mortal world and fell in the Nentir Vale.

The “meteor” fell near a keep constructed by a powerful goliath sorcerer named Voran Earthmane. While Voran was lucky and survived the destruction of his keep, many of his magic items were lost. With his life’s work in shambles, Voran collected those of his belongings he could find and departed the area for lands unknown, and his name and legacy faded into history.

The malevolent remains of the “meteor” began to sow seeds of wickedness, attracting those of a perverse and corruptible bent. Over the centuries, creatures of evil spirit have been drawn to this part of the Vale. A long-forgotten king erected a wall across the valley's mouth, trying to contain the threat of the Chaos Scar, with little to no success.

Sometime after the Chaos Scar was created, a group of followers of Bane discovered the heart of the meteor. Mistaking the heart for a gift from their tyrannical deity, they took it. Around it, high on the cliffs above the Chaos Scar, they built a small fortress temple they named Hallowgaunt, and began to be called the Brotherhood of the Scar.

It is rumored that around this time Restwell Keep was built near the Chaos Scar by a clan of dwarves, but soon they were defeated and enslaved by a hobgoblin king only known as Grim Eye. Other rumors tell that Grim Eye was the one who commissioned the Keep, the dwarves already being his slaves. Whatever the truth, Grim Eye’s petty kingdom didn’t last. Sometime after Grim Eye mysteriously disappeared, the blue dragon Fafnar conquered the Keep and made it his lair for a time.

Around that time, a necromancer named Daelh invaded the Witchlight Fens, bringing with him a handful of cadaver collectors. Nobody knows what happened to the necromancer, but some of the constructs he brought eventually fell in the hands of the Daggerburg tribe of goblins.

With the rise of the Nerathi Empire to the south, human settlers began to move up the Nentir River. Gardmore Abbey and the town of Fastormel were the first Nerathi settlements in the Vale, established around three hundred fifty years ago. In the following decades, other settlers established the towns of Harkenwold and Winterhaven. Valthrun’s Tower in Winterhaven is believed built around this time.

As the Nerathi settlers began to conquer more territories on the Vale, the old hill clans resisted. Hopelessly outnumbered, they stood with their faithful hounds against the mighty armies of Nerath, even as the Tigerclaw barbarians and other native tribes abandoned the ale and retreated far into the northern wilderness of the Winterbole Forest. Although the hill clans fought bravely, they were annihilated in a final desperate battle upon the downs. Long after the battle, the hounds of the hill clans prowled the battlefields, howling over the corpses of their masters and refusing to leave their sides. The Nerathans built a great barrow in honor of the warriors of the hill clans, and after the last of their bodies was interred, the hounds vanished. Legends of ghostly “hounds of ill-omen” became common in the subsequent years.

Legends of the time tell about a group of adventurers who massacred the hill clan that inhabited the region known as the Sword Barrow. It is said that, with his last breath, the elder of the tribe cursed the adventurers to be bound to the Barrow forever. When the adventurers were killed by monsters of the Sword Barrow when they were searching for the treasures of the tribe, they rose as undead, or so the legend says. Soon after, the people of the Vale began to tell stories about the “Barrowhaunts” that patrol the Sword Barrow.

years ago, a Nerathan hero named Aranda Markelhay obtained a charter to build a keep at the portage of the Nentir Falls, where is believed the legendary Vendar killed the dragon of the Nentir. She raised a simple tower at the site of Moonstone Keep, and under its protection the town of Fallcrest began to grow. Sometime after that, many wealthy lords built manors and states around the town, including families of well-off eladrin that came from the Feywild. Over the next two centuries, Fallcrest grew into a small and prosperous city.

The dragons of the Dawnforge Mountains wiped out several of the new human settlements that were established during this time. The Nerathi settlers sought out any who could help quell such assaults, and a dwarven thane sent a battalion of dwarf warriors to establish a forward operating fortress in the mountains. The dwarves named it Hammerfast. The struggle ended three hundred years ago, when the Nerathi wizard Starris sacrificed his life to place a curse on Calastryx, forcing the dragon to slumber beneath the Forgepeak Mountain. The other dragons' attacks lessened, allowing civilization in the Vale to grow. The fortress of Hammerfast became a sacred necropolis and eventually a vault for dwarven treasures.

While the humans from Nerath and the dwarves fought the dragons of the Dawnforge Mountains, Chief Fangstrike of the Tigerclaw barbarians defeated Bitterstrike, a white dragon that had claimed the Winterbole Forest as her realm. Bitterstrike retreated into hiding and only reappeared thirty years later, when Chief Fangstrike died of old age. Bitterstrike destroyed the Tigerclaw's main settlement and subdued the surviving barbarians into serving her. Having discovered the benefits of rule over the inhabitants of the forest, Bitterstrike soon dominated the other forest inhabitants as well.

After having slaying the red dragon Pyrothenes, the Nerathan knight Boris Zaspar was granted lands extending out from Lake Wintermist’s western shore for as far as he could walk in every direction from sunrise to sunset. In those lands, he founded the town of Mistwatch. The first building raised was Widower’s Watch, named at its completion for Lord Zaspar, who lost his beloved wife to sickness the first year after claiming his land. After his castle was completed, stone buildings replaced the wooden shacks and piers grew out across the water to meet the burgeoning fishing industry’s needs. The crude hamlet became a thriving town, a trade partner for nearby Winterhaven, and an important stop for merchants bound west from Fallcrest, Hammerfast, and Harkenwold.

Tales say that the great wizard Galap-Dreidel, after he had found the mystical Soul Gem, had lifted the keep known as Castle Inverness from the bedrock to make a kingdom of others' lands for himself. When lords and royals came to challenge his claim, Galap-Dreidel's spells struck them down long before they could even see Castle Inverness. Thus were the boundaries of Galap-Dreidel's lands discerned. Most grand and terrible of all Galap-Dreidel's work was the keep's great inner tower where the wizard's most prized possession, the Soul Gem. To protect it, Galap-Dreidel raised up the great central tower and filled his castle with horrible creatures and traps. Then, using a great incantation, he wrested the tower from the fabric of time so that those within would not be affected by the passage of years. Even when the creatures didn't age or needed food, still had need of amusement, so at times Galap-Dreidel would take a prisoner from the surrounding lands and set the victim free in the tower for their sport.

A time came when Galap-Dreidel left his keep and did not return, however. When at last it seemed safe to assume the wizard was not coming back, a mob of superstitious people from the surrounding lands laid siege to the castle. Without the wizard to protect it, its walls fell before the force of their rage, and they even threw down the great tower. Despite this victory over their former master, people feared the ruins—for on foggy nights the keep seemed to return. Did the old magic and monsters also return, or perhaps the ghost of Galap-Dreidel himself? No one knows for certain, but that's what the bards seem to suggest.

By this time, noble knights of Pelor quested to find the Sunspire, a legendary amber tower where the sun's daughter dwelled. Many knights of Nerath explored the world in search of that tower to no avail. It is said that many of those knights found a mysterious tower similar to the Sunspire in the Nentir Vale, but reports are confusing, because the Tower was spotted on different regions of the Vale. The knights that ventured into that Tower were never heard from again.

The famed dwarf bandit Greysen Ramthane was a scourge of Nerath’s borders for many long years. He and his coterie of thieves looted untold wealth from the empire. Eventually, Nerath dispatched a small army that tracked Greysen to the Restwell Keep. After an extended siege, the soldiers stormed the keep and slew the bandits to a man. But what happened next became the source of countless rumors and legends. The task force’s commanding officer, a half-orc named Bertak, claimed to find only a tiny portion of Greysen’s stolen wealth within the keep. Stories claiming that Bertak and his cronies pocketed much of the treasure persist to this day, but others believe that Greysen’s wealth is still hidden somewhere in the keep, protected by traps and mechanical guardians.

When the settlements of the Nentir Vale became populous enough, Commandant Lathiel of the Winterguard order sent messengers to negotiate an accord with the rulers of Nerath. In return for a considerable sum of gold and magical items and knowledge, the order would incarcerate the empire’s most dangerous criminals—those so powerful that execution would be an insufficient means of stopping them. The emperors were pleased with the Winterguard’s services, and allowed its members to operate legally as bounty hunters within its borders, thus enabling the order to recruit new members from farther afield. One side effect of the agreement has been the gradual dissemination of the swordmage’s traditions in the lands of the empire and beyond.

During the height of Nerath's rule, the holy knights of Gardmore Abbey fought valiantly in Bahamut's name against any monstrous and evil forces that encroached into the Nentir Vale, and on occasion launched campaigns to bring down bastions of evil in the world beyond the ale. They destroyed thousands of orcs in the Stonemarch, and brought low a temple of Zehir in the depths of the Witchlight Fens. However, the knights suffered devastating losses in this campaign, primarily because the cult of Zehir was so adept at recruiting converts to their faith from within the ranks of the knights, creating highly effective spies. Eventually, Zarel, the daughter of the head of the paladin order of that time, was corrupted by the Yuan-ti and transformed into a vampire.

The last time the Winter Witch walked upon the world, a group of Imperial Knights halted her advance. These heroes procured Koliada’s nemesis—a powerful artifact of pure sunlight called the Sun’s Sliver—and entered the frozen far reaches of the Feywild and confronted Koliada within her fortress of Winter’s Heart. Sun’s Sliver in hand, they battled the archfey, but before they could use the artifact to destroy her, Koliada fled the field, and while the knights won the day, they knew someone would have to confront the Winter Witch again. In preparation for that day, they hid the Sun’s Sliver, sealing it in an isolated monastery in the Dawnforge Mountains where a member of their order could retrieve it again the next time Koliada walked the world.

Some legends tell that, during this time, the Nerathi Prince Rande (later known as “the Lost of Nerath”) established House Random near the banks of the Lake Nen, after having chased and killed a doppelganger criminal. A few years after that, he and his entire mansion disappeared without a trace.

Many Nerathi lords also wanted to settle down in the Vale. The wrecks now known as Kobold Hall and Kalton Manor were such attempts. Many people still tell about the folly of Lord Arrol Kalton, who raised his manor about 200 years ago in the Witchlight Fens. Soon, however, monsters—among them the powerful black dragon Shadowmire—drove off the tenants Arrol had brought with him, and the manor was never finished. At the end, Arrol and a handful of his servants and family lived alone in a half-finished keep, slowly falling into ruin until they disappeared as well. Some believe the old Kalton fortune still lies within the ruins of the abandoned manor. Few know that the descendants of Lord Kalton fled the area and survived, tainted by the foul energies of the Witchlight Fens.

Sometime after the destruction of Kalton Manor, Shadowmire was able to establish himself as the ruler of the Witchlight Fens, subduing the inhabitants of the swamp to his will. Among his most loyal subjects are the vast majority of the lizardfolk tribes of the Nentir and White ivers.

In the same year, a cult of worshipers of the demon prince Orcus purposely created a rift to the Shadowfell in the Cairngorm Peaks, near the town of Winterhaven, connecting one of Orcus’s unholy sites to the mortal world. Skeletons, zombies, and fouler creatures flooded through the rift into the light of day. The empire of Nerath dispatched a legion to join forces with the knights of Gardmore Abbey, and they quickly destroyed the undead, sealed the opening, and built a keep to watch over the location and contain the threat ages of Nerath put a magical seal the rift to Shadowfell horrors to the mortal world. This is the site known as the Keep on the Shadowfell.

Some years after that, the paladins of Gardmore Abbey, along with the imperial legions, journeyed to the Dragondown Coast, far to the south, to destroy the Infernal Bastion and defeat its leader, the terrible hobgoblin warlord Hur-Tharak, who had conquered many of the Nerathi lands. After a victory that is acclaimed by historians as the most glorious of Nerath’s victories, the paladins were tasked to safeguard the powerful artifacts the warlord had stored in the Infernal Bastion. One of the treasures the knights brought back from the war was the ancient artifact known as the Deck of Many Things.

About one hundred fifty years ago, the empire of Nerath found itself in a massive campaign against an invasion of orcs, goblinoids, gnolls and demons, led by the mysterious "Ruler of Ruin" The last Nerathi Emperor, Elidyr the Just, rallied a valiant defense against the demonic threat. To bolster his armies, he commissioned the Imperial Order of Artificers to create the warforged, a race of mechanical warriors, and also recalled all the legions that were in the far-flung corners of the Empire. Not all the armies returned to protect Nerath’s capital, as they had to deal with the enemies that also threatened the Empire’s far outposts. Among those who didn’t return were the knights of Gardmore Abbey.

A force of orcs from the Stonemarch descended on Gardmore Abbey. Aided by ogres, hill giants, and demonic embodiments of chaos, the orcs laid siege to the abbey. Rumors say the knights could have survived if it not for the folly of one person. Fearing the attackers and unable to trust in Bahamut's deliverance, the captain of the knights, Havarr of Nenlast, turned to the Deck of Many Things for aid in the siege. Havarr drew the Skull card, and scores of undead monsters emerged from the space between worlds and spread throughout the abbey, bringing terror and destruction in their wake. The walls were breached, the Stonemarch forces spilled inside, and a titanic battle among knights, undead, and orcs left the abbey in ruins. Some believe the Deck of Many Things remains in the abbey, unable to leave because the magic the paladins had placed to prevent intruders from reaching the artifact also prevented the Deck from disappearing. No one knows the truth.

When the armies of evil encircled the abbey, the knights entrusted a messenger with a map indicating the locations of their greatest artifacts and begged him to deliver it to the Emperor. The messenger never reached his destination, however.

Some believe that empress Amphaesia returned soon before the final battle against the “Ruler of Ruin” to save as many people she could from the war. The rumors say she took those she saved to her realm in the Feywild, but no one knows if the rumors are true.

Alas, Elydir’s efforts to save Nerath were not enough. Just before the final, catastrophic battle of Nerath, the foolish Prince Roland, firstborn of Emperor Elydir, used his influence to move the Third Legion, one of the most powerful legions of the Imperial Army, to defend the remotest outposts. He did so because he coveted a woman who was betrothed to the commander of the Third Legion, a veteran named Paulus. Roland hoped that with leagues between them, she would forget Paulus and welcome his advances. While Roland courted the young woman, the demonic army spilled into the city of Nera.

In a tragic battle that would be forever remembered as “the Battle of the Nine Sons,” The Emperor, along with his heirs and his most trusted nobles, fell in battle. The "Ruler of Ruin" simply returned to the Abyss, apparently content to leave the world in a state of chaos. It is said that, when Paulus heard about the attack on the capital, he rushed the Third Legion to help the Emperor, but is was too late. By the time they reached the battlefield, the city of Nera was already destroyed. Paulus renamed them the Last Legion and they spend their remaining days righting such wrongs as they could.

The remaining lords of the empire—fragmented, fearful, and desperate—fell upon one another for survival. The empire crumbled quickly into factional wars, commerce ground to a halt and famine and plague grew thick across the land, while monsters and raiders prowled freely. The greatest of the human empires was no more, leaving the world in a new dark age.

Whispered rumors in the Empire’s final days told of the younger daughter of the Emperor, born amid the lethal chaos of the war. She survived her mother’s death and was secreted away by Uhon Nerika, the last surviving member of the Ghost Blades, the imperial guard. What became of the girl or her savior, no one knows. Some of the oldest farmers of the Vale tell of woman named Uhon Nerika that came from the south and lived her last days with her “daughter” in the village of Nenlast.

After Nerath fell, the Gravelstrokes—a family of assassins on the service of the crown—lost much of their fortune and influence. Maintaining their true nature as a secret, the Gravelstrokes retired to the country, eventually raising a manor in the Barony of Harkenwold, where its descendants live to this day.

The town of Kiris Dahn, built by human hands in the western lands of the Ogrefist Hills, stood strong against invaders for decades after the fall of the Empire. It had magical stones created by tiefling artisans that could kill anyone who attacked the town. The stones were almost all t, but protected the town against invaders for decades.

Roughly one hundred thirty years ago, during his teenage years, a boy named Aurtus hired himself out as a messenger, delivering messages and packages in the city of Fallcrest. When he could afford a horse, he began delivering messages throughout the Nentir Vale. During his travels, he visited many towns and settlements, and, in the process, saw the problems that people faced. At age 27, Aurtus heard the call of Pelor and began studying at the House of the Sun in Fallcrest. Rising quickly through the ranks, Aurtus became one of the most trusted and respected priests of Pelor in the city.

Then, ninety years ago, a fierce horde of orcs known as the Bloodspears Clan descended from the Stonemarch and swept over the Vale. Without the knights and paladins of Gardmore Abbey to aid them, Fallcrest's army was defeated in a rash attempt to halt the Bloodspears in the Gardbury Downs, and the horde burned and pillaged Fallcrest and completely destroyed Fastormel and other towns before finally met their match in the necropolis of Hammerfast. Even when they conquered the fortress and killed all the dwarven warriors and priests tasked with guarding its treasures, the orcs suffered heavy losses as well. After capturing only a few of its treasures, the Bloodspears abandoned the Vale.

Aurtus was one of the few survivors of the Bloodspear War. He saw the fall of his home as a calling to serve Pelor in a new way. As the people of Fallcrest struggled to rebuild their home, Aurtus refocused his efforts in service to Pelor. He began collecting histories of all the nearby lands and compiling them into a great book he called The Living Tome of Pelor. He hoped that the followers of Pelor could use this knowledge to enlighten the people of the Nentir Vale, teach them to avoid the hazards of history, and in so doing, bring a brighter tomorrow to all. As Fallcrest grew anew, several followers of Pelor found merit in Aurtus’s work. These priests and acolytes began working with Aurtus to teach the people of Fallcrest and others about the follies of the past, so that events such as the fall of Fallcrest could be avoided in the future. They came to call themselves the Students of Aurtus.

At the same time, dwarves came from the south with the aim to settle in the Vale. Due to the fall of Nerath, the southern citadels of the dwarves were broken and in a state of chaos, and the dwarves determined that dead had no use for a fortification such as Hammerfast. Thus, the necropolis was transformed into a city of the living. However, orcs demanded that the dwarves set aside part of the fortress for their priests, as the fortress that had claimed so many orc lives had become a holy site for the followers of Gruush. The dwarven priests beseeched the gods for guidance, and in a sacred compact struck with Moradin and Gruumsh, the town's founders agreed to let the orcs live in the city as long as the orcs agreed to live with them in peaceful terms, respect the dead and protect the city from attacks. The orcs agreed, and since then Hammerfast has grown into the largest and richest settlement in the eastern portion of the Nentir Vale.

years ago, Sir Jerold Keegan, the commander of the last of the Imperial Knights forces, that were tasked with the protection of Shadowfell Keep, slaughtered many of the keep’s residents—including his own family—and them himself in a fit of madness, produced by the dread powers from the Shadowfell. In doing so, Sir Keegan was bound to the site of his dead, and became a ghost. The keep was abandoned after that, and eventually, more or less forgotten. An earthquake a few years later collapsed the upper towers and walls, and turned the place into a ruin of tumbled stone. Sometime after that, a tribe of goblins set up a lair within the subterranean chambers beneath the keep.

Over sixty years ago, a group of famous explorers and warriors who operated near Hammerfast, known as the Silver Company, delved into the “ghost tower” that appeared in the ruins of Castle Inverness for the first time. The result was tragic—one of the Silver Company, a woman named Oldivya Vladistone, perished. Her husband, Salazar, continued to adventure with the Silver Company for some years, growing more despondent the longer he had to deal with his wife's death. Eventually, Salazar Vladistone sacrificed himself to save his allies and the people of Hammerfast from a catastrophic dragon named Actherimos and his duergar followers, in a remote monastery in the Dawnforge Mountains. Vladistone's spirit did not rest quietly after his sacrifice however. He became a ghost, haunting the Nentir Vale as he made pilgrimages to the grave of his wife in the ruins of Inverness. Soon after, the deeds of the Silver Company faded into obscurity.

More than fifty years ago, the monks of the Enlightened Flame were killed in their monastery, the Dungeon of the Fire Opal, by a band of marauding gnolls. The gnolls went to the monastery in search of a great fire opal, a gem said to contain the bound spirit of a powerful efreeti lord, but they never found the gem. Rumors persist of secret passages and tunnels within the dungeons beneath the ruins of the monastery.

years ago two rival adventurers, the human Jasyn of Therund and the dwarf Marholt Arlestone, found themselves trapped in the Underdark in the aftermath of an expedition gone bad. For years the two had competed to find the legendary ruby of Sereth Van, and both arrived at the gem's location serendipitously. The treasure hunters, however, didn't plan for a nest of purple worms surrounding the ruby, and they were driven back into the tunnels. Each blamed the other for their mutual failure, and they lost the path during their bickering. Just as they realized their predicament, a violent quake trapped them in a hitherto unknown region of the Underdark.

Forced to rely on each other for survival, Marholt and Jasyn set aside their differences and, after a four month trek, they emerged in a huge lava tube that held a river teeming with subterranean life. When they finally reached the surface, Jasyn realized that the two were in the immense Dawnforge mountain range. The two, now fast friends and keen for any opportunity to amass wealth, came up with the same idea: They could use the underground river to bypass the Dawnforges, opening up new trade routes and earning a fortune. The Deep Guides organization was born. A few years after the dea of their founders, the Deep Guides separated into many independent, rival organizations that compete for their customers, however.

Nearly forty years ago, a pair of retired adventurers—an elf wizard named Vanamere and a human fighter named Lethion Goldenhawk—married and built a tower south of the Cloak Wood as a private residence. A few years later the tower became an important point the defense of Nentir Vale, due to its strategic placement between Fallcrest, the Ogrefist Hills and the Witchlight Fens. When Lethion passed away, Vanamere placed his remains in a secret tomb carved out of the hill beneath the tower. With him she buried their remaining treasure, including magic items seized during their careers. One of the items entombed with Lethion was a gold-plated human skull, taken from the corpse of a gnoll demon-worshiper in the Ogrefist Hills. The golden skull is believed to be one of several stolen from the Temple of Yellow Skulls.

years ago, goblins from the Ogrefist Hills and the Witchlight Fens joined forces with a clan of hill giants, and launched an attack on Vanamere’s tower. Vanamere used a ritual to summon a mighty storm, and when the monsters breached the tower, a great bolt of lightning struck its peak, causing the tower to explode. Jagged shards of rock killed most of the invaders, and the remaining monsters fled back into the hills, never to return again. What became of Vanamere no one knows. According to legend, when the lightning struck, she became one with the tower and remains trapped within its ruined walls to this day.

Nearly thirty years ago, after having killed her former hobgoblin commander, the bugbear Graala Bloodghost founded the Bloodghost Syndicate, composed mostly of bugbears, though they also employ mercenaries of other races as well. The syndicate dabbles in a variety of criminal enterprises, from gambling, protection rackets, assassinations, and money lending. It operates in the most important cities of the Nentir Vale and beyond.

About twenty five years ago, three wizards—Hasifir, Niame, and Samazar—discovered the ruins of Saruun Khel in the Thunderspire Mountain, while seeking reliable access to the Underdark. Accompanied by retainers, the wizards spent long months in the ruins. Among the magic items they recovered were several command amulets, which allowed them to control the bronze warders, minotaur constructs built in the city’s heyday. The wizards used the bronze warders to clear the upper level of the ruins, establishing a stronghold there—the Seven-Pillared Hall, and founded the order of the Mages of Saruun. In the Seven-Pillared Hall, dwarves, duergar, drow, and other merchants of the Underdark come to trade with a few lucky merchants of the surface. The existence of the place is not widely known either by Underdark denizens or surface-dwellers, and the mages try to keep it that way

Eight years ago, the citizens of Kiris Dahn abandoned the town when faced with invading goblin hordes, as they believed all of the slaying stones were expended at last. The town had endured a long decline under the rule of the Kiris family, and the citizens scattered rather than follow their ruler, Kiris Alkirk. Along with his advisor and seer Treona, Alkirk found a place to live in obscurity. The goblins overran the town and renamed it Gorizbadd. Recently, Treona discovered old records that indicate one slaying stone still remains. She now looks for powerful individuals to recover it.

A few years ago, Restwell Keep served as the base of operations for a band of evil adventurers known as the Six Blades of Fortune. While the Blades fought monsters in the Chaos Scar, they also preyed on other, weaker adventuring bands, and even raided a few caravans. As they were content to keep their depredations far from their base of operations, in time the keep became a small outpost of civilization. Wanderers, refugees, and other folk in search of a safe harbor settled within the keep. The Blades saw a benefit in the growing community within their walls. The taxes they collected paid the mercenaries who guarded the keep, and within five years, a small village stabilized within its walls and became a center for adventurers heading to the Chaos Scar. Despite the Blades’ nature, they believed the safe harbor and profit offered by the keep was worth preserving.

In time, though, the Blades’ criminal ways caught up with them. After stealing a holy icon of Erathis, they were tracked to the keep and defeated by Lord Peridin Drysdale, a human paladin of Erathis. Lord Drysdale and his followers slew four of the Blades and drove off the remaining two survivors. While he had planned to leave the keep and its inhabitants to their own devices, he saw that doing so would leave the inhabitants vulnerable without the Blades’ protection. Assessing the threat posed by the Chaos Scar, he decided to remain in the keep as its new ruler. The guards and administrators who ran the village under the Blades’ rule are still in place, and Drysdale plans to organize expeditions into the Scar to defeat the evil that dwells there. More than a few residents, accustomed to the old regime, resent the paladin's uncompromising push toward order and morality. As a result, Drysdale's authority is weak in the village.

Meanwhile, a priest of Orcus named Kalarel uncovered the truth about Shadowfell Keep, after finding records dating back to the time of the original opening of the rift. Since then, he has been ceaselessly researching an evil ritual that he believes will allow him to shatter the seal and once more open the rift. After gaining control of the keep, Kalarel placed agents in the surrounding areas. He established dominion over the tribe of goblins that lived within the subterranean chambers beneath the keep, and also control a tribe of kobolds operating out of a lair near Winterhaven. Kalarel has ordered the kobolds to harass and, if possible, eliminate anyone in the vicinity (such as adventurers) that have the potential to delay or thwart the priest’s plans. Kalarel also installed an elf spy named Ninaran in Winterhaven. Through the reports of this individual, Kalarel keeps an eye on the activities of Winterhaven’s residents and knows when newcomers arrive.

At the same time, the green dragon Vestapalk began to raiding the regions nearby the Cairngorm Peaks, including the lands near Winterhaven.

The red dragon Cazakk “the Blessed” also came to the Nentir Vale. Raised among dragons that venerate Tiamat, the red dragon brought with him a piety and a drive unusual among dragons. He sees himself as a crusader for Tiamat, and he enforces conversion with fire, fang, and claw. Considering all he can survey from his mountain home, including the lowlands of Harkenwold, to be his demesne, Cazakk has now set his sights on the wider valley.

Sometime after that, a wicked blackguard named Parald made a name for himself by hunting and killing elves. He stole a powerful magic sword from one of the few elves that was able to survive his fury. The elf searched for her sword, but Parald fled and she never able to track him down. Parald’s luck didn’t last, however. A cavalier named Richard chased him down and defeated him in single combat. It’s said the body—and the magic sword—was stolen before it could be burned. The rumors said the body of Parald was hidden in the “ghost tower” of the Witchlight Fens.

Four years ago, the halfling adventurer named Reed Tinderfoot, severely wounded a bear that was living near Riverslye Homestead, one of the villages that compose the Barony of Harkenwold. The bear, named Smiley Bob for the grisly scar the wound left in its face, coexisted peacefully with the halflings of the homestead .

years ago, the tunnels connecting the Ogrefist Hills and the Underdark city of Erelhei-Cinlu collapsed due to borrowing umber hulks, stranding a party of drow raiders of House Despana, the Hunter Spiders, the surface. Convinced that Erelhei-Cinlu had abandoned them, the Hunter Spiders sought the goddess Lolth for guidance, and she guided them to a forgotten elven ruins in the Harken Forest known as the Spiderhaunt Thicket, were is believed the eladrin and elves fought against the drow in the past. There, Ti'irtha Despana, a priest of Lolth, killed her consort and was "blessed" by Lolth, who transformed her into a werespider instead of showing her the way home. Since then, the few Hunter Spiders had been enslaving people of the Vale to search a new way to the Underdark for them.

A year ago, a clan of shadar-kai under the leadership of Mistress Ranala, a priest devoted to the Raven Queen, emerged from the Shadowfell, having escaped through the rift beneath the Keep on the Shadowfell disrupted by Kalarel. They drifted north to settle in the Winterbole Forest. Along the way, Ranala discovered through her auguries that followers of the Chained God hid among Mistwatch’s people. They entered the town to root out the infestation and reveal their presence to Lord Cadmus Zaspar, the ruler of the town. To their surprise, they learned Cadmus was one of the worshipers. The confrontation went poorly, and Ranala’s effort to destroy him failed. She left defeated, her magical abilities and her obsidian magic disk stolen, and with Cadmus more powerful than ever before.

Some few days after that, Lord Cadmus used the magic disk to darken the town, infecting it with a poisonous curse. Over the next nine months, the sun paled in the sky and temperatures dropped. Fog rolled in from the Wintermist Lake and never left. Disease chewed away at the oldest and youngest citizens until the temple filled near to bursting with new corpses to bury. Lord Camus’ wife died while giving birth to an aberrant child. After that day, dark clouds shut out the sun. The plague started affecting even healthy people and the dead began to rise from their graves. Leaving Mistwatch proved impossible. The shadar-kai prevents anyone from leaving, as a carrier could pass along the infection to anyone he or she meets. Those fleeing citizens who were not struck down by the shadar-kai’s swords and spells were driven back to the accursed town. Mistwatch now sinks into the Shadowfell, where it might be destroyed in the darklands or be transformed into a new domain of dread with Cadmus as its dark lord.

A few months ago, following visions granted by the mysterious “Elder Elemental Eye”, Vestapalk presented himself to Tiktak, the wyrmpriest of the Greenscale tribe of kobolds, a minor tribe that live in the Cairngorm Peaks. Worshiping Vestapalk as a god and following his prophetic visions, Tiktak has begun to send the Greenscales to raid the area near Winterhaven. It seems they are searching for the “herald of the Eye”.

At the same time, rangers operating out the Cairngorm Peaks have reported an alarming resurgence of activity among the Stonemarch orcs in recent months. They fear that a new Bloodspear horde can rise soon.

Meanwhile, the tribal elders of the Emberdark kobolds in the Dawnforge Mountains have received signs from Kurtulmak, exarch of Tiamat, that Calastryx is nearing freedom. The tribe is now raiding the Vale to gather a trove to win her favor and become her loyal servitors. Unknown to them, however, are the efforts of Thar, a dragonborn champion of Gruumsh, to bind Calastrix to the service of his god before she awakens.

On the hunt for lost dragonborn relics, Dythan's Legion arrived to the Nentir Vale recently to locate ancient Arkhosian ruins. Its members are all dragonborn that have flocked around the banner of Legatus Dythan, a charismatic idealist who seeks to raise Arkhosia from the ashes. Dythan's Legion numbers close to five hundred —small in comparison to the legions of old, but large in an age without empires. The legion is split into platoons, each one numbering between twenty and twenty-four legionnaires, scattered throughout the Nentir Vale.

Roughly two months ago, lord Vhennyk and his mysterious Iron Circle mercenaries came to the Nentir Vale from the southern city of Sarthel. With the intention of dominating the Nentir Vale, Vhennyk decided that overt operations would start in the relatively isolated Barony of Harkenwold. He tasked his subordinate, a brigand captain named Nazin Redthorn, with seizing the region, then hurried on to implement his other plans for the Vale. For now, Nazin is collecting information about Harkenwold, but he is planning to invade the barony soon.

A few weeks ago, Smiley Bob began to attack the halflings of the Riverslye Homestead. Nobody knows why the peaceful bear became dangerous, though some suspect it has to do with goblin activity in the area.

At the same time, the human wizard Anarus Kalton, the last surviving member of the Kalton bloodline, was killed by one of his apprentices, the dwarf wizard Traevus, who also stole his master’s books. The other apprentice, a human wizard named Malareth, is now searching Traevus to avenge his master and retrieve his books, that Malareth intends to use to finish his master’s evil, dark magic ritual. In the meantime, Traevus is hiring adventurers to go to the ghost tower of the Witchlight Fens and retrieve his master’s dark grimoire.

Another ambitious young dwarf, a cleric of Moradin named Aldus Splintershield, seeking to make a name for himself and his clan, has begun organizing a group of settlers to found a new town in the ruins of Castle Inverness. Brother Splintershield is hiring adventurers to escort him and his pilgrims to the ruins.

At same time, rumors of a strange plague that affect both humanoids and beasts on many regions of the Vale spread like fire in taverns and inns. Strange creatures with protruding red crystal on their bodies have been sighted on the roads and abandoned farms. Only a few know about this Abyssal Plague, and they’re being hunted down by members of the Cult of the Elder Elemental Eye to maintain the secret of the plague until they can conquer the Vale and prepare an invasion to conquer the rest of the world.

A few days ago, the vampire lich Magroth, the first emperor of Nerath, put in motion his plans to free himself from the domain of dread known as Darani, in the Shadowfell. As the first step of his plan, he needs to locate the last of his descendants, which he had divined live in the Nentir Vale. For that reason, he opened the way into the buried Andok Sur, the City of the Dead…

# Factions of the Nentir Vale

Some people of the Nentir Vale have banded together to pursue their common goals. Some of these goals align with that of other organizations or groups and some do not.

## The Barrowhaunts

The Barrowhaunts are a group of five former adventurers bound to the lands surrounding the Sword Barrow. Their deeds in life are seldom recollected, and no one is truly sure why their spirits have never been laid to rest. Now they savagely attack any who enter the lands of their trust. Many rumors exist about the exact nature of their curse; one common legend suggests that they sought to plunder the Sword Barrow and evoked the wrath of a warlord entombed within. The warlord's spirit called to the native hill folk in the area, who marched to the Sword Barrow to confront the adventurers and reclaim the warlord's treasures. The adventurers, rather than relinquish their trove, slaughtered the hill folk. A dying elder placed a curse on the adventurers' souls, binding them to the land for all of eternity.

At first, the elder's curse seemed empty and hollow, but every time the adventurers left the Gray Downs to sell their hard-won loot, they could not help but return to the hills in search of even greater treasures. Eventually, their greed surpassed their skill. Descending deeper into the Sword Barrow than they'd ever gone before, the adventurers fell prey, one by one, to horrid monsters and insidious traps. Though cursed to haunt the Gray Downs and guard "their" barrows from other would-be pillagers, they still seek out treasures and relics for themselves.

The spoils of their exploits are stashed in an ancient crypt deep within the Sword Barrow. Their motive for collecting such worldly possessions isn't clear, but some believe they are forced to sate their everlasting yearning for adventure and exploration. Regardless of the reason, most believe that this cache is of significant worth. Many other adventurers have tried to locate the hoard, but all have been slain or rebuked.

The five adventurers are (or were): Boldos Grimehammer (male dawrf fighter), Adrian "Iceheart" Reninold (male human wizard), Cassian d'Cherevan (male human figther), Joplin the Sly (female hlafling rogue), Uthelyn the Mad (female half-elf ranger).

## Blackfang Gnolls

Predatory and fiercely territorial, the Blackfang gnolls have long terrorized travelers who dare to cross the Old Hills. Caravans moving along the trail between Nenlast and Fiveleague House are common targets for Blackfang ambushes. The pack either devours captured victims in a nearby den or drags them through the warrens to the Well of Demons, where the victims are sacrificed to Yeenoghu, the Demon Prince of Gnolls.

They currently lair under Thunderspire Mountain, in the Well of Demons, an ancient monastery sanctified to the demon lord Baphomet. The Blackfang chieftain, Maldrick Scarmaker, recently locked himself inside the Well of Demons chamber in preparation for reconsecrating the temple to his demonic patron, Yeenoghu. With Maldrik isolated from his followers, the Blackfang tribe is effectively leaderless. If the chieftain does not emerge soon, another prominent pack leader will move to seize the throne.

## The Bloody Order of Harkenwold

The Bloody Order of Harkenwold is one of the most feared and respected group of sellswords in the Nentir Vale. The leader of the order is Guarn Logran, fearsome but somewhat foolish dwarven warlord. The Bloody Order is known for their honor and for their bloodthirsty methods.

## The Bloodghost Syndicate

The syndicate traces its humble beginnings to one bugbear, Graala Bloodghost. Graala served as a warrior aboard a pirate galleon under the command of a hobgoblin captain. Graala worked her way up the ranks, and in time she became a personal bodyguard to her captain. She saw firsthand how the captain turned plundered cargo into cash by dealing with human, tiefling, and dwarf smugglers, fences, and merchants of flexible morality. Graala’s assignment also gave her insight into the fabulous wealth that the captain and his coterie enjoyed, while she and the bugbear marines survived on a few coins from each raid.

The next time she accompanied the captain on a secret rendezvous with a smuggler on the docks of a human city, her bugbear compatriots killed the hobgoblin officers left aboard, waited in ambush for the captain’s return, and killed him. Graala then led the survivors ashore and into the city, but not before arranging for the smuggler to collect on a bounty placed on the captain’s head. Graala claimed half the share, and with the cash liberated from the ship, she founded the Bloodghost syndicate, nearly thirty years ago. Today, she still takes an active hand in the syndicate’s affairs, but her age and infirmity have pushed her son Rathos to take command.

The syndicate operates in all the important cities of the Nentir Vale, as well in the more populous cities of the south, and dabbles in a variety of criminal enterprises, from gambling, protection rackets, assassinations, and money lending, as well as some legitimate business venture. The Bloodghosts carved their niche in the underworld through a combination of brute force, cash, and access to monstrous allies outside civilization who are eager to do business with forces within the cities: Orc mercenaries seeking to sell their swords, cultists in search of a safe dungeon lair or illegal reagents for their rituals, and outlaws (whether monstrous or humanoid) eager to turn the goods and coin plundered from their victims into material comforts and fine goods.

## The Bloodreavers

A gang of slavers and marauders, the Bloodreavers includes goblinoids and humans. Most of them are fierce warriors, though some act as spies throughout Nentir Vale and beyond. The Bloodreavers are leaded by a hobgoblin named Krank.

## Clan Bloodspear

Legend says that the first great chieftain of Clan Bloodspear singlehandedly slew the elder iron dragon Kulkoszar. The self-proclaimed King Bloodspear declared the dragon's lair to be the seat of his new empire, and he forged a throne there from the dragon's jaws. Over the years, Clan Bloodspear has extended the original cavern into an extensive warren furnished with forges, arenas, and slave pens.

Rallying the tribes under the banner of Bloodspear is an unusual chieftain for the patriarchal orcs—a female. Queen Msuga is as formidable as she is indomitable. Though many warriors defied her rule in the early years, none contest her reign now; scars from many victories mark her as rightful chieftain. She claims to be the consort to Gruumsh himself, with a divine mandate to force the Nentir Vale's submission.

Never lurking far from the queen's side is her twin sister, Rohka. As high shaman of Clan Bloodspear, Rohka commands terrifying power, despite her withered body, and none dare cross the Blood Witch. It is whispered that Rohka is the true power behind the throne, with Msuga her unwitting puppet. Whatever the truth, the two sisters lust equally for power and conquest—woe to anyone who stands in their way.

## The Brotherhood of the Scar

Centuries ago, a group of Banites discovered the heart of Shoth-Gorag in the Chaos Scar. Mistaking it for a gift from their tyrannical deity, they took it and built a small fortress-temple around it. They named the fortress Hallowgaunt. The heart of Shoth-Gorag became the center of worship for the Banites, who began to call themselves the Brotherhood of the Scar. From their temple, the heart began to exert its influence, inundating the Chaos Scar with its evil. Shoth-Gorag has also been poisoning the minds of the Banites in Hallowgaunt. Banite clerics there draw some of their strength directly from Shoth-Gorag instead of Bane. Its influence has also begun to twist the bodies of these misguided servitors, and some of them have bizarre deformities indicative of exposure to the Far Realm’s energy.

While gaining mastery over Hallowgaunt, Shoth-Gorag has also amassed enough power to begin the final phase of its plans. It is undergoing a hideous resurgence, building a physical body worthy of a Far Realm lord. To build this physical form, Shoth-Gorag requires ample supplies of flesh. It has been sending out its most trusted servants, members of the Brotherhood of the Scar, to capture creatures great and small. Any unfortunates these Banites capture are dragged back to Hallowgaunt to be tortured out of their wits and cast down to where Shoth-Gorag dwells deep under the fortress. Shoth-Gorag absorbs those brought to it, using their flesh as raw material to construct a horrific body around its heart. Soon, Shoth-Gorag will be powerful enough to move beyond the temple of Bane and begin absorbing the myriad creatures dwelling in the Chaos Scar.

Although Shoth-Gorag now controls a majority of the priests and soldiers serving in Hallowgaunt, a small group of temple guards loyal to Bane resisted the Far Realm lord’s growing influence. These faithful Banites surreptitiously sought aid from any allies they can get outside the Chaos Scar, seeking a way to destroy Shoth-Gorag and return the temple to Bane.

## Carthain's gang

A would-be petty noble, Carthain indulges himself with fine clothes and an elegantly waxed mustache. He is a thug and a murderer, who works for both the Circle of Stone and for Thar, the champion of Gruumsh plotting to destroy Hammerfast.

The main body of Carthain's band lives in a small, temporary village northeast of Hammerfast. Carthain and his followers have cleared a number of trails through the mountains, allowing them to move much faster than their pursuers. Carthain's gang consists of half-orcs, gnomes, kenkus, and humans. Serlek Undertow, Carthain's lieutenant, handles many of the raids on caravans near Hammerfast. Carthain accompanies him only when victory is assured.

A vicious halfling, Serlek was once a member of the Swiftriver Clan. He was exiled for murdering his brother over a gold statue the two found in the wilds. He currently hides in the Dungeon of the Fire Opal. He and the other bandits pose as treasure seekers exploring the dungeon. They offer to ally with adventurers and then try to kill them in their sleep.

Carthain and his men pose as prospectors. Their small village is heavily fortified, and they engage in some prospecting to pass the time between raids and to lend truth to their cover story.

## The Circle of Stone

A conspiracy of fundamentalist priests of Moradin, the Circle of Stone poses the greatest current threat to Hammerfast. Led by Grond Silverstar, the second most powerful priest in the ranks of Moradin's church, the priests in its ranks and their followers believe that turning the necropolis into a center for trade is a grave insult to Moradin. Even worse, they believe, was allowing worshipers of Gruumsh into the town. Thus, the Circle works to drive the orcs out of Hammerfast and to destroy the Black Spire, the temple of Gruumsh.

Of course, destroying Gruumsh's temple would violate the compact on which Hammerfast is founded. It would invite divine retribution not only from Gruumsh but also from Moradin, whose pledge to the god of destruction would be broken. The members of the Circle of Stone are unconcerned with this possibility, however, having been duped into believing that the compact is a sham.

Among their most vicious members is Gerrek. A bloodthirsty fanatic, he maintains a lowkey reputation as a quiet champion of Moradin, but in truth he leads the Hammers, the Circle's muscle. The Hammers harass businesses and other folk that Grond targets for destruction. They are generally the least pious of the Circle's members. Most of them are little more than thugs eager for a few coins and the chance to hurt innocent folk. Gerrek also carries out assassinations on Grond's behalf. Although he appears to be devoted to Moradin, in truth he secretly worships Bane.

## The Company of the Iron Gauntlet

A hobgoblin mercenary group leaded by a hobgoblin warlord known as Prag. The Iron Gauntlet mercenaries are trained to fight as a squad, and their behavior suggests strict military training and organization. These goblinoids have joined forces with Kalarel's Cult.

Among their most notable members are the goblins Irontooth and Balgron the Fat, and the commander of the mercenaries, a bugbear named Frubog.

## The Cult of the Elder Elemental Eye

The danger posed to the world by any other primordial cult pales in comparison to the Cult of the Elder Elemental Eye. The cult is most often associated with the Princes of Elemental Evil, but they are merely stewards for a vast and unknowable entity. The Elder Elemental Eye is believed to be an ancient primordial being that was cast out from the Elemental Chaos by its fellow primordials. It works to regain a foothold in the planes and resume efforts toward the goal it once sought—the end of all things.

Throughout history, the cult has threatened civilization by raising armies and dark temples, whose priests scour the world for the keys needed to free their master. What gains the cult makes are often sabotaged by infighting and betrayal. Factions rule the cult, each seeking to gain dominance over the others—even if doing so means destroying everything they work toward. Compounding these troubles are other powers who seek to exploit the cult. At various times, Zuggtmoy, Graz'zt, Lolth, and other Demon Lords have all manipulated the cult into advancing their own agendas.

In the Nentir Vale, the various cells of the Cult of the Elder Elemental Evil are working to help spread the Abyssal Plague into the mortal world, as they believe the plague is the only key they need to free their master at last.

## The Deep Guides

The explorers of the Deep Guides are an adventurous lot concerned mostly with discovery and excitement. They leave the politics to those who stay behind at headquarters or on the surface. Individual guides are allowed to operate independently, as long as they give the company's leaders a portion of earnings under the Deep Guides name. Each company of Deep Guides operates independently, making alliances with caravan masters, lords, and travelers at its own discretion. Each has a different leadership style and its own priorities, though most members are still explorers at heart.

Little consensus exists today among the bickering factions of Deep Guides. Each claims to be pursuing the original intention of the organization: exploring and mapping the Underdark. However, their motives vary wildly. No company of Deep Guides is evil, but the groups' mutual resentment prevents them from cooperating as the organization did in early days.

Daggerburg goblins

Where the Witchlight Fens and Harken Forest meet, a craggy hill conceals the main entrance to Daggerburg, an ominous goblin fortress. Far from the tyranny of more powerful creatures, the Daggerburg goblins have long been free to plunder, maim, and murder. Mounted on swift battle worgs, Daggerburg raiders exploit their speed to bushwhack victims throughout the southern Nentir Vale.

A clever hobgoblin named Delderosh masterminds the raiders' attacks and trains them in their unorthodox combat style. Under Warlord Delderosh's leadership, the Daggerburg goblins have refined their hit-and-run tactics, which has enabled them to dodge capture and certain execution for more than a decade.

As if the band weren't a diverse enough group already, it counts among its ranks a number of mistmane bugbears, which are obsessed with alchemy and dark magic. Their long servitude to the black arts has enabled them to enlarge their bodies so that they stand as giants compared to other bugbears. Also large beyond the norm is the enormous goblin that calls himself Kabo Bomble. Although he is two feet shorter than the mistmanes, he is still nearly twice the size of his goblin kin.

Gokof, a notorious hobgoblin necromancer of the southern Nentir Vale is nominally a member of the Daggerburg goblins, but he spends most of his time with his collectors and undead servants. Gokof has a particular affinity for locating cadaver collectors and bending them to his will. It is not unusual for him to search the vale for collectors, though he rarely has more than two at his command. He also trains other Daggerburg goblins to command the collectors, but only if doing so further enriches him or adds to his power base.

## Dythan's Legion

A fighting force comprised of about five hundred dragonborn, Dythan’s Legion is leaded by the charismatic Legatus Dythan, a prime example of his race. The legatus is rarely seen without his gold-inlaid plate armor, which is embossed with heraldic devices of Arkhosia. Though the lost civilization of Arkhosia was centered in the lands south of the Nentir Vale, the dragonborn empire did have handful of remote enclaves this far north. Legatus Dythan plans to collect wisdom and power from the old empire's relics to facilitate his monumental task: restore old Arkhosia to her former glory.

The legion employs a strict hierarchy based on the service ranks used in ancient Arkhosia. Rank is earned through great deeds performed on and off the battlefield. Adroit tactical planning and critical thinking are valued as much as, if not more than, melee prowess. From highest to lowest, the legion's ranks include legatus (general), thaenar (major), vargus (captain), morikar (lieutenant), farang (sergeant), hengot (corporal), and baka (private). Independent of rank, each legionnaire is assigned to one of three specialized corps: infantry, cavalry, or artillery.

Even though the legion is formidable in its own right, its use of drakes and behemoths greatly enhances its effectiveness. Legion dragoons capture liondrakes in desert lands far to the south and train them as mounts. Dythan's Legion also salvaged a handful of Arkhosia's animated constructs. These 15-foot-wide, 30-foot-tall stone-dragon towers use 10-foot-tall granite rollers to move unimpeded over rough terrain and can shoot fireballs or a volley of arrows in any direction.

The Fallcrest Guard

The Fallcrest Guard numbers sixty warriors, who also serve as constables. Moonstone Keep is their barracks. The Lord Warden can call up 350 militia at need. There are 6 warriors at each gate of Fallcrest, 30 at the Moonstone keep at all time and 8 on a rotating patrol throughout the city. The rest of guard patrols the Moon Hills surrounding Fallcrest, maintaining peace and order in the region.

They are led by Commander Gondar (male dragonborn). Among the high ranking officers are Captain Nathan Faringray (male human), Sergeant Thurmina (female human), Sergeant Nereth (male human), and Sergeant Murgeddin (male dwarf), a veteran from the Bloodspear War.

## Fallcrest Mage's Guild

The Mage's Guild was an order of spellcasters that practiced their art in the Septarch's Tower, in Fallcrest. During the Bloodspear War, they fell in battle or fled to safer lands. The tower is now the property of Nimozaran the Green, an elderly wizard who was once apprenticed to the last of the old guild mages.

Nimozaran considers himself the “High Septarch of Fallcrest” and master of the guild, whose membership now includes only himself and his two apprentices: the young male eladrin Albanon, and a rather unpromising male halfling named Tobolar Quickfoot. Nimozaran expects any potential new guild members to pay a hefty initiation fee, and so far none of the few other arcanists living in or passing through Fallcrest have seen reason to join.

## The Fell Court

A handful of tieflings have banded together for mutual protection, calling themselves the Fell Court. These self-proclaimed scions of Bael Turath are determined to restore the shattered empire under their rule. Their leader, Melech Ambrose, fancies himself a visionary and a general, but in truth he behaves more like a petty crime lord, lurking within Fallcrest's slums and conducting clandestine operations that fund his "war chest." He has become a folk hero among the slum dwellers, who are usually unprotected by the constabulary, because of his defiance of the established authorities. In various hidden redoubts, the Fell Court has begun to amass weapons and supplies for a secret army that will one day overthrow the Lord Warden of Fallcrest.

Melech reports to his own dark masters. He is in direct communication with powerful devils that guide him in his dealings, and these fiends have a vested interest in seeing Bael Turath rise from the ashes. To aid him, the devils have granted Melech some measure of control over the felldrakes that have invaded the Nentir Vale, giving the Fell Court access to small groups of the tiefling-bred monsters.

Through his network of spies and informants, Melech has become aware of the activities of the Iron Circle and learned that its leaders are followers of Asmodeus. Thus it seems to him that the Fell Court and the Iron Circle have much in common. The Iron Circle has the power to conquer the Nentir Vale far more quickly than the Fell Court could, and yet Melech chooses not to feel threatened by such a rival. Instead of opposing and undermining the efforts of the Iron Circle, Melech has attempted to make contact with Iron Circle agents in the hope of forging an alliance.

## The Frost Witches

Over the past several decades, the evil elemental prince Cryonax has sent underlings to infiltrate the Winterbole Forest, looking to extend his influence into the Nentir Vale. Chief among these servants are the Frost Witches, who use cold-based magic to frighten, fight, and manipulate all with whom they come in contact. The Frost Witches are relatively few in number. To combat this weakness, they often ally themselves with similarly minded creatures or try to manipulate more powerful forest creatures.

The Frost Witches come from many races, including elves, humans, harpies, and gnomes. Most are female, and all use magic. Though a new witch is occasionally born into the group, they normally recruit like-minded individuals, or even kidnap young females who have shown an aptitude for magic.

Clenderi is the highest authority within the group, aside from Cryonax. Little affects one's status in the group beyond personal experience and Clenderi's approval. Though some amount of intrigue naturally occurs between the witches and Clenderi's current favorites, it is far less than would be found in a royal court. Most direct their energy and schemes toward outsiders, because expanding the group's reach expands their own power, as well as that of their elemental prince.

## The Frostblood cult

In the uncharted reaches of the Winterbole Forest, a cult of blue-skinned humans known as the Frostbloods pay homage, with blood and sacrifice, to their chained lord Cryonax. Few civilized people know of this cult. Only the wild folk who live on the borders of civilization and the wild north know of the existence of the Frostblood cult. Even among the wild barbarians and uncivilized tribes of the north, the Frostbloods are shunned and condemned as cannibals and monsters. No one knows how many Frostblood cultists exist. Their organization is broken up into separate tribes that roam the frozen wastes. Their tribes are mostly nomadic, traveling in groups of eighteen to thirty.

Born human, Frostbloods must undergo three rituals at different points in their lives to become Frostbloods. Each of these rituals proves fatal to half of those who undergo it, thus keeping the total number of adult Frostbloods low. During the first ritual, a drop of Cryonax’s blood, diluted through its transfer between the Elemental Chaos and the mortal world, is fed to a child of four years. If the child survives, it ingests another larger amount of the blood at age twelve. Finally, at age seventeen, the young adult is given the final largest dose of the black liquid. This infuses the new Frostblood with terrible visions of the chained lord, Cryonax, atop his plateau in the swirling storms of chaos. It also gives the Frostblood a touch of his power and turns the young adult’s skin blue.

The northern tribes are right to fear and shun the Frostbloods. Any humanoids captured by the Frostbloods are designated either as sacrifices to Cryonax or as food. The Frostbloods consider themselves beyond mortality and ingest the fresh warm blood and flesh of their mortal victims. Horrid tales spread among the northern tribes tell of large herds of captured slaves held by multiple Frostblood warbands as a surplus of food for the tribes.

## The Gravelstokes

Before the fall of Nerath, when the Gravelstoke family was at the height of its power and prestige, it was the envy of noble society. When Nerath fell, so did the family's good fortunes. However, throughout that difficult time and to this day, the family has guarded its dark secret: The Gravelstokes were not only proud supporters of the emperor but also assassins in service to the crown. But after Nerath had fallen, they no longer had a rich benefactor to support their bloody work.

Currently, the Gravelstoke family inhabits a bleak stone mansion in the Barony of Harkenwold, and it keeps a modest summer retreat on the outskirts of Fallcrest. The reigning patriarch is Xander Gravelstroke, and he has an itch to restore his family to greatness by doing what it does best—murdering people.

The others members of the family are: Vincent, Xander's only child (from his second marriage), who a reclusive and quiet sociopath; and Xander’s younger siblings, Alesia, Mikus, and Tovin (Mikus and Tovin are twins). The three siblings are inseparable, traveling back and forth between their estates along with other family members and household staff, or wherever "the work" takes them. It's well known that they share a fondness for one another, and rumors of their "debased offspring" have become fodder for whispered taproom conversations. The rumors are false, but the siblings are nonetheless grasping, cruel, and moody.

The Gravelstokes take pride in their skills in the art of assassination, and over the years they have perfected a signature ability that turns their victims to black rock. Though they surround themselves with the faded trappings of nobility, they are often contracted to perform dastardly deeds that are not for the faint of heart.

## The Gray Company

From a young age, the Gray Company's soldiers heard stories from their grandfathers of how Nerath's grand pennants flew above every city in the ancient world. Finally grown and trained in combat, these enlistees from the Gray Downs intend to take back their heritage. Determined to resurrect the glory of ancient Nerath, the Gray Company actively recruits new soldiers. Warriors make up the company's rank and file, backed by mages whose ability should not be underestimated. These mist mages can call upon and manipulate the fog that rolls in over the Gray Downs to hamper their enemies. Recruits who join the Gray Company do not leave its ranks. Once inducted and told the fragmented secrets of old Nerath, a soldier is committed for life. Deserters are hunted down and hanged publicly at the nearest crossroads.

Halvath Cormarrin, the self-proclaimed successor to Nerath's throne, is leading the group from the foggy hinterlands across the Nentir Vale and down into the former empire's foremost lands. Along the way, the company is recruiting new soldiers, plundering ancient ruins, seeking relics such as the lost Sword of Nerath and the Threefold Crown, and hunting down treasure seekers who pilfered fragments of the soldiers' so-called birthright. According to rumor, the Gray Company didn't earn its name from its home region, but from its faded banners of long-dead noble houses and its soldiers' grim moral views.

Although the group's power base is located in the Gray Downs, Gray Company chapters have sprouted elsewhere—under the leadership of other so-called princes of Nerath. If united, these separate chapters might be strong enough to accomplish the company's dream of restoration. However, political power struggles, infighting, and accusations of false lineage have kept the chapter leaders from coming together under a single banner. Despite the members' vaunted claims of honor and nobility, many Nentir Vale inhabitants believe the Gray Company is nothing more than a gang of bandits seeking legitimacy.

## Hammerfast Guilds

The town's three guilds—the Trade Guild, the Lore Guild, and the Craft Guild—govern Hammerfast. Each guild elects three members to the Town Council. The Council then elects a High Master. The High Master serves as the town's executive, overseeing daily functions and managing affairs with other settlements in the Nentir Vale.

The consent of a majority of the Council is required to pass a law, and so the guilds constantly forge and break alliances in order to pursue their separate interests. The guild with the most influence over the High Master gains a further advantage in these maneuvers, since the High Master casts the deciding vote in case of ties. Marsinda Goldspinner, the leader of the Trade Guild, has been High Master for four years and shows no inclination to step down. The other guilds are content with this situation as long as the town continues to prosper.

* Trade Guild: The other guilds rely on the Trade Guild to move their products far and wide. With its control over commerce, the Trade Guild is the most powerful group in Hammerfast. The Trade Guild maintains strong connections with other settlements, including Nenlast, Fallcrest, the Seven-Pillared Hall, and Winterhaven.
* Lore Guild: The Lore Guild consists of professors, researchers, and sages. As the center of learning in the Nentir Vale, Hammerfast attracts students from far and wide. The economic and political advantages that accrue to Hammerfast as the intellectual center of the region contribute to the prestige of the Lore Guild.
* The Craft Guild: The Craft Guild is the largest guild currently active in Hammerfast. For years, the independent miners, prospectors, smiths, and other artisans in Hammerfast negotiated individual contracts with the Trade Guild. The Craft Guild was formed twelve years ago as a way of presenting a unified bargaining front. Since then, the Craft Guild has enjoyed a steady rise in power and wealth, and its membership continues to increase as the town prospers.

## Harken's Heart

Allied with the Harken treants is a group of elf druids who call themselves Harken’s Heart. Laboring under an ancient curse, the druids are effectively trapped within Harken Forest, and they spare no effort in their attempt to protect it.

The general membership of Harken's Heart numbers in the hundreds. Most are born into the group, though some outside elves occasionally join. Harken's Heart druids live in small camps or settlements sprinkled throughout the forest, and they rarely number more than a dozen members in a particular community. Many live and travel alone. Harken's Heart druids prefer to travel in beast form, or at least in a highly stealthy manner when moving about the forest. A druid known as the Hierophant leads Harken's Heart. He or she is the group's ultimate negotiator, judge, arbiter, and policymaker. Once a druid attains this top position, it's for life. Each Hierophant handpicks and rears his or her successor. If the Hierophant dies without an established heir, the Harken's Heart druids elect a new leader. The Hierophant is highly respected for his or her power, wisdom, and forest knowledge, even by some elves and druids outside the group.

In recent years, a Harken's Heart's sect has devoted itself to expanding the forest's boundaries, which would give all Harken's Heart druids a wider berth in which to use their powers. Meanwhile, the Harken treants are rumored to be planning an all-out land grab in the near future.

## House Azaer

One of the two most important tieflings families in Fallcrest. The Azaer family import goods (including weapons and armors) from Hammerfast, Harkenwold, and the lands to the south, and organize caravans up to Winterhaven several times a year. House Azaer is an excellent place to purchase nearly any mundane equipment, although its prices are a little on the high side.

Amara Azaer is in charge of the family business in Fallcrest, and spends her time on the premises. Though young, the tiefling is quite sharp and doesn’t miss an opportunity for profit in running the Azaer business.

## House Naerumar

The second of the two most important tiefling families in Fallcrest. The patriarch is Orest Naerumar, a tiefling who displays impeccable manners and discretion. He is the proprietor of Naerumar’s Imports, considered the finest of Fallcrest’s retail establishments. Orest corresponds with relatives and colleagues in several towns and cities outside the Nentir Vale; given a few weeks, he can order in low-level magic items or other items of unusual value. Similarly, Orest purchases interesting items such as these, since other dealers in distant towns or cities might be looking for them.

Orest doesn’t ask questions about where characters in his store found the goods they’re selling to him, but he is not a fence—if he knows that something was obtained illegally, he declines to purchase it. Orest normally arranges for halflings of the Swiftwater clan to transport special orders—jewelry, gems, or magic items of value. However, he sometimes makes other arrangements for items that seem especially valuable or dangerous. If the player characters are looking for something to do, Orest can hire them to carry or guard exceptionally valuable goods he’s sending to a merchant in another town.

## The Honest Few

The Honest Few is a small thieves’ gang operating out of Fallcrest in the Nentir Vale. It's rumored the band is sponsored by Orest Naerumar and Kelson of the Lucky Gnome Taphouse, though those are baseless rumors. As a new group, they don’t quite have the numbers or influence to call themselves a thieves’ guild per se, but with the right kind of leadership, they might rise above their meager standing and become a syndicate worth fearing.

## The Hunter Spiders

Three years ago, a party of drow raiders was stranded in the surface after the tunnel to Erelhei-Cinlu collapsed. The raiders, calling themselves the Hunter Spiders, are members of House Despana. The group's leader, Ti'irtha, the daughter of House Despana's matron, turned to Lolth for guidance, and the goddess led her to a corner of Harken Forest known as the Spiderhaunt Thicket. Control of the Spiderhaunt Thicket did not come without a price. Shortly after the Hunter Spiders arrived in the gnarled grove, Lolth saw fit to test them. Exploring the grove alone, Ti'irtha and her consort discovered a small shrine to the Spider Goddess in one of the ruins. Ti'irtha murdered her consort and spilled his blood on the spider-shaped altar as an offering. Rather than show her the way home, Lolth transformed Ti'irtha into a werespider, which allowed her to assume the form of a hideous black spider.

The Hunter Spiders haunt the King's Road, snatching travelers between Fallcrest and Harkenwold. When armed patrols make it difficult for them to carry out this tactic, the drow head north and set up ambushes along the Trade Road between Fallcrest and Thunderspire, although they face stiff competition there from the Raven Roost bandits. When pickings are slim, the Hunter Spiders are not afraid to creep into Fallcrest's outlying farms under the shroud of night and snatch people from their beds.

The Hunter Spiders have managed to survive on the surface without losing more than a few members. Still, they number only twenty-four, including Ti'irtha. A handful always remain in Spiderhaunt Thicket, overseeing the slaves search for a new passage to the Underdark, while the others set ambushes. The Hunter Spiders are willing to negotiate with anyone who claims to know the location of a passage to the Underdark. However, Ti'irtha is no stranger to the art of deception, and she expects proof before upholding her end of any bargain.

## The Iron Circle

The Iron Circle is a powerful band of mercenaries under the control of the inscrutable Lord Vhennyk, who hails from the city of Sarthel, to the south of the Nentir Vale. Lord Vhennyk and his followers worship Asmodeus, but few Nentir Vale inhabitants are aware of the mercenaries' true affiliations. Lord Vhennyk's sweeping plans to conquer civilization in the name of his diabolical god are genuine, however, and he has set his sights on the barony of Harkenwold.

Since the Iron Circle is largely unknown in the Nentir Vale, few of the ale's inhabitants have heard of Lord Vhennyk, though that state of affairs could eventually change. However, southern settlers who deal more regularly with the Iron Circle might soon hear the names Nazin Redthorn and Val Esed. Redthorn is a brigand captain recently tasked with launching overt operations in the southern Nentir Vale. Esed is Lord Vhennyk's spymaster and chief information gatherer. She secretly lives in the Harkenwold region, assuming a variety of aliases. A tough human, she is part spy, part thief, and all mercenary.

Iron Circle members are primarily human, though like-minded individuals of other races can be found in the organization's ranks. The Iron Circle also employs powerful sages and dark adepts that animate constructs to guard its bases and important figures, among other tasks. Infernal pacts forged with the Nine Hells enable the band's most powerful adepts to summon and command tar devils. A tarlike substance oozes from a tar devil's skin, dribbling down its body and leaving thin trails of tacky sludge in its wake. A tar devil is humanoid in shape with short horns that emerge from, and curve over, its humanlike head. It has haunting, pupilless eyes, beastlike feet, and a strong, lizardlike, nonprehensile tail. A tar devil wears little or no armor and carries exotic weaponry.

## Kalarel’s Cult of Orcus

A cult dedicated to the Demon Prince of Undeath, Orcus, leaded by the death priest Kalarel. The cult seeks to reopen the dimensional rift located in Shadowfell Keep, and unleash a horde of undead horrors into the mortal world. The old magic seal has so far frustrated the cult’s intentions. Time, however, is on the side of the cult. Unless the cult is stopped, the seal will collapse and the passage into the Shadowfell will be opened anew. If that happens, the cult seeks to establish a foothold, and launch undead atrocities against the world at large.

Along Kalarel's most trusted followers are Volondra, a female drow assassin; and Ninaran, a female elf spy that Kalarel has stationed in Winterhaven to keep an eye on the activities of the town's residents and report to him when newcomers arrive.

## Kobold tribes

There are many kobold tribes in the Nentir Vale, but the most prominent are the Emberdark, the Greenscale, and the Skull Kickers tribes.

The kobolds of the Emperdark tribe were nearly hunted to extinction by the dwarves of Hammerfast, but they survived by hiding in the Dawnforge Mountains. Lately, their numbers have grown. The tribal elders have received signs from mighty Kurtulmak, exarch of Tiamat, that Calastryx is nearing freedom. The Emberdark kobolds are gathering a trove to win her favor and become her loyal servitors. So far, their efforts have yielded modest results, although Emberdark pillagers wearing armor with shoulder guards shaped like second and third kobold heads (in honor of Calastryx) have been sighted in the foothills. Whether Calastryx will accept such servants is unknown.

The kobolds of the Greenscale tribe have long hunted in the wilderness north of Winterhaven, competing for limited resources against rival tribes and roving bands of goblins. Their fortunes have risen considerably since the arrival of Vestapalk, whom the kobolds venerate as their god. Under Vestapalk's protection, the Greenscales now control much of the hunting grounds along the King's Road, from Winterhaven to Lake Wintermist. As the tribe's leader and prophet, Tiktag works tirelessly to raise the standing of the Greenscales. Above all else, he wants to have other races fear him as they fear Vestapalk.

Before the tribe came under the wing of Vestapalk, Tiktag's divinations were often muddled and confused. Now when the wyrmpriest tosses his bone fragments, he is amazed at the clarity and relevance of each divination performed at Vestapalk's request. These miracles and others have convinced Tiktag that something momentous will come of his relationship with the green dragon. Though neither would scarcely admit it, a close bond has formed between Vestapalk and Tiktag; the dragon and wyrmpriest are seldom encountered apart. Vestapalk even allows Tiktag to ride on his shoulders, rather than risk danger by traveling overland.

Of the tribes that dwell in the Cloak Wood, the Skull Kickers are the most prominent. After they were “chosen” by the white dragon Szartharrax, who ate the leaders of the others tribes, persuading the rest of the kobolds to swear allegiance to the Skull Kickers tribe, the kobolds of the Cloak Wood have become bolder, and now are attacking caravans and travelers along the King’s Road.

## The Kuldar

Kuldar literally means “axe-cutter,” but the term is used for different kinds of heroes who fight in Moradin’s name—from those who wade into the fray with axe or hammer, to those who fire away with bow or wand. The Kuldar includes orders of warriors who worship Moradin, from the elite Hammers of Moradin to the sacred Soulforged knighthood.

Some of the fiercest Kuldar come from the Dawnforge monastery, hidden away in the mountains beyond Hammerfast. These zealous avengers temper both weapons and souls in astral fire, and they eternally carry out the fight against giants and titans that has waged since the Dawn War. Their most elite members have perfected divine attack forms that draw inspiration from the works of Moradin.

## The Last Legion

Most know the Last Legion as a mercenary band formed to hunt and exterminate monsters, though in truth the Last Legion is what remains of the Third Legion of old Nerath's army. Since the Last Legion formed during the Nerath Empire, it has undergone many missions, fought for many masters, and drifted from place to place.

The Legion’s numbers change as members perish or retire and new recruits join. At most, the Last Legion has a couple of hundred members in the main force with agents scattered across most towns in the Nentir Vale and elsewhere. Recruiters prowl towns and villages, looking for mercenaries and adventurers first, militia second. They welcome mages, priests, soldiers, and thieves. Anyone who has a talent that can aid the Legion is accepted.

The battle-scarred half-elf Captain Rule, whose real name is Elsa Kristoff, took command three years ago when her predecessor, Ryken Masterson, fell to a poisoned drow quarrel during an ambush in a ruined city. The Last League is the organization’s headquarters, and its base is wherever it makes camp. The captain and her officers occupy a tight cluster of tents at the camp’s center.

## The Mages of Saruun

Obsessed with the secrets of the Underdark’s hidden depths, the Mages of Saruun have established a tentative grasp on an ancient subterranean stronghold, the Seven-Pillared Hall. In the ordered society they have built, the mages’ rule is law; to break it means death. The Mages of Saruun oversee their subterranean outpost from an impregnable tower. Served by animated brass minotaurs and wielding powerful magic plumbed from the depths of the Underdark, these ambitious arcanists maintain strict order in their stronghold as they seek influence over and alliance with the races of the deep frontier.

Thought the order has grown to have at least twelve mages and many acolytes, the three founding members of the Mages of Saruun are all believed to still be living and currently exploring the Underdark. They are Hasifir, Niami, and Samazar.

## Minions of Queen Stravalla:

The trolls and werewolves of Summerdown Valley venture far and wide in the Dawnforge Mountains in search of fresh victims and treasure for their queen.

## The Phantom Brigade

For the past nine decades, ghostly warriors have haunted Nerath's forgotten places, from the ancient halls of Kalton Manor in the Nentir Vale to the ruined palace at the center of the partially destroyed city of Nera, the former capital of the empire.

At the empire's height, the rulers of Nerath anointed many knightly orders. One of the most revered was the Knights of the Empire. Consisting mostly of righteous paladins and noble rangers, the Imperial Knights served as guardians to the emperor and manifestations of the emperor's will. The best of this order were often called to serve the emperor directly, becoming protectors of secrets and defenders of the imperial family.

Many of the knights of this order died during the chaotic time of the collapse of the empire. Some perished trying to defend the empire and prevent the onrushing disaster. Others met a more ignoble end. Some mysterious magical effect or unknown curse turned the dead Imperial Knights into undead guardians. It seems that the knights continue to try to fulfill the oaths they undertook in life, seeking honor in undeath even though they were unable to ultimately stop the empire's collapse.

A knight's code prevents Phantom Brigade members from accosting travelers without provocation. However, this prohibition doesn't preclude a knight from coming into conflict with adventurers. Bound to an oath sworn centuries ago, a phantom knight might be forced into a confrontation with adventurers who are attempting to enter a protected sanctuary or to plunder the empire's lost treasures. Sometimes, offering the phantom knight a passphrase (or, more rarely, a voucher impressed with the imperial signet) gains safe passage.

Members of the Imperial Knights' Phantom Brigade appear as they did in life, though they are ethereal and translucent. They can be recognized by the archaic armor they wear and by the way the light of the moon passes through them. Each knight wields the weapon that he or she used in life. The bond between knight and weapon is powerful, and each ghostly implement bears the symbol of the Threefold Crown of Nerath, marking each member of the Phantom Brigade as an Imperial Knight.

## The Porter's Guild

The Porter’s Guild is in charge of the Upper and Lower Quays in Fallcrest, transporting goods off of ships above or below the Nentir Falls and then moving them to the other quay and reloading them onto a new boat.

A surly dwarf pugilist named Barstomun Strongbeard runs the porters’ guild, and he takes a cut of any wages paid to laborers carrying cargo up or down around the falls. Barstomun and his thugs are trying to extend their reach by intimidating merchants who send their goods overland and forcing them to hire guild porters for any cargo handling in town.

## Ranala's Shadar-kai clan

A clan of shadar-kai who emerged from the Shadowfell Keep a year ago, under the leadership of Mistress Ranala, a priest devoted to the Raven Queen. Ranala discovered through her auguries that followers of Tharizdun hid among Mistwatch’s people. They entered the town to root out the infestation and reveal their presence to Lord Cadmus. To their surprise, they learned Cadmus was a worshiper, having been seduced by the wicked god through the forbidden tomes he loved. The confrontation went poorly, and Ranala’s effort to destroy him failed. She left defeated, her magic stolen, and with Cadmus more powerful than ever before.

Ranala and her followers withdrew to the outskirts of the town to find a way to recover the artifact Zaspar had stolen. Instead, they learned that the cultist had already unlocked its magic and used it to siphon energy from the townsfolk to perform some unspeakable ritual involving his wife and his ‘child’. The magic from the now-corrupted relic not only stole life from the people but infected them with a vile disease—when they died, they rose soon after as undead. Worse, anyone who entered the town risked being exposed to the blight. The shadar-kai refuse to enter the town and prevent anyone from leaving. A carrier could pass along the infection to anyone he or she meets. The shadar-kai encouraged the locals to stay put until a way could be found to defeat Zaspar. They allow others to enter because if they turned visitors away, word would surely spread, inviting unwanted attention and risking even greater exposure to the disease. Thus, the shadar-kai seem like villains, but they are, if anything, pragmatic protectors sheltering the wider region from the evil growing in Mistwatch.

## The Raven Roost bandits

The Raven Roost bandits operate from an old manor house between two major trade routes, fanning out to prey on travelers passing to Fallcrest, Hammerfast, Harkenwold, or Thunderspire. Tipped off to the impending appearance of wealthy travelers by Barton, the smiling proprietor of Fiveleague House, and led by three ambitious shadar-kai, the bandits forged themselves such a reputation for elaborate and gruesome killing that the people of the Nentir Vale initially offered them no resistance.

On their home plane, Samminel was a minor warlord, Erzoun was his albino witch, and Geriesh was his chief spy and assassin. In one of her prophetic auguries, Erzoun predicted that Samminel would become complacent if he stayed in the Shadowfell, never advancing or gaining major prestige. Geriesh suggested that only a greater challenge could alter fate's course and proposed that they leave the Shadowfell to begin anew. Samminel agreed, and the three located a crossing to the world near the Keep on the Shadowfell, determined to carve out a bloody new destiny worthy of the Raven Queen's favor.

Unburdened by frail human compassion, the three shadar-kai quickly gained respect in outlaw circles. Word of their deeds traveled as fast as the breath that spoke them, and within weeks of their arrival, the bandit population of the Harken Forest knelt before the trio, practically begging for leadership and instruction. The shadar-kai were happy to oblige and quickly molded the outlaws into the most fearsome band of bandits the region has ever seen.

## The River Rats

Beneath the shadow of Fallcrest’s limestone bluffs lies the modest district Lowtown. Here, amid the hulks of burned out buildings left to rot following the Bloodspear War, citizens of little wealth scrape out meager existences one day at a time. Honest jobs have been scarce in recent years, forcing droves of paupers to live off of the streets, where local thugs call the shots.

The Lower Quays is home to one such gang of miscreants and ruffians—the River Rats. An odd band of human and halfling poor, the River Rats have long plagued warehouse owners along the wharf. This incessant targeting has had an increasingly debilitating effect on the merchant trade in Lowtown. Frustrated traders must calculate whether they would rather pay exorbitant fees to the Porter’s Guild of the Upper Quays to safely unload and store their goods, or risk the pilfering hands of the River Rats.

Kelson, proprietor of the Lucky Gnome Taphouse, is the rumored leader of the River Rats.

## The Rockguard Clan

This dwarf clan lives in a small collection of shacks southwest of Hammerfast. The local equivalent of rustics, they demand a toll of 5 gp or a cask of strong drink from anyone they catch crossing their territory. If the intruders refuse, the Rockguards trail them through the wilderness. At night, they attempt to sneak into the travelers' camp and steal whatever they can grab.

The Rockguards are crude, belligerent, and obnoxious, but they quickly warm up if given gifts of fine ale or food. If adventurers befriend them in this way, the dwarves adopt them into the clan. The Rockguards' camp provides a safe place to rest, and the clan can lead the adventurers to any of the locations on the nearby lands.

## The Students of Aurtus

The Students of Aurtus are a loose affiliation of clerics, acolytes, and other worshipers of Pelor who seek to harness knowledge of the past as a means to make a better future for all. As members of Pelor’s faithful, they seek to bring light to the world, providing compassion and aid to those in need. However, they also see Pelor’s influence as an opportunity to teach the people of the world how they might avoid the mistakes of the past. Students of Aurtus view the whole of time as a living, constantly evolving tapestry of events that influence each other in myriad ways. They refer to time and history as “The Tapestry.” Members of the order refer to themselves as students, though they might better be called teachers.

Little organizational hierarchy exists in the order since all members are encouraged to take on challenges as equals. The only title within the order is that of Keeper of the Living Tome. One member of the order, typically the eldest, is charged with administering The Living Tome of Pelor, a collection of seven thick books originally written by Aurtus, a survivor of the Bloodspear War. The Keeper is tasked with further Aurtus' work. Students can access The Living Tome of Pelor at any time by speaking with the Keeper at the House of the Sun in Fallcrest.

Members of the order don’t work only with other followers of Pelor. Students seek to develop personal relationships with clerics of Avandra, since her portfolio includes change for the better and travel. Students seek out those of her followers who might provide stories and histories that the Students of Aurtus can use to augment their own understanding of history. Additionally, Students of Aurtus seek to work with followers of Ioun, so as to further strengthen their knowledge of the past and prophecies that might guide them in their endeavors.

## Spider Goblins

These goblin clans occupy small, hidden outposts across the Dawnforge Mountains. Their leaders are masters of primal magic, and the clans train spiders as pack animals and war beasts. The spider goblins are most noteworthy for the helms they fashion from the eyes and skin of slain spiders.

## Clan Swiftwater

The halfling of Clan Swiftwater carry cargo all the way the Nentir’s river. They’re more than willing to take passengers for a small fee. Irena Swiftwater is the matriarch of the clan. She is a sharp merchant who passes herself off as an absent-minded reader of fortunes and maker of minor charms.

## The Tigerclaw barbarians

The Tigerclaw barbarians claim to be direct descendants of the primal spirit Hunter of Winter. Part human and part hunting cat, the Tigerclaws hold fast to the brutal way of life that has sustained them beyond the rise and fall of civilizations.

When Hunter of Winter made Hota Swiftstripe, the first Tigerclaw, his kin, the human chieftain took on the outer aspect of a hunting cat and became the tribe's first razorclaw shifter. These traits he passed to his children and their descendants. Thus the shifters of the Tigerclaw can trace their lineage directly back to Hota and the primal spirit. Shifters form the base of the tribe's Tigerblood caste, which includes the chieftain, shamans, elite warriors, sabertooth riders, and others who have passed the caste's initiation rites. They comprise about one-third of the tribe. The remaining two-thirds are called the Tamed, consisting mainly of human gatherers, artisans, and warriors eager to prove themselves worthy of the Tigerbloods. When a Tamed has proven himself or herself worthy, the chieftain invokes the rite of initiation, in which the candidate hunts and attempts to subdue a wild sabertooth in the manner of Hota Swiftstripe. Those who tame the sabertooth are elevated to the Tigerblood caste and mated to a shifter. Henceforth, all their descendants are born Tigerblood.

The Tigerclaw barbarians refuse to submit to any authority beyond their own. When Nerath's influence expanded, the Tigerclaw were pushed into the icy northern reaches of the world. But in the decades since Nerath's fall, the barbarians have thrived, forging their way south into the Nentir Vale and other lands. The Tigerclaw tribe of Chief Scargash that inhabits the Winterbole Forest has dwelt there for over seventy winters.

## Vryloka

Uncounted centuries ago, in a land of mists and dark forests, the noble families of a now-forgotten kingdom sought a way to increase their lifespan beyond the meager years allotted to them by their human heritage. One evening, their elders were approached by a mysterious entity known only as the Red Witch—a scarlet-clad figure who held the key to their dreams. She offered to them a powerful blood-bonding ritual that would grant them the vitality of vampires without subjecting them to the taint of undeath. These human nobles became the first living vampires—blessed with great power gained at the price of their own vitality. In later centuries, those creatures became known by the name of the noble family that first forged the pact, the Vrylokas.

By carefully concealing their true nature, the first vrylokas quickly rose to power, becoming the rulers of their realm. In time, others learned of the dark accord that was the source of their power. An uprising of the vrylokas' human subjects soon followed, and their former kingdom was cast down and lost to the mists of time. However, the living vampires endured.

Over long generations, these deposed nobles managed to insinuate themselves into the upper classes of other nations, reestablishing their power and prestige. Paying attention to the lessons of their history, vrylokas go to great lengths to keep their true nature secret, living elaborately crafted double lives. To the world at large, vrylokas are known as human nobles who were displaced from distant ancestral homelands. But even as they are welcomed into the upper circles of their adopted cultures, the vrylokas maintain their true society in the shadows—a dark court of living vampires constantly plotting for power against each other and the mortal races.

In the Nentir Vale, a few vryloka noble families live in the Barony of Harkenwold.

## The Weeping Skull Tribe

The orcs of the Weeping Skull tribe that wander in the Dawnforge Mountains are clever, vicious marauders. Their symbol is a skull weeping tears of blood, and it comes from a strange idol they worship, a rock formation that resembles a skull and that bleeds from its eye sockets. If this idol were destroyed, the tribe would fall as its religion collapsed.

## The White Lantern Consortium

This association of merchants, traders, and explorers is one of the most powerful forces in the region. The consortium's reach extends far beyond the Nentir Vale. The White Lantern Consortium has no unifying goal or vision other than the acquisition of profit. Factions within the group—noble families, merchants, and wealthy adventurers—might become members for their own reasons. The consortium's symbol is lantern with rays of light shining from it. Almost all the goods sold and traded in the Vale are brought in by the White Lantern Consortium. Anyone attempting to assert mercantile power in the region is likely to receive a visit by members of the group. Membership is by invitation only, and it usually requires a handsome sum of money or a great deed on the organization's behalf (membership has its benefits, including discounts on goods and access to privileged information about the Nentir Vale and other regions).

The consortium was founded by Taleen Quirrelle, an eladrin of Mithrendain (an eladrin city in the Feywild) who was exiled after her spouse died of poison. The eladrin authorities couldn't definitively pin the crime on her, but she was exiled nonetheless for suspected complicity. She departed the city with a great deal of wealth, which she funneled into starting what was then called the White Lantern Company. Her beauty, cunning, and business acumen soon attracted other companies until she was able to form the consortium that exists today. She has a weakness for expensive jewelry and clothing, and no longer wears the motifs of her people, preferring the more cosmopolitan style of humans. Whispers sometimes call her the Princess of Poison, for it is said that anyone who opposes the consortium soon ends up face down in an alley somewhere.

Among other key members of the consortium are Vinn, a gnome accountant who oversees the consortium's investments. He came over from the Feywild with Taleen, and he is the only person who knows her dark origins. And Lord Kelevan, a male human in his late fifties, who claims to be a lord of a faraway land, and certainly has the wealth to support the claim. Kelevan is a heavy investor in the White Lantern Consortium and says he is personally overseeing his investment. He is a common patron for adventurers and explorers, though his motivations remain hidden. This "lord" is in fact a former adventurer who lives vicariously through the experiences of others, constantly pushing them toward more and more dangerous endeavors.

## The Winterguard

The Winterguard’s history stretches back to ancient times. During the waning days of the Kinstrife Wars, the terrible conflict between eladrin, elves and drow, the leaders of the fabled eladrin realm of Cendriane decided to sequester their most dangerous prisoners where the criminals could do no further harm. They constructed a prison in a remote corner of the natural world, in the northernmost region of the Winterbole Forest in the Nentir Vale, atop a mountain known to the local human tribespeople as Winter’s Rise, and magically sealed their prisoners away within the prison’s frozen walls. They also assigned a company of their finest swordmages —powerful wizards who blend spellcasting with swordsmanship techniques— under the leadership of Ilyara Lathiel, to guard the distant prison. The mighty archmages of Cendriane granted Commandant Lathiel immortality as part of her commission, as they required an everlasting guardian for the prison’s most powerful denizens. Though Lathiel would live forever, she could never again leave the prison, for the magic that gave her immortality also trapped her in the prison just as effectively as her charges.

After the fall of Cendriane, the grieving members of the Winterguard remained true to their original mandate. They refused to abandon their posts until they received orders to do so from the legitimate rulers of Cendriane. Because their prisoners were far too dangerous to ever set free, the order renewed its vow that none would ever escape. Commandant Lathiel quickly realized that predators, the hostile environment, and the passage of time would eventually take their toll, so she decided to recruit promising candidates from nearby tribes to replenish the Winterguard’s numbers.

The Winterguard remained largely isolated until the rise of Nerath, when Commandant Lathiel sent messengers to negotiate an accord with the fledgling empire. In return for a considerable sum of gold and magical items and knowledge, the order would incarcerate the empire’s most dangerous criminals—those so powerful that execution would be an insufficient means of stopping them. The emperors were pleased with the Winterguard’s services, and allowed its members to operate legally as bounty hunters within its borders, thus enabling the order to recruit new members from farther afield. One side effect of the agreement has been the gradual dissemination of the swordmage’s traditions in the lands of the empire and beyond.

After Nerath disintegrated, the Winterguard endeavored to maintain alliances with the empire’s myriad successor states, but few could afford to compensate the order for incarcerating their prisoners. Many of the younger nations lack the means to apprehend fugitives, especially across newly established borders, so they still permit members of the Winterguard to operate in their territories. Nowadays, some settlements are home to at least one of the order’s swordmages.

Today, descendants of the original eladrin swordmages comprise the majority of the Winterguard’s membership and hold its most important leadership positions, but a sizable number of members of other races —primarily humans, dwarves, dragonborn and goliaths—have swelled its ranks.

## The Wolf Runners

The Wolf Runners gang targets travelers along the Trade Road between Fallcrest and Hammerfast. Merchant caravans and farm wagons make particularly tempting targets. The legend of the Wolf Runners has grown in the time that the gang has been active in the area, and people as far away as Winterhaven and the Dragondown Coast have heard about the bandits and their wolves. Sylish Kreed, leader of the Wolf Runners, is a large man with long, dark hair, which he wears tied back. A wolfish grin brightens his rugged features, and it grows wider as the situation around him intensifies. Kreed approaches every raid with good humor and a certain amount of politeness; he tries to be civil in his dealings with victims. He leaves them short of gold and goods, but alive—that way he can rob them again at a future date. Kreed is a sore loser, however, and he won't forget a loss and continues to harbor a deep hatred for the person who got the better of him, but a victory or two puts him back into his usual calm and cheerful nature.

The gang includes a number of gray wolves and dire wolves, all of which serve as companions to the charismatic Kreed. The wolves tolerate the rest of the bandit gang, but they treat Kreed as though he was the alpha male of their pack. This happens because Kreed is in fact a lycanthrope, able to shift between wolf, hybrid, and human form at will. However, for three days every month during the full moon, the curse overcomes him, and Kreed gives in completely to the wolf inside him. During this period, he and his pack of wolves leave the gang behind and take to the hills and forests.

The rest of the gang sets up camp in some remote location and remains there until Kreed and his pack return. While Kreed is away, the de facto leader of the gang is a calm, steel-hearted female tiefling named Eveni Redblade. Kreed rescued her from the clutches of the Dark Drake of the Moon Hills and her loyalty to him is beyond reproach. To the best of anyone's knowledge, the Wolf Runners have no other lycanthropes in their ranks.

## Woodsinger Clan

The elves of the Woodsinger clan live in the southeastern part of the Harken Forest. This nomadic tribe consists of a dozen bands, numbering near 200 in total. Each band shifts from camp to camp every few months. A wise, cautious elfwoman named Eriyel leads the band currently residing near the Barony of Harkenwold.

# Threats to the Nentir Vale

This is a list of endemic monsters species of the Nentir Vale, as well as individuals worth mentioning due to the dangers the pose to the region.

## The Abyssal Plague

Deep in the bowels of the Abyss lies the prison of the evil god Tharizdun. Also called the Chained God and the Elder Elemental Eye, Tharizdun created the Abyss by piercing the deepest layers of the Elemental Chaos with a crystal of pure evil, the Heart of the Abyss. For eons Tharizdun has been imprisoned by the other gods, and he has waited and watched for opportunities to spread his malevolence throughout the multiverse.

That time has now come. A cult loyal to Tharizdun performed a dark ritual to penetrate his prison, and though the Chained God could not escape, the essence of his will did, in the form of a sentient red liquid laced with silver and flecked with gold, known as the Voidharrow. This essence infects all creatures it touches, filling them with great strength and Tharizdun’s desire to destroy all of creation. The opening into Tharizdun’s prison tore through the fabric of space and time, allowing the Voidharrow to seep into many worlds simultaneously. Among those worlds is the one where the Nentir Vale exists.

Now the Abyssal plague has ignited a fever that burns throughout the land. Plague demons of various forms have begun to appear, threatening civilized settlements across the Nentir Vale. The very touch of a plague demon can pass along a debilitating disease that can lead to death or even transformation in rare cases. The alien disease is capable of turning humans and other natural creatures into plague demons. Heroes and greater beasts are transformed into powerful servants and go on to threaten entire towns. The lowest form of the Abyssal plague can infect fresh humanoid corpses, resulting in ferocious hordes of reanimated dead bent on slaying every living creature in their path. Others give themselves over to the Voidharrow willingly and undergo similarly terrible transformations, becoming blightwalkers. Only the most powerful become the Voidharrow’s chosen heralds and exarchs.

All plague demons so far observed share certain physical characteristics. A crimson crystal substance, either in liquid or solid form, is somehow incorporated into each plague demon's body. The crimson substance contains strands of silver and flecks of gold, and it appears as either an oozing liquid or as hard as an armored shell. The substance might manifest as veins of pulsating liquid crystal running between armored plates or undulating from cracks in the skin, solid crystal protrusions, or even crystalline weapons emerging from limbs.

The plague appears to be transmitted to its victims by their consuming the Voidharrow, or by coming into contact with it or the blood of a carrier. The malevolence of the plague and its victims is divine in nature. Although the Abyssal plague has appeared only recently, the phrases invoked by those infected come from a foul, ancient language. No direct translations can be made of the more complicated phrases, but the simpler phrases speak of a world of complete darkness, devoid of life, and an insatiable hunger for destruction that has existed since the beginning of creation, the will of its victims appears enslaved to that Tharizdun.

The Voidharrow: The Voidharrow began as an alien substance called the Progenitor, the liquid remnant of evil inhabiting the dead universe that is the Chained God’s prison. Tharizdun infused this substance with all his hatred and madness and sent it through a pinhole in his extradimensional prison, starting a plague that crossed all known worlds.

The relationship between the Voidharrow and Tharizdun is more complicated than mortals can understand. Though the two conscious entities had been entombed together since creation, their minds were not fully entwined. While Tharizdun commanded his cultists to set him free, it was the Voidharrow that escaped. Tharizdun still seeks freedom, but the Voidharrow’s primary goal now is to spread its disease as far as possible.

## Boggle

*"Boggle comes and boggle goes,*

*Steals your rings and stamps your toes.*

*Turn around the compass rose,*

*Where it went to, no one knows."*

-Fallcrest children's rhyme

Boogles are native from the Feywild, and are common ancestors of goblins and of the Shadowfell's dimension-hopping banderhobbs, but are as similar to those creatures as humans are to apes. Boggles are cowards that prefer to stay out of contact with others. They can speak in halting Common or Goblin, but most communicate with shrieks, hisses, clicks, and taps understood only by their own kind. Boggles are not particularly intelligent, but they are cunning and exceptionally devious. Using their dimension-folding powers, they feed by snatching birds, rabbits, and other small prey by surprise.

Boggles go out of their way to torment or vex people. A boggle might spoil milk, strip the sheets from beds, tie shoes together, or set stockings aflame. It might disassemble armor and hide the pieces, or switch new weapons with old, rusty ones. It might pound at the inside of a closet door, hurl an object against a wall, or grab at sleepers from beneath their beds. It might even swaddle a wild animal cub like a baby and swap it for a sleeping infant-then lurk nearby to delight in the parents' horror. Sometimes a boggle volunteers to act as a humble guide for travelers or explorers, then leads them into an ambush or a dragon's lair.

## Cadaver Collectors

Cadaver collectors are massive, armored constructs built to retrieve corpses from the battlefield, regardless of the dead ones' alliances. A loaded cadaver collector is a horrific sight: a 12-foot-tall, 2-ton form with bloody, broken, and decaying bodies impaled on its spiked plating. Even after a war or a conflict ends, cadaver collectors are often discovered among the ruins, searching for bodies to gather and masters to serve. The secret of creating cadaver collectors is thought to be lost, but occasionally a new one appears, suggesting that someone has rediscovered or reverse-engineered the process by studying the golem-like creatures.

Old stories say the first collectors appeared in the Nentir Vale with the company of the human necromancer and conqueror Daelh, whose small but powerful army invaded the southern borders of the Witchlight Fens hundreds of years ago. No one knows what happened to Daelh, but eventually the Daggerburg goblins found many of his the collectors lost in the old ruins of the Fens.

## Dragons

In the Nentir Vale setting, there are three main families of dragons:

Catastrophic dragons are mighty embodiments of primordial forces. They are destructive, but not devoted to evil. The ground warps and explodes violently in their presence. Earthquake and typhoon dragons are two types of catastrophic dragons.

Chromatic dragons are generally evil, greedy, and predatory, and they’re inclined to worship Tiamat, whom they regard as their progenitor and patron, although some exceptions of this rule exist, and some of those good chromatic dragons worship Bahamut instead. Those "rogue" good chromatic dragons are labelled traitors and hunted down by followers of Tiamat.

Metallic dragons are in some ways the opposite of the chromatic dragons. Many of them are devoted to Bahamut and share his ideals of nobility and virtue. Many, however, fail to live up to those lofty ideals and succumb to a selfishness and aggression that seems common among all of dragonkind.

Among the known dragons of the Nentir Vale are:

-Actherimos, a young earthquake dragon that is trapped in a ruined monastery in the Dawnforge Mountains. He and his duergar followers tried to destroy Hammerfast 60 years ago.

-Bitterstrike, a female adult white dragon that controls nearly all the inhabitants of the Winterbole Forest. She lost her left eye in a battle against Chief Fangstrike of the Tigerclaw barbarians when she was young, nearly 300 years ago.

-Blightborn, a male young black dragon who destroyed Sunderpeak Temple and now inhabits its ruins.

-Calastrix, a female young three-headed red dragon who sleeps under a magical effect in Forgepeak Mountain, but the spell is losing strength and she can awaken anytime soon. Nearly destroyed Hammerfast 300 years ago, and is considered the most powerful dragon in the Nentir Vale. Thar, a dragonborn champion of Gruumsh, is working to bind her to the service of his god before she awakes.

-Cazakk "the Blessed", a male young red dragon worshipper of Tiamat who lives in the hills near Harkenwold, and wants to convert his "subjects" to his faith by any means necessary.

-Farallax, a male fledgling white dragon that lives in the Twisting Halls, near Fallcrest.

-Shadowmire, a male adult black dragon and the oldest and currently most powerful dragon in the Nentir Vale (at least, until Calastrix awaken). He dominates the Witchlight Fens unchallenged. Shadowmire also knows and understands much of the history of the Nentir Vale and their more influential inhabitants. He uses this knowledge to his advantage, manipulating current events wherever possible.

-Szartharrax, a male young white dragon that lives in the Cloak Wood. Although he is small by the standards of his kind, Szartharrax is far and away the most dangerous monster in Kobold Hall. Szartharrax has an appetite for gold, and the white dragon has been demanding tribute from his loyal servants. Fear of the dragon’s anger is driving the kobolds of the Cloak Wood to attack caravans and launch raids against the nearby settlements.

-Vestapalk, a male young green dragon that has been chosen by Tharizdun to carry the Voidharrow and spread the Abyssal Plague to the world. The dragon believes that the Elder Eye has looked upon him and blessed him for greatness. He is currently searching for the Voidharrow.

## Drakes

Regardless of whether they're wild or domesticated, the reptilian drakes make fierce and clever foes. They come in many shapes and sizes, and serve as attack animals for all types of masters. Players characters such as rangers can domesticate them.

Among its subspecies found in the Nentir Vale are:

Bloodseeker Drake: Bloodseeker drakes are dwarf-sized bipedal reptiles with blood-red scales and yellow-orange bellies. Like bloodhounds, they're often used to track fugitives or hunt prey.

Dark Drake: Unlike common drakes, these drakes are actively malicious. An evil intellect flares within their reptilian brains, and their terrifying abilities are evidenced in the morning's light by the gruesome, dismembered remains of their kills. Dark drakes enjoy inflicting torment against individual targets. When facing groups of enemies, the drakes gang up on one creature at a time, taking it to ground and tearing it apart in a frenzy to panic its companions. There are two known types of Dark Drakes:

* Coiling adderbrood dark drake: Those drakes are black and as slick as oil, sliding from hidden burrows to poison their prey with sickle-like fangs before dragging the paralyzed victims back down to their lightless underground den.
* Hellghost dark drake: The long, black-scaled bodies of those drakes are covered with faint, wavering flames that intensify whenever the reptile is restrained against its will.

The Dark Drake of the Moon Hills: A unique, giant dark drake thought to be a just a fancy tavern story by scholars and veteran rangers. According to legend, The Dark Drake and its brood emerge only on the blackest of nights, stealing across the moors in search of humanoid prey. If the Dark Drake of the Moon Hills really exists, it is not only ancient, but cunning enough to have eluded expert monster hunters and diviners for decades. Nevertheless, the sinister presence of the brood of lesser dark drakes in the Moon Hills remains unexplained. Common drakes and felldrakes also throng to the region, as if in answer to a primal call or the summons of some king drake. And bodies still turn up on the moor on the darkest nights—moon-white and rigid, as if they died from sheer terror.

Felldrakes: When devils transformed the decadent human nobles of Bael Turath into tieflings, the nobles were thrilled with the infernal power inherent in their new forms. Emulating their infernal masters, the tieflings altered some breeds of drakes in various ways and bound them to service. Nowadays, most of the felldrakes inhabiting the Nentir Vale are wild predators. Felldrakes came in four varieties:

* Leaping felldrake: A green-scaled creature capable of quickly jumping out of danger. Adept at camouflage, leaping felldrakes bide their time amid bookshelves, rafters, tree branches, and cave walls, waiting for an opportunity to lunge at a victim. A weak venom in the felldrake's saliva turns the flesh around a bite wound blue for several hours, making a felldrake a valuable asset when identifying thieves and burglars who were caught in the act and bitten before they managed to flee.
* Crested felldrakes: Those felldrakes were bred from guard drake stock and enhanced for agility, speed, and stealth. Like its progenitor, the crested felldrake is a pack hunter. Its bright orange crest runs from skull to tail, and it shifts in color from light orange to deep red as the felldrake closes in on its prey and smells its fear. Many a foe has underestimated the vicious cunning of crested felldrakes on the hunt; clutches of these creatures have been known to climb upon one another's backs to reach high places, and stories tell of an individual creature using its foreclaws to open and close doors.
* Hissing felldrake: A lithe copper-scaled beast that has a frilled neck and a larger body than the leaping and crested varieties. Turathi beastmasters drew their inspiration from nagas and cobras, creating a quick, poisonous beast with a hypnotic dance that entrances its envenomed prey. By refining the leaping felldrake's weak poison, the tieflings imbued the hissing felldrake with a corrosive spittle laced with soporific pheromones.
* Tri-horned felldrake: The most aggressive felldrake produced by the tieflings' breeding program. Tough, territorial, and stubborn, the tri-horned felldrake claims a piece of ground and considers that place its lair until instructed otherwise. A tri-horned felldrake can corral lesser felldrakes, who obey the larger creature through some pecking order among these unnatural reptiles.

Guard drake: A green-scaled reptile that walks on two legs, with an orange crest that runs down the length of its spine. Living up to their name, these drakes are often kept as attack or guard animals.

Pseudodragon: A pseudodragon resembles a tiny dragon not much larger than a house cat, with a venomous stinger at the end of its sinuous tail. These drakes are often kept as pets or arcane familiars, and are by far the most intelligent drakes, able to communicate with their masters. With patience and training, some pseudodragons can grow to be fairly intelligent.

Rage Drake: Rage drakes savagely attack all other creatures they encounter and become even more ferocious when hurt. Adult rage drakes cannot be domesticated, but newly hatched rage drakes can be trained to serve as pets, guards, or even mounts.

## Hounds of Ill-omen

On dark nights when the fog rises, it is said that the hounds of the old hill clans, who now rest beneath the barrows of the Gray Downs, can still be seen coursing across the downs, their ghostly forms pining for their lost masters. The common folk call them the "hounds of ill omen," because calamity and misfortune follow in the wake of their fearsome howls. As legend would have it, on nights when the skull-white moon hangs low and the downs are silent as a corpse's dream, the ghost hounds come forth to hunt mortals. Who sends the hounds and for what purpose, none can tell; when a hound tracks its quarry down, it emits a baleful cry before vanishing into the fog. For the one the hound calls, its hours are numbered. Those the hound has called observe nothing unusual at first. But soon enough, ill luck nips close at the afflicted one's heels, and as calamity follows calamity, it soon becomes apparent that a curse is at work. It is said those who seek solace by petitioning the mercy of the gods, or of the great she-hound Bregga, have sometimes survived a hound's dire calling. For most, however, death comes inevitably.

Sometimes a single howl sounds over the downs, louder and longer than any other. This is the cry of the alpha female, Bregga, calling the pack to her so the hounds can rouse the shades of their masters slumbering within the barrows. When Bregga's hounds sound their lonely howls for the hill clans, the spectral apparitions of their dead masters—cold and black as the grave—rise again from their barrows. Their hateful presence chills the blood of living mortals. With their hounds restored to their sides, the hill clan apparitions ride again to war, eternally seeking vengeance against foes and empires long since crumbled into dust.

It's said that Bregga was the first hound, having lived on the downs since before the hill clans arrived. According to some legends, she sees the true nature of mortal hearts and sends her hounds to punish the unjust—in retribution for the sins of Nerath, perhaps—but no one knows for certain.

## Hurly and Burly

North of Winterhaven, a lonely path wends through the foothills of the Cairngorm Peaks. Flanking this trail are two caves five miles apart, one along the shore of Lake Wintermist and the other carved into a rocky hill to the west. Although the caves aren't visible from the trail, local hunters know them well and avoid them, for they are home to two savage trolls—fraternal twins—that despise one another. Residents of Winterhaven call the trolls Hurly and Burly, because of their tumultuous history and the uproar they have caused over the years.

Hurly and Burly are not typical trolls. Their mother, a shaman, casted a ritual upon them when they were born. The ritual bound their spirits as one, such that the brothers cannot be killed unless they're in close proximity to one another. Though they generally keep to themselves, the trolls sometimes encroach upon each other's territory, leading to arguments and brawls. The brothers walk away from these conflicts no worse for wear, thanks to their regeneration ability. However, these altercations can upset them for days, spurring them to take out their frustrations on nearby farmsteads and passersby.

## Lizardfolk

Primitive hunters stalking swamps and jungles, lizardfolk spring out of murky water or overgrown foliage. They capture prey to eat in great feasts or sacrifice to their lizardkings. In the Nentir Vale, the Witchlight Fens is the only place where one can find a lizardfolk tribe.

Over the past hundred years, many lizardfolk tribes have begun worshiping the powerful black dragon Shadowmire as a living god. His intention to supplant their own living deity-kings is either lost on them, or seen as proof of his superior intelligence and power. A loyal chieftain or marsh mystic directs the tribe and interprets the dragon's commands. Though many tribes follow the dragon, they are not a single organization. Shadowmire encourages them to remain separate, acting as allies that vie for his attention and approval. Although many Witchlight lizardfolk tribes obey the dragon, nonaligned tribes still maintain their own chieftains.

Lizardfolk of the fens reside in abandoned settlements, isolated isles, and hut villages. They are fiercely territorial, even in dealings with others under Shadowmire's influence. Sentries and hidden traps guard their encampments, making an effective early warning system. The three most prominent tribes of Fens are the Brackmarsh tribe, the Mistkiller tribe and the Crushwater tribe.

## Magroth the Mad

Today, history remembers Magroth the First as a shining example by proud humans, the legendary first emperor of Nerath, who conquered most of the known world within his lifetime. Some Nerathi descendants worship him as though he were a god, praying for the mighty emperor’s guidance and protection. Nobody remembers the true history of Magroth the Mad, a tyrant and a conqueror; cruel, ambitious, filled with delusions of grandeur and dreams of destiny, and more than a bit insane.

During Magroth’s reign, rumors of necromancy and demon worship were rampant, but the truth was far worse. Magroth had sold his soul to Orcus, Demon Prince of Undeath. In return for dead warriors to bolster his Shadowfell armies, Orcus made Magroth immune to all natural weapons, giving him the power to conquer any enemy he would face. Magroth turned the Nerathi legions against enemies real and imagined, against his own people, and dedicated the dead to the Demon Prince of Undeath. When his despotic rule was as his peak, Magroth was killed by the forgotten hero Krondor, ending his reign of terror at last.

Thanks to the dark pacts he made, however, death was not the end of Emperor Magroth. Instead, a piece of him was drawn into the Shadowfell where he became the ruler of a domain of dread, Darani, the city of his death. From this vantage, the old emperor, now turned into a vampire lich, prepared for his return—and the new empire he would forge from the ruins of the old.

Now Magroth has made a new deal with Orcus, one that frees him from his eternal prison for a year and a day. In that time, Magroth must re-establish his ancient kingdom while also accomplishing a series of terrible tasks for Orcus. To this end, Magroth’s plans intersect with other threat that is rising in the world: the Abyssal Plague. He also needs to locate the last of his descendants, as his own blood must be offered to Orcus in a vile ritual to ensure his freedom. With the help of his faithful death knight, Kallabar, Magroth now prepares to open the sealed doors of the City of the Dead, where he intends to complete a ritual to raise an undead horde and restore Andok Sur to its former glory…

## Mooncalves

Mooncalves are otherworldly monstrosities from the Far Realm that haunt the spaces between the worlds. Following some little-understood cycle, they enter the natural world for a period of weeks, lairing atop desolate mountains and lonely hills, often near settlements where food is abundant. Ringed by mountains and dotted with hills, the Nentir Vale remains a favorite location for the predatory mooncalves. Sages of Nerath used to predict with great accuracy the arrival of these horrific beasts, but much of that knowledge has been lost since Nerath's fall.

A mooncalf combines the body of an immense cephalopod with the wings of a bat. It has six short tentacles that it uses to grab prey and two long, flailing tentacles that it uses to attack at a distance. The creature's beak like mouth is located where the tentacles meet the base of its body. Mooncalves understand Deep Speech but do not speak it. They can communicate telepathically with each other and with any other creature within 100 feet. However, only creatures that understand Deep Speech can fathom a mooncalf's thoughts, which tend to be primal and focused on killing and eating.

Roughly every eight years, a small group of 2-5 mooncalves, called a grasp, preys upon a localized area (a few square miles) for a single lunar cycle before returning to the place they came from. Mooncalves typically hunt at night, resting during the daylight hours. Although not choosy about prey, mooncalves particularly enjoy the flesh of humanoids and cattle, making them a true menace to villages and towns. A grasp of feasting mooncalves can devour an entire settlement and its livestock in a matter of weeks. Of all the places in the Nentir Vale that attract such creatures, Thunderspire Mountain might be the mooncalves' favorite haunt.

## Oozes

Among the weirdest creatures in the world, the formless oozes wriggle through dank underground passages. The mindless things attack anything that draws near, then dissolve the meal with their acidic bodies. Alongside the more common slimes and gelatinous cubes, the Bloodfire ooze is a unique variant found in the Nentir Vale. Those oozes Bloodfire oozes are created through horrid rituals offered to the Demon Lords. The amorphous bloodfire ooze looks like a slithering mass of seething, boiling blood, which reeks of sulfur. It occasionally extrudes pseudopods and manifests faces twisted in torment. Bloodfire oozes can appear in the most unlikely places. Some are known to lurk in the dungeons below the Temple ofYellow Skulls near the Ogrefist Hills, where demonic rituals were practiced (and possibly still are).

## Penanggalan

By light of day, penanggalans are virtuous maidens whose clever charm is exceeded only by their incomparable beauty. They often work as midwives or nursemaids, taking care to note expecting mothers and young children beyond their employers' walls. But at midnight, their maidenly heads tear free from their shoulders, her teeth lengthen into fangs, her bloated entrails serve as motile appendages, and a putrid ichor spews from the intestinal orifices, causing every living thing they touch to fester with boils and sores.

The penanggalan hunts in the dark for the sweet blood of innocents. Penanggalans live to feed and spend a portion of each day hunting for potential victims. They typically prey on those of pure heart, entangling them with its intestines while it drinks their blood. If it cannot locate its preferred quarry, the penanggalan preys on the weakest victim it can find, young innocents that won't be missed, such as youths from poor urban areas or isolated villages.

In maiden form, a penanggalan tempts and teases suitors, modestly guarding her chastity until she is alone with the suitor at night. When her amorous victim is most vulnerable, the penanggalan's head separates from her body's shoulders, and the monster strikes. Some penanggalans serve intelligent evil creatures as seductresses and spies. A penanggalan can maintain its humanoid state without feeding for three days before it goes mad from hunger and devours the first victim it finds.

## Peryton

The peryton blends the body and wings of a bird of prey with the head of a stag. This tenacious, sharp-eyed creature swoops down from mountain peaks, determined to pluck out the heart of its prey. The peryton's tough wing feathers are typically dark green, while its blue-black stag's head is crowned by strong black antlers. A male peryton's light blue chest feathers stand in sharp contrast to the female's drab brown. Both varieties have dully glowing red-orange eyes and a bizarre shadow—rather than reflecting the creature's actual form, its shadow appears humanoid. Sages postulate that the first perytons were elves transformed by some hideous curse, and the bards whisper that a peryton dines on the hearts of its victims to remind itself of what it once was.

Perytons are known to roost in the eastern ridges of the Dawnforge Mountains. They also hunt in the high mountain caves and rocky cliffs of the Cairngorm Peaks and the Stonemarch in the Nentir Vale's northwestern reaches. Those traveling within any of the vale's mountain ranges are advised to keep a wary eye on the sky. Established mountain settlements are especially attractive to perytons as a renewable food source, and it's not uncommon for a town council or a local noble to dispatch adventurers, city guards, or other hirelings to eliminate peryton nests, which usually hold two to four of the creatures. Many adventurers will eagerly accept such a task, because each of the perytons' eggs can be worth several hundred gold pieces to an interested buyer.

## Ragewind

The Nentir Vale is strewn with ancient battlefields where the armies of Nerath once clashed with orcs, primitive hill folk, and barbarian tribes, and where the tieflings of Bael Turath fought the dragonborn legions of Arkhosia. Among the ruins of these bygone conflicts lurk creatures of lingering malice—the spirits of despondent soldiers whose lives were thrown away for no satisfying purpose. These spirits can muster enough will to animate their ancient weapons and strike back at the living, whom they both envy and despise.

A ragewind normally appears as dozens of suspended weapons dancing and clashing within a dusty whirlwind. It can choose to lie dormant, appearing as nothing more than a pile of old, discarded weapons until it senses the presence of a living creature, at which point it rises and attacks. It has no treasure other than the weapons it carries. A ragewind can speak Common in a shrill voice that sounds like the howling of a bitter wind, but it seldom bothers to do so.

## Rats

Rats are said to be sacred to Torog, the evil god of the Underdark, known as the King That Crawls. The presence of rats signifies plague, decay, and collapse in decadent cities.

## Scroll Mummy

A scroll mummy, or grisgol, as those constructs are commonly referred, is created from discarded magic paraphernalia and the essence of a lich. The creature's frame is crafted from broken magic items, potion vials, and similar materials, then wrapped in scroll parchments and pages torn from ritual books.

The construct is animated through a process that includes destroying a lich, recovering its phylactery, and placing that object within the construct before the lich re-forms. Once the lich's spirit is so contained, it becomes bound to the scroll mummy and trapped in the service of the construct's creator. When the scroll mummy is destroyed, the spirit of the lich bound within it is released. The lich's phylactery survives the destruction of the scroll mummy and can be recovered. Unless the phylactery is destroyed, the lich re-forms in a maximum of ten days.

The secret of scroll mummy creation is known to a handful of evil mages and priests, many of whom worship Vecna. It is also known to the Mages of Saruun, who use scroll mummies to guard their private libraries.

## Treants of the Nentir Vale

After the ancient civil war of the treants of the Nentir Vale, those creatures have been divided into two factions, those who live in the Winterbole Forest, and those who live in the Harken Forest.

As cold-hearted as their name implies, the coniferous Winterbole treants have little patience for the proclivities of humanoids or any compassion for their plight. They view humans, elves, orcs, and other two-legged races as parasites-nuisances to be swatted down when they come too close. Within their woods lie ancient Arkhosian ruins and secret Shadowfell crossings, both of which the treants discourage outsiders from visiting.

Winterbole treants maintain an age-old truce with the white dragon Bitterstrike, though the naivewhite wyrm considers the wizened tree folk to be little more than vassals. The treants are content to let the dragon believe what she will as long as she delivers on her end of the agreement—aiding them against the Harken treants in the Winterbole treants' next Great March. The Winterbole treants aren’t fond of the dragon’s other vassals, and sometimes they launch raids against the Tigerclaw barbarians.

The Harken Forest treants are usually found in the company of other fey allies: elves —especially the druids of the Harken’s Heart—, eladrin, hamadryads, and wood woads—stern humanoids from the Feywild that look much like dwarf-proportioned trees. Their leader is Mysteriphal, the oldest living creature in the Nentir Vale, who solemnly vowed to protect the petrified husk of his once-thriving patron, the archfey Malorunth.

Fire-scarred and rot-cursed, Mysteriphal has forgotten that he once was a kind and noble treant who would help any genuine and good-hearted being. Years of warring, destruction, and death have scoured any remnants of goodwill from his soul. Even the elves are cautious when treading into his domain.

## Twig blights

Twig blights can resemble large woody shrubs or small trees with interlocking branches. These nondescript predators need blood to flourish. They can root in nearly any soil and take on attributes of native flora, making wooded areas and forests seem to be attractive nesting grounds. Seedlings grow from an adult twig blight's root system, with as many as a dozen simultaneously sprouting. Seedlings are weak and extremely vulnerable in their first few days of growth, but they mature quickly and can ambush small creatures within a week or two of sprouting.

Twig blight numbers swell dramatically wherever large sources of fresh blood is found. Usually the blood comes from unwary creatures the twig blights have slaughtered, but even heavily blood-soaked earth, such as on a battlefield, draws them. As long as the blood source remains, the blights root themselves in it to feed, dropping seeds to create more of their kind. When the food source runs out, however, the predatory plant creatures move on to seek out more fresh blood. If no blood can be found, the deprived twig blights root themselves in normal soil where they can get sustenance and survive until they can feed on blood again (usually when a creature comes too close).

Twig blight infestations aren't limited to the surface world. Adventurers have reported seeing them in dungeons, ruins, and monsters' lairs, where they gorge on the wreckage of once-living creatures. Such tales have led to the conclusion that twig blights don't need light to survive; rather, they become increasingly bloodthirsty when dwelling in the dark.

## Vampiric Mist

Old legends tell that, long ago, a coven of vampires claimed the marshy expanse known as the Witchlight Fens as their secluded demesne, wherein was hidden the phylactery of their dark liege—a powerful lich whose name has been forgotten. One of the lich's many enemies, a powerful hag, came to the Witchlight Fens in search of the phylactery and performed a ritual to destroy the vampire coven. The ritual did not yield the expected results. The vampires' bodies were destroyed, but their evil essence lingered. The nine vampire lords who led the coven transformed into a single force of pure hatred and malice called a crimson death mist. The lesser vampires of the coven were reduced to roaming clouds of mist having an insatiable hunger for life. The hag, discouraged by the ritual's failure, left the swamp without her prize. The coven itself did not survive the passage of time, and the vampiric mists scattered throughout the Witchlight Fens.

Vampiric mists exist beyond the Witchlight Fens. Any vampire that becomes trapped in gaseous form (usually as a result of losing its sacred resting place) can transform into a vampiric mist by sheer force of will. In doing so, it gives up its corporeal form and becomes a more primal creature, with few desires beyond a craving for life and blood.

# Playable races

Those are the races than can be found as both heroes and villains.

**Bugbears** hail from many tribes of goblinoids that live in the region. The most prominent among those is the Daggerburg tribe that dwells around the Harken Forest. They also can be found in small numbers in the bigger towns and small villages. Those who become members of an adventurer's band are normally members of the Bloodghost Syndicate.

**Devas**, or **Aasimar**, as a few scholars call them, are almost nonexistent in Vale. However, some of them can be seen traveling the Vale from time to time.

**Doppelgangers** as a whole are few in number, but tend to congregate in small groups while living among other races. Doppelgangers are much like humans in that they come in a wide variety of personalities and dispositions.

**Dragonborn** used to be rare sights in the Vale, with a few of them working as escorts for merchant caravans that hailed from the southern cities. However, their presence in the Vale increased when Dythan’s Legion —an army composed of about five hundred dragonborn— arrived to the region in search of past relics from their old Arkhosian Empire. Dragonborn are still uncommon in remote towns, working as mercenaries or bodyguards, but their presence is more numerous in important settlements, such as Hammerfast or Fallcrest.

**Drow** are very rare in the surface world, but numerous in the Underdark of the region as the great drow city of Erelhei-Cinlu is located just below the Nentir Vale. Because of that, the few drow that chose to abandon the Underdark normally reach the surface world through the caves that dot the Vale. The major cave connecting the Vale to the Underdark is the Seven-Pillared-Hall in the Thunderspire Mountain.

**Dwarves** are common sights in the Vale. Small communities of dwarves live in human towns, but great dwarven settlements can be found to the east, the most important of all is the town of Hammerfast.

**Genasi** are rarely seen in the Vale at all. The few individuals that live in Vale hail from the Elemental Chaos.

**Githzerai** are very rare on the Vale, but a few githzerai communities can be found in the Witchlight Fens.

**Gnolls** hail from the Blackfang tribe that dwells around the Old Hills. Some gnolls are civilized enough to oppose their brethren and join an adventurer's band, but those are rare individuals.

**Gnomes** are rarely seen in the Vale at all. The few individuals that live in Vale hail from the Feywild. Svirfneblin are rare sights on the surface, but a few communities of them exist in the Underdark below the Vale.

**Goblins** hail from many tribes of goblinoids that live in the region. The most prominent among those is the Daggerburg tribe that dwells around the Harken Forest. From time to time, some goblins sell their services as mercenaries or join an adventurer's band.

**Goliaths** are very rare on the Vale, but are more numerous in the Dawnforge Mountains. From time to time some goliaths go to the Vale to trade and some of those chose to join an adventurer’s bands.

**Eladrin**, or **High Elves**, as the common people call them, are rarely seen in the Vale at all. Some of the old manors in the Moon Hills and the nearby parts of the Vale were the homes of well-off eladrin families during the Nerathi Empire, and recently some eladrin have come from the Feywild to reclaim them.

**Half-elves** can be found in small numbers in the bigger towns and small villages, living as artisans, farmers, herders or woodcutters.

**Half-orcs** can be found in small numbers in the bigger towns and small villages, working as bodyguards or mercenaries. Half-orcs often find prejudice because their ancestry.

**Halflings** are the second most numerous people in the Vale, like humans can be found nearly anywhere, though their caravans normally are found near the rivers.

**Hamadryads**, or just **Dryads**, are very rare in Vale. Most of them came from the Feywild, though a few number of them live in the Harken or Winterbole Forest. A few of those chose to join adventurers' bands from time to time.

**Hobgoblins** hail from many tribes of goblinoids that live in the region. The most prominent among those is the Daggerburg tribe that dwells around the Harken Forest. Because hobgoblins are the most intelligent and civilized of goblinkind, a few of them suppress or deny their baser urges and embark on adventuring careers.

**Humans** are the dominant race of the Nentir Vale anywhere outside of the Dawnforge Mountains, the Harken Forest and the Stonemarch.

**Kobolds** can hail from many tribes in the Nentir Vale. From time to time, some kobolds abandon their brethren and join an adventurer's band, but those are rare individuals.

**Minotaurs** hail from the mountains surrounding the Vale. While they’re rare sights in the Vale, since the city of Sarhuun Khel is located in the Thunderspire Mountain, some bands of minotaurs can be seen traveling the Vale from time to time to recover relics from their old kingdom. Some of those are civilized enough to work as mercenaries or join an adventurer’s band.

**Orcs** hail from the Dawnforge mountains or the Stonemarch. The “civilized” orcs live in the dwarven town of Hammerfast. However their origins, orcs are hated across the Nentir Vale.

**Pixies** are rarely seen in the Vale at all. They few individuals that live in Vale hail from the Feywild. A few of those chose to join adventurers' bands from time to time.

**Revenants** are almost nonexistent in Vale. However, some of those poor souls are summoned by the Raven Queen with a mission to fulfil in the Nentir Vale from time to time.

**Shadar-kai** are very rare in the Vale. A clan dwells in the Winterbole Forest, and some came directly from the Shadowfell. A few individuals chose to join adventurers' bands from time to time.

**Shades** are rarely seen in the Vale at all. They came directly from the Shadowfell, and the few individuals that came to the mortal world are adventurers.

**Shifters** make up the half of the Winterclaw Barbarians along with humans. A few of those chose to join adventurers' bands from time to time.

**Satyrs** live among the humanoids of the Winterbole Forest. A few of those chose to join adventurers' bands from time to time.

**Tieflings** are uncommon and most likely to be found in Fallcrest and Harkenwold, living under the thumb of a few merchant families. Some tieflings live in small towns across the Vale, but those are very rare.

**Vryloka** (living vampires) are extremely rare in the Vale at all, as there are only few of those noble families in the Barony of Harkenwold.

**Warforged** are almost nonexistent in the Vale. A few of them belong to the noble families of Harkenwold and Fallcrest, or work as mercenaries. More rarely, some of them still lay dormant across the countryside, relics of the last war of the empire of Nerath.

**Wilden,** or **Killoren**, as some scholars call them, are extremely rare in the Vale. They are most numerous in the Hinterlands, a land beyond the Dawnforge Mountains, and individuals or small groups travel to the Vale from time to time.

**Wood Elves** are rarely seen in human dominated communities, but are more common in the Harken Forest or the Winterbole Forest. Most of them are members of the Woodsinger Clan.

**Tuathans** and **Vistani** are rare in Vale, but some of them can be seem from time to time, since there are rifts and natural doors to the Shadowfell and the Feywild in various locations of the Nentir Vale. Those aren’t races, but tribes. Tuathans are humans or half-elves with of fey lineage —in the case of half-elves, one of the parents is an eladrin; while Vistani are traveling gypsies that traverse across the planes.

Members of other races do not exist in the Vale. If you play with one of them, your character is a traveler from far lands.