News From Waterdeep

Hammer, Alturiak, Ches, Tarsakh

1367 DR/Year of the Shield

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NOTE: The following material intertwines greater and smaller events that occur within Waterdeep during the year of 355NR (1367DR), nine years after the Time of Troubles. The events herein summarize or add to the many stories of the NPCs within the City of Splendors boxed set. These entries come from the following official sources;

Campaign Guide (CoS), p.32-35

Running the Realms (2nd Edition box set), p.20 and 24

HAMMER 1367DR

Furious northern storms hammer the City of Splendors, coating the streets and buildings with thick ice and making any travel dangerous for two tendays (assuming the windows and doors weren’t sealed and frozen shut by the ice and sleet, trapping people indoors). With the bitter temperatures and sheer slipperiness of the streets, the Market becomes more skating rink than commercial center.

Many Waterdhavians of Southern and Trades Ward are awakened for four consecutive nights at the end of the month by loud explosions heard from the direction of the Rat Hills. While nothing seems immediately amiss (as per the guard and the Dungsweeper’s Guild), some adventurers and members of the Watchful Order of Magists and Protectors are dispatched to investigate.

ALTURIAK 1367DR

Nine hours after their entrance, the assigned party that has ventured into the Rat Hills dies mysteriously within the wasteland. A flurry of spell use and the sound of battle erupts quite suddenly. By the time a guard contingent tracks them down, all the adventurers and mages lie dead; three of their bodies are missing, but little else can be discerned (of their deaths or their attackers) as the garbage heaps catch fire and soon rage out of control! Soon, much of the interior of the Rat Hills is aflame. The fires burn powerfully for two days, but smaller fires smoulder for a full tenday, the efforts of the Watchful Order to quench the entire inferno for naught. Waterdeep is engulfed in thick, choking clouds of smoke and soot from the Rat Hills Conflagration. The guard is kept busy, however, as the fires drive out many inhabitants of the area, including a small tribe of lizard men, a pack of leucrotta, a clutch of sea zombies, and even a previously unknown form of gulguthra (see the gulguthydra MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM entry). After the fires burn themselves out, the Rat Hills are reduced in size by more than 50%.

A small colony of aquatic elves is wiped out down in the south by a huge horde of undersea predators driven into a feeding frenzy by something; the twelve survivors (nine females, three males; two of each are children) settle with the mermen within Waterdeep’s harbor and petition to join the guard as part of the contingent below. One of the females recalls seeing sharks working alongside sea-wolves and even an ixitxachitl or two!

Many folk in the city succumb to a mild plague caused by the smoke and debris carried over the city by what is now called the Rat Hills Conflagration. While no one dies of the plague, many in the sea trade get a late start at fixing up their ships in preparation for Fleetswake and the shipping season next month.

CHES 1367DR

Rhalaglingalade, a soft-spoken, bearded archmage who recently settled in Neverwinter, has announced an important new creation: the sphere of summer. This enchantment is a series of complicated spells that brings into being a sphere of translucent force in which plants can be grown in warmth and controlled damp throughout the winter. Such spheres also allow the farming of tropical fruits and flowers in northern climes. Since announcing his discovery, the archmage has thrice been attacked by Calishite assassins (notable Thyruin of the White Flowers, who escaped and is though to be wandering the North in a savage mood) and survived capture attempts sponsored, it is whispered, by various merchants of Amn, Luskan, and even Thay. Rhalaglingalade has appealed to the Lords Alliance for protection, and has been assigned a bodyguard of hired adventurers (each of whom is paid 2000gp/month). Several of this guard have been slain already while repulsing attacks, but there seems no shortage of ready applicants, even from among the noble families of Waterdeep.

Lady Hyara Talmost’s celebratory gala the first night of the Fleetswake festivities is a smashing social success. The only disturbing news involves the disappearance of Jynnia Gundwynd’s handsome but mysterious escort; she claims they were alone and asleep in an upstairs room, “resting to get our second wind for the party,” but when she woke up, he was gone. The only evidence left behind is his coat, stained a bright red on the hem and tails.

Fleetswake and the Fair Seas Festival. The tenday-long festival ends with its usual pomp and pageantry, and the donations to Umberlee’s Cache are extraordinarily generous (roughly 260,000 gold pieces). The high mermaid shaman Thur Aquarvol demanded the money be smelted down and sculpted into an undersea statue for Umberlee. The Lords refused this change, but added a commission for a marble statue next year.

TARSAKH 1367DR

Waukeentide. On Goldenight, whether by accident or by Halaster’s design, four aurumvorax exit Undermountain into the Old Xoblob Shop and rampage into the Purple Palace festhall next door. By the time the animals are disabled, three patrons and four festhall girls (wearing naught but gold dust) are dead due to the animals’ attack. The aurumvorax hides are each distributed to the victims’ families (and the festhall) as little recompense. The owner of the Old Xoblob Shop is at a loss as to how the creatures weren’t affected by his usual magical safeguards, suggesting foul play to the watch.

A one-eyed sailor starts a brawl in a Dock Ward tavern, breaks the arms of four men, and proceeds to swing one man by his ankles, using him as a club. When the watch arrives, the sailor flees with two watch officers in pursuit. The two officers are found three streets down, both badly mauled and one with an arm missing. A trail of blood leads down to Smuggler’s Dock, but the trail disappears and the miscreant escapes. The watch is offering a 50-gold-piece reward to anyone who catches this maniac.

Ten non-native Cyricists are arrested at the Plinth for disturbing the open religious services. The group of twelve have cast multiple darkness spells, surrounding the Plinth with utter blackness at highsun. Normally, this breach of ethics is overlooked and the worshipers are ushered out the River Gate; however, their services are interrupted by a number of devout Tyr-worshipers. The resulting battle of spells and steel ends with the death of two Cyricists and for Tyrites, as well as random damage to surrounding structures including the Plinth. Four Tyrites are arrested but released when their fines are paid. No one has seen the Cyricists since the incident, though they did receive judgement from the Lord’s Court; rumor has it they are now in Undermountain.

Eleint, Marpenoth, Uktar, Nightal

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ELEINT

An uncontrollable magical fire ravages the northern section of Sea Ward near the Heroes’ Garden, destroying a number of businesses and villas. Investigations later show the cause as a younf mage’s apprentice attempting a fire-based spell beyond his control; he set the central rowhouse of a block afire, consuming himself in the process. Sadly, a number of guardsmen’s homes are also consumed by the fire, the Watchful Order’s fire-fighters proving ineffective against the flames (though they did limit the damage).

Many new creatures are being encountered in the sewers by the Plumber’s Guild, and they are growing understandably nervous. The newest is quickly being called a sewerm, with its anaesthetic bite and leechlike abilities. The Guild wants someone to go clean out the sewers of such infestations, before any Guild members go missing.

Many rumors abound through the Dock Ward about the unification and alliance of a number of pirate crews in the past few weeks. Many say the former crews of the Black Admiral are pulling together to attack soon and take over Mintarn just before the winter sets in. Others whisper that the direction of the pirates comes from below (“from some new power in Skullport”).

MARPENOTH

At Higharvestide, the new Knights of the Sword Coast stand collected and exit the city as caravan escorts for Lord Phaulkon’s last trade caravan of the season. Its final destination is Cormyr and, due to the coming harsh winter, the Knights and the return caravan aren’t expected until spring.

Gods’ Day. The morning after the Gods’ Day festivities, four watch officiers and two guard officers are discovered stuffed into the garbage carts of the Dungsweeper’s Guild, all decapitated. Curioualy, the bodies are ston cold and cannot be identified without the heads, but none of the watch or guild posts report any missing patrolers. However, a laundry where some watch and guard members send their uniforms was ransacked the night before and a number of unifoms are missing. All watch and guard civilars and armars are keeping sharp eyes out for any strangers in their garb in hopes of catching the killers.

Toward the end of the month, the legendary axe Azuredge magically returns to Waterdeep. Reappearing apparently in answer to a bard’s ballad, Azuredge embeds itself into the main pillar of the Safehaven Inn’s taproom. Many capable warriors try their hands at removing the axe, but none succeeds until some unknown adventurers claim it. The magic of Azuredge proclaims them the Company of the Blue Axe, causing much excitement within the Adventurer’s Quarter.

UKTAR

Auril’s Blesstide. The celebrations of the first frost on the 10th of the month are marred by the discovery of three bizarre ice sculptures on the Seas’ Edge Beach. The three nude male figures appear frozen in fear and they are carved from solid ice. No one within the city can positively identify the bodies, although a few folk recall seeing some braggarts in the Fiery Flagon the night before that looked like these men. Speak with dead magics prove useless and no way has been found to restore the men to mobility.

Each full moon since fire ravaged Sea Ward in Eleint, a sad, lonely phantom appears to remind folk that life and love don’t always end at death. At the former second story level of a villa (which no longer exists), a woman stands by her window, her form and the shape of the window illuminated by the lantern that rests on the sill. Curiously enough, this apparition cannot be seen from the side or behind it, on Stormstar’s Ride, but only when facing it on Phastal Street.

Khelben Arunsun has an uncharachteristic embarrassment on his hands. Some prankster has manipulated the Walking statue of Waterdeep, walking it from its customary spot at the top of the Cliffride to Blackstaff Tower, and altering its stoic face and pose to that of a weeping child curled up in Khelben’s front courtyard. While the statue was swiftly moved back to its usual location and form, Khelben has yet to track down and deal with the prankster; while many see this solely as humorous, others recognize the danger of some unknown factor being able to control one of Waterdeep’s most powerful defenses.

NIGHTAL

One of the early snows falls on the city, but curiously all the snowflakes are deep green in hue. The following morning, the green snow has evaporated, but the many trees and plants about the city experience large growth spurts and, in some cases, crack surrounding pavement. Though it is the start of winter, all fruit-bearing trees magically produce new fresh fruit overnight for two nights in a row, causing a frenzy at the Market for fresh fruit this late in the season. No other results were noted from the green snows, but some speculate that next year will be a bountiful one due to this sign.

Several travelers on the road south of Waterdeep have reported seeing a glowing, blue-white unicorn that came out of stands of trees to closely scrutinize them and others on the road. Its hooves made no sound — and one reoprt says they never quite touched the ground! Elzund Glimmercloak, a wandering priest of Mielikki then in Waterdeep, was very excited at the travelers’ tales. He says the unicorn could only have been a manifestation of Mielikki, and that all faithful of the Lady of the Forest must pray to her for some explanation of this sign.

Glimmercloak has been sharply rebuked by Mhair Nalath, a wandering priestess of Lurue the Unicorn (one of the many splinter faiths known as the Beast Cults). She says what the travelers saw could only have been Lurue, her goddess, and that her appearance marks a rise in power and importance of the Unicorn in Faerun. The adventuring band known as the Blade of the Unicorn, who share Mhair’s faith, agree with her — and have already slain three orc raiding bands and a priest of Malar in the name of the Unicorn to celebrate this sign from the gods.

In Daggerford, the druid Galass Tholt says the unicorn was merely a friend of his who had fallen afoul of a warding spell that left it aglow with faerie fire, and that it was looking for a kindly wizard to remove the condition. Tholt also says that priests are all too apt to make wild claims about happenings in Faerun before they look about, see, and think — and that much tumult and bloodshed could be avoided if they would all mend their ways, even as the gods did (in the Time of Troubles). Nalath denounced him as just “a crazy old druid,” but several merchants who heard his words replied “Amen to that.” The arguements bid fair to continue for some time.

At the Lord’s Court on the 15th of the month, one of the masked Lords stands before the people (four noble patriarchs and five guild masters are on hand in the court’s audience) and takes off his helm, revealing himself to be Khelben Arunsun! Everyone, including Piergeiron, is shocked, and in the surprised silence, Khelben says, “My fellow citizens of Waterdeep, I stand before you, revealed as one of the Lords of our fair city. For years, many have speculated that I sat among this August assemblage, and I admit it freely now...as I retire my position as Lord. I also hereby call my successor, who shall take my place among the rulers of the city. Enter, Lord.” With that, the doors to the Court open, and a masked, robed Lord strides silently in, bows to Piergeiron and the other two Lords in council, and finally takes a seat next to Khelben. Within days, the news spreads throughout the city, shocking many; the taverns buzz of no other news, and many speculate whether he has actually resigned from the Lords, or whether he’s just acting out another convoluted scheme to draw out some enemy (since his revelation was not the greatest of his secrets...).