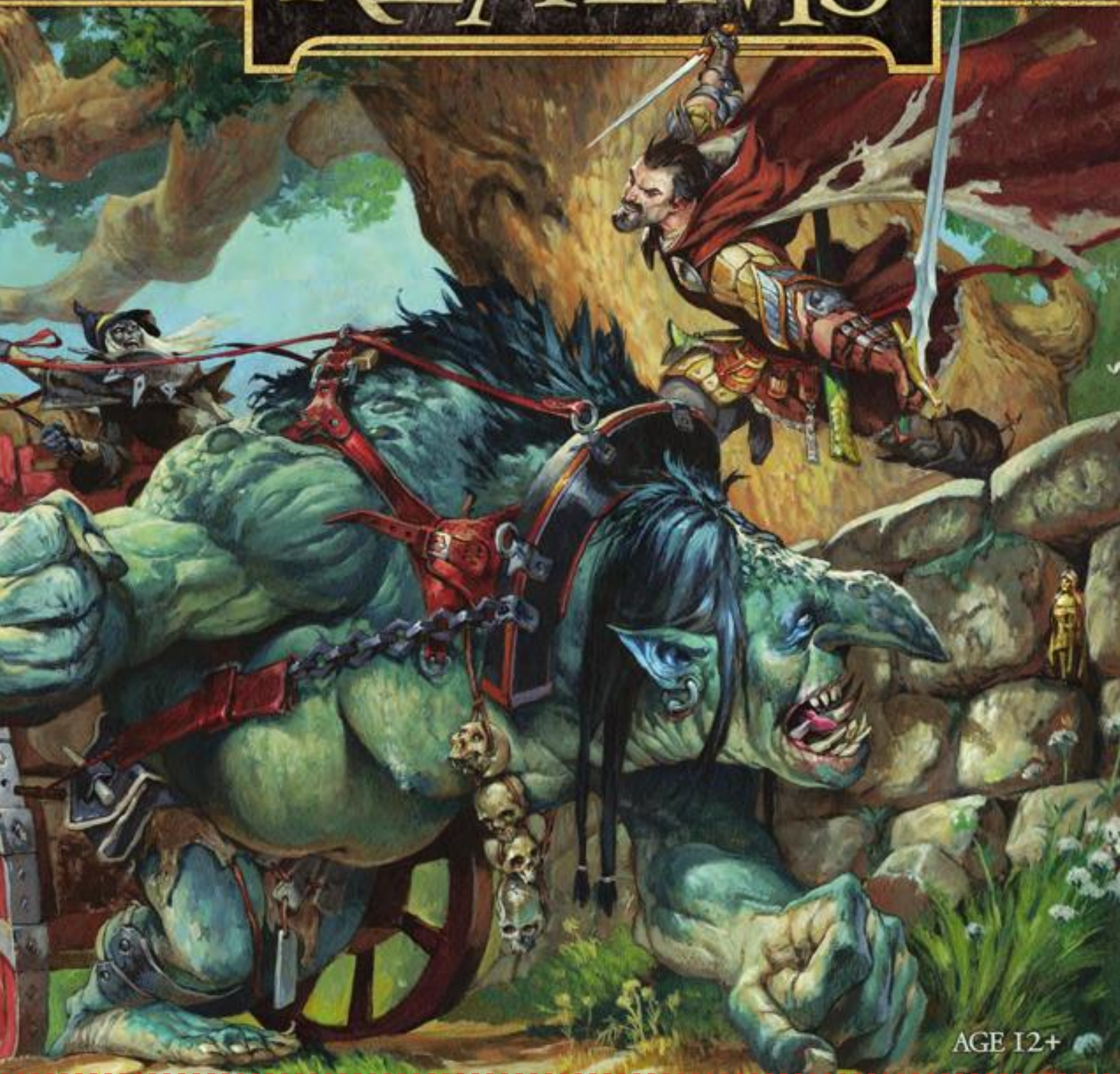


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# FORGOTTEN REALMS™



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# FOREWORD



*A (relatively) young Ed Greenwood summons up his alter ego, Elminster, before the unfurling of a proclamation of great import.*

To all who peruse this volume, these:

Well met, as always, and welcome to the latest tome from the pen of Ed of the Greenwood that purports to lay bare secrets of the world I dwell in, the place best known to ye as “the Forgotten Realms.”

A world so vast and rich that its secrets could fill libraries—to say nothing of the myriad passing details of everyday life, the strivings of folk mighty and simple. Beggars and humble crofters can change the Realms as much as kings do, and its heroes are not always those lauded. Like thy world, the Realms needs splendid deeds from us all for life to hold a goodly measure of pleasures and rewards.

In short, it needs thee to make a difference.

This book, like all guides, seeks to steer readers. Luring them here, and turning them aside from there. 'Tis true no book is thick enough to hold everything, but ye should beware the scribe who is ruthless in omissions of lore that just might keep ye alive. Just as much ye should cherish the sage who reins in his tongue, and never shares in the first place what dare not be shared. I have tried not to doom the Realms by what I've let slip down the decades.

Yet some omissions have been born of the urgency of the moment or the lack of pages, time and again, and not been set down for all to peruse.

I see Ed is finally seeing, in however paltry and slapdash a manner, to some of those gaps, here and now.

I have long thought that the Realms must seem strange indeed to ye, who've not been told anything comprehensive or coherent about this little detail here, and that little detail, there.

For instance, bards' tales and fireside folklore simply bristle with mention of evil tyrants—yet in the Realms I know, only nobles and rulers who utterly lose their tempers or who are spoiled brutes habitually take open and public violent action. I see the vast, sophisticated majority of nobles and rulers in the Realms habitually using adventurers (and guilds, and costers, and others they can manipulate instead of paying) as their agents (sometimes through several layers of go-betweens).

This is the chief reason why adventuring bands—as opposed to strictly ordered professional mercenaries—are suffered to exist in any land where there are laws and lawkeepers. In frontier areas, brigands and monsters are prevalent enough to demand that the prudent go armed, and the young and penniless have ample opportunity to win wealth and reputation by dealing with locally marauding perils. Yet were I foolish enough to want to sit on a throne somewhere, I would take great care to spy tirelessly and attentively on all adventuring bands within my realm and nigh my borders. I would expect my foes to be hiring them, or manipulating them, or both, against me.

Yet down the years, other than briefly covering the charters that Cormyr grants adventurers to at one stroke allow them to buckle their swashes and at the same time enact a measure of control over them, I see that Ed of the Greenwood has neglected this root fact of life in the Realms.

Which means it's high time for a book such as this.

In recent times, the Realms has seen the rise of broadsheets, or printed scraps of current news and salacious rumors masquerading as news—something hitherto left to the tongues of minstrels, peddlers, and caravan merchants, with the ever-increasing distortions that their retellings inevitably embroider everything with.

The pervasiveness of this form of written communication encourages reading, and foments propaganda—and, though it pains me as a sage to say it, the reckless sharing of some things better kept secret.

There is a high price to telling all.

Why, even to impart the makings of some alloys that the dwarves prize highly would be to shift balances better left as they are, among the ever-uneasy threats and counterthreats and prudences of rulers and those who desire to rule.

Not all secrets hold that much power, yet any might well shift attitudes and beliefs and desires across the Realms, and so have their own effects.

So you'll not find everything within these pages. Yet I know I've shared more than enough juicy bits to keep ye thinking for a while . . .

# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the FORGOTTEN REALMS<sup>®</sup>, the world I began crafting when I was six, before there was anything called DUNGEONS & DRAGONS<sup>®</sup> or a role-playing game industry. The world I still work on, every day.

It's been a long, rich, rewarding road, and the Realms now grows around me courtesy of many loving creators, toiling busily. We're building a world that never has to end, a setting that can forever be home to novels and roleplaying campaigns and board games and much, much more.

This book is a peek at the beating heart of the Realms, at what makes it work and seem alive. A bright buffet of lore, with buckets of little details about all sorts of things. A grand gallimaufry of matters Realmsian, for your perusal and enjoyment.

There is no "right" way to play D&D<sup>®</sup> or to conduct a Realms campaign, and many gamers won't use or want everything in this book. Yet if it spurs adventure ideas, or provides elements an overworked Dungeon Master can pick up and use rather than having to think through and create anew, it will be useful. It's not an attempt to convince anyone to abide by every detail of canon, but rather to provide lore for those who want to use it, to make more time for unfolding adventures around the gaming table.

Real-world medieval or Renaissance conditions, arts, world views, religious beliefs, or standards of medicine don't directly correspond to the Realms, just as steampunk fiction is seldom accurate Victoriana. So, DMs should feel free to twist matters to make their Realms seem excitingly—or unsettlingly—different.

By my deliberate design and my players' preferences, play in my home Realms campaign has always featured these three characteristics.

1. Player characters have the freedom to do their own thing. Play unfolds in a large and detailed setting so I really can allow PCs the freedom to choose to stroll north today, instead of returning to that mystery in the alley to the south they stumbled into yesterday. No Dungeon Master's carrot-and-stick, no railroading. I present the world, and the players around the table decide where to poke their characters' noses. They control their destinies, and they impose their wills

upon the world. (Yes, they see they can accomplish far more working together, as a united band of adventurers, and act accordingly.) My players run characters of various classes with different interests and obligations. For instance, clerics are under constant pressure from church superiors to do this, that, and the other. And yet, they also continuously pursue their own pet projects (notably investments and trade negotiations), as well as engaging in adventures with the Knights of Myth Drannor. Many play sessions begin with the characters holding a council wherein they debate and decide what to do next, rather than running through a prepared adventure. I lay out the buffet, and they sample what catches their eye.

2. The Realms is constantly unfolding. I keep a flow of current events (and rumors) burbling past my players' ears to make the world seem alive around them and to present a continually renewed, rich selection of adventuring and role-playing opportunities. Part of this ever-changing world is a steady stream of new nonplayer characters (NPCs), which make up the cast of thousands that is the Realms. The key to the Realms is not just that it has a past, but that things happen; history is being made every day. So, over time (and game editions), prices fluctuate and currency morphs. If values given here in gold pieces (gp), silver pieces (sp), and copper pieces (cp) don't seem right for your campaign, change them. Merchants overcharge when they can, and undercharge when they must.

3. Subplots and intrigues abound. I love them, and so do my players. This means mysteries large and small, little secrets and big ones, clever and sinister behind-the-scenes villains (if I wrote Sherlock Holmes, his landlady would eventually turn out to be a sweetly manipulative crime boss, hiding behind his notoriety and proximity), and power groups galore. I try to keep my players so busy their characters have a hard time finding enough time to go off adventuring; there have seldom been less than a dozen subplots in play at a time. Tied to this is the clear understanding that people, groups, and events are all connected in the Realms, so every word and deed has consequences, just as in real life. Of course, in the Realms, the stakes are higher, the pace faster, and the mundane and boring elements are minimized. Clear and swift rewards keep Realmsplay from ever being a daily grind.

These characteristics are key to the longevity and depth of my home Realms campaign, and the thirst for detail that my superb players exhibit has spurred me to build it into the Realms. This in turn made it seem more real to my players, making their imaginary achievements matter more.

My first players were the Company of Crazy Adventurers. Then rose the Swords of Eveningstar, who became the Knights of Myth Drannor. With other players, I explored the Realms in short-term public library games whose participants portrayed

chartered adventuring bands in Cormyr and the Dalelands such as the Company of the Unicorn and the Company of the Manticore. At conventions for two decades, on three continents, the Baron's Blades (hired bodyguards and agents of the baron of Hawkhill in the remote farming foothills of northeastern Amn) have fared forth into adventure. It's all been a lot of fun, and along the way the Realms has gained far more lore and depth than could ever be published.

Well met! Mount up and join the ride!

A THIRD LOOK AT THE FORGOTTEN REALMS/Ed Greenwood/1986/Page 1 of 64 Pages

### Introduction: THE FORGOTTEN REALMS

The Forgotten Realms, or 'Realms' for short, is a fantasy world begun as a setting for fantasy short stories in 1968 or 1969, and was developed later (circa 1975) when DUNGEONS & DRAGONS appeared. Regular play in the Realms began in 1978, and has continued to date, with the present roster of players intact since early 1980. As



ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS appeared, book by book, the Realms were modified to conform with official rules, and official AD&D rules (with the unofficial additions published in DRAGON magazine from issue #30 onwards, such as the incantatrix NPC class, and the spells revealed by Elminster---a few of which remain unpublished, and will be included or noted in these packages) can be assumed in all cases to hold sway in the Realms now.

The 'Forgotten Realms' derive their name from the fictitious 'fact' upon which the campaign is based: that a multiverse exists, with countless 'parallel' Prime Material Planes co-existing, all related to the other Known Planes of Existence envisioned in the AD&D rules, and themselves interconnected by magical 'gates'---our own modern 'Earth', any fantasy fiction settings an individual DM may want to use in play, and the 'Realms' proper all being examples of such parallel Prime Material Planes. The name 'Forgotten Realms' comes from the assumption that travel betwixt these parallel planes was once far more common than is the case now (when few know the means, or even believe in the existence of such fanciful 'other worlds'); hence, the Realms have been 'forgotten' by beings of Earth. Legends of dragons, vampires, and magic known to us of Earth, albeit in forms confused and distorted by the passage of time and many retellings, are due to this former widespread contact between the worlds.

*A self-portrait of a much younger Ed Greenwood. Take a peek at what I'm writing; "Divinity in AD&D" was my title for "Down-to-Earth Divinity," in issue #54 of The Dragon (I did this sketch to go with that article). It's a reminder to me and everyone that when writing about the Realms---deities in particular!--one must Get It Right. The flying beastie (started out in 2nd Edition format, somewhere in my houseful of handwritten Realmslore notes) is seemingly none too pleased about what it thinks I'm going to write. Wise little beastie.*



A TOUR OF THE REALMS

The name 'Forgotten Realms' comes from the fact that the fantasy world of the Realms is linked to our Earth of today and other parallel Prime Material Planes that a DM wishes (such as the World of Greyhawk, and any favourite worlds depicted in fantasy novels; for example, Fritz Leiber's Nehwon); in the past, there was much travel between these parallel 'worlds' (hence, our legends here on Earth of vampires, dragons, unicorns, et al) but today, most on Earth have forgotten the Realms and the ways to them, hence the name. The Realms proper, the fantasy world of my AD&D campaign, is medieval-level but surprisingly diverse and tolerant; a Prime Material Plane surrounded (as are its parallel 'cousins') by the Known Planes of Existence, as set forth in official AD&D material.

This 'Realms proper' is presently as follows: a vast continent with sea to the west and south (the sea being detailed along the coast as to islands—such as the Moonshae Isles and the perhaps-mythical Isles of Anachronis mentioned in the DRAGON—and including such island realms as Evermeet, retreat of the elves (who have largely fled the continent as men have grown more numerous and destructive of the woodlands), Ruathys, Lantan, and Nimbral), and an unknown, largely undetailed northern (arctic & glacial), southern, and eastern extent.

The known parts of this continent can be seen on the rough, extremely simplified players' map included herein, and can be summarized as follows:

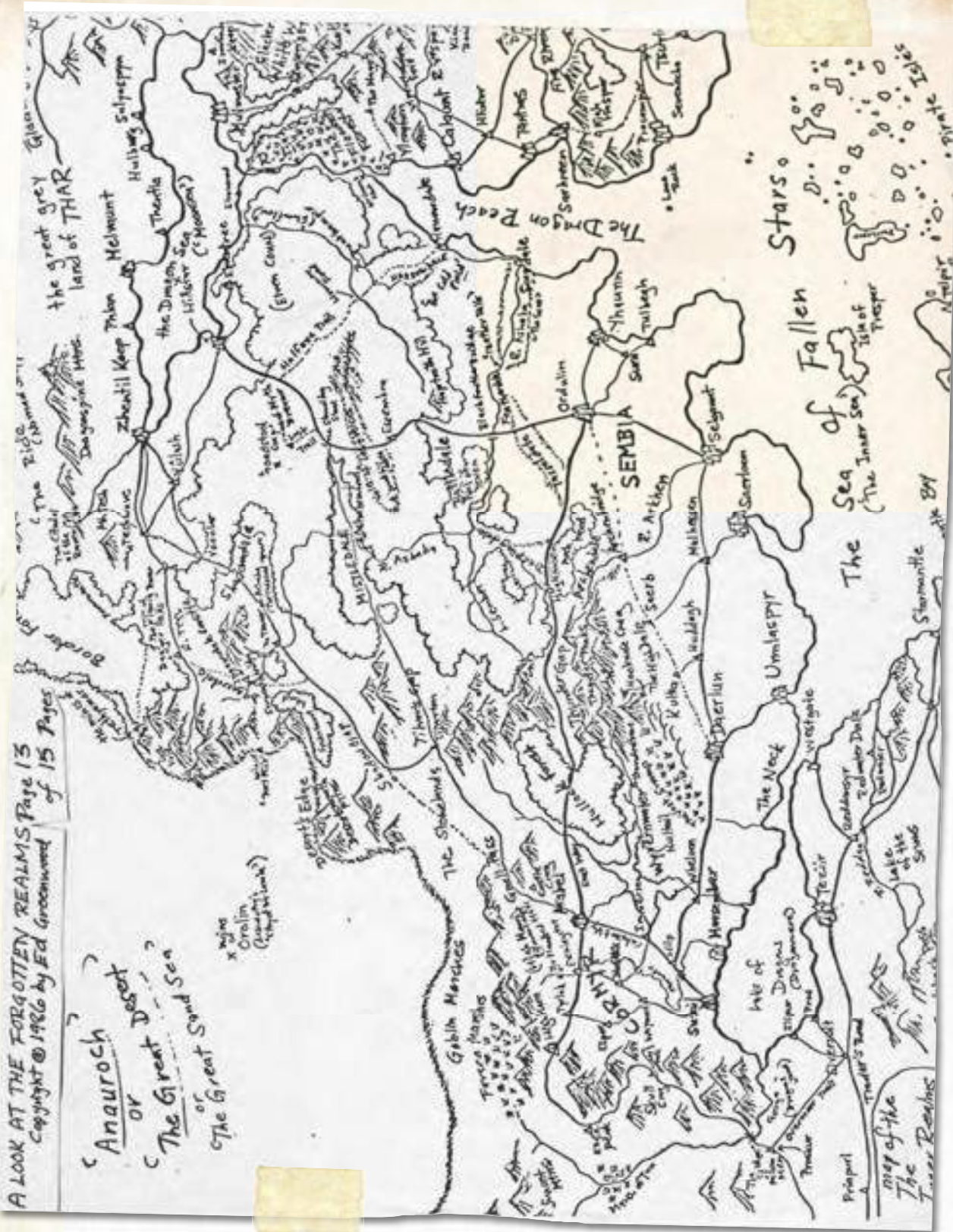
- \*'The North'—a rugged, alpine land of wilderness, monsters, mines, the ruins of earlier civilizations, particularly dwarven kingdoms (i.e. many 'dungeons'), and fortified city-states.
- \*Waterdeep—a vast, cosmopolitan New York/London/Paris/Rome-type dominant city, with a proud history and much activity and intrigue.
- \*Amn—a merchant kingdom of intrigue and far-travelling explorers and caravan-companies.
- \*Cormyr—detailed herein (I have far more material on Cormyr than is here)
- \*Anuroch—the Great Desert, which has swallowed up at least two kingdoms within written memory, and is home to lamia, etc.—a possible setting for the existing Desert of Desolation modules.
- \*Tethyr—a feudal kingdom; many small and diverse holdings loyal to a powerful monarch; the scene of a recent usurpation and the setting for continuing intrigue and unrest.
- \*Calishan and 'the South'—hot, exotic Middle East/Arabian Nights-style city-states and small kingdoms—including deserts and jungles (and many non-human races). Much of these areas are lightly detailed, leaving lots of 'elbow-room' for designers.
- \*the Dalelands—a forested temperate area with many small, autonomous 'dales', strategically located for overland trade.
- \*the Moonsea area—a region of recent, fiercely military city-states, most hostile to their neighbours, and all built on the mineral wealth of the bleak lands to the north (such as Thar, seized from the beast-men (= ogres) in the last few hundred years, and the vast 'Great Glacier', still largely unexplored).
- \*Impiltur—another feudal kingdom, dominated by rival noble houses of long standing.
- \*Thay—most dominant land of the East, a China/Far Eastern-style mysterious and menacing empire, feared for its Red Wizard rulers, who have magical powers unknown elsewhere (Thay and the lands under its sway being suitable Oriental Adventures play settings).
- \*The Shear—separating the Inner Sea lands from the South, a vast plain inhabited by nomadic tribes

(there are also many other, smaller lands on my master maps and in my notes; if they have been developed to any extent, they are noted in the inventory listing given in the covering letter).

*In 1986, I began sinking the upper floor of TSR's Lake Geneva headquarters under the weight of many, many typewritten sheets. The principal sufferer was Jeff Grubb, a superlative game designer who became a great friend—and who first suggested that TSR acquire the Realms. Every week, Jeff asked for specific lore, and I assembled and typed it up, and sent it off. This is from the first of many packages; my response to being asked to briefly outline major regions of the Realms for anyone unfamiliar with the world.*

A LOOK AT THE FORGOTTEN REALMS Page 13  
 Copyright © 1986 by Ed Greenwood of 15 Pages

Anauroch  
 or  
 The Great Desert  
 or The Great Sand Sea  
 or The Great Sand Sea



I always furnished players in my campaigns with packs of brief "what your character starts off knowing about the world" information. Usually twenty-odd pages, they included detailed maps of the "home" village or city neighborhood, and simplified, error-and-omission-filled regional maps. This is one of the latter, showing what player characters in the Swords of Eveningstar knew about the lands immediately around the Forest Kingdom. It echoes the style of an expensive map one could buy from a Faerûnian merchant.



# I LIFE IN THE REALMS

So what's it like, living in the Realms?

The flippant answer is “More exciting than you would like.” Given the prevalence of wars, casual daily violence, and widespread natural or magical disasters, it's hard to see things otherwise—yet Faerûnians do. Unless hardship or outright disaster lands in their laps, they tend to regard such unpleasantness as happening to “outlanders, far away,” often as a result of crazed or evil rulers, bad mistakes, and “the will of the gods.”

Deities are paramount in Faerûnian life. Everybody believes in all the gods and worships every god (even if only in token “Please don't frown upon

me in the days ahead” veneration). The existence, power, and influence of the divine are unquestioned by all sane beings, so no god ever need be taken strictly on faith. Specific directives given by mortal clergy might be taken on faith—or more often, questioned or reinterpreted—but everyone knows the gods are real.

Atheists and agnostics are rare indeed, yet organized religion doesn't dominate daily life because ordinary folk, and not just priests, know that divine aims, deeds, utterances, and desires are complex, confused, and sometimes contradictory. The wants of one god necessarily conflict

with another (Talos of storms and destruction versus Lathander of creation); and mortals can never perfectly understand what the gods are up to. Moreover, it's understood that deities are fallible and can't govern the future, though they work to correctly foresee and influence it.

As a result, most mortal lives are balanced between daily needs and obligations, personal desires ("I want my own farm, someday"), and the endless great game (as Elminster once described it) of trying to advance the influence and aims of this deity and thwart or lessen the influence and aims of that one, so as to tug the Realms closer to what you personally want it to be. There are less noble aims.

## RACIAL VIEWPOINTS

Humans numerically and culturally dominate the civilized surface Realms. Most humans hate and fear creatures they deem monsters, such as beholders, illithids, yuan-ti, drow, and goblinkin. "Goblinkin" refers to hobgoblins, orcs, goblins, and their lookalikes; most humans neither know nor care about actual species differences. In the words of the long-ago King Roreld of Athalantar, "If it looks like an orc, it's an orc." Many humans mistrust half-orcs and all elves, and a few mistrust all nonhumans, but in Faerûn, most humans grew up dwelling or trading with elves, half-elves, dwarves, halflings, and gnomes, and so accept them as fellow citizens.

The folk of the Dales have typical backland human attitudes, hating and fearing half-orcs because they can't distinguish them from the orc mercenaries used so often by Zhentil Keep in Daggerdale. Some also mistake half-orcs for the beast-men (ogres) of Thar, having never seen real ogres (and lived to tell the tale), and will reach for the nearest weapon.

Almost all humans, elves, and dwarves in the Realms mistrust small, non-familial groups of orcs (four or fewer), and will be openly hostile to larger groups. As an old upcountry saying plainly states: "Orcs is trouble." (Or, in full: "Orcs is *always* trouble.")

Orcs are born fighters, which just keep coming back for more. (And, the smaller inner voices of most non-orcs add silently, orcs will kill you *and then eat you*. Some of them won't even wait until you're dead!)

Individual, urban-dwelling (in predominantly human trading cities) halfling and gnome families gain acceptance by making themselves useful in the eyes of other citizens. They are the chief source of small, clever inventions (intricate double locks, fold-down doorstops, removable boot scrapers that double as tools for other purposes, heat-reflecting stove hoods and fans whose blades are turned by the heat of cooking fires, and so on). They do the laundry, fix small everyday objects, make speedy deliveries, and seek and find what paying humans are missing (like a window catch of this precise style to replace yon broken one, or a dagger to exactly match this rapier, or an identical rug to this one that must be hastily gotten rid of—only one *without* a large bloodstain right in the center of it, please).

Urban-dwelling gnomes in the Realms usually seek to be the quiet collectors and refiners of good ideas from all cultures, keep low profiles, and make good livings trading useful items. Gnomes make the majority (and the best) of spectacles, magnifying glasses, spyglasses, and other devices involving glass lenses. Gnomes have perfected intricate nonmagical locks and hinges, and mastered large-scale paper-making and bookbinding. They are experts on waterproof garments, portable containers for scrolls, and flat paper, and are building bigger and better looms for everyday cloth. Many gnomes are working to perfect ever thinner and more flexible wire, and they experiment with fashioning everyday items from it. This "quietly, quietly" manner has led gnomes to being the truly forgotten folk of the Realms, but also tends to make almost everyone view them as harmless, helpful, and friendly.

Across Faerûn, "everyone knows" that elves flit from one delight to the next diversion, and they crave and master the most beautiful music, dancing, and visual arts linked to flowing, growing life. It is likewise commonly held that dwarves are stolid, stubborn hard workers, and master forgers, who have unequaled skill in working stone and metal, creating new alloys, and deep, swift mining.

Of course, as everyone in the Realms who really thinks about such things knows, all of these widely known views are stereotypes and generalizations, with thousands upon thousands of exceptions.



*Getting along together whisperingly well: There's nothing like being in the same cabal, with your lives on the line, to close all divides. Until, of course, things go wrong.*

## What's in a Name?

Many racial attitudes are revealed in widely used terms for the intelligent races of the Realms. In the entries that follow, races mentioned in parentheses indicate those that use the term directly preceding it. If no race is mentioned, the term is in general use (certainly among surface-dwelling humans and merchant folk of all races). There's little political correctness in the Realms beyond the strictures of polite society in a city or a well-ordered realm.

**Drow:** The Dark Elves, the Dark Ones, the Accursed (by other elves).

**Dwarves:** The Stout Folk, anvil-hammerers.

**Elves:** The Fair Folk, the People (by elves).

**Gnomes:** The Quiet Folk.

**Halflings:** The Quick Folk, the Sly Folk (by humans and dwarves).

**Humans:** The manyhanded (by halflings and elves, in reference to the Manyhanded Curse, an old elven insult), Brittle Bones (by orcs), *oroosh* (by treants, using their term for “never-stopping talkers”), *hurbryn* (by brownies, halflings, korred, and satyrs, using their term for “heavy-footed”).

**Korred:** The Dancing Folk.

**Ogres:** Beast-men.

**Orcs:** The Mighty (by orcs), slaugh (by elves; this literally translates as “mud-wallowing-dogs,” and is creeping into the speech of half-elves, dryads, and other forest-dwelling folk).

**Satyrs:** The Free Folk.

**Svirfneblin** (deep gnomes): The Deep Folk.

## All Together Now . . .

The four most widely encountered collective terms are these:

**Meat:** All intelligent prey (by orcs).

**The Proud Peoples:** Dwarves and elves collectively (by humans).

**Ugrukh:** Wounded, defeated, slaves, and those too weak to defend themselves or be worthy of attention (by orcs, using their term for “broken bones”).

**Worms:** Lesser goblinkin (by orcs).

The drow and certain elder sun and moon elven nobility (House Starym, for instance) are haughty esthetes who view dwarves as their true foes; gnomes as degenerate dwarves; and humans,

halflings, orcs, and crossbreeds as children so far beneath elves in their intelligence and cultural development that they are dismissed as little better than animals able to follow instructions. This makes those latter races ideal—in their eyes—slaves who can be collected, bred for traits, experimented upon with herbs, poisons, magic, and surgeries, and—for entertainment and betting purposes—hunted or used in races, fights, and other sporting contests.

## REALMSPEAK: TALKING THE TALK

Creating languages for gnomes, dragons, and all the myriad races in the Realms is fun and can add flavor to full-on roleplaying (and fragmentary tongues for most nonhuman races exist and are slowly being augmented, as the years pass). However, it tends to be more enjoyable around the gaming table to have some new expressions and borrowed elven and other examples of “outland talk” to lard the Common tongue—meaning the everyday language of the players—and impart atmosphere without baffling the players.

Accordingly, I’ve compiled a “highlights only” handy vocabulary of what’s said in the Realms. You can also pick up other words and phrases throughout this work.

The overuse of dialect or invented words can become tiresome or clumsy, but sprinkling speech lightly with archaic words and phrases—such as “’tis” and “’twas”—or invented words placed so that context makes their meanings clear, can help the Realms come alive as a medieval fantasy world different from our modern world.

The constant flow of traders, adventurers, pilgrims, and job seekers throughout Faerûn has made Common the vital and paramount language. Guilds, priesthoods, and folk in backland areas develop their own words and expressions, but Common is the primary tongue of trade, because in most market moots a speaker never knows who will be listening to—and understanding—asides made in another tongue.

Here following is some useful Realms speech lore.

### Modern Term or Expression

anyhow  
anyway  
barflies

barkeep

beauty/beautiful

breakfast

dinner

foreigner

foreign goods

hick

know-it-all

lunch

noble

noon

perhaps

priest

tomorrow

tonight

### Realmspeak

anyhail

anyhail

hardjaws (refers to garrulous tavern regulars)

tavernmaster (innkeeper is used in the Realms, barkeep never)

glim/glimmer

morningfeast (or mornfeast)

evenfeast (or eveningfeast)

outlander (not pejorative)

outland goods (not pejorative)

hay-nose (bumpkin also used)

clevershanks (men) or

clevertongue (women)

highsunfeast

highborn (polite use) or

highnose (deliberately rude)

highsun

mayhap (“perhaps” is used by bards, minstrels, courtiers, nobles, and between many middle-class merchants, but only with intimates and family, never in public)

holy-nose (only mildly offensive, akin to using “cop” for “policeman”)

on the morrow

this night

## More Involved Terms

Some of the elements of Realmspeak involve special treatment of normal words, or are complicated enough that they can’t be succinctly defined. For instance:

**Art** or **the Art** (capitalized) means magic and its mastery.

**Badaulder** (*bah-doll-durr*) is the western Heartlands expression for “hogwash.” Its usage is creeping into Cormyr, headed for Sembia, the Dales, and the Moonsea.

**Brightstar** means great, exciting, pleasing, marvelous, or superb.

**Darburl** (*dar-burl*) means angry. For example, “I’m right darburl, just now,” or “He makes me proper darburl, that one.”

**Galad** is a nonsense word for “I’m astonished” or “I’m impressed.”

**Kell** means try, but is used only when whatever is being tried is unfinished, nigh impossible, tricky, or dangerous, or there’s some doubt as to whether whoever’s trying it will ever accomplish it. “Kell” doesn’t change with tenses and is sometimes used in place of “accomplish,” as in “You’re not hoping to kell stealing *that*, are you?” and “Kell such feats often, have you?” Polite speech sticks to “try” and “tried” and “done,” leaving “kell” for cynical, disbelieving, or openly derisive speech, such as “Kings always *say* they’ll clean all the monsters out of the woods. Oh, and they *kell*, too, for a tenday, each of them, sometimes sending more than one knight to do it, too.”

**Lalandath** means agile, sleek, and lithe. It is often used to describe dancers or women whose beauty is accentuated by their movements. A well-built but sleekly dancing tavern dancer might be spoken of thus: “What a glimmer! A lalandath spurnarmor, glim enough to leave every man in the place rivvim!”

**Power** (capitalized) means divine magical powers.

**Rivvim** means lusty or amorous. For example, “I’m fair rivvim when I looks upon her.” It also means ravenously hungry, as in “I was so rivvim I could’ve eaten the cow, hooves, hair, and all!”

**Scorchkettles** are people who habitually deliver impressively blistering words to someone in public, usually because they are quick-tempered.

**Spurnarmor** is a spectacularly good-looking man or woman, as in “If I had those features, I’d be a spurnarmor too!” or “Galad! What a spurnarmor!”

**Thael** means glad, pleasant, or heart-lifting. For example, “I’m always thael to see her,” or “That feast was right thael,” or “I always get that moment of thael, when I look down from the ridge and see . . . home.”

**Time bells** is any sort of alarm clock, wake-up gong, or audible time signal. Originally these were temple bells, struck to summon faithful to particular prayers.

**Throatlake** (or **gulletfire**, for beer or wine) is any drinkable that takes care of thirst and doesn’t cause illness in doing so, but isn’t particularly pleasant to consume.

## Topics of Discussion

The following entries are divided according to general subject matter and serve as a guide to how specific and nuanced certain bits of Realmspeak can be.

**Importer:** The well-established Realms terms for such a profession are “trader from afar” and, more often, “far-trader,” which doesn’t mean a foreign merchant who has come from a long way away—who is an “outlander merchant”—but rather someone who trades in goods from afar. “Far-shipper” and “caravan merchant” are also common terms, both used to refer to merchants who bring outland goods into Waterdeep for sale, though far-shipper implies a two-way trade carried on by a trader who largely remains in the city, and caravan merchant implies a traveling trader who literally does the bringing and taking himself or herself.

The term “long-cask merchant” means someone who deals in goods that have made a long journey, whether the wares are actually shipped in casks or not. A “far-wares merchant” is someone who sells goods from afar, but might not necessarily ship them; many Waterdhavian shopkeepers buy crates and coffers of curios that catch their eye from Dock Ward warehouses, rather than arranging specific importations.

**Hooligan:** The Waterdhavian terms for non-professional street louts and others who behave rudely and violently are “toughs,” “fastfists,” and “alleyblades.” Toughs is a general collective term, bespeaking an attitude of habitual street loiterers; fastfists are those who are belligerent at that very moment, such as when drunks spill out of a tavern spoiling for a fight; and alleyblades are lowlife, opportunistic thieves and scavengers who lurk in alleys and carry knives or homemade weapons to threaten or to defend themselves with. Any purveyors of muscle hired on a long-term basis, such as the “Take care of that for me, will you?” gangs hired by most nobles and wealthy non-nobles, are called “bullyblades.”

The Sword Coast term for vandals is “cask-smashers,” and the damage done is “casking” (even if no casks are involved in a particular incident). “Fang gangs” are Dock Ward and South Ward street gangs who use knives and carve gang “sigils” on their forearms (or less conspicuous places) and on their victims.

Posers who pretend to be hard, violent types, but who are usually thrill-seeking teenagers, are called sharpjaws because of their sneering, derisive words, and aggression.

**Paramour:** “Rose” is the Waterdhavian term for a beau, a suitor, or “the one I desire.” “He’s my rose” or “She’s my rose” can mean either “He or she is the one I want” or “We long for each other.” It can mean “the love of my life,” but more often it means “someone I long to have as my partner, or we both desire to be together, but haven’t yet actually become intimates.”

“Brightheart” means someone your heart is set on, now that the two of you have kissed and danced, been seen together at revels, and felt a desire to see more of each other.

“Stag” (for males) or “doe” (for females) is a polite (and bardic) way of describing a lover, whereas “buck” or “steed” (or “filly” or “mare”) are jocular, among-the-lads talk. These latter terms would not be used in front of parents, priests, or disapproving relatives.

“Lovers” and “brightbirds” are perfectly polite, neutral terms in Sword Coast cities, the latter implying two people who are courting but not necessarily intimate.

“Fancyman” or “fancylad” is a disapproving pejorative, as in “Your fancyman’s been around again”; and if the speaker is older than the person being spoken of, “fancyman” will become “fancylad.”

**Escort:** Many terms are used to describe this profession, shifting over time and with locale and the social standing of either the person being described or the individual describing them.

A coin lass (for females) or a turncoin (for males) waits in an alley to attract clients. The escort usually entertains the client in a rented room, which might be where he or she lives, or off the alleyway, down in a cellar. Most often, such a rented room is upstairs, above a street-level shop that has no connection with the escort.

A highcoin lass or a laugh-lad is an escort who is more expensive and glim (beautiful, as in “She was right glim” or “A proper glimmer, she was!”). Such an individual is better dressed than everyday commoners and generally higher class. She or he has a full set of teeth, bathes regularly, and wears clean clothes that aren’t torn or in need of mending.

A highcoin lady or a bright spear is an escort who tries to dress, act, and speak like a noble, both to dazzle young clients and to attract customers interested in nobility.

An escort of either gender who is so slick in manner and deft in solicitations that only a few clients know their trade at all is a hidecoin. A vanishcoin, in contrast, is anyone—not just an escort—who cheats on a business deal, thereby making coin disappear (often by taking it elsewhere forever).

**Nouveau Riche:** Down the centuries, in all Faerûnian societies, there has been tension between the nobility and those who aspire to such status—to say nothing of the tension between the wealthy and the hard-working, middle-class-or-lower guilded merchants, shopkeepers, and crafters (craft workers). There are many terms used to describe the wealthy who lack titles or have only recently acquired them.

“Newcoin” is a pejorative that refers to those who are newly rich and spending to show it off.

“Brightcoin” is used for the socially rising. It’s actually a polite term unless twisted by words attached to it. “Drippingly brightcoin,” for instance, means one who is ostentatious in spending, blindly adherent to fashion, and inclined to display put-on manners. “Bright-fisted-coin” refers one who is ramming one’s own success down the throats of friends, acquaintances, and anyone within reach or earshot, or the practice of such behavior, as in “He was loud and rude, full of bright-fisted-coin talk, all the while; we couldn’t wait to be rid of him!”

“Thrusters” are tirelessly ambitious social climbers. No arrogance is necessarily implied; this word characterizes someone who will do anything to advance in standing, from behaving as a sycophant to moving to another neighborhood to performing all sorts of demeaning roles or deceptions; a “whatever it takes” willingness.

“Highmantle” is used for someone who is successfully superior or refined in manners, as in someone who is politely haughty, not sneeringly over-the-top offensively haughty. It is used both for old-money families and genuine nobles, as well as for persons whom the speaker knows to be newly wealthy or not wealthy at all, but who have successfully acted in a noble manner. For example, “And there he was, right in the thick of the



dance, all proper highmantle, for all Faerûn as if he'd been born bathing in gold coins!"

"Highnose" describes one who displays a general haughtiness. Also known in use are "highnosed" and "nose-worthy."

"Swirlcloaks" are those trying to copy the accents, phrases, fashions, gestures, and pastimes of the nobility. In particular, the term refers to someone who has suddenly come into money and wants to elicit better treatment from others by acting noble so as to be treated as noble.

**Thieves:** The Realms has as many terms for thieves as it does for escorts. Idiotically reckless thieves are known as snatch-runners, even if their crimes don't actually involve snatching or running. It's a pejorative term used for those too foolish to avoid being caught soon if they don't "learn them some wisdom" in a hurry.

Clumsy thieves are inevitably "fumblehands," whereas a deft, veteran thief is a "softshadow," as in: "Never even seen 'im! He took her necklace, tiara, and all soft as a passing shadow!" Someone new to thievery is politely termed a "dayblood," meaning the thief "doesn't yet have the blood of the night in him."

"The blood of the night" refers to the feel, the nature, or the essence of what it is to steal for a living. "Nightblood" is a general term, devoid of judgment, for an individual of the profession. For example:

"Who was out on the roof making such a noise? Not a nightblood, surely!"

"Nay, not even a fumblehands; just some ad-dleplate or lovelorn tryster out to try to break his neck for himself!"

## Curses and Epithets

Like everyone else, Faerûnians cuss from time to time. Here are a few of the most popular Heartlands profanities.

"Haularake" (*hah-rake*; pronounced very quickly, as if it has but two syllables) is the all-faiths, acceptable in polite society equivalent of "gods darn it all, anyway."

"Sark" (*ssark*, drawn-out "s") is a more powerful form of "haularake," equivalent to "gods damn it all!"

"Hrast" (*hur-rast*) is a non-deity-specific "damn."

"Hrammar" (*hur-ram-uh*) is a "hrast" equivalent used in the Shining South.

"Naeth" (*naythh*, drawn-out "th") is the equivalent of saying "dung."

"Naed" (*nayd*) is a stronger form of "naeth."

"Orbal" (*or-ball*) is the Shining South equivalent of "naeth."

"Sabruin" (*sah-broo-in*) is the equivalent of "—you" or "— off."

"Tluin" (*tuh-loo-in*) is the most emphatic way of saying "sabruin."

"Stlarn" (*stuh-larn*) or "stlarning" is a mild expletive, about equivalent to "screw," as in "Bah! They can't do one simple thing without stlarning up!"

"Hrasting" (*hur-rast-ing*) is a mild form of "stlarning," not associated with "hrast."

"Straek" (*strrake*, drawn-out "r") means "go drown yourself, right now and painfully."

Then there are longer oaths. These are many and fanciful, but a handful see widespread use in a shortened, expletive-handful form.

"Bind me!" (long form "Bind me and tar me") is a slightly stronger equivalent of "Weell, strike me down!"

"Dark!" (long form "Dark and empty!") is the equivalent of saying "Damn and blast!"

"Hells!" (long form "Those of all the Nine Hells take you!") began as the Faerûnian equivalent of saying "The devil take you," but is now closer to "Hell take us all."

"Red garters!" (long form "I'll turn out your guts for blood red garters!") which means, "Ho, you're going to catch it."

One mildly comical oath, still said in earnest by older Faerûnians, usually when astonished, is: "Happy dancing hobgoblins!" (Hobgoblins do not say this, and are not amused when they hear it.)

## The Art of the Insult

The provocative, demeaning, and antagonistic terms and expressions in Realmspeak are as many and varied as those who hurl them. However, the more formal and less profane ones—such as those written in books and drawled by nobles—tend to take the form of "The stench of your X befouls you," where X might be "the low, coarse ways of your heritage" or "your flagrant misdeeds" or

“your transgressions against the gods and all reasonable folk.”

There are old, well-used provocations (“Your dam and sire met but once, and coin changed hands—one coin, of copper, and bent”) and more inventive ones (“Dragons fall stunned from the skies when they behold what you are so bold as to call your face, peering up at them”). Minstrels and playwrights ensure that the Realms receives a constant supply of new nastiness, from wry observations (“His mother named him after the family stallion, for some curious reason”) to the crude and direct (“For once, try not to act as stupid as your face tells all the world you are”).

It should be noted that halflings, gnomes, orcs, and elves all tend to be more amused than angered by insults directed at them. The same is true of dwarves, unless their female ancestors or living kin are impugned. Human actors, minstrels, bards, courtiers, and caravan merchants are the targets of so many insults that such individuals soon learn to take them calmly even if naturally hot-tempered. Drow, beholders, and illithids tend to be intelligent enough to keep control over themselves when they believe they have been disrespected, but to call any of them “nigh human” is an insult indeed.

## “Noblespeak” in Waterdeep

A Waterdhavian addresses everyone of known noble status as “lord” or “lady” (toddlers and young children usually as “young lord” or “young lady”). Brief bows are considered polite, but deep or florid ones are now often taken as mockery.

“Saer” (rather than “sir”), or “goodwoman” for a female, is used by those uncertain of a person’s status but not wanting to give offense. No offense will be taken (except when one Waterdhavian noble addresses another one as “saer”).

“Saer” is also sometimes used to signal respect when you know you’re addressing someone not noble, but you believe the person has behaved nobly, and so is “worthy to stand with the best.”

A typical noble family consists of *the* “Lord Bladderblat,” who is the head of the house and who may or may not be its eldest male, and several “Lord Bladderblats” (his sons, cousins, brothers, and uncles). “Old Lord Bladderblat” always refers to an immediately previous head of the house, so it’s either the dead father of the



*The badge of the Trail Lords trading coater, whose members are proud to call themselves “wolves among merchants.” Rivals just call them “the Snarling Wolves.”*

current head or (rarely) someone dismissed from being head of the house (perhaps exiled, deposed, vanished, fled, or locked up as dangerously insane). In the same manner, the family can have multiple Lady Bladderblats. It should be noted, however, that widows are usually referred to as “Dowager Lady Bladderblat” when speaking of them, but just “Lady Bladderblat” when speaking to them (widowers are accorded no such titular distinction).

To address a Bladderblat as “young master” or “young mistress” is seen as a form of admonishment. (The word “miss” in the Realms means “fail to hit what you were aiming at”; it’s unknown as a form of address.) When spoken to an infant, a toddler, or a misbehaving youth (up to the age of eight or nine), “young master” or “young mistress” is quite acceptable in the eyes of the child’s noble parents, even if the speaker is a servant, outlander, or the dirtiest of “low commoners.” When used to address an older noble, it’s an insult, tolerated—though not with pleasure—only when used by the Watch or guard or palace officers, or (passed off as not insulting) when used by a very old noble to a younger noble. The doddering, eighty-year-old Lady Glunder, for instance, might say it disapprovingly to an adolescent Lord Bladderblat and not discomfit the Bladderblats at all; as an elder noble it is Lady Glunder’s perfect right to speak thus.

Among adult Waterdhavian nobles (who, naturally, all know each other and see each other often at feasts, clubs, and revels), it's an insult to address someone by the wrong title. As mentioned above, an adult noble will take offense if called "saer" by another noble, when that person wouldn't be upset at all if a commoner or outlander addressed him or her as such. Nobles refer to themselves as "we lords" or "we worthies," and they speak of the ruling Hidden Lords and the Open Lord as "the Lords of the City." Nobles usually refer to non-noble Waterdhavians as "citizens" when being polite, and "commoners" when being impolite.

"Bladderblat" and "Glunder" are not real Waterdhavian noble surnames, but every city inhabitant or frequent visitor knows them. They are the two fictitious noble surnames most popular among Waterdhavian satirical broadsheet writers, minstrels, and tellers of rude street jokes. ("How did Lord Bladderblat decide if young Lady Glunder was a suitable match for his son? He tried her out himself, of course. Several times.") The names originated as one acid-penned noble's way of decrying the antics of certain other nobles, centuries ago, when everyone knew the specific real individuals who were being described and made fun of. Today, no one even remembers which noble invented these "fancynames" (the Waterdhavian term for "pseudonyms"), and they have evolved into general archetypes.

## How to Address Rulers

Many areas of Faerûn have distinctive forms of government and correspondingly particular ways of referring to those who rule.

In Waterdeep, most citizens rarely have the opportunity to speak to the Masked Lords (the anonymous rulers of Waterdeep, who may or may not be noble) directly, aside from very formal settings such as legal trials. When they do, they're usually speaking to a row of featureless masks, so they say merely, "Lords." When speaking to the Open Lord, almost every Waterdhavian who isn't his personal friend will say "Lord Piergeiron" (or, by 1479 DR, "Lord Neverember"), shortening it to "Lord" only if they converse together for a time.

In Amn, members of the council are supposed to be addressed either as "High Honored One" or by their specific title, such as "Lord Tessarch."

In Cormyr, the king and queen are "Your Majesty" and all other royals are "Your Highness." Nobility and senior courtiers are "lord" and "lady," with "saer" and "goodwoman" used whenever the speaker is uncertain of rank, something that can give offense if said to someone of exalted rank. However, if "saer" or "goodwoman" is said with a bow of the head, respect is implied and no offense will usually be taken by someone thus addressed, even if he or she is of exalted rank.

## Speaking of Time

Time in the Realms is never spoken of in terms of hours or minutes. Where we would say "a second or two," most Faerûnian humans say "a breath or two," and what we would call a minute is "a goodly breath or three." Dwarves tend to call anything up to about three minutes "but a little while," whereas a halfling would call the same span of time "a long song." To a halfling, a minute is "a tune," and ten minutes is "three long songs." Most halflings tend to speak of longer time periods within a single day in terms of how far the sun has progressed.

In cities, temples, and monasteries, the equivalent of hours are "bells" or "candles" (which visibly burn down). These are counted in reference to or from an obvious event, such as dawn, dusk, or highsun (noon), as in "the trouble began three bells before nightfall."

The common (as opposed to regional or poetic) terms for the periods of each day are as follows.

Modern Term	Realmspeak
predawn	godswake
dawn	dawn
full morning	harbright
late morning	elsun,
noon	highsun
early afternoon	thulsun
late afternoon	tharsun
sunset	sunset
gloaming	eventide
dusk	nightfall or dusk
night	night
midnight	midnight or deepnight

In Waterdeep, the clock time is counted in so many bells, but folk also refer to times of day by habitual meals. Breakfast is “mornfeast,” a mid-morning break is “slake,” lunch is “highsunfeast,” a tharsun snack is “highthar,” supper or dinner is “evenfeast,” a late evening meal is “highfeast,” and a night meal is a “brightstarfeast.” It bears noting that most Waterdhavian shopkeepers, nobles, and guilded merchants refer to late afternoons as “highthar,” or more formally “highthar-time.” Special-occasion night meals are named for the special occasion of which they are a part.

To a caravan merchant, a drover, or a farmer from the lands around Waterdeep, as well as any Waterdhavian noble (or aspiring noble) who rides for sport, recreation, hunt, or to fly falcons, late afternoon is “longride,” and dusk is “last ride.”

In most walled cities that close their gates at night, bells are triple-struck to mark when city gates are about to soon open (if not at dawn) and again when they are soon to close (if not at dusk). Double-strikes are rung to mark the opening of shops on workdays in some cities, and again to mark the daily closing of shops.

Days in the realms are never referred to as “Monday,” “Tuesday,” or any real-world weekday name. Most folk in the Realms refer to a particular day as “the first of Mirtul” or “the last of Eleint” or as one of the annual festival days. If one must be precise, something like “the first day of the first tenday of Ches” might be heard. If this date is written or spoken of formally, it becomes “1st Ches.”

## THE WRITTEN WORD

Some folk in the Realms are illiterate, and care little if they remain so. Others value writings so highly that they hire the most expensive veteran adventuring bands to steal or seize particular books.

Magical tomes are the most infamous, valuable, and dangerous books of all; some are linked to monstrous custodians, or even contain guardian spells, poisons, or creatures. Some can see, think, fly, and unleash spells, thanks to the sentience bound into them. For centuries, the Chosen of Mystra have secretly placed magical scrolls, workbooks, spellbooks, and mighty

grimoires in wizards’ tombs, treasuries, and even in public libraries for novices of the Art to find. Other enchanted tomes seem to want to be found; the magics on them move them into the open, out of hiding, time and time again.

Yet even utterly unmagical books are valuable, interesting—and sometimes dangerous. Of course, in the eyes of some rulers, all books are dangerous, because an ignorant populace is more easily ruled, and any information can be a weapon. What’s certain, down the centuries, is that books, like the best gems, retain their value more than almost anything else that’s easily portable.

Many temples derive a lot of income from copying maps, charts, and portions of books from their libraries. So do some independent scribes (who often call themselves “scriveners”) in larger cities across the Realms. In smaller settlements, scribes spend most of their professional time writing letters on behalf of the illiterate or the unsteady of hand.

Regular books are quiet things, and so often overlooked—but there is always a roaring trade in such items in the Realms.

## Maps and Charts

Maps in the Realms are expensive works, being rare, easily damaged or destroyed, and more often inaccurate than not. Large, detailed, good maps are usually owned by rulers, from mayors of cities who have sewer and street maps, up to kings who own large and varied collections of old and fanciful maps from everywhere. A fair number of maps are also owned by temples, guildmasters, and the families of mapmakers, explorers, and adventurers.

In many cases, limners (painters or portrait drawers), local heralds, and scribes make good livings copying simplified portions of maps from such collections. Royal scribes and religious scribes are on staff at the court and the temple, and make copies for stiff fees. Independent scribes access the aforementioned private family collections, and in some cases temple and court collections, by paying fees. An independent scribe usually pays a set fee, per map, for access. This fee covers the time of the junior courtier or novice priest who brings the map to a work area within the court or the temple, as well as the time

that individual spends watching while the scribe works, to guard against theft, mutilation of maps, and substitutions of false maps. The fee usually amounts to a portion, usually a third or a half, of the price the scribe charges the client for the finished map. This means that maps for sale are usually found or stolen items; most independent scribes don't create a specific map until hired to do so.

It follows that books of maps are very rare and precious things, sometimes part of the most secret treasure of a guild or a temple, perhaps part of a royal collection and kept in a closely guarded inner vault.

The most famous book of maps, known to most bards and minstrels by reputation only, is *A Manyrealms Gallimaufry* by the cartographer Trammeth Anstrelgor. Candlekeep owns a fragmentary copy (most books of maps suffer the vandalism of having one or more maps torn out); the complete original, according to legend, was buried circa 1114 DR with Anstrelgor in his tomb, somewhere forgotten in Tethyr.

The most infamous one is *Relvor's Portals*, a slender grimoire of spells, portal locations and instructions, and portal vicinity maps. A dozen heavily vandalized copies are known to exist, and a few have been bought and sold at mage fairs—transfers which involved the murder of owners and worse.

Many realms have official map books for the use of garrison commanders and other public officials, usually containing maps restricted to the realm. One of the best of these is the constantly updated *Crown Book of the Realm* for Cormyr, a slim collection of Cormyrean palace, castle, city, town, and village street maps.

The best collections of maps in the Heartlands, in descending order, are located in or at:

- the Herald's Holdfast;
- Candlekeep;
- Piergeiron's palace in Waterdeep;
- the Star Court in Silverymoon;
- various hidden vaults beneath the high palace in Silverymoon;
- the Hallowed House of Higher Achievement temple to Deneir in Selgaunt;
- the royal court in Suzail;
- the Society of Stalwart Adventurers club in Suzail;

- the Leaves of Learning temple to Oghma in Highmoon, in Deepingdale;
- the Halls of Inspiration temple to Oghma in Silverymoon;
- the Twilight Hall temple to Deneir in Berdusk;
- and
- the Sanctum of the Seven Scribes (a book and map-copying library) in Athkatla.

Nautical charts tend to be cruder, more inaccurate, and even more precious than maps. Many sea captains draw their own, usually using lit tapers or quills to burn markings in cured, durable bull hide as they consult the chart of another captain—in return for stiff fees and under the watchful eye of that captain. The buying and selling of even spurious charts is a roaring business in most port cities, and some scribes make a good living turning out endless copies of a fragmentary original chart they found or inherited.

## Popular Literature

Personal accounts of travels predominate among human publications across Toril. These are the same sort that were so popular in real-world Europe during the times of exploration, discovery, and colonization; the sort of books parodied by such mock titles as *A Gentlelady's Adventures in Darkest Murkaria* or *Down the River of Doom with Gun and Camera*. In the Realms, there are so many of these that no one tome has risen to prominence.

This phenomenon is due to the same reason that real-world fiction varies widely in genre and style: the books are read primarily for enjoyment rather than for information. Of course, for a book to be successful in Faerûn, it's essential that it purport to contain some practical lore or insider information. The style of writing—which is humorous, filled with “you are there” rich descriptions, and resembles “good yarn” fanciful tavern-tale-telling—is more important than up-to-date factual content. Some peculiar local habits and customs are imparted, stereotypes about the folk of a particular land or town are passed on, and some good fireside yarns—always embellished and sometimes entirely fictitious—are thrown in.

Wayfarers' histories are considered “essential reading for educated persons,” as the sage Ontil of Baldur's Gate put it, but no one agrees on just

which titles are best, which has prevented any of them rising to famous, truly essential status. Lasting popularity is the only way a dispassionate observer can identify the best candidates to be placed on any core reading list. A few titles that have enjoyed some lasting popularity include:

*My Sword Points the Way* (by Tarrondur Mae-rinspyke, first published 1246 DR): This book centers on a handsome, dashing Tethyrian adventurer, made rich by his many marriages to wealthy widows, who tours the wilder backlands of countries around the Sea of Fallen Stars. He ends up in contented service, in his declining years, in Darandra's House, a small, now-vanished temple to Sharess in Deepingdale. His descriptions are dated but very colorful, and provide a handy collection of local jokes, legends, and tall tales that have served more than one adventurer trying to pretend to be "a long-lost local, returned home at last."

*Lancegrove's Travels* (1277-1296 DR diaries by Tal Lancegrove, posthumously edited into book form by his daughter Tarteera Lancegrove, and published in 1306 DR): This book covers the exploits of a tireless merchant-explorer of Iriaebor who fared far into the Moonsea North and the lands east of the Great Dale, seeking trade goods, gems, and gold. It is packed with descriptions of trails, mountain passes, wayfarers' landmarks, local weather, and perils, and filled with now-dated analyses of local politics and mercantile power struggles.

*Lornra Among the Loxo* (by Sharmra Lornra, published in 1322 DR): *Lornra* tells the tale of the bold pirate Lorna the Reaver who, facing certain death as several foes closed in on her, abruptly abandoned her life of Inner Sea piracy to journey overland, laden with the rich spoils of her success. Her travels ultimately took her to the depths of the Shaar, where she joined and dwelled among certain tribes of the elephantine loxo, making a

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Here follows the Thorass, or written trade-tongue and universal language of the long-ago Realms (often found in tombs, underground ways and habitations, and even---still in current use---in certain southern areas of the Realms). The Common Tongue is descended from this; troubled times across the North (when the Inner Sea lands were very sparsely settled) caused a period of little literacy among young people, and the use of runes or symbols (detailed later) replaced Thorass for a time.

A S  
B x  
C 2  
D 2  
E h  
F h  
G H  
H 2  
I 2  
J 2  
K 2  
L 2  
M 2

N 2  
O 2  
P 2  
Q 2  
R 2  
S 2  
T 2  
U 2  
V 2  
W 2  
X 2  
Y 2  
Z 2

Th C

1 2  
3 4  
5 6  
7 8  
9 0  
C

(Base ten; totals are enclosed in a circle, thus: (14)=14)

(An inscription in Thorass will translate directly into Common, albeit usually a stilted and archaic form of phrasing and vocabulary.)

I've always loved giving players handouts, particularly in the form of messages found as graven inscriptions, passages in books or ledgers, words scorched or written in blood on walls, or scrawls on scraps of parchment found on corpses. These could be just in plain English, but it's so much more fun (and makes players "feel the world alive") to write them in the scripts of the dozen-some languages I devised for the Realms. The illusionists' secret script; symbols used by thieves, the Harpers, and other groups; the runes of dwarves, and so on.

life for herself that culminated in her defeating adventurers sent to find her, romancing a mage among them, and convincing him to magically transform himself and her into loxo form. They led their tribe to defeat several other tribes, but were ultimately cast out by the loxo, which had become increasingly revolted by their warlike nature and aggressive pursuit of power. Ultimately they retired to an ancient, hidden tomb-labyrinth in the heart of the Shaar, where they dwelled, crafting portals, pursuing covert lives of magical thefts, and trading in poisons, weapons, potions, drugs, and spells until the mage (named Brentaen) was killed. Lornra then wound her business down, spending much of her time thereafter writing *Lornra Among the Loxo* and sneaking through portals to murder folk who had displeased her. She has not been heard from for some decades. In addition to containing detailed accounts of amorous dalliances and some portal-finding and portal-operating instructions, the book hints at where in the Shaar she buried various chests of her gold and gems, and to this day enjoys brisk sales among coin-hungry adventurers.

Each of the above works, and the dozen or so almost-as-popular rivals, exist in hundreds or thousands of copies scattered across Faerûn, most in several editions. If a merchant notices a title selling briskly, he holds one copy back to serve as the master for a new printing—a feat accomplished by copying it out by hand in multiples. This task is often done by using children—who don't have to read to be able to precisely copy an original—or the elderly, who can be had for little pay. It is also sometimes done by re-cutting the story onto new wooden blocks, again by someone who need not be able to read what they're copying. The original author rarely gets paid anything for these later editions, and might never know of their existence.

## Philosophical Tomes

Written philosophy in the Realms is dominated by religious dogma and thought, tempered by semi-secret “tricks of the trade” writings about rulership and business success. The rulership books are often kept in private royal libraries, with public copies outlawed or snapped up by Crown agents. Business success books tend to be

gathered in guild libraries but are hawked across the Realms by every peddler and caravan merchant. These business books can't successfully be suppressed by anyone, particularly since new titles are published almost every month. New releases in this genre often endlessly rehash or even directly copy the ideas and prose of older writers, often without any acknowledgment.

There are also cosmological writings that in the main brush past religious views, to treat Realmspace (even if none of them call it that) as a region to be explored rather than the home of the gods or as the realm of an afterlife.

Of these explorations that explore the known universe without overmuch religious slant or through “the eyes of faith,” the most important works are *The Great Realms in the Stars* by Jhevven Dree of Tharsult (1332 DR) and *Realms Beyond Those We Know* by Armlarra Stormcloak (1338 DR).

Dree writes of elven skyships and realms those vessels can sail to, where the skies are different, and he envisages “other worlds than this one” without specifying what they are. He suggests that the gods are divine because they can call on the energies of these other worlds when we mortals can't, and that they achieve their own immortality, unless slain by other gods, by being able to put some of their vital essences on these other worlds, out of reach of any mortal foe. Dree speculates that mortals could become gods if they developed the Art sufficiently to be able to understand and reliably manipulate the energies of these other worlds, reach and come to understand them, and leave vital parts of themselves there “as all gods do.” Dree's scanty and fragmentary descriptions of these other worlds suggest he has visited places very different from Toril—perhaps even other planes of existence.

Stormcloak takes a different approach. She believes that the nature and specifics of the gods and godhood are beyond mortals and that speculations on such matters “are, and can only ever be, a waste of time, spittle, and ink.” The realms beyond Toril are merely places “where different skies are seen, different conditions pertain, and different strange beasts roam,” which folk of Faerûn should explore and exploit as they dare. She devotes herself to describing as much as she has been able to learn “from diverse sources, many of them deemed mad,” but the vivid descriptions in her book lack

named and identified places or clear and coherent ways to reach them.

Both Dree and Stormcloak are still alive, though frailly and elderly, and both are said to be working on new books eagerly awaited by many sages, adventurers, and merchants across Faerûn.

## Religious Writings

These sorts of books are vast, and can be divided into five kinds.

**Temple Histories:** Straightforward accounts of the founding, development, events and achievements of a particular shrine, temple, holy site, abbey, monastery, or other holy place of a faith.

**Sermons:** Collections of messages, holy thoughts and prayers, and other writings intended to be read aloud to the faithful as part of religious rites.

**Religious Dogma:** The official creed of the church, any divine pronouncements and holy laws, and the specific conduct and instructions for holy rites.

**Inspirational Texts:** Writings about deities, interpreting their actions, words, manifestations, and signs.

**Personal Holy Histories:** Accounts by mortal individuals of how they came to primarily worship one deity over others, converted from one primary faith to another, or how they were changed by divine contacts and holy experiences.

Books of sermons are by far the most numerous tomes to be bought and either hurled onto fires as fuel or found in the temples and the homes of the devout. Many faiths deliberately leave copies of them in shrines and at holy sites for pilgrims or faithful passersby to take, read, and be inspired by.

Personal holy histories are the most popular books bought and sold—but only among those of the same faith as the author.

Every temple will have copies of all five kinds of books, with inspirational texts being the most poorly represented (or even hidden away and disapproved of). Thanks to all the gods being considered real and important, there are no big names of religious books that rise above the rest.

Perhaps the most famous popular religious writers are the warring sages Rondarro of Selgaunt and Askral of Calimport. These two sages'

learned disagreements over what importance this or that deity places on the monetary value of offerings versus diligent prayer and belief has escalated, over the years, into a personal feud that ended up with each one taking caustically sarcastic opposing views in chapbook after rebutting chapbook dealing with almost every faith.

Rondarro's most famous work is *From the Dawn Cataclysm to the End of All* (1316 DR), though most people have heard of it but never read a word of it. Askral's most popular work is *How Wrong Can One Sembian Be?* (1324 DR), which is valued more for its viciously eloquent attacks on Rondarro than for the views it espouses.

It's thought that both men are still alive, but trapped in a spell cast on them by the exasperated queen of Aglarond after they attacked at each other at a conclave she was attending in Baldur's Gate. This spell, legend has it, placed their bodies in a stasis while their minds wander a maze, debating with various spectral servants of Mystra. Other sages believe that both must have gone mad long ago—but still others insist they were mad long before The Simbul's spell.

## The Rules of Rulership

The most infamous source of advice for rulers is the Calishite courtier Erlo Elraedan, who in 1212 DR published his only known work, *The Blood-Drenched Throne*. An often mocking, generally ruthless how-to book on how to reward, scare, awe, or earn the love of subjects, it was written for rulers who use armed soldiers to do their bidding.

Elraedan advocates that a ruler promote just laws and then establish a not-so-secret personal strike force that is clearly above the law, and can with impunity do anything to any citizen. He also considers holding onto rule at all costs to be the duty of every ruler, because every transfer of rulership weakens a realm. Ruling firmly and consistently, showing ruthlessness rather than mercy, is therefore also a ruler's duty, because uncertainty, change, and vacillation all leave a realm weaker and more vulnerable, even if only in reputation.

Elraedan has harsh words, however, for rulers who become so wrapped up in holding power that they surround themselves with sycophants rather than honest advisors and reporters, and who never properly prepare a successor and



an orderly succession. He lauds a minor robber baron lordling of the Border Kingdoms, an otherwise forgotten warrior named Skalandro Sarlawge, who chose Harlar Dawnstrake, his rival and a strong warrior and rebel, as his successor. Sarlawge built up Dawnstrake's reputation by spreading false rumors of his prowess, invited Dawnstrake to a feast, and there arranged his own death by way of a fiery spell cast by a concealed mage, in a staged moment that made it seem as though the gods had struck down Sarlawge and chosen Dawnstrake as his successor.

## The Book of Dragons

Sammaster, the founder of the Cult of the Dragon, trusted no one. However, he partially trusted a few individuals within the cult far more than he did others. One such was a sly rogue known as Indithul, who as an intrepid adventuring agent of the Cult found—and used—a magical means of longevity in a tomb he plundered. As a result, Indithul yet lives. He and some others have confirmed that Sammaster ached to find and use a long-lost—or rather, long-hidden—magical tome: *The Book of Dragons*.

*The Book of Dragons* was hidden by Khelben “Blackstaff” Arunsun at the direct order of the goddess Mystra herself. Said to be a large book bound in electrum, with metal pages in which the letters and other characters have been stamped, this tome contains short, fanciful tales about the lives of various dragons, written to be read aloud to children. The dragons associated with each story are real wyrms, magically bound in stasis somewhere in the Realms. And as each story is read, as Sammaster believed (and which Elminster has confirmed as truth), the dragon associated with it is released, to fly free in Faerûn.

Sammaster coveted the book to try to induce the dragons linked to it to become dracoliches and part of the cult, but he never found it. Several senior mages of the Zhentarim also sought it, some hiring several bands of adventurers to hunt in places they thought it might be, including the Ghost Holds of Battledale, one of the half-drowned cellars under Marsember, and deep inside Undermountain. They, too, failed to recover it. One band brought back the claims of a wizard who called himself the Keeper—claims they obtained through torture, ere the wizard

died of their ungentle questioning—that *The Book of Dragons* had been wrested from him by a living, unbound dragon, and that the book is now part of its hoard.

There have been many suggestions as to who crafted *The Book of Dragons*, but most are mere speculation. Orondryn of Cormanthor, a sorcerer sage-of-Art who vanished long before the City of Song first became Myth Drannor, believed that Ioulaum of the Netherese made it and magically bound the twenty-six dragons linked to it. But this might be his mere speculation. Whatever the truth of the tome's origins, the dragons linked to it were magically bound against their will, very long ago, and when freed they are both furious and bewildered. The Realms is warned.

## Literacy in Cormyr

In Cormyr, ever since Azoun IV ascended to the throne, the rulers of Cormyr have made certain that all Purple Dragons can read and write—a skill that they ensure gets practice by having them filing brief but frequent written reports. They have strongly encouraged all Cormyrean nobility to train their entire households to read and write, as well.

This campaign began with Azoun IV under the persistent urging of both his court sage Alaphondar and the man who really ran the kingdom, the wizard Vangerdahast. Their reasons were many, but the public ones are as follows:

More literate native-born Cormyreans means a larger pool of folk from which courtiers and spies can be drawn.

Oersons with a natural aptitude for the Art can more easily advance because they already know how to read and write spells.

A more literate general populace cuts down on casual dishonesty in trade.

A more literate general populace increases the chance that random commoners will be able to recognize important, suspicious, and dangerous writing if they come across it. This issue has been a problem in the past, when Sembians used Cormyrean illiteracy to write to each other in Cormyrean taverns, knowing that no one could understand their true conversation.

As well as training soldiers and cajoling the nobility to train their people, the Crown of Cormyr



*The loudest and most persistent seekers of the Book of Dragons have thus far found only false trails, traps—and their deaths. Most sages are unsurprised when new accounts of these frustrated endeavors arise.*

began a policy early in Azoun's reign that continues to this day of making monetary donations to local tutors and priests of Deneir and Oghma for freely teaching anyone who asks how to read and write.

Some of the enticements to read are “chapbooks,” which are coverless booklets of only a few pages in length, about as wide and tall as a large man's hand, and “riders.” Chapbooks are racy tales sold by peddlers and caravan merchants, that purport to tell the latest lurid gossip about social and court life in Suzail. Riders are collections of installments of three sorts of serialized stories: simple adventure tales for children, the exploits of larger-than-life adventurers, and one steamy ongoing saga of a devastatingly handsome and morally flexible fictional noble swashbuckling his way across the realm.

That's what counts as “literature” to many crofters across Cormyr.

However, in the three cities of the realm, and among certain families and individuals scattered

all across the Forest Kingdom, serious literature also exists. Of course, no Cormyrean would ever call it that, because the Forest Kingdom entirely lacks any literary snobbery, except among sages sniping at each other's published works for reflecting biases or exhibiting lazy scholarship.

In a given year, five hundred or so books are published in Cormyr, mainly in Suzail, although there are also binderies in Arabel. Of these, about one hundred fifty or so are scholarly sagecraft, commonly known as furrowbrow writings. The average circulation of a sagely tome is about six hundred copies, of which a hundred or so are exported to waiting buyers in Waterdeep, Sembia, and elsewhere outside the borders of the Forest Kingdom.

The rest of Cormyr's annual output of books consists of around three hundred fifty popular works. These are all bound volumes, usually parchment leaves sewn into calfskin bindings. They tend to be small and easily held, though

sometimes very thick, and they can address almost any topic.

No court permission is required to publish anything, with three exceptions: anything of or about magic, anything of or about a living member of the royal family, and anything specific about current Cormyrean military dispositions. There's no such thing as copyright or libel, though courtiers can order untruths to be publicly recanted, and nobles can and will duel over words they dislike, or arrange to have a commoner whose words they disapprove of beat up. Reprisals are often guarded against by the use of pseudonyms.

Print runs and sales of these volumes vary widely, depending on their popularity, which (in rough terms) is as follows, from most popular to least.

**Riders:** Average 18,000 copies each.

**Readers:** Collections of eight or so writings, one of which is usually current gossip, another one or two being polemics (colorful rants are preferred), and the rest being an array of fiction. The fiction consists of aforementioned popular genres, plus endless war adventures of this or that simple lad—or lass, disguised as a man—rising from the barnyard to command armies, and light manner comedies of the high life of Suzail that often include satirical references to real folk and events. Average 14,500 copies each.

**Recipe Collections:** Always avidly devoured in kitchens across the realm, from farm huts to noble palaces, and in most inns, too, the hot topic for recipe collections is new spice and herb mixtures. In lean winter days, farm families often gather at the abode of whoever has the warmest kitchen and the largest cauldron, and make a communal stew, reading aloud from recipe books as entertainment. Average 8,000 copies each.

**Tyankurs:** How-to books about farming, especially breeding and “new seeds from afar,” and craftwork are popular. They are sometimes bought up by guilds so they can be destroyed en masse, to protect secrets. As a result, helpful hints for dyes and repairs and daily little tasks are rising in popularity, and in-depth how-to tomes are declining. Average 3,500 copies each.

**Wider Realms Books:** Gossipy travel exploits, plus tall tales and recent news from distant parts of the Realms. Average 1,700 copies each.

**Histories:** This category includes memoirs and legends of old Cormyr. Old soldiers'

campaign accounts are the most popular works here, especially if full of juicy details about daily screw-ups, officers carousing or making mistakes, grisly battle occurrences, and so on. Average 1,200 copies each.

**Everything Else:** Here are included collections of love poetry; collections of wise sayings; annual reviews of breeding stables and “hot” horses for racing and stud; annual overviews of trade shortages and opportunities; predicted fads and fashions in Suzail, the Dales, and around the Moonsea; and stand-alone polemics. Average 1,000 copies each.

The figures cited above are publishers' sales, and don't include re-sales. Most copies are loaned around and read by many, then resold to a peddler to be sold elsewhere, where the process might be repeated. They also omit temple copies, except for Candlekeep, which treasures originals. A temple of Deneir or Oghma will purchase a single copy of a literary work, examine it, and if it (or a portion of it) is viewed as worthy of wider circulation, the temple will hand-recopy it any number of times for circulation among temples of the same faith throughout the Realms. Of course, not a copper coin, nor any word of this activity, goes to the original author. Traffic in the form of letters, such books, priestly decrees, and sermon texts is constant among temples, usually carried by trusted priests in sewn-shut, waterproofed parcels.

Cormyr, especially Suzail, has a thriving, growing literary culture, with a solid base of readership ever since the 1350s DR. From then on, best sellers began to appear—books that everybody in the kingdom was reading or wanted to read. Noble houses began to patronize writers for more than merely turning out self-congratulatory family histories and courtship poems, sponsoring these “dream-scribblers” to produce fiction for all to enjoy. The noble house stamped its heraldic badge onto the bindings of sponsored dream-scribblers and took credit for making the entertainment possible, in hopes of winning friendly regard realm-wide. And nobles and just plain shop workers and tradesmen, as well as sages, began to assemble personal libraries—a few shelves at most of favorite books, usually. All of this provides the right climate for works of greatness to begin to appear.

## EVENTS AND FESTIVALS

Most communities in the Realms hold trade fairs, which are annual events tied to local commerce, such as farmers driving their herds into town on one or two weekends every fall for “largehand buyers” (bulk buyers) to see and bid on. Eventually, over the passing years, these trade fairs attract gatherings of food vendors, camp followers, and finally wagon peddlers of all sorts, until the local authorities decide to make a few silver coins off everyone and stake out proper rental plots for the erection of stalls.

Pure sporting events—except for religious ones, such as “champion frays” put on by large temples of Tempus, akin to knightly jousting tournaments—are much rarer. Most folk in Faerûn just don’t have that sort of leisure time.

A few locales in the Realms, such as Hillsfar, have arenas where battles (gladiatorial contests) are staged. In addition, in regions like the Dales there are many small archery shoots (the sort of activity the Sheriff of Nottingham sponsored in an effort to trap Robin Hood). Small, one-day events with modest prizes, like a sack of flour, a sack of potatoes, twelve coppers and a good dagger, or two new wagon wheels, are the norm.

Festivals, especially religious ones, and annual celebrations are common across Faerûn, and many involve an element of misrule, such as apprentices clashing in the streets, demonstrations of weapon skill, glorified and wide-ranging games of tag, and so on. In larger cities, it can be hard to find days on which someone isn’t celebrating something, but these observances are hardly ever citywide, and rarely involve sporting events aside from some sort of street race, such as those that involve wild horses or cutthroat chariot contests.

Waterdeep has its own arena, but very few big annual events. Most often, the arena is not used for public events but for City Guard and City Watch training sessions. There are horse races east of the city that folk can watch from atop the cliff top wall in spring, and many small competitions, from oratory and minstrelsy contests to wrestling matches and “cat fights” involving two actresses dressed as high-class nobles who tear off each other’s outer clothing and hair in mock rages involving as many hilariously snooty insults as

they can think of. These smaller competitions are held in the various clubs and private-rental upper tavern rooms of the city.

### Summertime Fests of Silverymoon

Almost every settlement in all of civilized surface Faerûn has annual festivities of some sort on or around Midsummer and Shieldmeet. Because Silverymoon is one of the most tolerant, open, and artistic cities, it has many such festivities. A brief overview of Silvaeren’s summertime festivals follows. It can serve as a model for devising events in other Realms locales. In addition to what’s mentioned here, many temples in Silverymoon hold various celebrations and rites—but only Moon-down is observed citywide.

During the tenday preceding Midsummer, a festival is celebrated every day. Here are those ten events, followed by discussions of Midsummer and Shieldmeet.

#### Oldcasks: What’ll You Have?

The first festival is a day during which private individuals and businesses all across the city make or find and dust off various vintages from their cellars and sell them off tables set up by their front doors in preparation for the festivities to come. Wineries and “flagon shops” often offer special sales or import hard-to-find or novelty vintages such as: “Dwarfbeard Ale! Contains the ashes of genuine dwarf beards!” or “Elfmaidblood Ruby, a fine red guaranteed to contain drops of blood from gold elf maidens of the eldest, proudest lineages!” In addition, all the city temples cast poison-neutralizing magic for free on all liquids brought to them from dawn to dusk, a feat accomplished by stockpiling scrolls and calling in faithful clergy from outside the city.

#### Cloakswirl: Dressing the Part

In this crafters’ festival, various costumes, garments, and fashion accessories are sold for use during the festivities ahead. No masks, cosmetics, or headgear are sold on Cloakswirl—doing so is not unlawful, it’s just considered unlucky, and so in most shops, such things are hidden away for the day. Street vending is freely allowed on Cloakswirl, and most shops move tables out into the

street. These must all be cleared away by highsun of the next day (Moondown). By tradition, inns and taverns put on, or hire actors to stage, brief plays or dramatic readings after dusk.

### Moondown: Selûne's Time

This day is a normal working day, until highsun. Thereafter, everyone in the city bathes—in the river, if they've nowhere else to go—then puts on new garments they've never worn before. Folk without coin for new clothes trade clothes for the night. A solemn ceremony of worship to Selûne is held, starting at dusk. A Moondance—the slow, quiet, sweeping movements of many dancers clad in palely glowing “moonrime” (white to very light green) garments, led by priests—winds its way along city streets until dawn. Moonwine, squirted from the nozzles of shoulder-carried wine skins, and platters of small round cakes are offered freely by the dancers to everyone they pass. Wishes are whispered to the moon, and loved ones who perished during the preceding year are softly named. Temples of Shar are closed during the day, and her worshipers by tradition pray only in private, not wearing any ceremonial garb, vestments, or symbols of their goddess.

### Masks: New Face for a Day

Elaborate (and often very expensive) masks, cosmetics, and headgear are sold on this day for the revelry that begins at nightfall and continues on night and day through Midsummer night. On this day Alustriel typically pays every musician (players of instruments, not singers) who desires to play in the streets a “flourish” of 25 gp, and many minstrels wander, playing music alone or in groups.

### Elskelter: Catch a Skull!

As with Moondown, this is a normal working day until highsun. At that time, all the city and temple bells are rung, and the Skull Run begins.

The Skull Run is a giant game of hide-and-seek wherein swift, agile, persons wearing skull-head masks try to get from any gate of the city to the Moonbridge without being caught. The catching is done by a mob of persons, each of whom must, in order to participate, down a potent drink to the dregs, which makes them literally tipsy—that is, staggering on their feet. The

Skull Run is administered by the Spellguard, who prepare the drinks and give drinkers one-eyed hoods to wear. Only those wearing the one-eyed hoods are allowed to take part in the fun.

Typically one Skull Runner will start from each gate of the city. The runners cannot use any translocation magic but can employ other forms of magical movement. Although they can, and usually do, go bare-skinned and greased, they must wear their skull masks at all times. This means that tearing off a Skull Runner's mask is one way to delay that competitor. However, chasers are forbidden to hide, throw, or carry masks. They may only snatch a mask off a runner's head (then drop it nearby)—but this they may do as many times as they wish, and can manage. The Spellguard typically teleports a Skull Runner away from harm if one is injured, gets into a fight, or is attacked in earnest. It's understood that a runner will be healed or even brought back to life if one comes to harm during the Skull Run.

Every year, Alustriel announces prizes for chasers for “catching Skulls,” as well as prizes for Skull Runners who successfully reach the Moonbridge. These are typically monetary, but might involve a Skull Runner choosing any single spell (that Alustriel can manage) to be cast upon oneself, or another service or boon.

The Skull Run began in the days when Silverymoon was founded, but was later banned after widespread and deadly fighting broke out in two successive years. Alustriel revived it in 1324 DR.

From dusk onward, this night is traditionally when old friends gather to catch up on events of the past year, or begin to negotiate deals or plan the year ahead, and absent friends are remembered and toasted.

### Claws: Monsters Remembered

On this day, elaborate costumes are worn by citizens—or even several citizens sharing the same oversized costume—so they can impersonate various monsters. Dragons and owlbeards are perennial favorites. These marauding monsters parade through the streets, heading for particular taverns. Older citizens just watch the monsters proceed along, but younger ones fall in behind them and repair to the taverns, where the costume wearers doff their hoods to receive free drinks and meals. While dining, they are

entertained by bards, minstrels, and old retired adventurers telling wild and dramatic tales of monster slayings, battles against beasts that got away, and horrific ghost stories of revenant monsters, creatures of the Underdark lurking under all our feet right now, and so on.

These tales go on into the wee hours, with the taverns serving free drinks to all. Traditionally these drinks are very watered down, so it's hard to get intoxicated before one feels bloated, but taverns vie with each other in doctoring the beverages to achieve unusual but very enjoyable tastes. Everyone gets free drinkables unless they want full-strength ales and spirits, but only those who wore monster costumes get free food.

### Glarth: Eat to Bursting

Colloquially known as Fullbelly, this is a day of widespread at-home feasting. Flower-decorated wagons are sent out from the palace in the morning, piled high with smoked hams, loaves of bread, sausages, smoked fish, tiny drawstring bags filled with spices, and fruit. The wagons head for the poorest streets of the city first, then circulate until emptied. During their rounds, any person can take any food from the passing wagons that he or she can personally carry (perhaps augmenting whatever food they already have), so that none may know hunger on Glarth. Visitors to the city and those who live alone are invited to dine with families or at inns and taverns with other solitary folk, but no loud entertainment or organized revelry takes place. Typically everyone eats too much and drowns in chairs and on beds and couches into the evening, talking lazily of diverse matters.

### Oamaurae: A Play's the Thing

After all the eating and drinking of the preceding day, few rise until after highsun on Oamaurae (*oh-more-ay*). Traditionally, this is a day when everyone goes out to see theater, whether at a playhouse, an acting ground outside the walls, an inn, tavern, or private home where hired performances are being presented, or simply a street performance.

On Oamaurae, new plays are presented for the first time, new ballads-with-dance-and-mime tales are performed, and new drinks (often

fortified, doctored-with-herbs-and-spices wines and sheries) are sold to see what will catch on.

After enjoying performances and returning home, members of households take time during the evening to read aloud stirring passages of prose, or to recite ballads and heroic tales from memory. Much rich dessert food is then consumed, before everyone goes to bed.

### Clearsight: Chart the Future

The ninth festival day is a half-day of work, with shops open only until highsun, followed by a day of planning ahead on personal, household, and professional levels.

Everyone discusses politics and the wording of any pacts to be renewed or new agreements they're involved in that are to be solemnized on Shieldmeet. Shop owners talk to their employees about the direction and aim of the business, commoners hoist tankards at taverns and discuss the latest news and "the way the world is sailing," and everyone from adventurers to fashion-setting clothiers makes plans for the seasons ahead. The shop closures make possible meeting with investors and merchants to plan future undertakings—and to persuade would-be business partners by wining and dining them—if, of course, you can find the people you want to make contact with, among all the to-ing and fro-ing and glad-handing going on.

### Amalree's Pleasure: Dance, Flirt, and Wager

Amalree was a spectacular, affectionate, and much-loved dancer of Silverymoon who died almost a century ago. In her honor, this day is devoted to lighthearted dancing and flirtation. Older folk, and those too injured or infirm to take part, gather to sip wine, watch the fun unfold around them, and play various elaborate board games. In recent years, wagering on these games has become very popular, and vast sums are won and lost by the evening of "the Pleasure."

### Midsummer: Love's Night

Midsummer night is the day of the Feast of Love. No shops are open past highsun on Midsummer, and at highsun, small feasts (private meals) begin, and public decadence follows. Many folk don't take part, and stay home in their shuttered

rooms, but many more citizens wander, watching or participating. Open doors are invitations to all, priests cast curative spells against diseases for free, risqué costumes and dalliance are commonplace, and even staid old Silvaeren tell off-color jokes or make frank, lewd remarks or compliments they'd never dream of daring to utter on any other day. Of course, everyone is supposed to forget everything that happened on Midsummer after the next dawn. Alustriel leads a "Hunt of Maidens," which is actually a hunt for a specific mask—or rather, the person wearing it—through various gardens after the moon rises. Various wealthy folk with large homes host parties at which naughty games are held. Eating various sweet desserts from the bodies of fellow revelers is a favorite tradition at these parties. In more conservative locales than Silverymoon, Midsummer is the time when all families hold large and often drunken feasts, and at which future couples publicly announce their attention to wed.

### Shieldmeet: Speaking Truth

Celebrated the same way it is everywhere else in the Realms, this special day is devoted to open council between the rulers and the ruled, which really means that commoners can sit down and speak frankly with monarchs without being overheard by courtiers and without fear of reprisal. Monarchs are typically protected against attack for the day with various protective magics that mitigate the effects of missiles, particular sorts of spells, and so on. Commoners can communicate complaints and warnings, answer royal questions, pass on gossip, and so on. Most rulers consider Shieldmeet the most valuable and informative day of their year, and often arrange to meet again soon with particular informants.

For rulers, guild members, merchants, masters and apprentices, and others engaged in renting or in transacting business, it's also a day of renewing agreements, which were often reviewed or drawn up earlier, during Clearsight.

It's also a day of contests, trials-of-arms, duels, contests-of-spells, and full-blown tournaments of horse-and-lance, with attendant wagering. In Silverymoon, these events are rarely undertaken in anger or to settle scores or legal disputes, though they can be, if Taern or Alustriel agrees and if the proceedings are overseen by Spellguard members.

Instead, these competitions serve as popular entertainment, with local merchants and wealthy notables sponsoring prizes for victorious contestants. Taking part in such trials has also become a very good way for adventurers and hedge wizards seeking employment to attract the notice of potential patrons.

Silvaeren temples and visiting priests provide free healing magics and care to injured contestants, and the day ends with a "last revel" of plays and bardic and minstrel performances in various inns, taverns, clubs, and guild headquarters, at which mead and other sweetened wines are sipped and honeycakes and other pastries and candies are consumed. Everyone is well aware that it's "back to the everyday trudge and drudge on the morrow," so wise celebrants take to bed early and sober; foolish ones sing and carouse late into the night—and take surly hangovers to the shop the next day.



*The badge of the city of Zazesspur in Tethyr. It depicts Storm-dagger Keep, the fortified in-city home of the ruling Hhune ducal family, but is not used by the Duke of Kamlann or his family.*

# LEARNING THE ROPES, AND MORE

A lot of what passes for education in the Realms is free (or almost so) for the asking. Anyone with a coin or two can receive basic instruction in tasks from local guilds (along the lines of “Don’t do this, or you’ll blow yourself up; instead, call in the guild!”).

Local lore is often free for the asking from local courtiers or civic scribes (“That property belongs to Lhannath the miller, from the old dead felsul down to the creek; formerly it belonged to the weaver Rustragus, and before that . . . I have all the dates here”).

And priests of almost all faiths offer information about who the gods are, what their portfolios and beliefs are, where their temples and current civic projects are, and so on for free. This information from priests carries an emphasis on the beneficial importance of the priest’s own faith, but has little overtly lying propaganda, because in the polytheistic Realms, it’s considered a sin by all to deceive about any faith.

Other sources of learning include high sages (researchers, too expensive for most folk below the wealthy merchant or guild level, and often consulted by rulers and nobles) and low sages (neighborhood shopkeepers who dispense small-scale information from their acquired knowledge and personal libraries). The low sages’ experiential learning tends to be very good, but their book learning often repeats the errors that are in their books.

Most commoners hire low sages to tutor their children on specific matters, building on what they can get for free from priests. Guilds sometimes hire low sages to teach regular classes, or write “chapbooks of learning” (short and simple schoolbooks).

The high sages, on the other hand, debate with each other, write chapbooks that are sold to the wider public, and sponsor adventurers to recover lost books (or pay well for books brought to them without forewarning).

Large and influential guilds desiring to increase their influence over time often establish tutors in more than just the work of the guild, but these tend to be for members only. Some guilds grow this arm of their staff into private

investigators (because they want to know what rival guilds are up to, what courtiers are planning or thinking about them, and so on), and said staff often hire adventurers of discretion to handle the more dangerous eavesdropping, kidnapping, spying, and thieving assignments involved.

Lastly, the level of common education varies greatly from place to place across Faerûn, depending on the attitudes of local rulers. In general, trading centers (such as Amn, Sembia, and Waterdeep) want a literate populace that can do basic arithmetic because such knowledge cuts down on cheating, unrest, and theft, and provides more customers with both coin and hunger enough for wonders from afar.

Commoners in lands with militias (such as Cormyr) are trained and drilled in local geography, map reading, discipline, the local chain of command, how to access local lords and their staff, how to read and write, how to draw and interpret way-marker symbols, and so on. Purple Dragons get posted all over the realm of Cormyr, and so have a wider worldview and pick up all sorts of local lore, such as the brands used by local horse breeders, where specific sorts of caravan goods come from, and so on. Since so many folk across the Realms have done military or militia service, most of the population has a shared grounding in lore.

Much common knowledge is built up locally from gossip, rants, facts in chapbooks, and from talking with traveling peddlers and caravans. In addition, minstrels and caravan workers make coin carrying or delivering messages, and telling the news (sometimes colorful invented stories). That’s why caravans are so socially important in way-stop settlements like Shadowdale.

## Tutoring and Discipline

Private tutors are much used among the nobility and very wealthy who often want to have their young disciplined without having to do such distasteful work personally. The intent is for their children to acquire all the results of a good academy without “the rabble” (or worse, their social rivals) knowing that their little Launsarra went to Madame Theorla’s Peerless Academy of Social Quality. If Launsarra does turn up at such a place, it means either her family is too impoverished to hire a good tutor, or more likely, that



Launsarra beats and terrorizes tutors, or even poisons them or pushes them off balconies, when her temper gets the better of her.

Such tutors are often aging relatives, hired clergy of impressive character (either wandering priests, or clergy from a local temple, who are expected to extend their temple influence to the family they are employed by), high sages in need of housing and income, infirm or elderly experts taken on as house servants, impoverished or exiled outland nobility, and—for weapons training and discipline—retired military officers.

Informal tutoring—augmented by temple instruction—is the norm in rural areas across Faerûn, and teaches local children basic arithmetic, local laws and customs, and “simple letters” (reading and writing enough to handle basic road and market signs).

## Schools and Academies

Bards, heralds, and various faiths (particularly monastic orders) set up organized schools, but the vast majority of these are in large cities (such as Waterdeep and Silverymoon), and of these urban schools, the majority are “academies.” Such places in the Realms function as what we could call “finishing schools”—that is, although they impart lore, their primary purpose is to teach etiquette, deportment, an accent, fashion correctness, a worldview, and so on, to aid in social climbing or success.

Such schools are usually created by glib, literate individuals. In particular, these individuals are often down-on-their-luck longtime professional servants or minor nobles; what Sword Coast speech calls the “fifth, sixth, and seventh sisters” or “idle aunts” and “idle old uncles.” Sometimes, however, they have a particular skill, such as playing a musical instrument, singing, or fencing.

These individuals set themselves up, usually in upper rooms somewhere (in Waterdeep, mainly in Castle Ward or South Ward; in Silverymoon, mainly in the westernmost streets of the city), to teach or provide practice sessions in return for pay. There are always a few mock academies that are really houses of pleasure or private drinking clubs for young wastrel nobles (which usually last only until uncovered in public scandals), but most academies are quite real and never rise above the level of struggling tutors.

A few, however, have the resources or charismatic staff or connections to establish themselves as refined. Many of these are in Waterdeep and Silverymoon because both cities have some social mobility within classes (coin can buy you status) as well as an ambitious, rising upper middle class that aspires to nobility or at least the trappings of nobility. These clients enrich exclusive academies, so the academies can expand, gaining more of the luxurious appointments that enable them to hold revels, recitals, and demonstrations. These public events attract social interest and more clients, allowing them to hire more staff, purchase properties to gain rental income, and expand again.

Wealthy or noble patrons sometimes sponsor existing academies in return for the right to use them on rare occasions as private armies or agents (spy on this rival for me, rough up that man as he leaves yonder tavern, buy up all the barley you can find on the morrow).

However, the vast majority of academies are comfortable little establishments, such as three widows sharing a house and instructing young ladies on sewing, good manners, and how to act as a hostess (serving wine, directing servants at table, and the art of small talk). They will have a door guard, one or more maids, and a regular clientele (akin to a modern real-world dentist).

## Centers of Training

Here are a handful of currently popular academies across the Realms.

### Waterdeep

#### **Mother Tamra’s House of Graces (Mendever Street, Castle Ward)**

*Clientele:* Young ladies of ambitious families, being taught how to wash and groom themselves, how to develop a fashion sense and how to keep a wardrobe looking fresh (including washing and sewing for repairs), etiquette and carriage (how to walk, sit, and hold one’s hands), how to write polite messages, how to politely and with dignity encourage or discourage social entreaties, dancing, and the right thing to say in difficult situations.

*Secret Clientele:* Men who need to impersonate women, and nobles about to appear in drag at a revel, who desire to learn how to look and act like a lady of quality.

### **Tartel's House of the Sword (Seawatch Street, Sea Ward)**

*Clientele:* Persons desiring to learn how to fence or defend themselves with or against a light long-sword or smaller blade, and a dagger.

*Secret Clientele:* Young nobles desiring to learn how to duel and to meet young ladies for amorous purposes. Tartel encourages young and beautiful women to become clients by offering them half rates.

### **Corondorr's Countinghouse (Aveen Street, North Ward)**

*Clientele:* Young guild members and unguilded shopkeepers desiring to learn number skills and "how business is really practiced" from a cynical, veteran clerk-of-coin retired from Piergeiron's palace.

*Secret Clientele:* Swindlers who want to learn all about dodges, and what clerks like the sarcastic old Corondorr are alert for when business is done in Waterdeep.

## Silverymoon

### **Tantathra's (Stormwind Alley)**

*Clientele:* Folk who want to learn to sing or play simple airs on stringed instruments, or at least learn lyrics to popular songs.

*Not-So-Secret Clientele:* Amateur musicians; individuals looking to recruit amateur musicians for a revel, a feast, or other entertainment event such as a shop opening or a celebration; and folk who love a regular musical get-together.

*Secret Clientele:* Romantic folk looking for lovers.

*Sideline:* Tantathra sells teas, wine, ale, replacement strings, lyric sheets, and instruments to clients.

### **The Risen Moon Academy (Alander's Lane)**

*Clientele:* Folk who want to learn how to dance and fence.

*Secret Clientele:* Persons desiring to pay for company from the beautiful female instructors employed by the proprietress (a one-eyed retired adventurer by the name of Amratha "Redtresses" Dalree).

## Neverwinter

### **The Starshine Academy (Blackule Lane)**

*Clientele:* Those who desire to appreciate—and paint their own—art; acquire herb lore; be able to live off the land; and to know wild animals by scent, sound, and spoor.

*Secret Clientele:* Those desiring to make potions that induce sleep, freedom from pain, heightened sensations, lust, and calm.

*Sideline:* The tutors sell paintings, herbs, recipes, animal-track-reference drawings, and potions. (Some, it is correctly rumored, even vend poisons.)

## Suzail

### **Mathulk's House (Taumurt's Lane)**

*Clientele:* Men from all walks of life (both masters and servants), desiring to learn how to dress, maintain a wardrobe, walk and dance with dignity, and the proper things to say and do in most social situations.

*Secret Clientele:* Women wanting to pretend to be a man for a revel, or women needing to fool others into thinking them male for more serious purposes.

## Baldur's Gate

### **Garmult's House of Mastery (Longwind Lane)**

*Clientele:* All who desire to learn the laws and ways of business up and down the Sword Coast, and the "untold truths" of who dominates various fields of commerce and "how things really work."

*Secret Clientele:* Those desiring to invest in shady shipping enterprises by land and sea, such as smuggling and sponsoring piracy. The proprietor, the retired sea captain and active fleet owner Darbrand Garmult, is both a smuggler and an outfitter and fence for pirates.

## Athkatla

### **Rezunder's Academy of the Coin (Methquem's Way)**

*Clientele:* Investors, speculators, and shopkeepers interested in learning Amn's ways of doing business, how to make and maintain a reputation in trade, good bets for investing, and financial foes and pitfalls to watch for.

*Secret Clientele:* Those willing to join the Purlrend, Ardrult Rezunder's secret investing cabal, by either contributing funds or doing shady dealings on behalf of the cabal.

# ACTING AND THE THEATER

Minstrels and bards have always memorized crucial scenes from “the classics” (old plays) to perform in their travels alongside music and dramatic recitations of poems. These audience favorites are the dramatic confrontations between legendary heroes and dragons, rulers and usurpers about to slay them, wise old men and young reckless fools, and those falling in love.

Carters and merchants also have a long history of earning extra coin as they travel by doing mimicry of well-known figures (Vangerdahast, for instance, in the Dragon Reach). They also put on the equivalent of Punch-and-Judy shows, which in the Realms are done by putting footwear over both hands, then a shawl or other cloth over one’s head to serve as a backdrop, and using the upturned boots as the heads of comic characters. These shows are known as Oldboots or, when folk printing handbills in larger cities are being precious, Talking Toes shows.

Traveling companies of players are summer-time features of the Heartlands, the Moonshaes, Amn, Tethyr, Aglarond, and the Vilhon. Performers often play roles of the other gender (in both directions), usually for comedic purposes.

In Faerûn, some actors travel constantly with goods caravans. These performers often make extra coin selling, making, and modifying clothing for buyers at the various places where they appear. For example, an actor might perform in a small village, present a stunningly beautiful gown on a lady character, and then let it be known after the show that similar garments can be bought. Then, all the actor has to do is wait for the local ladies (or men looking for a gift) to demand them.

Acting isn’t a disreputable profession except in places where traveling companies in the past have practiced thievery with heavy hands. Many temples have small morality plays that are never seen outside their sacred precincts (and are supposed to be kept secret from all who aren’t deeply and loyally devout). Audiences expect actors to ad-lib or add new jests and mockeries to certain comedy plays.

## Unusual Performance Styles

In Calimshan and Chessenta, traditional theater features an on-stage chanting chorus and oversized caricature masks mounted on sticks that all actors use to cover their faces. The style probably migrated from Calimshan to Chessenta centuries back, since very different plays are performed in the two regions; only the masks and choruses are common to both. This theatrical style is known in Calimshan as malakram, and in Chessenta as masqueladra. It is from this Chessentan term that Cormyr and other lands around the Sea of Fallen Stars get the term “masquerades” for their masked balls and revels.

In Neverwinter, many local plays are built around a central trio of harpists. These harpists literally sit center stage for most of a performance, but occasionally walk on or off in unison to mark passages of time, such as a season or some period of years. Throughout the play, they harp, comment to the audience on the action of the play without being a part of it, and wear no costumes.

In the Sword Coast lands from about Waterdeep south to Amn, many “crafty country bumpkin” plays are staged, built around a gruff, limping character called Old Duiwin (*doo-win*) and constantly updated with new jokes and snide political commentary. These traditions don’t seem to have formal names—they’re just “the good old plays” to locals, as opposed to strange new productions brought from afar.

Many Sword Coast cities from the Tashalar north to Waterdeep continue to celebrate a tradition of tableaux in festivals and the revels of the wealthy. Tableaux is a play in which scene after scene of motionless actors is revealed, to the accompaniment of stirring music. The actors are usually provocatively clad women, often frozen in scenes that purport to depict important historical events. These are often known as marvel masques, but sometimes as grandiques, fresstel, or allbeholdings.

Recently in Sembia, a new tradition has gained popularity in the most exclusive clubs and in the private revels of the wealthiest: silent reenactments of murders or hunts, the latter often involving actors with their skins painted to mimic the appearance of the beasts being hunted. When these silent plays are performed in club settings, sometimes the portrayers of the painted beasts are

ELMINSTER'S ERRATA

Into every project in life, here and in Faerûn, it seems, a few errors creep. Be it the work of dark forces, or the gods' way of teaching mortals humility, or mere ill luck...mistakes there are, always. Elminster, sharp-eyed old rogue that he is ("five hundred-odd winters will do that to ye," he told us rather testily), has noticed more than a few in the Forgotten Realms<sup>TM</sup> products we've published thus far. He has not hesitated to tell us so. In several cases we've felt moved to follow his ah, gentle suggestions to correct such errors--- hence this announcement. Hopefully such entries will be few.

Item the First: In the original boxed Campaign Set of the Realms (and in the first issue of this newsletter), the world map of "the North" of Faerûn shows a city south of The High Moor which it names "Soubar." The correct name of this place, as the 'close-up' maps in the boxed set correctly give it (and as Elminster acidly assures us the city's native inhabitants prefer it) is "Soubar." Let it stand thus corrected.

...

*"Secrets of the Sages" was a free newsletter produced in 1987, consisting of collections of my root Realmslore (maps, sketches, and background information). David Martin edited three issues, but only the first was ever printed. "Secrets" was seen as a vehicle for teasers, to find out which Realms elements the clamor would be loudest for more of, and for publishing errata. This was my way of trying to turn something to be embarrassed about into something fun that would bring us all closer. You should hear Elminster when he goes on about Volo!*

hired to drum up business. Some monster-playing performers are doppelgangers who are very well paid to appear as humans with webbed hands or feet, tails, illithid tentacles, or the like. They are under strict contract not to harm patrons—though of course no such restrictions apply to nonpatrons who happen to come within reach of such creatures outside the club.

## Traveling Troupes

A medium-sized traveling troupe of performers is some sixty to eighty people, some of whom are bouncers and coin-takers and makeup folk, and a large troupe is more than eighty strong, topping out at around one hundred forty persons for practical reasons. Smaller troupes of both varieties are far more numerous, with most troupes in the mid-forties in total strength, and larger ones in the mid-sixties.

Aside from the obvious acrobatic acts and acting performances, a troupe's attractions can include wrestling (both genders, against those of same gender), monster-taming acts, jesters, jugglers, fortune tellers, and sellers of confections and "luck pieces" who tell amusing or scary tales. Most troupes also offer services: They check coins for value and authenticity, appraise items brought to them, provide names of and directions to experts on various matters (sometimes even furnishing letters of invitation or passwords), and examine contracts and agreements to explain them fully to the illiterate or bewildered.

Troupes might also offer more shady assistance, such as help with disguises and providing doubles, or sending out "set things to rights" teams to aid the poor, the weak, or those simply outnumbered or overmatched. In particular, they furnish this service to those facing a wealthier or more numerous foe who has advantages over them, such as their guildmaster or the head of the local Watch.

Harpers and members of other secretive groups and cabals often join traveling acting troupes as a means of remaining "unseen among the many" while moving around the Realms. This way they can make covert contact with others in their group along the way. In such secretive meetings, they pass on and receive payments, funds, and small items (such as keys, tools, rare magical ingredients, and contraband); impart everyday

advice as to who and what to watch out for (a Harper posing as a fortune teller would pass this information on as part of her spiel), and dispense medicines or poison antidotes or daggers.

A troupe disbands every winter, either in a city or somewhere warm enough for inhabitants not to have to worry about freezing to death, fighting off wolves, or having no green growing things to eat. Waterdeep is as northerly a site as an acting troupe would voluntarily end up at a tour's end; beyond its walls, and south as far as Amn, is the cold, snow-swept, orc-raided, monster-roamed North. But only the wealthiest performers can afford to winter in friendly-to-artistes Silvermoon or Everlund, and the high cost of daily living makes most actors shun Waterdeep, too, with the exception of those who can "stay on the cheap" with family, or work at a winter job, usually crafting of some kind.

Traveling troupes are far more likely to winter in southern Tethyr, the Vilhon, and more southerly areas, near Innarlith, for example, or in the Border Kingdoms, or down in Luiren. Cormyr is "law and order" safe enough, but has a harsh winter climate—and most traveling performers will by nature mistrust the surveillance the War Wizards are said to perform on everyone and every place in the Forest Kingdom.

Acrobatic entertainers need warm weather, cheap food and accommodations, and relative safety so they can keep their muscles relaxed as they practice, readily recuperate from injuries suffered on the road, and live cheaply and easily. That need usually means dwelling on farms, villages, and hamlets in lush, warm, lightly (or fairly) ruled areas.

## The Famous Seven

Actors, enthusiasts, and sages can argue endlessly over the best, the most influential, and even the most popular plays performed in the Heartlands, but throughout the 1300s DR and well into the 1400s DR, seven plays were most often performed. They were agreed upon by widely traveled Harpers before High Lady Alustriel of Silvermoon listed them in 1344 DR, and are described here in the order of the years when each play was first performed:

*Bellagar the Black Dragon* by Orstyn Scardarr of Scornubel, 1242 DR. A stirring

adventure in which simple village folk slay a fell wyrm who lairs in their midst, after armies and adventurers flee.

*King Helcantur the Doomed* by Awnagur Hertrel of Athkatla, 1266 DR. The moral tale of how a hated, cruel tyrant is brought down by his suffering court.

*Rorold the Lusty* by Anonymous, 1297 DR. A slapstick, pratfall comedy about the misadventures of a gruff dwarf made irresistible to human women thanks to a mischievous elf mage's spell.

*Five Fallen Thrones* by Ammathra Longalar of Waterdeep, 1299 DR. An inspiring semi-comedy wherein the ghosts of the last kings of five vanished realms haunt young seekers of fortune, driving them to overthrow an evil lord.

*Aballar the Mighty* by Nareth Quorl of Neverwinter, 1306 DR. A comedy about a timid man consistently misunderstood as a hero, who is pushed into becoming one and rescuing a princess—who is then delighted to find that he is timid and easily ruled.

*Seven Swords Snarlclash* by Imbaerla Nardragon of Saerloon, 1312 DR. The bloody “god’s justice” account of how seven overambitious adventurers seek the same treasure, the fabled hoard of Snarlclash the dragon, and butcher each other to win it, until only the female slaves of two of them are left alive to claim the riches.

*Harl the Serpent* by Anonymous, 1322 DR. A dark comedy about a stylish but despicable womanizing villain who is finally brought down.

## MEDICINE

The level and extent of medical knowledge varies widely across the Realms, but it is highest among the nonhuman common races, because tending humans has become for many of them a way of gaining long-term acceptance in human-dominated communities. Herbal lore (about which see more below) is predominant among such practitioners, coupled with “potions” (herbal concoctions, not magic) that are effective in dealing with minor diseases, allergic reactions, and shock. The organs of all humanoid races are known, as well as the general functioning of the body (hence what shock is, and how to treat it), the function of blood, and the importance of cleanliness to recovering from wounds. Concocted, expensive bottled

medicines, called “physics,” are generally hard to find and priced accordingly; to most rural folk in the Realms, herbs are the basis of what they use for daily medicine.

In the Realms, almost everyone understands that ill or wounded people need rest, to be covered by a blanket or at least kept out of full sun; that moving or rough handling will do greater harm; and that people should be given much to drink (even in cases where we moderns would say, “No, not even if he is complaining of thirst should Thrudd be given water or something stronger, because he’s hurt inside!”). Stretchers and slings are commonly used, and when a stretcher can’t be found, injured who must be carried are usually lashed to felled tree trunks and borne along between the shoulders of two strong carriers.

Scarring as an aftereffect of injuries is common, because cauterization is a well-known procedure. Herbal painkillers (usually liquids that are brewed and drunk, but also liquids drizzled into wounds) are widely used, especially before someone is sewn up.

Splinting is common, many beings are experts at neatly sewing flesh, and the importance of using flame or alcohol (not together!) to prevent infections related to piercing injuries and large gashes is widely understood.

## Herbal Lore

Everyone—from farmers to foresters to shopkeepers—knows a few old family remedies, and almost every rural place not in the remote wilderness has an herbalist or two. A village on a trade route might have an apothecary, and almost all market towns have one—as well as a “hedge wizard” (self-taught mage of low Art) who augments his or her income by splinting breaks, washing infected wounds, and selling beneficial castings, salves, and the like.

If a village not on a trade route has a shrine (as opposed to just a priest or hermit), the priest who tends the shrine often functions as an apothecary to earn an income. If a shrine has two or three staffers, even if only one of them is a proper priest, an apothecary is likely to be on that staff.

Apothecaries prepare and sell physics, but also sell raw and “readied” (washed, cut, and sometimes powdered) herbs for kitchens and for medicinal use. Many feshalls and herbalists offer

inexpensive herb bath or steam bath services, which always include a rubdown (deep tissue massage). Many travelers and street-dwelling poor use these services regularly to get clean, get their clothes washed, to get warm, and to have aches and pains seen to. For some, it's what makes their lives (of having little, and being in contact with folk who have so much more) bearable. So the application of heat and skilled massage part of what real-world chiropractors do is in part covered by these relatively inexpensive services, usually 1 cp for a bath or a massage, and 2 cp for both with washing and "ovenboard" drying thrown in. Ovenboard drying is laying wet clothing out flat on boards heated by proximity to an oven or hearth or chimney to rapidly dry them. Clothes being ovenboarded are moved to new dry hot surfaces several times to speed the process.

Relatively few sages specialize in herb lore, but there are some self-styled academic authorities among humans. In Cormyr, the Guild of Naturalists has offices in Suzail and Arabel. It is a professional fellowship of those who study animal and plant life with the aims of understanding natural cycles fully and thereby exploiting natural substances—from plant saps and distillates to beast ichor and organs—to make scents, medicines, poisons, spell inks, dyes, sealants, preservatives, cooking herbs, and so on. A Cormyrean consulting a guild member is expected to buy guild products, but guild members will sell advice as well as concoctions to outlanders—and will buy raw herbs in good condition from anyone.

Here follow some widely known effective medicinal uses of raw plant gleanings. Herbs often do not need to be fresh, which is why many households keep a crock of various dried leaves, wrapped in scrap cloth, for use in winter. Please note: None of these plants exist in the real world.

### Bloodpurge

Found in the depths of freshwater marshes polluted by magical and nonmagical wastes, this herb can neutralize minor poisons.

### Bloodstaunch

Found in dry gullies in semiarid temperate zones, this herb thickens blood very quickly upon direct contact, and so can be applied to open wounds to slow or stop bleeding.

### Fleshwort

Made from the stalk of a gray, celery-like vegetable, fleshwort is found only on recent battlefields, where corpses are buried near the surface or left to rot above ground. If sewn into an internal wound, fleshwort is slowly absorbed by any mammalian body as raw material for building new tissue.

### Felsul Tree

Chewing the soft wood that directly underlies the bark of a felsul tree, or chewing small datherthorn roots (those of purplish hue) quells nausea and deadens all mouth, tooth, and throat pain. This does nothing to remove the cause of the discomfort; it merely temporarily removes the discomfort to allow sleep, hearty eating, and other usual activities. Eating a volume roughly as much as the eater's palm, as thick as the eater's hand, will deaden for a day and a night, or so.

### Harlthorn

Drinking the liquid derived from boiling down equal parts of the thorns from harlthorn bushes (a common Heartlands wild shrub) with dried or fresh leaves of the very common weed known as hoof-leaf (because its flat, on-the-ground leaves look like the print of a cloven-hoofed herd animal) calms delirium, rage, and grief, and soothes itchininess and skin rashes, allowing for rest or sleep.

### Tatterskyre

Eating small flakes of tatterskyre bark slows bleeding (internal and external) and thickens the blood, soothing agitated folk and making them drowsy. This herb can aid the healing of many sorts of internal wounds.

Orcs and all goblinkin (goblins, hobgoblins, and such) are especially susceptible to the effects of tatterskyre bark, and typically fall asleep if given as much to eat as would cover their palms. Since this is a sleep typically filled with pleasant dreams, many orcs gather and carry the bark and eat it regularly.

The tatterskyre is a gnarled shrub that tends to form loops or drooping arcs like wild raspberry canes, rerooting when it touches the ground only to throw up fresh stems. It grows all over the Heartlands and the North, is smaller in colder climes, and its bark is very flaky and easily brushed off; its foliage sprouts as bursts of needle-like flat leaves all up and down its stems.



*Though an illness might not be fatal, the misapplication of herbal medicine can often produce worse results than if the affliction had gone untreated. There's a lot to be said for healing magic, which does not have the risks of concocted cures, and a lot of priests who do the saying.*

## Dathlil

The tiny petals of the common white ground flower known as dathlil work to neutralize poisons for some who consume them, typically by drinking them as a tea, or washing them down with water or alcohol. The effects vary widely with the individual and the poison being fought against, and even vary unpredictably for the same individual over time, but do apply to all known creatures and are sometimes (not often) complete cures—one petal banishes all poison effects. Dathlil can work on contact, ingested, and insinuating poisons—but it sometimes does nothing at all. For most individuals, the herb usually slows poison and lessens its eventual damage.

## Tonandurr Bark

Bound against open wounds, tonandurr bark inhibits bleeding and infection, and helps skin and flesh to heal by helping it expand and knit

together. This substance works on humans, halflings, dwarves, and gnomes only; elves it helps not at all; and it actually harms goblin, making their wounds fester. “Tonandurr” is a tall, spindly “weed tree” of the Heartlands and more southerly forests; it’s not hardy enough to survive winters much north of Waterdeep, though a few specimens are kept alive in indoor gardens in Silvermoon and Neverwinter.

## Blood of the Dragon

Down the centuries, dragon blood has always been a highly sought after, very expensive medicine among those who can afford it. Dragon blood is widely believed to impart the longevity and vigor of the mighty wyrms. Some individuals even use it to try to become half dragons, usually by means of the would-be dragon opening his or her veins and immersing the bleeding limb in dragon blood—though there is no evidence that



this process works without the use of a long series of powerful spells, cast with exacting precision and care.

So, dragon blood is thought of as “liquid gold” and is bought and sold for very high prices. In Calimshan, dragon blood is believed to be inky black with gold flecks in it, and anything looking different will be dismissed as false, but those who have fought or slain dragons know that real dragon ichor varies widely in hue, consistency, and smell, the only common property being that it is smoking hot when freshly shed, due to the heat generated by a dragon’s metabolism.

## ILLNESS AND HYGIENE

Most civilized people in the Realms know that disease transference works “something like this for shaking fever, like that for blacktongue,” and so on. They disagree on treatments—aside from rest, care, bathing and purgatives, and the careful feeding of observed specifics—and tend to use what they remember worked for them and their friends in the past. The reasons for these disagreements are the various churches, most of which are striving to maintain influence and control (and a continuing flow of coins for healing) by way of having the lower ranks unwittingly spread misinformation as to exactly how this or that disease is best treated. As happens with real-world doctors, the resulting differences of opinion can lead to heated professional conflicts.

The “bad hygiene” of the Realms means that people wash their hair every four days or so and again before special occasions, and that they bathe “smelly areas” every night if possible. People do not have not reeking, filthy bodies; “unwashed peasants” is not a Realms norm.

Persons desiring to make a good impression who can’t get a chance to bathe properly will work scented oils into their hair and rub scented oils on their bodies to change their strong odor into something less unpleasant.

### Known Afflictions

There are many wasting and rotting afflictions, cankers, and the mental illnesses of paranoia, pyromania, and delusions that haven’t yet acquired

Realms-wide names. However, here are a few of the known afflictions.

**Fevers:** Blacklung fever, blacktongue, marsh fever, shaking fever, windchill fever (pneumonia)

**Diseases:** Darkrot, “foamjaws” (rabies), “sallar” (typhus), “whitewasting” (leprosy)

**Plagues:** Featherlung, the spotted plague, the shaking plague (most recently in Scardale)

**Magical Diseases:** Lycanthropy, “mummy rot” (flesh rot), green rot/scaly death (courtesy of the goddess of disease, Talona)

**Heartstop** (heart attack)

### Plagues: Disease Gone Wild

Plagues have risen repeatedly in various areas over the centuries, each onslaught usually killing about four in ten people, making another three in ten very sick, and doing nothing at all to the last three in ten. People might well flee “plague-hit” areas, but it’s almost unknown for the disease itself to exterminate everyone in a community or even a household. Various remedies are championed, but no one really knows what causes the plagues or how to cure them, though healing magic is effective against all of them, if the magic is strong enough and applied early enough. Because of how little is known, the afflicted are usually shunned, being thought (correctly) to be incredibly infectious.

#### Featherlung

Drying out the lungs and making people wheeze loudly, featherlung saps the strength of people as they struggle for air. The afflicted can gasp all they want, but even if someone pushes a victim’s chest in and then lifts the person to force breath out, repeatedly, no victim can get enough oxygen from his or her own breathing to stay vibrant or even keep one’s balance. Most victims soon drift in and out of consciousness and just lie there, helpless. Death can take a tenday or more, and during that time victims are unable to defend themselves against scavengers, predators, or frightened persons, and can readily be slain. If victims are too weak to reach water, they often die of thirst before the plague takes them.

#### Spotted Plague

Thick clusters of swollen, pus-filled skin eruptions, called either “spots” or “the festers,” define

the spotted plague. These eventually break, leaving permanent pockmarks that resemble real-world smallpox. Inside, the body is awash in infections, and the victim reeks as many cells literally rot. Balance, reasoning, and vision are usually affected, causing lurching, disorientation, and “swimming” sight, and the sense of smell is always lost—usually permanently. Sometimes hearing is affected, but never permanently. Spotted plague causes a shivering, raging fever, and often kills in half a day to a day; those who live more than two nights will almost always survive, though they might be very sick for four to six days more, and weak for a month. Survivors have permanent pockmarks, no sense of smell, and other long-lasting effects.

## Shaking Plague

This plague is associated with Scardale nowadays because that’s where it most recently struck (in the mid-1300s DR). It causes victims to go very pale, to sweat profusely (so they need water, and lots of it, for the first day or so of illness, after which the sweating stops), and to shake, helplessly, spasmodically, and continuously. This shaking hampers balance and movement and makes writing—or any activity requiring fine motor skills, such as sewing or locksmithing or most craft-work—impossible. When not fatal, the shaking plague lasts for two tendays, whereupon a sudden recovery will occur, usually with no after-effects except a tendency to go pale and shake when greatly agitated or in great pain. When fatal, the plague usually claims its victim in seven to ten days by way of heart seizures and lung spasms that starve the body while it undergoes twisting, arching, and pain-wracked writhing.

## DRUGS

In the Realms, a drug is something—usually liquid, taken orally—whose making is complicated and unknown to whoever is using the word. In other words, the liquid made by boiling harlthorn and hoof-leaf together, as described earlier in “Herbal Lore,” would be a drug if its manufacture wasn’t so widely known. Most drugs are secret-recipe mixtures of herbal distillations, plant saps, and animal secretions, all of which have no real-world inspirations or counterparts.

Local laws often restrict making and importing of drugs, because bad things have happened in the past. Since alchemy, doctoring, and the like all approve of using herbal and created substances to help the sick or injured, and most clergy use mind-altering or pain-numbing herbs and drugs as part of their rituals, drugs are seen as bad only when they are clearly intended to be used to incapacitate someone so that person can be killed, robbed, kidnapped, made to sign or say things he or she otherwise wouldn’t, or in some other way taken advantage of. Poisons are always seen as bad except when used with state sanction in war, or by physicians as part of medical treatment—and this latter use is usually very closely watched by local law keepers and guilds.

Waterdeep provides a model to use for tolerant trading cities where local rulers or dominant temples aren’t trying to control drug use.

The drug trade in Waterdeep is largely confined to Skullport and Downshadow, in terms of dealing and in the storage of large amounts. “Topside” (in the city proper) there is no drug production, only runner-to-client selling. Selling is done face to face, but some nobles send their stewards, bodyguards, or trade agents to buy drugs. These so-called “runners” tend to be lone individuals or gangs of no more than three, a runner and two “watcheyes” (lookouts) who are often young children, preferably girls, who serve the runner as eyes and as places to stash drugs if the Watch approaches—because Watch officers are far more reluctant to search a young girl’s body than that of a hard-bitten, known-to-them Dock Ward tough.

A Lords’ Edict was long ago issued banning the making and selling of drugs in Waterdeep—so the relevant crime is Willful Disobedience of Any Edict, which results in exile for five years or a 1,000 gp fine. The former is enacted on all outlanders and those who do not own property, and the latter against all Waterdhavian land-owning citizens—who will find themselves very closely watched for a month, then again in the third month thereafter, because the Watch wants to catch and fine them again. It’s not a crime to use drugs, nor is it a crime, strictly speaking, to possess them. In practice, nobles and wealthy merchants receive nothing but a stern “We’re watching you” warning if caught with either small or large amounts of drugs, but a commoner

merchant or laborer is assumed to have the drugs to sell, and will be sentenced accordingly, unless the individual is a member of the Guild of Apothecaries & Physicians or can prove he or she is working directly for a guild member.

Aside from those exceptions, drugs that can readily be used to kill—even if only through overdoses—can, if the Watch or the magisters involved desire it, be treated as poisons, and arrested beings are charged with murder even though no killing has yet occurred. Waterdhavian justice has no attempted or intended murder charges, so what occurs is a murder trial, usually ending in a sentencing for “Murder with Justification,” which brings a five-year exile or three years of enforced hard labor.

Drug making is secretive and a matter of constant experimentation, so there are thousands of drugs that go by even more names, enough to fill shelves full of books as big as this one. Here follow just a notorious, popular handful.

## Alindluth

When ingested, alindluth deadens all pain and prevents shock and nausea effects for a few minutes. There are no known side effects, but if the substance is used too soon after first exposure (or in too large a dose; dosages vary by body volume and weight), it induces a short-duration coma.

## Chaunsel

Upon contact with bare skin, chaunsel makes the affected area extremely sensitive for up to about twenty minutes. It is often used by thieves or others working in darkness, applied to their fingertips to make them able to feel tiny details, seams, and such. Overdosing causes days of numbness in the affected area.

## Tansabra

When injected (it must reach the bloodstream), this mixture of particular creature venoms causes complete “system shutdown” in mammals. This means that breathing is suspended, the body temperature “holds,” the need for oxygen ceases, bleeding stops, any internal bleeding and tearing is healed (unless fresh wounds are induced), acids and toxins suspend their operations on the body, and the recipient loses consciousness. In

effect, the body is placed in stasis. Certain little-known arcane and divine spells can force release from “tansabra sleep,” and there are rumors that certain rare gem powders and herbs can shock someone out of tansabra sleep, but otherwise, an affected being emerges from the effects of tansabra at a random time.

Creatures in tansabra sleep don’t heal naturally, and magical healing doesn’t affect them—but of course they can be conveyed to magical healing while in thrall to the tansabra, and healed the moment they awaken.

Repeated exposure to tansabra can kill an individual, but how much exposure is lethal varies randomly from being to being. A lethal dose is not related to the amount of the drug administered—it depends on a person’s tolerance for the number of distinct times his body undergoes the effects.

## Vornduir

When inhaled as a powder, vornduir varies widely in effects. To many people, it does nothing at all. Others get mild rashes and itches.

For a few, it switches pain and pleasure for an hour or two, so a gentle caress brings discomfort, and a slap, flogging, heavy punch, or cutting wound can induce an enjoyable feeling.

For others, it makes them feel warm, even if they are wet and out of doors in freezing temperatures, and at the same time happy and alert, for two days or more. For these folks, sleep isn’t needed, and their dexterity and judgment don’t suffer due to weariness.

Vornduir prevents shock and immobility due to exposure, but not frostbite or lowered body temperature, so users won’t get hypothermic, but they could freeze solid. The drug, a mixture of herbs and animal essences, also acts as a complete and instant antidote to certain poisons—for some individuals only!

## POISONS

In general, natural-source potions and ointments have a lower level of efficacy than substances that either incorporate spells in the creation process, or use material as an ingredient that has been enspelled, or both. This statement holds true for the majority of poisons, though some monster venoms are powerful indeed.

Even if a poison enters the system of its intended victim, there's no guarantee the stuff will work to great effect. The physiology of some individuals (dwarves in particular) enables them to shrug off certain poisons, feeling nothing more than a sick feeling for a moment or two and the loss of a small amount of vitality. Some folk build up a tolerance to poisons that they are exposed to repeatedly, and might even become immune to one or more toxins in this fashion.

Poisons are illegal, usually rare or well hidden, and expensive. As with drugs, there are many known poisons that go by even more names. Here follow a few of the most infamous or most widely available. Unless otherwise noted (such as for dragonbane), the poisons described here must be ingested to produce their indicated effects.

## Belarris

One of the few poisons that can be cooked thoroughly in food and remain effective, belarris is a black, oily mixture of wyvern blood, two tree barks, and six plant saps.

Someone who ingests a dose is hit with a tide of fatigue as the substance enters his system. If the poison takes full effect, the victim is rendered unconscious for several minutes.

## Calad

This golden, opaque liquid is derived from the cranial fluids of basilisks, catobelpas, and disenchanters. Calad causes short-term distorted hearing and vision in its victims, at the same time that its alien chemical composition eats at one's insides.

## Dragonbane

A legendary poison that is far more often counterfeited than found, this bright blue, opaque liquid is a mixture of the blood of three sorts of dragons. Dragonbane is used to best effect on real dragons, who find themselves unable to breathe for a brief time after being dosed with it. (Other creatures are "merely" wracked with pain and internal distress.) Dragons tend to slay anyone they encounter carrying it—because, as many wyrms have discovered to their chagrin, the poison can be delivered by simple contact or through an injury and does not have to be ingested.

## Imvris

A clear, purple-tinged but nigh colorless liquid that has a peppery floral scent, imvris is a distillate of the crushed petals of twelve jungle flowers.

The poison causes paralysis in those who are exposed to it. The effect is nearly immediate; it dissipates quickly on those who merely make contact with it, but if imvris enters the body by ingestion or injury, the paralysis can last for hours.

The effects of multiple doses are cumulative, but only to a point: For a victim who has suffered at least seven consecutive hours of paralysis, any additional exposure instantly negates the effect and renders the individual immune to the poison for half a day thereafter. During this time, the person can hear very keenly.

## Lorbralinth

Better known as just lorbral, this sweet-smelling, clear, oily poison is made from the spittle of no less than sixteen monsters, including the basilisk and the leucrotta.

Touching the concoction does no harm, but someone who ingests it or is wounded by a lorbral-tainted weapon becomes briefly debilitated with alternating waves of chill and fever.

## Srindym

An iridescent, silver liquid, this poison was created by elves millennia ago and was often used by less principled individuals of that race against "lesser" races. Very few individuals know how to make srindym—or know where the secret caches of it are—so it's rare and expensive. Making srindym is a closely guarded secret that involves elven blood, moonlight, the casting of multiple spells, and several plant ingredients.

This poison works by injury, contact, and ingestion. Elves (including drow) are immune to srindym, and half-elves are highly resistant to its effect. Other kinds of creatures quickly become disoriented and stiff-jointed, then lose consciousness for a minute or more.

Srindym acts as a sort of antidote to itself, for a while: No single creature can be affected by a subsequent dose of the stuff for about a day thereafter. Also, repeated exposure to the poison brings with it eventual immunity—every time an

individual is beset with it, the resulting period of unconsciousness is a few seconds shorter, until finally the toxin has no effect on that person ever again. Some of those who employ this poison are not initially aware of this aspect of its makeup, and learn about it only when the target of their attention fails to fall down.

## Swiftsleep

A gummy, translucent ale-brown liquid that smells like crushed citrus fruit, swiftsleep is abundant and relatively cheap because its ingredients are a distillate of crushed flies and certain common tree beetles, added to duskwood sap.

When delivered into an open wound or otherwise directly into the bloodstream, swiftsleep causes nigh-instant slumber, with normal breathing and smooth, even snoring, for an initial period of many minutes. In much the fashion that *sryndym* works (see above), each time the same target is affected, swiftsleep's duration decreases by a good fraction, until after several exposures that individual is immune.

## Thardynyn

A translucent yellow liquid that's odorless but tastes like sugary strawberries, thardynyn is made from a distillate of certain fish scales combined with alcohol (usually wine) and the blood of certain birds.

Thardynyn is harmless if consumed, but if the substance touches one's body in any other way, the resulting shock to the system causes uncontrollable shuddering, leaving the victim helpless to prevent what happens next.

## Yethgrel

An enspelled mixture of the spittle or blood of seven sorts of monsters, yethgrel is a vivid purple, opaque liquid. The substance wreaks havoc on the physiology of anyone who drinks it, yet at the same time it protects that same body from any other harmful effects for a short period. Some brave—or desperate—individuals have deliberately taken yethgrel so as to survive a few deadly exchanges of combat.

## CURRENT CLACK

Most news and rumors are spread across the Realms by caravans, and along coasts, by the crews of ships. In many a wayside settlement, whenever a caravan stops for the night, the populace turns out at local inns and taverns to hear the latest "clack" (what's being talked about). Travelers can often earn something to eat or a drink or two by relating enough entertaining lore. The freshest news is the most in demand—which, of course, leads to embroidering and outright tall tales, lies and half-truths and rumors building on each other into fanciful creations that bear little resemblance to their plainer and more demure beginnings.

The Harpers, the Zhentarim, the Red Wizards of Thay, and wily manipulators such as Elminster and Vangerdahast—not to mention trading costers and merchants aiming to affect market prices—have long known the value of planting rumors to stir public attitudes in a particular direction. It takes a lot of energy and a glib tongue, and such accounts can often be twisted in undesirable or unintended directions in the retelling—or overwhelmed entirely by more dramatic events happening at the same time. Yet this method of disseminating information works, has worked for centuries, and is going on right now. Innkeepers and tavernmasters are often paid by the Zhentarim or other power groups (even small local cabals) to talk about something, drop particular names, or direct wayfarers to particular businesses.

Wayfarer, be warned. Any bit of clack you hear might be absolutely true. It also might be absolutely not true, or its place along the spectrum of factuality might be anywhere between these extremes. No matter what else it might be, though, the current clack is always . . . current.

OF RECENT NEWS AND RUMOURS

Play begins on Elesias 1, "The first of Highsun", in the year 1332, The Year of the Prince. 'Current clack' includes the following:

---Forces of Cormyr under Duke Shereu have advanced from Tilverton (which they occupied earlier this year) to Shadowdale, where they have joined forces with Mourngrym, the Lord of that place, in an attack on a dark-elven caravan, and also aided Randal Morn in his fight to regain Daggerdale from the orcs of the Desertsedge Mountains. The garrison at the fortress of Castle Crag has been doubled in size, to repulse any attacks from the north, or from bandits taking advantage of the strife. Soldiers of Cormyr have met and battled the armies of Zhentil Keep in ruined Teshwave and in Daggerdale.

---Merchants have been asking in Sembia and Westgate if any adventurers know the whereabouts of the fabled Warriors' Crypt, said to lie somewhere north of Cormyr in mountainous, lawless country. These merchants are not men known locally, and offer four pieces of gold a day as pay, plus 'a substantial bonus if the venture is successful' (they decline to give more details unless their offer is accepted). Only three freeswords are known to have signed on with these merchants.

---That mysterious mage known only as 'The Firemaster' has been seen in Suzail and in Westgate, hiring mercenary adventurers. He usually gathers such forces to aid him in reaching sources of old magic he has located by his arts and research; tavern-talk has it that there are several ancient toombs hidden in the depths of the woods north of Waymoot.

---Rumours abound in Suzail (as they have periodically on this subject for the last winter) that someone in the city has a map revealing the location of the lost gem-hoard of the Great Worm Draughthothnor, and is hiring mercenary adventurers to form a party that will undertake an extended expedition to seek out the hoard. Draughthothnor was slain by the Five Wizards two hundred and sixty winters ago, and his fabled hoard is said to contain gems now found nowhere else in the Realms.

---A new trading coster, the Firehands Group, is being formed in Daelrun, and is interested in hiring experienced caravan-guards, swordsmen, and travellers to staff its caravans on the overland routes from Westgate to Hillsfar, ranging over Cormyr, Sembia, the Dalelands, and the southern Moonses settlements. Paymaster for the new group is the old warrior Dhelarr 'the Night Blade'. Rates are 'competitive.'

---Reports continue to flow into the Royal Court in Suzail of sightings of the missing princess, although these reports are suspect because they come from all directions in the known Realms, some from lands known only as legends in Cormyr. Alusair Nacacia, youngest daughter of the King, vanished from the royal palace in Suzail a year ago, and is said to have run away. Her reasons and destination are unknown, but she is said to have been seen in Tilver's Gap, with the former lord of Tilverton, the High Priest of Gond, Gharri, who has himself since vanished. It is also said that the army sent to Tilverton was intended primarily to bring about her safe return, rather than to aid Tilverton's inhabitants against besieging orcs. Obviously, that army did not find her, for a royal reward is still offered for her safe return to Azoun.

---A new leader, Thaalim Torchtower, is rising amongst the lawless men who live in the wastes west of the mountains that lie on the western edge of Cormyr; those same men that are known as 'bandits' for their frequent raids upon travellers in the Forest-Country. Thaalim is said to have spies in all of the cities, towns, and villages of the realm, and to be waiting for the richest caravans.

---Strange, fey beasts have been seen in the Hullack Forest and in the hills around Thunderstone, and such reports have always come down into Cormyr steadily from travellers in the Stonelands and Groll Pass; the lands beyond the spearpoints of the King's soldiers seen truly wild.

*In every player pack I created for one of my Realms campaigns, I included "current clack"—news and rumors characters would hear locally (including from caravans passing through their locale) as play began. This is from the Company of the Stag player pack, but this is how it all begins, every time—because if you, the players, are going to choose where your characters go and what they explore, I must dangle an array of possibilities before you. You have to feel the world is no lifeless backdrop, but a gigantic flood of many lives constantly unfolding.*



## 2

# LAW AND ORDERS

Many an adventurer has had to flee from, lie low to avoid the attention of, or deal with the Watch or some form of local law keepers, what the old Amnian ballad calls “the grim stalwarts who face the night armed with lantern, badge, and sword.” And the law these stalwarts enforce isn’t the whim of a Watch officer, but something written down somewhere and meant to be upheld by trial.

In short, there is a justice system with codes of laws that define it, built with the intent to achieve justice—and it is what has made the busy mercantile successes of Faerûn possible. Many years ago, the sage Alaundo wrote: “If proud civilization is a

rampant, roaring dragon, laws and their keepers are its mighty skeleton.”

In the realm of law, as in many other areas of life, those with the most clout usually get to make the rules. In Faerûn, an appropriate synonym for “those with the most clout” would be “the members of the noble class.” No discussion of legality and justice in the Realms can avoid the fact that social class and noble standing (or lack of it) are critical to how the system works for each individual.

As the saying goes: If you don’t handle nobles, nobles will handle you.

# CLASS AND NOBILITY

Almost all societies in the Realms are divided into classes based on genealogy and wealth. Individuals can move from class to class, but such is never easy—unless one moves from society to society, leaving the neighbors who have known him or her from birth. Although recent centuries in the Realms have seen a steady rise in the power and status of merchants, most lands have a titled nobility, a ruling class that dominates by birth-right—and often also by wealth and competence. Many a poor rogue who lives by wits and desperation dreams of becoming a noble.

In the Realms, some of them even manage it.

## Lower Classes: The Haves

In most locales in the Realms, non-noble men and women are considered equals but have traditional roles or fields of dominance. For men, this dominance extends to warfare, sea voyaging, and smithing, and for women, hearth and home and shop keeping. In guilds, members' rights and privileges are never based on gender.

In addition, while most Faerûnian lands have social classes based on wealth and heritage, rigid castes that a person is born into and dies without leaving are found nowhere in the Realms.

The closest thing to a feudal society in the Realms is Tethyr. Almost all Heartlands and more northerly farmers in the Realms are free-men, though a case can be made for serfdom (in fact if not in name; the term “serf” is unknown in the Realms) in Tethyr (before the Black Days), and in present-day Calimshan. Arguably, those latter two countries have more high-yield farmland due to climate, so perhaps some form of serfdom is used in the highest-output farmlands.

The most common Realms term for the equivalent of a serf is “bondsmen,” meaning someone who holds lands under a contract that sets forth conditions. Of course, the duties and rules for a bondsman don't directly correspond to those of real-world serfs.

Certainly the duchies of Tethyr and the border baronies of Amn, such as Cormyr, are feudal in nature, but that term isn't used to connote a serfdom. Rather, it means that the local lord has to render military support to the ruler when called upon, and in turn has the power to commandeer

portions of crop yields from the farms under the local lord's protection (and in some cases “yeoman warriors” from among the farmhands) when the need arises.

No farmer in the Dales is anything but a freeholder (“freeman” or “freewoman”) or a hired “crofter” working and living on lands owned by another and paying rent to that owner in the form of either coin or a portion of the crop yield.

In Sembia and upland Cormyr, crofters are the norm. Except for the strips of land alongside major roads and in the most remote locales, almost all the tilled land is owned by one wealthy family or another. In “downland” Cormyr (roughly, south of Immersea and Waymoot), some wealthy families own large numbers of separate city buildings or small farms, but their properties are scattered among the small holds of independent Cormyrean citizens (“freefolk”).

## Nobles: The Have-Mores

What advantages does being noble give someone?

In most places, being noble gives you special treatment under the law thorough kinder investigations and fairer trials. Nobles tend to have rights lesser folk lack, even something as trivial as being allowed to stop and leave their coach in the middle of a street, or being allowed to enter or leave a city at all hours, when gates would remain firmly shut for others.

Most important: Nobles have connections. Nobles grow up knowing the right people to get things done—everything from quietly arranging investments, to giving jobs, to where to find (“source” in polite speech) almost anything. They are taught the local ways of successfully commanding, demanding, and influencing—and are expected to use them. Most certainly do.

By and large, nobles do not exercise their influence in an outright malicious way; to do so would be to unnecessarily invite discontent among those wronged. Exceptions exist, however.

For example, in the largest and most prosperous cities of Faerûn (such as Waterdeep, Athkatla, Suzail, and all the cities of Sembia), there are wealthy youths who because of their family prosperity have leisure and coin enough to pursue fashions and interests at idle whim. They often do so in ways that disgust or unsettle their parents, as a form of rebellion. Some young nobles play at



being a street beggar or a gang member or even a highcoin escort. Others join weird cults, or even create weird cults, complete with shocking clothing; secret passwords and catchphrases; or an obsession with the bygone fashions, manners, and mores of ancestors from several centuries back. Additionally, these cults often feature arcane sagecraft or herb lore, or the desire to go feral and live with packs of wild animals.

For most, these are just passing fads, but because so many idle youths try them, there are always some mischief-making wastrels to be found.

Currently, in both Athkatla and Waterdeep, nobles and the youth of rising merchant houses play at “Farforevermore,” the activity of wearing the fashions popular among local nobles more than a century ago, courting in the old ways, and playing at keeping—and flogging—slaves as the nobles once did . . . and so on. “Forever” adopt personas while playacting, often maintain hidden or private garret rooms where they transform from their everyday selves to their personas, and pool funds to host revels or even rent mansions where they can play. Of course, most of them hotly deny that they’re playing at anything, insisting instead that they’re improving themselves, and ultimately their cities, by cleaving to the better ways of yesteryear.

## Becoming Noble

The process for being made a noble varies from place to place. In most realms and city-states, you gain a title by pleasing the ruler—or by serving as a convenient fall guy. The title can be either a vacant title that you assume or, more commonly, a new title invented on the spot.

Cormyr even distinguishes between hereditary and nonhereditary titles. Azoun IV before his death, Filfaeril his queen before or after his death, Alusair as regent, and any ruler thereafter can confer a title on you that gives your offspring no title or status at all. “Sitting nobles” everywhere frown on rulers adding upstarts to their ranks and will often treat them with disdain regardless of what title they’ve gained. There are also court titles (also known as offices) that come with great power, but aren’t themselves a mark of nobility. Although, just to confuse things, they’re usually given to nobles, or if handed to commoners,

are commonly accompanied by at least a knighthood. Alusair the Steel Regent could appoint the nearest street urchin as warden of the Western Marches—but it’s hard to see why she would.

One true Cormyrean tale is told of a wounded Azoun IV wanting to send a commoner to Filfaeril to deliver a message without War Wizards stopping him, because he had just been wounded in a plot involving traitor War Wizards. So he appointed a particular commoner to be a lord high marshal of Cormyr for a tenday, complete with a royal ring, several copies of the royal commission, a War Wizard cloak, and Azoun’s own dagger. Vangerdahast was livid when he encountered this presumed impostor and forcefully took the commoner into custody—but did immediately bring that individual to Filfaeril, without examining the message he was carrying.

In Amn, Tethyr, and any land imperiled by monsters or brigandry, one can often gain nobility by offering to police a border area. Serving as examples are the baron of Hawkhill in the northeastern mountains of Amn, and the standing offer from the Crown of Cormyr to make a baron of anyone who can occupy, tame, police, and patrol the Stonelands.

Personal service to a monarch plus marriage to nobility usually gains you a noble title in your own right (as opposed to something lame such as “sir consort”). But bear in mind that if the monarch is succeeded by someone who didn’t like him or her, the title might go away again—and your head with it. Many nobles, such as the out-of-favor families in Westgate and elsewhere, have found that their status earns them exile in this way.

If a hero personally and publicly saved Cormyr, the ruling Obarskyr of the day would probably reward him or her with a handsome title: “High Protector of the Realm” or some such. The Obarskyr would almost certainly not publicly say if the title was hereditary or not, and it wouldn’t be worded to make it sound hereditary. Only War Wizards, senior palace scribes, and local heralds would know the permanence or impermanence of the title. Of course, public sentiment would probably enthusiastically support bestowal of the title at the time, but the Obarskyr is banking on the passage of time to help make sure that the nature of the title, hereditary or not, eventually won’t be of great public interest. Cormyr’s early history

CENSUS of SHADOWDALE, set down by Florin Falconhand, Warden of Shadowdale, in the 1st year of Doust's lordship, the Year of the Harp, Warpenoth 4-12. (And as later amended by divers hands.)

Tulba, a weaver, aged (balding, white hair). Took oath. Lives in house near Lella, wife to Tulba, younger than Tulba, fat. inn.

Tethgar, a retired merchant. Lives in house near inn. Took oath, given short-Senna, mistress of Tethgar. sword

Bronn Selgard, smith. Lives in house near inn. Took oath.

Leath, wife to Bronn. Lives in Bronn's house.

Aleena, daughter

Traith, daughter

Maela, daughter

Surd, son of & apprentice to Bronn. Took oath. Badly wounded in battle.

Doane, son & apprentice. Took oath.

Silmur, son & apprentice. Took oath. Sharp-tongued. Slain in battle.

Helve, son & apprentice. Took oath. Strong, fighting type. Slain in battle.

Berr, son & apprentice. Took oath.

Janth, son & apprentice. Took oath.

Jamble 'the Eye' Retired (thief?), some merchant work. Slick character. Took Leel, wife to Jamble. oath, given dagger.

Serbon, son to Jamble. Took oath, given dagger.

Boorga, Jamble's man. Took oath, given dagger.

Naithra, wife of Boorga.

Lila, daughter of Boorga.

Burr, son of Boorga. Took oath, given dagger.

Meira Lulhannon. Potter, breadmaker. Took oath, given shortsword. Badly wounded in battle.

Sulatha, wife to Meira.

Betra, daughter to Meira

Jassa, daughter. Slim, beautiful. Took oath, given dagger.

Jhaele Silvermane. Innkeeper, The Old Skull Inn. Took oath, given spear.

Braun, youngest son to Jhaele (others have left home). Took oath, given dagger.

Durman Hilesta. Carpenter, Bouncer. Took oath, given spear.

Bardag Shultu. Hostler, Stablemaster. Took oath, given spear.

Dora Leen. Maid, chamber lady.

Sasha Baddja. Maid, chamber lady.

Turko Broom. Cook, waiter. Took oath, given spear.

Erek. Philters, Potions, Physics, Purveyor & Maker, house next to Beregon Hillstar's farm. Took oath; did not fight in battle!

Hoareb 'Nimblefingers' Midwife/Surgeon/Healer. Took oath.

Latha Brannon. Boardinghouse owner (wife Leela dead). Took oath, given short-sword. Badly wounded in battle.

Uda, aunt to Latha. Matriarch; very crusty.

Ester, daughter to Latha.

Enra, daughter to Latha; a real beauty.

Ilil, daughter.....and another.

Hammerhand Bucko. Wagonmaker, woodworker. Took oath. Sarcastic, intelligent. No pushover; won't be pushed around; and strong!

Leeta Bucko. Wife to Hammerhand. Known for her cooking. Took oath.

*After the Swords of Eveningstar arrived in Shadowdale, cleaned out the brigands in the Twisted Tower, and claimed the lordship of the dale (Florin refusing it because he wanted to continue to be a ranger, not sit on a throne, so Doust ending up saddled with it), the future Knights of Myth Drannor decided they needed to have a census. This is the first page of it. They wanted to identify locals who seemed suspicious. Little did they know that more than a third of their subjects were agents of the Zhentarin, Cormyr, Sembia, or other dales!*

argues against the public acceptance of hereditary elven titles.

In Sembia, if you just want to be called “lord,” all you need do is amass a staggering amount of coin, take up residence in Sembia, and proclaim yourself a lord. This method has worked for scores of individuals over the last few centuries.

Many ambitious adventurers have set themselves up as nobility in the Border Kingdoms, conquering a few pastures and forests and declaring it a realm. They usually also give themselves all sorts of grand and often ridiculous titles, such as “Emperor of the Lower Middens.” That’s the usual sort of way that adventurers become noble, aside from wooing and marrying nobility. Realmslore is full of tales of warriors who forcibly wooed fair noble maids, who after marriage fell deeply in love with their new lords . . . but then, lore tends to be more romantic than daily life; a large number of such force-taken maids have poisoned or daggered their lords.

## Becoming Noble in Waterdeep

To put it succinctly: Forget it. Nobility in Waterdeep is a closed shop. Old-money merchant families once conferred noble status on themselves in return for their support of common laws that would bind them as well as the rabble, and their descendants are working very hard to prevent new-money merchants—or anyone else!—from gaining a title. In any event, folks in Waterdeep respect money, not titles, so if you’re the visiting king of Haroondra-Lala, that’s nice—now pay up.

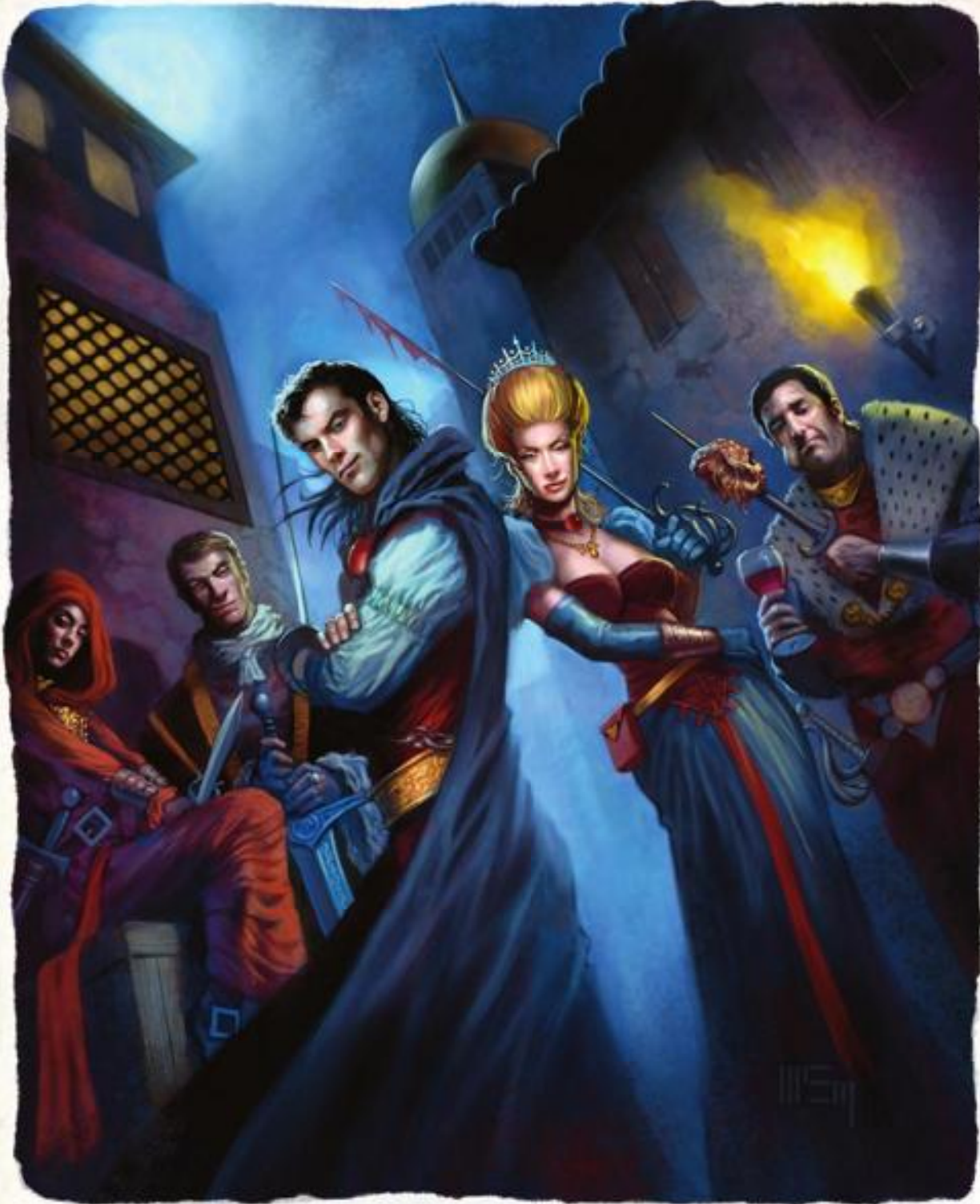
Still determined to gain power in Waterdeep, without the title? The easiest way would be to discover the identity of a Masked Lord and to dispose of and impersonate him or her (“easiest,” please note, not “easy”). This tactic presents moral problems for many individuals, and there’s also a high risk of discovery by mind-snooping Watchful Order magists and fellow Masked Lords. In addition, there are numerous pitfalls beyond the mere changing of face and form in successfully fooling family, friends, and business contacts into believing that you are actually the Masked Lord in question.

A slower, harder way to power is to serve the city with distinction in exposing plots, legal transgressions, and the like. Do so long enough and well enough—and stay alive in the face of angry surviving swindlers and plotters—and you will get noticed by the authorities. This notice includes being thoroughly investigated by the City Guard, the city’s unofficial but very real secret agents (who report to Piergeiron or Mirt), as well as by the Watchful Order and the Watch.

If you’re truly clean of personal scandal (not ambitions, just shady dealings and intentions), you might be covertly approached to become a secret agent. If—and only if—being a public agent would be the most effective way you could serve, you would be taken on at the palace in some sort of official position, and could gain status thereby. This turn of events is unlikely, however, since public agents are numerous already, and the lords really need more unknown, fresh faces for secret-agent work.

Of course, having this status would still mean you’d be looked down on by old-guard nobles; they even look down on Piergeiron and Khelben (behind their backs, of course). Courtiers are mere toadies and “jumped-up power-snatchers” in their regard, but then, so are junior noble families. Some nobles spend their entire lives ranking people and playing “I’m haughtier than thou” games. So, you could receive elevated status, yes, complete with airs to match, if you want to assume them . . . but don’t expect to get the full, cordial, “You’re one of us” treatment from certain nobles, who would cut you dead even if you married their parents, siblings, or offspring.

The most junior Waterdhavian noble families were elevated in 1254 DR, and Waterdeep has actually lost two noble families since then: Zoar and Gildeggh, which were exiled in 1273 DR. There have since been three noble families who almost went extinct, and there is some evidence that nobles or Lords of Waterdeep quickly arranged marriages to make certain that no noble house disappeared. This was done both to avoid pressure from any ambitious merchants (“There’s now room for me, isn’t there?”) and, more important, to avoid having dozens of mountebanks or serious individuals showing up over the centuries to come, each claiming to be the long-lost heir of this or that noble house. (“So where’s my



*No matter what angle you think you're viewing them from, the nobles of Waterdeep will be looking down upon you. (It's what they do.)*

mansion? What have you done with it? You *owe* me for it!”)

In this sense, “junior” really refers to the fact that certain noble families play a sneering-down-upon-others game based on the belief or pretense that their bloodlines are older and therefore better than those of other nobility. In truth, all of Waterdeep’s nobles began as jumped-up wealthy merchants—and some houses have even lost most of their wealth since being ennobled. So this snobbery isn’t much different from two ancient, toothless old men living in adjacent tumbledown shacks in a village, one of them looking down on the other because “his family wasn’t originally from these parts.”

It’s possible to marry into the nobility of Waterdeep, especially if you happen to be good-looking or very rich, but gaining entry into a family by successfully disposing of and impersonating a particular noble, or successfully convincing a particular noble family you are a long-lost relation, is much harder. Even legitimate long-lost kin must be ready to withstand hired magical probing and other tests—and be pleasant throughout. If the would-be heir is not pleasant enough, a dagger in the ribs and a corner of earth in the deepest cellar is much less work than feeding, clothing, and tolerating him or her.

## How They Did It

The Phull and Zulpair families were the last to be ennobled, and they seem to have managed it by identical methods, to wit:

1. They succeeded at trade enough to become staggeringly wealthy.
2. They bought up large amounts of real estate in Waterdeep, especially in North Ward and Sea Ward.
3. They attended all the revels and acted in a quiet, toadying, subservient manner, offering free coin to help with the troubles discussed by grumbling nobles at said functions.
4. They very quietly loaned coin to desperate noble houses.
5. They financially bailed out and furthered the stated aims of a few Masked Lords by cleaning up firetrap warehouses in Dock Ward, fixing the sewers, dredging the harbor, and expanding and repairing the city walls. Then, they allowed the Masked Lords to take all the credit.

6. They told everyone, over and over again at revels, that they cared deeply for the good of Waterdeep and said often that “We must all think of the good of Waterdeep, so that it will be as great centuries hence as it is now.”

7. When desperate noble houses discreetly approached them for even more coin than they’d given them before (in step 4), they willingly handed them more, saying, “This should be a gift, not a loan, but not being noble myself, I can’t insult you like that. Now, if we were both noble, all you’d need do would be to hint—and this could always be a gift.”

8. They started marrying their daughters (made as beautiful as magic could make them, and trained in noble speech and deportment) into noble houses, and accompanied them with staggeringly large dowries that were never actually called dowries or publicly transferred.

9. They hired spies to learn the identities of one or two of the Masked Lords, and they befriended them, financially helping their businesses.

10. They bribed (through intermediaries, of course) some of the disaffected young wastrel nobles to verbally champion their families at revels by “acting as nobles should.”

11. They bribed (through intermediaries) some servants at revels to remark to other servants that their families “acted as true nobles should.”

12. They bankrolled some young, disaffected nobles desirous of pursuing their dreams, however foolish or zany their schemes, and befriended them.

13. They watched for financial troubles among the nobles and sought to repeat step 4, aiming for a repeat of step 7.

And, all that time, they didn’t build luxury city mansions of their own, didn’t openly challenge any noble, and never openly asked to become noble—or pretended to be noble.

Eventually, someone facing ruin remembered step 7 and started whispering that these generous families should be ennobled. The Phull and Zulpair families were wise enough to do nothing. They just let it happen.

As you can see, this plan requires kingdoms full of money (the Zulpairs found a remote island where monsters had devoured a dwarf clan and then perished for lack of food, leaving entire caverns full of mined rubies ownerless) and

generations of time, plus *not making a single mistake*. That's why it's never been done since. It worked for the Phulls and the Zulpairs (who have been scorned by many nobles since) because they practically bought up all of North Ward between them—and then gave it away, property by property, in the process of winning support for the ennobling of House Phull and House Zulpair.

As to how Waterdeep got nobles in the first place: The richest merchants in Waterdeep got together in the face of Raurlor's and then Ahghairon's authoritarianism and said: "Right, now, hear this: We're special, and we get these special privileges, hey? In return, we'll support your rule instead of knifing all your agents and raising support against you, and then fighting each other and destroying the whole damned city, eh, what?" Ahghairon saw this as the perfect way to avoid the rise of another Raurlor, when he grew too old to stop such a calamity, as these self-styled nobles would police each other as well as the commoners under them.

This all changed in 1452 DR when a few impoverished nobles sold their titles in return for staggering sums of coin to pay off their almost-as-staggering debts. The shame wasn't as dire as they'd thought it would be, and the few became a torrent over the next twenty years, until by 1480 DR noble titles became publicly offered for sale—and, for the first time, for resale, as some of the wealthy purchasers of titles themselves fell on hard times.

## JUSTICE

The Realms is a large world, and across it are a bewildering variety of local laws and edicts and ways of applying them. Edicts can be ruler proclamations, but far more frequently are temporary laws and person-specific prohibitions instated by lower-ranking officials. These tend to have less weight at a trial than codified, formal laws unless they have stood for some time and been reinforced by many sentences.

### The Laws of Secomber

The laws of Secomber are reproduced in this section, because they are typical of local legal codes throughout the Heartlands. These laws are

modeled on Waterdeep's Code Legal, with the following modifications.

In Waterdeep there are four complaints of crimes, the first and most serious of which is "crimes against the Lords," or offenses against the government. There are no "crimes against Lords" in Secomber.

In Waterdeep, most crimes are heard by one of twenty-six magisters (commonly known as Black Robes, for their uniforms), but cases can be appealed to the Lord's Court, which consists of the Open Lord of the city and two magisters, neither of whom is the magister whose decision is being appealed.

Rather than black-robed magisters, Secomber has Rods of Justice as its judges. These are respected elders, nominated and voted into office for four-summer terms by the populace, and their total number varies from six to nine (as illness and crime rates necessitate). A Rod can be dismissed by a majority vote of the other Rods, can resign freely, and can excuse oneself from specific cases if he or she has a personal interest in the outcome (though Rods can't be compelled to excuse themselves, even when a conflict of interest or bias is obvious).

All cases are heard by nine-member juries made up of landowners of Secomber, each chosen randomly by a blindfolded local child (who in turn is randomly chosen by any priest who's handy, or failing that by a Rod) who chooses name-bearing chits out of a cauldron. If a chit drawn is someone who has served on a jury within the previous year, the chit is discarded and a new chit is drawn as a replacement. All trials are public, and often serve as entertainment for the idle. The accused parties are allowed to speak freely, though Rods can and do order them gagged if they spit obscenities or offer tirades or threats.

Spellcasting in court (without the express permission of the presiding Rod) is a severe crime; if done by an accused person, the defendant will be struck unconscious, bound, and gagged. Justice will then proceed with that person left thus restrained, with the punishment for spellcasting added to whatever sentence he or she might be given for the original crime. Attacking a Rod at any time is treated as both "aiding an attack upon Secomber" and "assault upon a citizen," and the sentences for both apply.



*The powers behind the thrones: Any who wonder why Cormyr hasn't erupted into civil war scores of times during its history must be unaware of how much its noble lords are ruled by their usually sensible and always iron-willed ladies.*

Trials are immediate (usually held within half a day), though a Rod can order a stay of proceedings if there's a wait to gain witnesses or evidence. As in Waterdeep's Code Legal, these laws aren't absolute rules, but rather guidelines. Rods and juries are free to set any sentence they want if guilt is determined. The inability to pay fines or damages is mitigated by seizure of the guilty person's property, combined with enforced hard labor until enough coin is earned to satisfy the debt. Unlike in Waterdeep, there is no Lord's Court or automatic appeal a party found guilty can make—but increasingly, over the years, the proclamation of new evidence coming to light has led to a nigh-automatic swift and informal retrial, or sometimes dismissal of the charges against a prisoner and the rewarding of freedom on the spot.

## Secomber's Code of Justice

Three general kinds of offenses exist in Secomber, to wit:

The category of godsfrowns (crimes against the gods) includes assaults against Secomber, most criminal activities that involve property loss or damage, and offenses of a personal nature that do not cause or lead to the death of the victim.

Deathseekings are crimes that directly involve death or that threaten to bring about death by their performance, including outright killing and other injurious behavior.

Deceits, malices, and threatenings make up the roster of lesser crimes. Some of these offenses, from the severity of their punishments, can be roughly equated to misdemeanors in the real world. Others (such as impersonating a Rod) are much more serious.

## Godsfrowns

**Attacking Secomber:** This crime is defined as invading Secomber with intent to murder, pillage, or set fires; the act of deliberately poisoning or fouling any food, water, or drinkable in Secomber; casting spells to cause building collapses or effects reasonably expected to cause multiple deaths; or damage to city gates. If observed in the act by a Rod or Watch member, the offender is killed on the spot; otherwise the punishment for conviction is death.

**Aiding an Attack upon Secomber:** This crime is defined as knowingly providing information or assistance to outlander parties desiring to damage or steal property from Secomber, foul any well or pond in Secomber, or attack or kidnap or mutilate or maim any citizen of Secomber. The offender must pay damages to anyone affected by the attack, serve hard labor, and pay a fine to the city. Then the offender is exiled and banned from entering the city again.

**Arson:** The offender is sentenced to death or enforced hard labor, depending on the severity of the crime, then branded and exiled.

**Defiling Holy Places or Temple Theft:** The offender must pay damages and serve a term of hard labor. A public pronouncement forbids the convict from entering a holy place, and the offender is often exiled from the city.

**Public Blasphemy:** The offender is imprisoned for half a day, or overnight if the trial is held in the evening.

**Rape:** The offender pays damages to the victim. Then the miscreant is stripped, chained in public, flogged, and left chained until the next sunrise. Citizens can ridicule the miscreant, but face justice if they strike, hurl missiles that do lasting harm, or cast hostile magic on the miscreant. During the shackling, citizens are free to feed, tend, comfort, give medical aid, and try to warm the miscreant with fires, cloaks, et cetera, but they may not unchain him or her or entirely clothe him or her. Then the offender suffers mutilation and is thrown in a dungeon.

**Spellcasting in Court:** The offender is flogged and shackled as described above, then fined and imprisoned for a tenday. This act is not a crime if it has the express prior permission of a Rod.

**Theft:** The thief must pay a fine to the city as well as damages to the victim, and is publicly flogged and shackled.

**Tomb-Robbing:** The thief must pay a fine to the city and damages to the injured party (usually a relative of the tomb's inhabitant), and is then branded as a tomb-robber.

**Violation of Any Edict:** The offender is sentenced to manual labor at the direction of the presiding Rod of Justice. This could mean repairing walls or bridges, filling in potholes and washouts on roads, mending roofs or chimneys, shoveling or plowing snow in winter, or—the old fallback—cutting, splitting, and stacking firewood. A fine also applies, plus a new trial if the violation involves new offenses against the Code.

## Deathseekings

**Assault upon a Citizen Resulting in Injury:** The offender must pay damages and is sentenced to either hard labor or public flogging and shackling. (A citizen is one who owns land, pays rent, or has resided in Secomber or within view of its walls for at least a season.)

**Assault upon an Outlander Resulting in Injury:** The offender must pay damages, possibly followed by light labor or a fine.

**Harmful Public Spellcasting:** The caster must pay damages and a fine, serve a light labor sentence for up to a tenday, and is then exiled from the city for one full year. This category includes unleashing magic items. "Harmful" means resulting in damage to persons or property, or through fear or removal of support causing immediate accident or suicide.

**Murder:** A willful murder brings a death sentence, but if the murder is judged unintentional, the miscreant might be flogged and shackled and then banned. In cases of justified killing (such as in the defense of self, spouse, or children), the offender is usually branded instead. Note that killings brought about by an attempt to prevent any crime in the Code receive lesser punishments (typically a fine paid to the city, or none at all), and adventurers or mercenaries who were hired to defend Secomber or to keep the peace cannot receive sentences more severe than a fine. Acquittals are usual in cases of murder done to someone who threatens the accused with a weapon after having just publicly committed a murder.



## Deceits, Malices, and Threatenings

**Bribery or Attempted Bribery:** The punishment includes light labor, a fine, and a public pronouncement prohibiting the offender from engaging in any activity related to the bribe.

**Dealing in Stolen Goods:** The fence pays a fine and damages, both based on the Rod's estimation of value of stolen goods.

**Forgery of Currency or Legal Document or Posted Notice:** The forger must serve a term of hard labor or imprisonment, and must also pay damages.

**Fraud:** The miscreant is branded and must pay both damages and a fine.

**Hampering Justice:** This crime is defined as refusing to testify, hiding from the Watch, preventing the Watch from entry or impeding the Watch's chasing of someone or seizure of something. The offender must pay a fine and serve a sentence of hard labor.

**Impersonating a Rod of Justice, a Member of the Watch, or an Ordained Priest:** The offender is fined and exiled.

**Intimidation or Blackmail:** The offender must pay a fine and damages, and endures public flogging and shackling.

**Obstruction:** In most cases, this offense amounts to parking a wagon or conveyance against a doorway or across an alley or other route, so it can't easily be traversed. The offender must pay damages, and a public edict forbids him or her from driving a wagon in the city for a specified period. If the city gate was blocked, the sentence also includes imprisonment for one full day and night.

**Resisting Arrest:** The offender is imprisoned for one day, then flogged and shackled. If the accused is deemed to be too weak to endure flogging and shackling, a fine is levied instead.

**Vandalism:** The vandal pays a fine and damages and is then flogged and shackled. If the damage is to a garden, or is merely cosmetic, payment of damages is usually the only punishment.

## Laws of Daily Life

In addition to the codified laws discussed here, Secomber and almost every other settlement large enough to hold a market that noncitizens come to, all across Faerûn, have a patchwork of accumulated "civic laws." These are akin to real-world

bylaws and regulations, and they govern how buildings are built (to minimize fire risk), when and where certain activities—particularly those that are noisy, such as building construction—can be carried out, and various prohibitions that have been put in place on a case-by-case basis to settle local disputes. ("Owing to insufferable stenches, Thaeler the furrier is not to park a wagon of raw hides, nor any uncured furs, against this wall or within two lance-lengths of any part of this wall, said lances being held straight out from the wall in line with each other.") A first-time offender against a civic law receives a warning, pays a fine, and must promise not to reoffend. Penalties for repeat offenders escalate.

## PROPERTY LAW

Generally, formal laws regarding possessions and property exist only in kingdoms and other organized countries. Otherwise, might makes right, and the law is whatever the local lord or kingpin says.

In reality, this brute force, "My sword is the law" approach is always tempered by custom. Customs are formed by the habits of generations, built up into "the way things are done," as well as by the expectations of locals ("You can push us, self-styled 'lord,' but only so far: my grandsire built that fence and my sire expanded it—tear it down and on their graves I swear I'll tear *you* down!") and by the unwritten "rules of wayfaring" as understood by caravan merchants, peddlers, pilgrims, and envoys, and enforced by priests and the Heralds.

An example of this policing: "If you set up an inn and then murder everyone who stops there and keep their goods, even if that's morally acceptable to you as a devout follower of Bane or of Cyric, it will not be suffered to stand. Once word gets out, expect to be soon destroyed by several caravans arriving at once intent on murdering you. Or failing that, expect to be shunned and ignored, with no one visiting you for any reason—so it would be best for you if there's absolutely nothing you need by way of trade, ever again, from now until the end of your life."

Centuries of disputes all over the Realms have led to property laws that are usually akin to this arrangement: You can charge fees for the use

of your land, or you can fence off your land and guard it, with notices, prohibiting all or specific uses of it—but you can't simply butcher, maim, imprison, or rob individuals you find on your land. Moreover, you can't flout local customs with regard to buying and selling land, or renting land to farmers to till, or providing stable and paddock space and room and board to travelers.

Border disputes between neighbors might be settled with violence, or by documents and rules and solemn (church or Herald-witnessed) agreements. Borders between nobility or rulers or countries are always solemnized somehow, usually with agreements or treaties arising out of wars and enforced by periodic border patrols or even garrisons. Often, for clarity and convenience, such borders follow a river, a mountain range, a road, or a tiny, meandering stream. Miscreants fleeing across a border can't depend on protection from their destination unless there are patrols or garrisons at the border. Without a patrol or garrison to guard the border, those in pursuit of the fleeing miscreants will simply follow them, ignoring the boundary.

## Slavery

Officially illegal almost everywhere in known Faerûn, except in Dambrath, Thay, and the Old Empires, the practice of slavery is known to be widespread in most eastern lands.

Which doesn't mean it doesn't go on in many other places. In the cold Savage North, orcs take human slaves whenever they can—and eat slaves who are no longer considered useful. In the chill wilderlands north of the Moonsea, “beast-men” (ogres) capture humans for use as slaves and food. There has always been a thriving slave trade in Sembia, Westgate, and Marsember, but by the very nature of the business as practiced in that part of the Realms, there aren't named, high-profile groups of slave takers. Rather, it's always a few individuals doing snatch-and-grab jobs and fetching captives, who are often drugged to keep them silent, eating and drinking little, and not trying to escape. The slavers then drag their captives to a hiding place they control, from which “the goods” can readily be transferred to the ship of a captain who is covertly dealing in slaves. This is an important source of income for some Sea of Fallen Stars pirates.

There aren't a lot of ship captains involved, but there are a lot of little slaving cabals. Each is composed of a dozen people at most, and half of those are usually guards and “heave the drugged bodies” muscle, with six at most being the active snatchers and thinkers. Many of these cabals can, if someone starts to hunt or hound them, call on the occasional assistance of evil wizards and priests in return for bodies to experiment on or use in rituals.

Because of the small, secretive, informal nature of these gangs, there's little official mention of slavers. Unofficially, Faerûnians hear a lot of horrific tales about slavers snatching innocent folk, causing them to be hated and feared. Folk in Marsember tend to be blasé about slavers, and Sembians know and accept that hiring someone to have a rival, a fellow heir, or a creditor “removed” is a daily business option. But Dalefolk and rural Cormyreans will grab pitchforks and attack suspected slavers on sight.

## CORMYREAN NAMING AND TRADE LAWS

Cormyr's naming laws and fair trade regulations are typical of those that have developed in other well-governed lands and settlements in the Realms.

### No Royal Names Allowed

The kingdom's laws about naming date back to about ten years before the death of King Azoun IV, when Vangerdahast and Alaphondar had an idle month and agreed on some things. One of them was a Crown law banning businesses of all sorts (including inns, taverns, and private clubs) from using royal names, royal nicknames, and royal heraldry, as well as preventing them from “decrying the Crown.”

This means you can't name your tavern Azoun's Codpiece or Duar's Head or the Steel Regent's Backrest. Local Purple Dragons would be offended and might wreck such an establishment even if there was no law. Those soldiers have a fierce loyalty to their “companions in harness” (comrades in arms) and the Obarskyrs who lead them, and so veteran Purple Dragons tend to take a very dim view of anything that pokes fun at the

Crown. Such an act of naming would also be seen as tempting misfortune, and as such many potential customers would avoid the place as well. Of course, sometimes undercover “drinking clubs” in Marsember are given names that are a mockery of the Crown—but never real, taxable businesses.

In memory, Azoun IV is revered and jovially celebrated in taverns everywhere as “our stallion.” However, honoring him takes the form of remembrance festivals on the date of his birthday, and the naming of meals or ales as “Azoun’s Preferred” or “Azoun’s Chosen” (claims that everyone smiles at and does nothing to refute, including Crown agents), rather than buildings and businesses that are named after him. Court officials had to be quite firm in the recent case of the “A King To Swoon For” club. Lauding royalty, rather than mocking the Crown, does not earn an exception to the law.

The law also prevents directly naming any business after a particular battle (even a victory), or any noble, noble family, local lord, or specific heraldic blazon. You could, for instance, dub your tavern “the Rearing Stag” even though certain arms use a rearing stag as a device. You could not, on the other hand, duplicate the depiction of the rearing stag that appears in the Staghunt noble family blazon, nor adopt the heraldic description of that stag: “a full-antlered scarlet stag rampant to the dexter, its silver rack entwined with the branches of an oak tree.” There’s no rule against a business using the name of a Cormyrean naval ship, because a few unintentional duplications existed when Vangey and Alaphondar were drafting the law—and because neither of them considered that anyone would ever confuse a ship with a business or a building ashore.

The names of mythical nobles—so long as they can’t be mistaken for members of a real noble family—can serve as the names of establishments, so “the Drunken Lord” or “Old Lord Roaringsides” is all right, but “Old Lord Roaringsides” would not be allowed in combination with a depiction, badge, or anything else (such as the black stallions famously bred by the Roaringhorn family) that would make a traveler think there was an association with the Roaringhorns.

Cormyr, like every other long-settled place, has several folk equivalents to the real-world Baron Munchausen, Casanova, and Squire Allworthy. Nobles detest being linked to these names, since

they have long been evoked to comment on (and usually mock) nobility of the day.

The best known is the aforementioned Old Lord Roaringsides, a hunting, brawling, tirelessly enduring lover of every woman within reach, who is said to eat like sixteen men at a feast, belch loud enough to knock nearby folk over, and so on.

Another is Lady Doom, an icily sneering haunt of a gowned, gliding woman who sails through walls and locked doors without hindrance, says nothing to most but whispers of doom to a few, and whose appearance presages misfortune or death.

The third most popular is Lord “Firetongue” Haubrynton, based on a non-noble knight of another name who fought alongside King Duar long ago. The Lord Firetongue of the folktales is a solemn, dignified noble of senior years who has fits in which he swears like a sailor, punches objectionable people, chases maids, plays pranks . . . and then reverts, apparently having forgotten everything he’s done. The real knight differs from the folk version in that he apparently had no remembrance, whereas the fictional Lord Firetongue is always depicted as slyly winking when he claims to have no knowledge of his wild deeds.

## Using Place Names

You can name your tavern, inn, or stables (but not any other kind of business) directly after the place it is located in. For instance, “the Arms of Arabel” and “the Pride of Arabel” are legal names for taverns or inns, but not for armorers, weapons shops, bakeries or garment shops. A tailor can’t do business as “the Flashing Needle of Arabel,” even if that nickname has been bestowed by his or her customers.

The laws prohibit duplication of, or even similarity to, an existing name. Crown agents (the same guys who show up to collect taxes) will force a name change on “the second business in” if, in their sole opinion, confusion could arise (for one thing, they never want the tax rolls to get confused). So if “the Pride of Arabel” is flourishing, you can’t legally open “the Promenade of Arabel,” because the two businesses might get confused by a wayfarer from afar unfamiliar with the city (or so a past Crown agent ruled), but “the Delight of Arabel” or “the Heart of Arabel” would be fine.



*A coach means noble or even royal cargo. Some folk say they wave like that to keep the flies off.*

No business can name itself after a place it isn't located in (for example, no inn in Espar calling itself "High Horn Rest"). There are a few old businesses that break this rule, and the right to go on breaking it can be bought and sold, but the number of such exceptions never increases. For example, there's a centuries-old inn called Wyvernwater Inn that was originally known as the Wyvernwater Way Inn because it was on the road to Wyvernwater, half a day north of that place. The name shrank over the years, but the inn itself has survived in steady operation, dating to before the naming rules were tightened—so it can continue to exist. However, if its keeper sells it to someone who goes on operating it under the same name, that seller can't open a new inn outside Wyvernwater called the Old Wyvernwater House. Similarly, if the inn called Wheloon House (located well outside walled Wheloon) ever burns down, it can be rebuilt, but it can't

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be expanded to two outside-Wheloon locations, Old Wheloon House and Wheloon Castle (unless those locations lack "Wheloon" in their names). Many elder businesses sport discreet "banner boards" under their main signboards, to inform all that this establishment was formerly known by a famous or infamous, but now banned, name.

## Signs Must Be Seen

Inns, public stables, and taverns are required by law to have clearly visible signs that thrust out into the street. These signs must be lit by lanterns or some other means, such as magic, so as to be readable by night, except during instances when local authorities specifically decree otherwise, such as during a war.

Other kinds of businesses might choose to have such signs, or might be governed by local guild rules or trade agreements in their signage. Almost all businesses do have signs, though not

all businesses use out-thrust signboards. Some businesses, particularly crafters, have flush-to-the-wall signs mounted over their doors. In all cases, the Crown (acting through local lords or through Purple Dragon commanders in rural areas where there is no local lord) has instant and final say over the size, shape, content, and location of all such signage. Location, in this context, means “how much the sign thrusts out into or over the road, creating a hazard for high-loaded wagons and coaches.”

Local heralds have a duty to inspect and order any necessary changes to all such signage on the grounds of infringing on heraldry or misleading the public as to the nature of the business (not, however, on the grounds of good taste). The High Heralds can override local heralds, who can in turn override the tastes of a local lord or his agents. This gives citizens a route of appeal if their lord just doesn't like giant carved wooden boots or candles hanging from chains out over the street he rides down, for instance.

It would be foolish for shopkeepers to pick a fight with their local lord, who has many ways of getting back at them, if he chooses. However, there is a strict prohibition on local lords harming businesses or crafters by denying them one sign after another, and in the past, local lords have been removed and publicly disgraced for doing so, most notably Onslur Gelnwood of Wheloon in the last few years of the reign of Rhigaerd I, and Caltath Malurt of Waymoot in the second year of Azoun IV's rule.

## Quality of Goods

Tax collectors and all traveling Crown officials and courtiers have clear, easy, and confidential channels through which to complain about bad beer and similar shortcomings in inns and taverns. They can, for instance, speak to any Purple Dragon barracks commander, to any local lord or bailiff of a local lord, to any War Wizard, or to the Desk of Justice in the Royal Court of Suzail. Every one of these “complain to” persons can also make complaints from his or her own observations, or on behalf of any citizen.

All complaints are ultimately routed to the Desk of Justice, which is really a room rather than a desk, and has nothing at all to do with Black Robes or judicial proceedings. Rather, it is a small

band of undercover inspectors run by a Highknight (a person who serves the royal family as a personal enforcer, spy, or envoy) and escorted by War Wizards and Highknights when it seems necessary for safety's sake. These inspectors have the power to close a kitchen or taps on the spot, confiscate or destroy food, yank Crown licenses, and effectively shut down a business for as long as it takes to fix it—even if that is forever. They rarely have to do so, these days; their mere appearance awes many patrons and frightens most hostelry owners bone white.

However, there aren't specific qualities set down in laws. The Desk tries to prevent poisonings, disease, and (the most important and prevalent part of their work) daily deception.

If you are promised a tankard of ale, there's an expectation that the tankard will be large enough to have a handle you can fit all the fingers of one hand through. In addition, the inside of the tankard should have a fillable depth that descends at least two finger widths below that handle and at least one above, and that space should be wide enough that all fingers of one hand, squeezed together tightly, can be thrust down into the tankard. This indeed means drinkers with huge hands should be given larger tankards, or more ale in other containers, per drink paid for. For everyone, it means no miniature “toy tankards,” and no vessels that are only two inches deep, from lip to the “bell,” or inside bottom. Similarly, if you are promised mutton or goose eggs or ale from Arabel, what you are served should be just that, not something else passed off as what was promised.

## Labeling and Levies

In the ports of Suzail and Marsember, guilds insist on and try to enforce strict labeling and precise identification of goods, so “Malaxan's Best Brew” won't be barrels of whatever Sembia sends labeled as such, but will always be beer actually brewed by the person named Malaxan, in the same place, and to more or less the same recipe. It should also really be what he considers his best, and not “mixed-bottom-barrel dregs slop Sembians won't drink, so we'll ship it to Cormyr, where all they can taste is horse dung, so they'll never know the difference.” Which is why you can buy really cheap, bitter, horrible ale called “Sembian

Odds” at some dockside taverns; it really is mixed “odds and ends” from barrels, which is fine because it is identified as such.

No direct taxes are assessed on the sale of ale, wine, and spirits to patrons in a tavern, but the businesses that produce such drinkables are taxed, both as businesses and at 1 cp per barrel (up to 1 sp for the largest tuns, so making the barrel larger doesn’t allow a brewer to escape “the Crown’s take”). Small beer made at home is never taxed, and local brews are never taxed if they are drunk only by the brewers or their neighbors. However, if drink is ever put into a barrel and transported elsewhere (outside town, as opposed to one street over in the same municipality), the barrel tax applies.

In Arabel, Marsember, and Suzail, all producers of strong drink, such as alcoholic beverages, “physics,” and “cordials” (medicines) are taxed, except for what family and table guests consume in their own houses. Individuals who try to evade this tax by running taverns or drinking clubs in their homes get swift visits from the Desk of Justice, the tax collectors, the Watch, and everyone else. This attention includes War Wizards mind-reading them to determine their true intent and the extent of their activities, because there’s an ever-present “wary watch” for smuggling. They will be taxed as businesses or hassled out of such behavior back to serving just themselves, family members, and a handful of dinner guests.

## SENTENCING THE GUILTY

Even where clearly codified laws exist, sentences are generally at the discretion of the ruler. For instance, the king can let a guilty party go free, or allow the individual to perform some task rather than enduring the usual punishment. Likewise, the king can decide that nobles, rather than being flogged and imprisoned, must pay huge fines.

As a rule, no place that thrives on trade (such as Waterdeep, Scornubel, or Athkatla) will dare allow open bribery or flawed justice. Any rigging of results must be done behind the scenes rather than in public. For instance, you could avoid someone’s being brought to trial, or arrange a prisoner escape. Also, places that survive on trade almost always have clearly codified laws,

separate-from-the-authorities judges (such as the Magisters of Waterdeep), and arrangements to let guilds partially punish their own members (lessening the court sentence in return for guild sanctions). A common belief that visiting merchants will be treated equally to residents and citizens must be fostered and maintained . . . or the merchants will stop coming.

In many places, magisters or their equivalents, guilds, and priests all have the right to call on the aid of spells to determine truth and falsehood, though who pays for this service varies widely from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. In most places, royalty and nobility have rights or privileges others in the society don’t have.

Trial by combat is rarely allowed in “trade reigns” places, but might occur in places of rural “rough justice” or in communities dominated by a faith that allows such activity, such as in a hamlet around a temple. In Sembia and some other civilized places, battle between hired champions—or even personal dueling—is often a public entertainment used in cases when a noble feels slighted by another noble, or when a young woman of high birth who hasn’t yet wed is accused of being of less than good character, and wants to refute the slur.

Most places in the Realms have nothing resembling real-world libel and slander laws. Also, aside from prohibitions against copying or counterfeiting the words of royalty or nobility, or the decrees of magisters or guildmasters, nothing really approaching modern real-world copyright law exists in the Realms.

The Realms does not have lawyers, robed and wigged or otherwise. There are some “advocates,” paid orators who will speak in court (always in the presence of an accused, not appearing in their stead) and who might know something of the law and can give advice to an accused. Some advocates are real performers who mimic the voices of people, act out scenes, tell jokes, and engage in furious debate in court—which, being great entertainment, is seldom cut short even by angry judges or rulers, because the commoners like it.

## Seized Goods

In actual practice, rulers or their officials have almost complete discretion over what happens to items found in the possession of an accused.

This blanket power is tempered by public scrutiny—usually supported by vigilant local clergy—reinforcing general principles that are actual law in some places, but merely prevailing opinion or tradition in others.

These principles include the following strictures.

— Identifiable stolen items should be freely returned to their owners, not kept or sold by the government.

— In peacetime, there should be clear and tight limits on what authorities can confiscate as evidence or suspected stolen goods. For example, if a thief has been storing stolen goods in a dockside warehouse used by many individuals, the authorities have the right to search the entire building and examine everything, but not to confiscate all contents of the warehouse just because they believe some of the contents were stolen.

— Magical things need to be thoroughly examined (and probably kept) by the authorities. However, local officials have an obligation to “hunt it all out,” and when it has been examined, tell local citizens the whole truth about what magic was found, where it came from, and what it was intended for.

— Any hint of undead in a settled area is to be treated like magic: hunted out, destroyed, and the whole truth told, locally.

— Law keepers who find and seize anything should not be allowed to personally keep it—otherwise, they would have a strong incentive to misuse their office for personal gain.

— Contraband should be publicly and promptly sold by the government, not destroyed or kept by government officials.

— Any investigation that disrupts the community (arrests, prolonged questioning, searches, and seizures of goods, for example) should eventually be explained fully to the community. Authorities have very few justifiable grounds for not telling citizens anything they ask about (though “the king’s will” is a justifiable ground).

— Disputes over what happens to property must be resolved in public, not behind closed doors.

Some governments are swift to confiscate land, buildings, and everything owned by certain sorts of criminals, but in other lands or city-states, such action would bring swift and strong protest from the citizenry. Different lands have varying governments and likewise differing popular attitudes regarding the presumption of guilt.

For instance, in Cormyr no one’s lands or buildings can be seized until royal assent has been given, in the wake of a formal sentence. However, in Calaunt, Mulmaster, or Westgate, if a high-ranking official believes someone is guilty, seizures can occur well before the person has been tried—and some individuals deemed miscreants just disappear, never getting a public trial at all.

In Chessenta until the mid-1320s DR, city rulers customarily arrested persons they disliked, then, even if they were not charged with crimes, let them escape with armed agents of the ruler in hot pursuit. If caught, the person was slain on the spot. The ruler then took the individual’s worldly goods, leaving the family of the “dangerous recreant” destitute. If the fleeing recreant successfully got away (the agents would not pursue beyond the borders of the city’s territory), it was deemed the will of the gods that the person escape. Although all of the recreant’s property was forfeit, the ruler would ignore him henceforth, rather than sending more agents after him.

This Chessentan custom faded into disuse thanks to the strongest nonviolent force for change in the civilized Realms, one that speaks ever more loudly as the years pass: traveling merchants. They publicly expressed their disapproval of such cruelty, calling it proof that rulers who engaged in this activity were corrupt and, as the shipping fleet owner Rarl Tartassan of Arrabar said, “placed no value on the rule of law, and the keeping of one’s bond.” Most important, the merchants threatened to stay away from the domains of such rulers. This resistance was mounted on an individual basis, not in any united effort. When several city lords scoffed, claiming that merchants were such “craven slaves to coin” that if one chose not to ship or bring goods to a place, a rival would inevitably do so, the rejoinder was that a city depending on lone peddlers would fall far behind others. Surprisingly, so it proved, and the rulers gave in.

# THOSE WHO ENFORCE

In any society, there is a broad area between the laws on the rolls and their daily, actual, on-the-ground enforcement. For instance, Purple Dragons in dangerous-due-to-monsters-and-brigands rural areas of Cormyr, far from the niceties of Suzail, are like a lot of rural law enforcers in the Dales and elsewhere in Faerûn. They often throw people in cells overnight to cool them off, but for all but the most serious crimes, rather than charge and hold miscreants and send word for officials to come and try them, they're quite apt to scare the offenders and beat them up (with bare fists), then send them on their way with growls of "Don't come here and try such foolishness again!"

Most such rural and small-town law officers are wily, salt-of-the-earth, cunning (but not necessarily corrupt) veterans who won't easily be caught in ambushes or duped. They know the local terrain and hiding places and are aware of residents who are crooked and might fence stolen goods. There are no haughty, I-never-get-my-hands-dirty "high-nosed city brightcloaks" among them.

## The Watch of Waterdeep

Cities tend to have more polite and disciplined, but sometimes markedly less effective, law officers than smaller communities do. Perhaps the best of these police forces is the famous Watch of Waterdeep, some details of which follow. These points can be used as a model for Watch behavior elsewhere.

Waterdhavian Watch officers always wear uniforms when on patrol, and carry both weapons and horns with which to summon aid. Aid is usually in the form of other Watch patrols, but specific horn calls can summon Watchful Order magists or soldiers from Waterdeep's small standing army, the City Guard, as well. (The City Guard operates much as the Watch does, with differences and exceptions noted in the following material.)

Members of the Watch customarily address male citizens as "goodsir," except for persons they know to be Waterdhavian nobility, whom

they call "gentlesir." Every veteran Watch officer knows at least the top people and the heirs of all Waterdhavian noble families on sight, plus the troublemakers. Mixed-gender noble groups are addressed as "gentles."

Commoner women are "goodwives" unless young, whereupon they become "goodlasses." Young commoner men are usually called "jacks" or "my jacks," as in: "What befalls? Hold and deliver truth, my jacks!"

"Hold!" meaning "Freeze," "Down arms!" meaning "Drop your weapons," and "Talk truth!" meaning "Answer me" are frequent Watch commands.

When Watchmen address officers of superior rank, "sir" is the all-purpose formal form of address. "Sorn" is an added term of respect, somewhere between "trusted" and "worthy" in meaning, and is applied thus: "Sorn sir."

"Sorn" is also used by higher ranks addressing lower ranks, but instead of "sir," it's added (or not added, if the speaker is grumpy or disapproving or merely bored) before the word "trusty."

In most daily situations, when not in front of a lord or palace official, Watch officers tend to ignore rank formalities when their ranks are similar. A Watch patrol leader would think something was wrong, or he was being mocked, if members of his own patrol started calling him "sir" or "sorn sir," and so would a senior commander, if officers one rank lower than him did the same thing. This is due in part to the practice, almost universal in the Watch, of carefully being very formal and polite when you think your superior is making a mistake, breaking the rules, or just being an "ox-haunch" (behaving like a jackass). In other words, members of the Watch clearly indicate their disapproval by tone and excessive formality without actually saying a single word of disagreement.

It's important to note that the Watch places far more importance on diligent behavior while on duty than on matters of etiquette. There's little or no discipline (beyond a sharp comment) for missing a salute or stumbling over another officer's title. The Watch prides itself on being family—albeit a gruff, ungentle "slap-on-the-back, mock-one's-fellows" family—and not what one Masked Lord once publicly called the City Guard: "a bunch of sniff-nosed, post-headed warriors."



Watch patrols in the streets of the city are eight to twelve persons strong. The smaller patrols are used in North Ward and Sea Ward, whereas Dock Ward and South Ward patrols are always a dozen strong. Inside the palace and the City of the Dead, patrols of pairs and trios are the norm.

Whenever trouble is known or expected, patrols will be enlarged as well as reinforced by “duty” Watchful Order magists and volunteering local priests.

If the Watch is operating in an area that can be overlooked from a readily accessible publicly owned vantage point, extra Watch officers will be stationed on high to watch the movements of suspects and Watch patrols, directing the Watch by means of horn blasts and messengers. Good vantage points include the battlements of Castle Waterdeep, any wall tower, the balconies of the palace, the roofs of barracks, and the roofs of the surprisingly large array of city-owned (and seized for unpaid taxes, but not yet resold) buildings. In daylight, griffonback riders of the City Guard help perform this function if a riot or chase is developing.

## Salutes: Gestures of Respect

The City Guard salutes often, usually with a raised weapon, but Watchmen seldom do so.

There are some little-used formal and ceremonial salutes, but the most common salute performed by a Waterdhavian Watch officer is done to indicate respect for someone’s judgment, prowess at arms, or bravery. It’s accomplished by drawing to attention, looking at the person to be honored, and, while doing so, sharply rapping the hilt of a sheathed weapon (usually a belt dagger) with one closed fist.

To any of superior rank within the Watch, a Watchman salutes by tapping his temple smartly with an upraised, vertical forefinger.

The reply (the salute to an inferior) is identical if the superior officer desires to convey profound respect or gratitude. Otherwise, the superior officer bends both arms at the elbow and holds them in front of him. The right hand he curls into a fist. The left he holds flat with the fingers pressed together, the pinkie side facing downward, in what we might call a karate chop. Then he takes his right fist and lowers it to strike the fingers of

his left hand gently. The fist touches just once, bouncing off the fingers.

In sharp contrast, members of the City Guard of Waterdeep, militia, and hired mercenaries formally fighting for the city salute all the time. This act is typically done by raising an upright, vertical sword toward the person being saluted. Another common salute, almost always used when addressing officers of superior rank, is executed by touching the fist gripping the sword to one’s forehead, then moving it outward a few inches toward the person being saluted.

This movement also serves as a covert salute between Watchmen, used in an exaggerated, not-trying-to-hide way by officers who are not certain of the rank of the person they’re saluting. This salute starts with one’s right hand held at belt level, with the palm facing one’s stomach and the fingers pointed toward the belt buckle. The heel of the hand should touch the belt. Then, the fingers come together and tap the belt once, as if patting one’s own belly. If this gesture is immediately followed by a move to scratch one’s own left shoulder, it’s really a covert signal that means “Hi, there! I’ve got trouble, big trouble, and need you to stay and confer with me. Contrive to get close to me in some unobtrusive manner, so we can talk.” If the scratching is at waist level rather than on the left shoulder, it means “Get out of here right now, but don’t make an obvious exit. I’ll catch up to you and explain.”

## Salary and Other Benefits

The Watch gives a soldier 25 gp upon joining, plus a free uniform, a pair of boots, training, and one weapon. If a member of the Watch is dismissed without completing training, everything must be returned except for 12 gp.

After a soldier is mustered in, free room and board is assigned to him or her at a Watch barracks. This benefit includes a bunk, a small beer, simple meal fare, bath access, and weapon oil. This room and board need not be accepted—and it can be taken on a casual “feel like it tonight” basis. In addition, members of the Watch get 1 gp per day, whether they are on active duty or not, plus 4 sp per patrol. The day is divided into three slightly overlapping shifts, and normally each Watch member is responsible for only one shift per day. Officers receive the same 1 gp a day, but

they also take in 5 sp, 7 sp, or 1 gp per patrol, depending on rank.

A replacement uniform, replacement boots, and an additional weapon are given to each member of the Watch once per year. All other uniforms, boots, and weapons must be paid for out of one's salary. Additional weapons and gear are often issued free of charge out of the armory for use during patrols, but this gear and weaponry must be returned or replaced.

## Conduct and Misconduct

Watch members found guilty of crimes or misbehavior are often fined by the Watch as well as punished under law. Dismissal and imprisonment apply to the most egregious offenses. On the other extreme, distinguished service often earns handsome retirement bonuses from the Lords, sometimes even including pieces of outlying land or an in-city building.

## Uniforms, Old and New

Both the Guard and the Watch have worn a variety of uniforms over the years, and senior members who desire to wear their older uniforms are usually allowed to do so, even if the garb is of a different style. Thus, several uniforms can be in use at the same time, in the same patrol.

Since the mid-1300s DR onward, the City Guard's dress uniform has been silver plate armor with black cloaks and boots, silver helms, and breastplates decorated with the arms of Waterdeep. Above the arms is a horizontal row of small right-hand gauntlets, fingers pointed upward. These gauntlets denote rank: one for trusty, two for vigilant, and so on. A long gauntlet clutching a drawn sword is used for ranks of commander and higher.

The Watch wears a suit of chainmail with a blue surcoat emblazoned with a simplified version of the "crescent moon reflected in the water" arms of Waterdeep on the breast and back—a crest more commonly known as the double moon. Members additionally wear helms, armored boots, leather weapon belts and baldrics, and leather gauntlets. If heavy fighting is expected, they might borrow City Guard plate mail, but they would never wear their black cloaks along with it. Occasionally Watch lads or lasses will be sent undercover. In these cases, they will

wear plain, well-worn leather armor ("jacks"), leather boots, and leather breeches of a variety of hues (and usually mismatched).

In a barracks, one might see a member of the Watch in "undress" uniform. This consists of a "grayweave" (cotton, dyed gray) tunic that extends to the wrists, ankle-length grayweave breeches, and a white surcoat emblazoned on the breast with a gray, right-hand gauntlet with the fingers pointed up and the arms of Waterdeep stitched in black on the palm.

## The Tantran Watch

In contrast to the bare-faced, recognizable trusties of the Waterdhavian Watch is the cudgel-wielding Watch of the Dragon Reach port city of Tantras. The Tantran Watch is typical of city law enforcers around the Sea of Fallen Stars (with the exception of Cormyr, Sembia, and Aglarond).

The Tantran Watch works masked. This tactic helps keep the identities of the Watchmen secret, which in turn helps prevent reprisals and attempts to influence them. The Tantran Watch mounts frequent street, dockside, and tavern patrols to keep order, arresting persons who draw steel, wound others, or start fires, and ejecting the unruly from taverns and clubs onto the street.

Tantran Watch patrols are a dozen strong, and use noisy three-rattling-brass-cup alarm gongs they carry on their belts to summon reinforcements. In peacetime, when there's no known peril inside the city or outside the walls (such as rival ships' crews both in port at the same time, lots of traders cramming the city, or—gasp!—adventurers passing through), minimal patrols apply. These are scaled up in frequency and strength if murders or thefts-and-chases occur, gongs are rung, or known perils are present.

There are seven Watch barracks around the city: a central citadel (which consists of the armory, the jail, and the courthouse) and six smaller posts, which each have jail cells, a ready room, and a tiny armory. From these bases, the twelve-member Watch patrols pass along the main streets and make the "inside-the-walls walk" about once an hour, twice an hour at dawn and dusk. In addition, two roaming patrols take varying routes through alleys and side streets during the dark hours, moving right across the city. Patrols carry shuttered lanterns, cudgels, grappling hooks and

lines (mainly used for fishing drunks out of the harbor before they drown), capture nets, and manacles. They've been known to shackle miscreants to handy hitching rings and leave them there while pursuing other suspects.

All dockside streets and red-lantern areas receive heavy patrols, as do the lanes around certain warehouses (to prevent thefts, arson, and smuggling). Heavy patrolling means that patrols go by about every ten minutes, at irregular intervals. Taverns and inns receive almost as much attention (about once every fifteen to twenty minutes).

Temples are policed only lightly by the Tantran Watch, because clergy are assumed to have dominion over their own grounds and buildings.

## Temple Guards

If a temple anywhere in the Realms is large or grand enough, its guards might well be commanded by a paladin. Priests of most churches can call on paladins to render appropriate-to-the-faith military aid whenever the need arises; as a general rule, however, paladins work out in the world to defend believers and further the faith. Few of them do guard duty in a temple, except on special occasions such as particular holy rites, or presiding over the choosing of a new high priest in controversial circumstances. Most temple guards are accomplished or at least disciplined warriors who devoutly believe in their deity, and who are closely supervised by priests of the temple. They might be trained and occasionally tested by paladins and might possess unusual skills.

Most temples have a few novice guards, too. These are commonly less accomplished individuals who have more enthusiasm than skill. Adventurers be warned: Only in tavern tales are clergy foolish enough to let such novices guard anything without veteran guards working alongside them and commanding them.

Quite a few temples have war dogs or beasts associated with their deity as trained or "wild but penned into an area intruders are forced or lured into" guardians. Moreover, the storage vaults of some faiths feature deliberately created undead sentinels.

## Lighting Keeps the Peace

Crime is greatly reduced by good illumination at night in cities across the Realms. Suzail, the capital of Cormyr, is typical of most Heartlands cities in this respect. Its streets are lit by oil lamps, candle lamps, and a few abandoned, experimental "lit candles floating in oil" hybrids. All of its lamps are set in metal cages and look like the largest coach lamps from the fog-bound London of Sherlock Holmes and Jack the Ripper. The lamps are most often mounted on the walls of stone buildings in black, cast-iron brackets; they are lit when the sun sinks low enough that the western arc of the city wall casts shadows across the nearest streets.

The coverage of their illumination is very good along the Promenade and in the area north of the Promenade and west of the palace complex (the neighborhood of most nobles and the wealthiest citizens). There, the lamps are almost all on free-standing metal poles about twice the height of a large covered coach. These are still known locally as "posts" even though the tree trunks they were formerly fashioned from fell out of use in the 1270s DR.

Street lighting is fairly good down the east wall, where the barracks are, and along the docks. The illumination in this area enables Suzail's port to work at night—as it does when trade activity warrants, which is most of the time. On the other hand, street lighting is sparse in the central heart of the city where only some major streets are lit, and the taverns and clubs tend to have door lamps (there's not much else open and lit in the dark hours). In the slums and poor neighborhoods, the lighting is near nonexistent, lending the western part of the city the name "Darkstreets."

Businesses fuel and light their own lamps, leading to lanterns of all sorts mounted in a great variety of ways on walls (which must always be stone, by Suzail's civic laws). Most are on pulleys and chains so they can be drawn up to a window (by means of a long metal hook mounted on a wooden pole) for filling and lighting. The trick is that they must be gently let go again, not left to fall and swing, to prevent them from smashing against the building wall on the backswing. Other lanterns are filled and lit by being unhooked and pulled down to ground level with hooked poles, and a very few are lowered to the ground by way

of pulleys and chains (in areas where recurring vandalism has occurred).

The inner wall lamps, Promenade lamps, nobles' district lamps, port lamps, and barracks lamps are lit by hired lamplighters employed solely for that purpose and overseen by Crown officials. These officials are minor courtiers numerous enough to form lighting crews if the hirelings fall ill, quit, or are too scared to light lamps in particular locations. The Crown pays for the fuel, lamp repairs, and replacement lamps as required.

These lamps are all of the sort you pull down with hooked poles, and they are all secured with safety chains rigged in opposition to each other so they can't blow down from their hooks. In daily practice these Crown lamps are almost always left where they hang and filled directly by workers standing on platforms built atop tall wagons. These wagons are locked away in sheds when not in use to prevent thieves from making dark uses of them at night. However, if the proper one-day Crown permits are purchased, private citizens can rent the wagons for roofing repairs, sign-hanging, and other tasks not related to lamplighting.

Many Suzailan private residences have a lamp in a window, on the inside sill, so its light shines forth into the street below. These are often used as signals, such as private merchants indicating to customers that they're home and open for business, family members telling each other dinner is ready, and a myriad of personal messages of other sorts.

## PACTS AND ALLIANCES

Common folk across the Realms are vaguely aware of the formal treaties and pacts between nearby lands and city-states, and slightly more aware of the blood ties forged by marriages among nobility, rulers, and wealthy and powerful families. They know the traditional alliances and hatreds.

For instance, it is widely known that there's no love lost between Cormyr and Sembia, or between Cormyr and Westgate, but that Cormyr has always allied with any of the Dales that wanted such friendly relations. It is also known that Archendale has never wanted Cormyr's

friendship, Scardale recently repudiated Cormyr, and Harrowdale and Featherdale have increasingly slid under Sembian sway and become cooler to Cormyrean offers and embassies. Also, it is widely thought that Cormyr's overtures to the Dales are meant to keep Sembia from swallowing all the land between the Thunder Peaks and the Dragon Reach, and thereby controlling eastward overland trade.

General truths aside, in any open conflict commoners are often surprised at the alliances and agreements their rulers make—sometimes breaking with tradition, making foes into allies or at least neutral parties, and rebuffing friendly realms, and complicating everything.

The wealthy and powerful, who have trading partners, kin, agents, and spies in distant places whom they can afford to communicate with often, have always known more of trends and forthcoming policies than the everyday shopkeeper or farmer. However, the steady increase in reach, wealth, and traveling of merchants over the last five centuries has elevated some heads of caravan costers and guildmasters to the level of the nobility in terms of influence and awareness.

There have always been dynastic families seeking to hold onto thrones, and there have always been rivals seeking to supplant them. For example, in Cormyr, the Obarskys have been challenged for centuries by the Bleths, the Cormaerils, and others. Cormyr has one of the very few ruling families that have clung to power in a nigh-unbroken line; most lands in Faerûn have suffered usurpers and heirs-in-waiting vying with rebels and rival claimants—both real and false—for the throne.

There are also very wealthy, sophisticated, highly educated families, such as the Moareldril in Amn, and the Cathmalar in Tethyr, who have never wanted a throne or to stand behind one. These families have always preferred to keep a much lower public profile and manipulate rulers from the distant shadows, to their own great benefit.

Inevitably, those who desire to exploit or manipulate humanity to *their* own benefit—notably doppelgangers, illithids, and beholders—have covertly sought out such families. An incursion starts with the monsters seeking to ally with the corrupt families, and ends with them slowly taking control of the families, making them their

human agents just as the families themselves use others as their own human agents.

There are almost always layers upon layers, and intrigues within intrigues. As Piergeiron of Waterdeep once said, “Matters of rulership in the Realms are never simple. If ever you think they are, there’s something you’ve missed. Look behind you quickly, and if no dagger’s coming at you, turn back and look again. Harder.”

Adventurers are often used as the “extended arms” of those who want to reach over the line of law or treaty and do something a pact or continued good relations constrains them from doing. At the same time, it behooves wise adventurers to know key details of pacts and alliances relevant in the territory in which they’re adventuring.

For example, the Lords’ Alliance has come to trade agreements with every land along the Sword Coast trade roads to let caravans travel those roads without hindrance. Which means a caravan under attack from brigands or outlaws can expect armed law keepers to ride to their aid, and caravan masters can expect border searches and even confiscations or arrests if certain things are found. Caravan masters can also expect that borders will not be closed arbitrarily, and that favoritism will not be shown to wayfarers of one land or coster or faith over another. Law keepers are pledged to help merchants get their beasts and conveyances through a territory unscathed, and they are not allowed to damage or seize (as opposed to detain for investigation) such property. For instance, even if locals are angry about or frightened of a wagon that has heavily armed or armored half-orc guards, law keepers are to keep the peace, not themselves burn the wagon and fight with the half-orcs—as often happened as recently as the 1200s DR, in Amn and Tethyr.

These agreements are collectively known as the Hand of the Open Road, and merchants are quick to notify innkeepers, tavern masters, local law keepers, and soldiers of the Hand of the Open Road if they think they are being mistreated. Quick-thinking adventurers who get themselves hired as caravan guards, or acquire a wagon and portray themselves as merchants, can call upon law keepers in the name of the Hand of the Open Road, too.

Merchants engage in some speculative forays entirely because one’s guildmaster (or simply a friendly guildmaster) has come to an agreement

with a guildmaster at a shipment’s destination. On the other hand, merchants should beware of covert agreements between guildmasters to shut out, underbid, or refuse to buy certain wares, a tactic often used to try to keep independent traders away from a lucrative market. Adventurers frequently find themselves hired to represent merchants when such trouble is suspected—so that it will be their necks, and not the merchants’, if swords sing out or daggers are thrust in dark alleys.

All rulers twist the intent of pacts and alliances to their advantage if they see more benefit than loss in doing so, but they rarely out-and-out break such agreements unless desperate. Such desperation might be the result of an orc horde coming, the mountains suddenly erupting, or something equally realm-shaking.

Some rulers, notably Alustriel in Silverymoon and later the Silver Marches, Piergeiron in Waterdeep, and Azoun IV (and Vangerdahast and Alusair the Silver Regent) in Cormyr, have long memories and cold dealings for rulers who break pacts. Which is why Calaunt, Hillsfar, Mulmaster, and Zhentil Keep were isolated for so much of the 1300s DR. They broke pacts, so no one would trust them, leaving them on their own—at least until their rulers died or were replaced, and those successors reached out with fresh offers, promises, and reparations.

It’s important to bear in mind that most rulers and other powerful folk like to “drink their tankard and see it still full.” As such, many covert trading deals and ongoing relationships break pacts, with everyone involved turning a blind eye. For instance, most Calishite satraps have renounced slavery so as to deal with Athkatla, Baldur’s Gate, and Waterdeep, all of which officially refuse to trade with slavers and those who harbor slavers. However, almost all of those same satraps sell persons who cross them into slavery and trade in slaves through so-called “outlaws” whom they bankroll. To avoid having Calimshan erupt in civil war and establish feuds that could last for centuries, satraps who find themselves in fierce disagreement with each other fight duels by pitting their “staff adventurers” against each other.

Most successful merchants know about such deviations—or survive learning about them the hard way. Traders daily worry about the shadowy

web of far smaller but more numerous pacts: the quiet agreements that have been reached between various small local cabals and independent merchants and larger, regional cabals. These pacts run along the lines of “No one shall bid on the ferry contract for the Dawndeeping Stream except a merchant of the Blue Stone” or “Where offers are substantially the same, House Hardusking will prevail over House Rathrune,” to use two west-country Sembian examples.

## Crown Agents

Every ruler has formal envoys and ambassadors who travel the Realms constantly, engaging in formal diplomacy. Almost all rulers also have unofficial representatives, investigators and “trouble fixers” who do the daily (and nightly) dirty work to keep the ruler on the throne.

Every city-state or ruler employs more than just outside-the-law hired agents such as outland adventuring gangs, dupes, scapegoats, and armed “heavies.” They also employ ongoing, loyal secret agents who investigate murders, conspiracies, crimes, and incipient treason. The Highknights and the War Wizards of Cormyr are famous examples, but even as small a place as the way-town of Tagarath has its secret agents.

Tagarath stands on the trade road between Riatavin and the Vilhon, right where the road fords the Shining Stream, and is too small to appear on most maps. Tagarath has a “crownar” (mayor); a council made up of the eight most powerful local merchants; and a police force, the Riders, who patrol the town and its environs and jail drunkards and those who do violence. Yet it also has seven elderly retired local women who seemingly sit and do nothing all day but are actually the paid “watchers” of (spies for) the crownar.

Crownar Orth Haelen is old, fat, and infirm, and for the past decade, his daughter Alaya has seen to the daily running of Tagarath. Alaya is both cynical and a keen observer of the world, and long ago she decided to put her three boyfriends and two younger sisters on the public purse as the “hand behind her back.” They regularly slay Zhents or other agents who try to linger in Tagarath, peer into what merchants who stop over are carrying, steal (or steal back) items when it becomes necessary, eliminate doppelgangers and other sinister threats to the local population,

spy on potential Rider recruits to learn their true character, and deal with adventurers—to make sure those who think they can easily overwhelm the Riders and rule by the sword think again.

Tagarath and many other places in the Realms have tax spies and tax collectors, the first of which peek and the second of which come to collect, accompanied by trained war dogs for defense and for catching those who prefer fleeing to paying.

## The War Wizards of Cormyr

The Forest Kingdom is famous—and widely feared—for its state force of wizards, which defends and informs the Dragon Throne. The War Wizards are the ultimate “not-secret” police, a self-governing force that spies on everyone in Cormyr, from the Obarskys to night-soil carters, to try to uncover threats to the throne before they truly imperil the stability of the kingdom.

Cormyr is thought of by many in the Realms as a shining bulwark of peaceful, law-abiding prosperity. It certainly strives to be, but behind the bright exterior of green forests, verdant farms, fluttering banners, and Purple Dragons in shining armor are dark and ever-present threats. Arabel and Marsember are both conquered cities that frequently stir into near rebellion, and nobles all over Cormyr test the authority of the ruling Obarskys all the time.

Without the Wizards of War—and an energetic, wise, strong-willed person at their head, like Vangerdahast—Cormyr would have been plunged into civil war scores of times, or (in the words of the sage Alaphondar) “leaped into civil strife with savage eagerness, and never left that bloody state until no one was left who could stand and swing a sword.”

In Cormyr, nobles personally swear loyalty to both the sovereign when they come of age, by name, and in the presence of the monarch and the Crown, pledging their persons to the defense of the realm. Purple Dragons, lesser courtiers, and minor officials of the realm swear to the Crown and the Dragon Throne before no less than three ranking courtiers and the Royal Magician, or a member of the Obarskys plus a court sage. In time of war, battlefield oaths are acceptable before three serving Purple Dragons and a Purple Dragon officer of the rank of ornion or higher. Oaths are sworn when entering service, and might

be redemanded (“reconfirmed”) at any time, at the pleasure of the monarch or regent.

Highknights and courtiers of rank take personal oaths to the sovereign in the presence of the sovereign; a priest of the swearer’s primary faith; the Royal Magician; another member of the Obarskyr family; or failing that, two persons of royal noble families, a court sage, and a court scribe.

All of these oaths are renewed when a new sovereign or regent takes the Dragon Throne. War Wizards swear before the Mage Royal, one War Wizard, and a court scribe or a member of the Obarskyr family. However, they can swear before the second-in-command of the War Wizards, three other War Wizards of at least twelve seasons of service, and a court scribe. When the Mage Royal and the Court Wizard are separate persons, either will suffice. In the event that both offices are vacant, any nine long-service War Wizards—so long as either one of the two highest-ranking surviving War Wizards is included—can receive the oath of loyalty.

This oath of loyalty is informally and universally known as the Handflame, because someone accepting the oath before the court often conjures up illusory flame around his or her hands for dramatic effect, transferring it briefly to the swearer’s hands as the accepter clasps the hands of the swearer. This formality is usually dispensed with in private. A War Wizard’s oath is taken only once. Dismissal from the organization, for reasons of age, ill health, loss of desire to serve, or unfitting conduct, is referred to as “release from the oath.” The Handflame is always spoken from memory, not recited by the accepter or a prompter and repeated by the swearer. Its words are as follows.

*I, [insert full formal name, without titles but including all given used names and aliases, and truenames if the oath is taken in private], give my service unfailingly loyal to the Mage Royal of Cormyr, in full obedience of speech and action, that peace and order shall prevail in the Forest Kingdom, that magic of mine own and others be used and not misused. I do this in trust that the Mage Royal shall unswervingly serve the throne of Cormyr, and if the Mage Royal fall, or fail the Crown and Throne, my obedience shall be to the sovereign directly. Whenever there is doubt and dispute, I shall act to preserve Cormyr. Sunrise*

*and moonfall, so long as my breath takes and my eyes see, I serve Cormyr. I give my life that the realm endure.*

All personal oaths and many noble oaths of Cormyr include variant flowery language, if approved beforehand by both independent heralds and the accepters, and there’s no reason why War Wizard oaths cannot also have embellishments, as long as this core is retained. In one instance, a War Wizard was recruited quite informally: Vangerdahast said, “Well enough, I accept your service. Swear to serve?” and received a response of “Uh, yes.” Whereupon Vangerdahast replied, “Right, you’re in. Now, I order you to . . .”

Most Wizards of War would privately agree that no one really leaves the organization except by dying. There is rarely true retirement, but rather reassignment to do sedentary spying work or magical maintenance work. The force is the envy of many lands, and has survived in part because of the covert support of Mystra.

## THE SECRET HISTORY OF THE ZHENTARIM

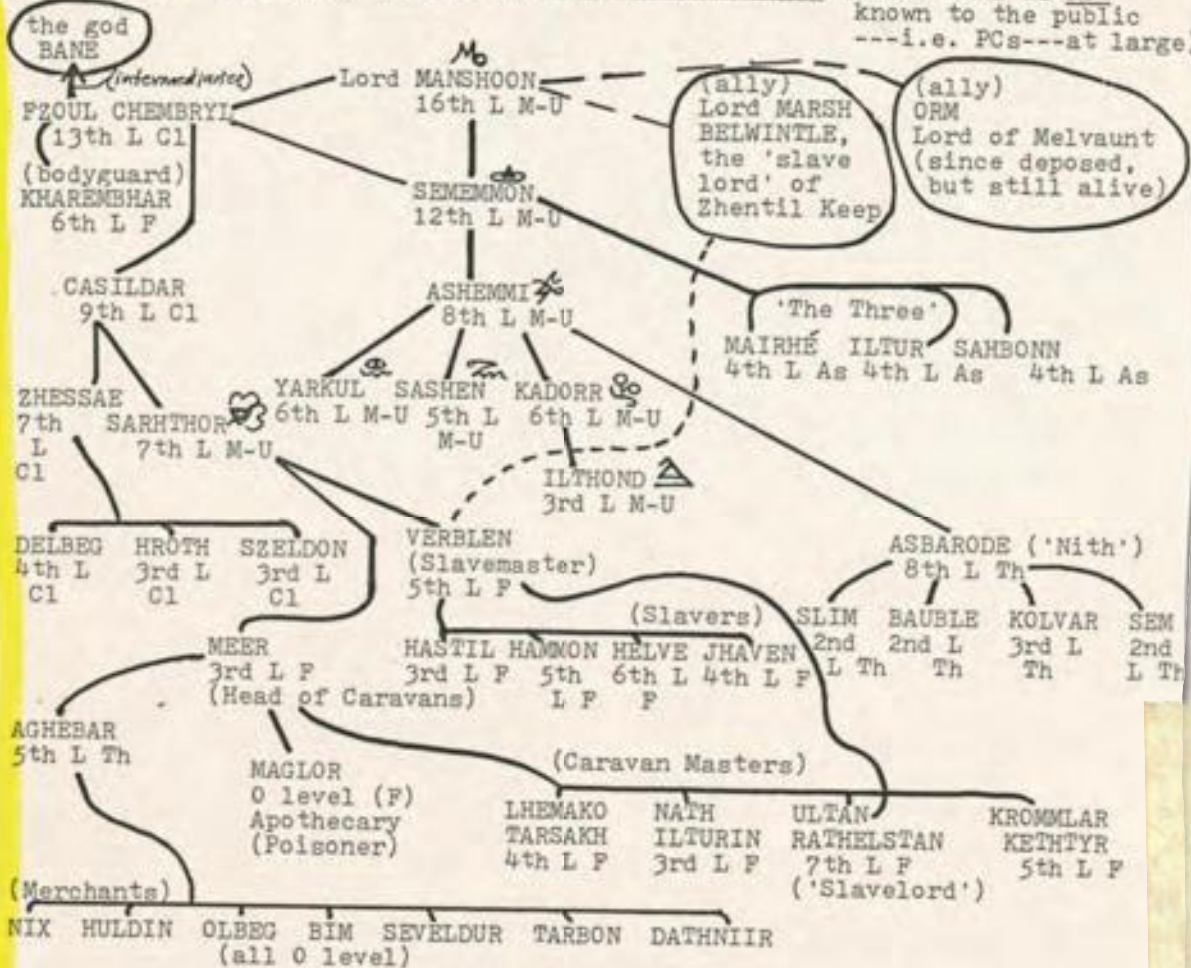
The driving force behind the founding of the Zhentarim was the wizard Manshoon, whose thirst for power, domination, and rulership almost matched the hunger of the beholders for the same.

Manshoon began his quest for power by backing up his older, louder, far less subtle older brother, the warrior Asmath. Foreseeing a long, bloody, and probably losing battle if Asmath tried to violently forge the strongest faction among many in Zhentil Keep, Manshoon decided on another road.

While he and his brother allied with Lord Chess and through that individual sought the loyalties of many lords and wealthy rising merchants of Zhentil Keep, Manshoon privately met and made common cause with the beholders who had come to dominate the local church of Bane. The beholders promised him that if he and the “magelings” (young, ambitious wizards whom Manshoon commanded) helped the beholders wrest the Banites away from the nominal head of the church, the decadent High Imperceptor, the Banites would join the Zhentarim and win

THE ZHENTARIM 'Network', as of the Year of the Prince

(note: this is not known to the public ---i.e. PCs---at large)



The Zhentarim's merchant and slave-trading interests can clearly be seen. A few further notes on the organization follow.

The Inner Ring of Power' of the Network are Manshoon, Fzoul, and Sememonn; Casildar and Ashemmi (replacing Yuldi) are the lieutenants. Manshoon maintains his paramount position by means of his arts, his servant efreeti, and his ally Xulla, the Eye Tyrant (who replaced Xantriph in the service of Bane after the PCs destroyed the latter; Xulla is much less powerful, and hides rather than dominating others in public as Xantriph did).

Of the deceased Zhentarim members: Sarm was a renegade cleric brought into the alliance by Whisper (or so Whisper believed); Whisper gave him one of the Seven Lost Rings of Mhzental. Sarm was actually a spy for Manshoon, who was (rightly) suspicious of Whisper's growing ambitions and non-Zhentarim personal activities. Whisper met directly with his three underlings (Aghebar, Maglor, and Stroy), arriving by Teleport, protected by his Golem and by a Shield spell, to issue commands and receive reports. Meeting times, locations, and (rarely) additional information were given by Whisper via a trained crow with a legband. A Magic Mouth spell on the legband gave the information if a person matching the description spoke Whisper's name at the right place and ti

The first flowchart outlining the ever-changing hierarchy of the Zhentarim. This simplified outline was current as the Year of the Prince began; four months later, it was woefully out of date. The Knights of Myth Drannor often never knew that a foe they had taken down was a Zhent spy. Manshoon kept the ranks in flux by challenging magelings (ambitious young wizards) to prove themselves by slaying Elminster or completing similarly deadly tasks. Fzoul and the beholders did their own prunings. So I redrafted this chart often. Secretly, of course.



Manshoon the lordship of Zhentil Keep. To accomplish this, Manshoon and his magelings were to personally pledge fealty to the god Bane, and promise the Lord of Tyrants that he would transform the faith into a far greater power than it had waned into under the High Imperceptor.

Manshoon would get the title and the power he craved, and the beholders would get the power they'd ached to wield for so long. The beholders would dominate not just a priesthood, but also the most powerful city-state of the Inner Sea North and a rich mining power that would be swiftly built into a military juggernaut able to defeat any foe in the field—or so Manshoon promised.

Secretly, Manshoon didn't want the cares and pressures of ruling an expanding empire. Ambitious rivals such as Fzoul or the beholders could take over, and Manshoon could skillfully manipulate them into believing they had duped and bested him to do so. He would even serve someone who rose past him, so long as he got ample opportunity to pursue his most cherished dream.

More than aught else, Manshoon desired to increase his personal magical might so he could dominate wizards and sorcerers. He considered mighty wielders of the Art as superior beings to the "common cattle" of humanity. To rule them is to rule the best—and thus to be the best. Manshoon wanted to achieve a life of relative ease and luxury, to spend his time crafting ever stronger spells, and so make himself the greatest, most famous wizard ever. To do that, he would need great wealth to afford all he wanted for spell crafting. He preferred not to suffer the endless interruptions and perils of hiring out his magic to others to raise funds—in such pursuits he would come into frequent contact with adventurers and mercenaries who might kill him, steal from him, or gain a hold over him.

Enter the central goal he set for the Zhentarim wizards: to establish the shortest trade route linking the Moonsea with the rich markets of the Sword Coast lands. Finding and controlling better trade routes than those of all his rivals would become the daily work of his magelings, as he set them tasks that would test them, weed out the fools and the undisciplined, and force them into rivalries that would keep them at each other's throats rather than plotting against him.

With the aid of his notorious stasis clones—at least a dozen of which still survive, scattered

across other worlds and dimensions—Manshoon intended to outlast those foes he couldn't outwit or destroy. To guard against Mystra and Azuth foiling his ambitions with their dictates, Manshoon sought the personal patronage of Bane, and won it.

Though his fortunes have risen and fallen with Bane's, ever since, the two have aided each other effectively. Bane's return was rooted in creatures readied by Manshoon's magic. In gratitude—and from a desire to maintain one of his most useful mortal pawns—Bane has rescued Manshoon time and time again.

There are many accurate accounts of Manshoon's angry, fearful, or reckless behavior—but all those from the later 1400s DR are due to the insanity aroused in Manshoon clones when multiple are awake and active at the same time. What some sages have called "the Manshoon Wars" did not span just the few wild years most believe to be the case, but lasted for more than a century. During this entire time, a Manshoon clone ruled the city of Westgate and headed the Night Masks as Orbakh the vampire, and other Manshoon clones were on the loose elsewhere in Faerûn—every last one of them less than sane, and acting accordingly.

Manshoon's earliest and least powerful surviving clones are more dangerous than his later, more magically accomplished selves. This is true because the early clones retain more of his calm, cold calculation, his freedom from loving or holding anyone in friendship, his clearest and most ruthless thinking . . . and his fiercest ambition. The older Manshoon was increasingly tempered by life, as his most hated rivals Szass Tam, Khelben "Blackstaff" Arunsun, and Elminster Aumar all were. He was mellowing, and starting to feel and pursue other interests aside from the drive for ever more powerful Art and the acquisition of wealth necessary to get that mightier magic.

At least one of his early clones foresaw the mess of the Manshoon Wars and hid himself very well, returning to stasis enclosed within multiple ward spells so as to survive the fray. That clone still sleeps in hiding, and will emerge after all other Manshoons have fallen.



*“Imposing” might be the most genteel way to characterize the air given off by a band of Zhentarim agents, though they might themselves prefer an expression with more of a fear-inducing connotation—such as, for instance, “cold to the core.”*

## Seeking the Best Routes

Getting rich by control of that “shorter, cheaper, faster, and all ours” trade route betwixt the Sword Coast and the mineral wealth of the Moonsea is what the Zhentarim were originally all about. At least, that’s what they were all about once Manshoon consolidated his political hold over Zhentil Keep.

Hence their creation of what some call the Black Road, a route up the valley of the Tesh from Zhentil Keep and across the perilous desert of Anauroch.

If the Zhentarim suffer the loss of one end of their cherished route, their first reaction—so as not to stop the flow of trade, and therefore income—is to change the route. In the long run, they would seek to reestablish the best route, since alternative routes are longer, slower, and more expensive.

The worst fallback route—which they use for a trickle of goods to keep the path open, just

in case, is through Tilver’s Gap and the Stonelands. For this passage to handle the full traffic the Zhents want to move, the Brotherhood would have to establish dozens of legitimate costers to perform carriage through the Dales, and strengthen Darkhold to better defend the western end, bringing caravans onto existing roads at various points near Corm Orp.

Two more desirable alternatives both begin at the Citadel of the Raven and require hewing a safe route through the Border Forest to reach Anauroch. From there, the Zhents would spend a lot of coin sending caravans carrying only firewood, food, and water out into the desert to dump at specific sites before returning. In this manner, they would establish a series of “water and warmth” way stops across the frigid desert. Thanks to the cold, spell-controlled rothé (or, as a less desirable alternative, caribou) would be the beasts of burden instead of horses, because breeding enough sled dogs or training wolves would take too long.

A wise Zhent commander would run the route along those three isolated peaks, Azirrhath being the most easterly, and use the heights as navigational aids and signal beacons. This icy route would damage some trade goods, and could reach the western edge of Anauroch at either end of the Far Forest. Which end of the Far Forest is chosen would depend on how fiercely Llorck is held against the Zhents. The river Delimbiyr would be their first choice to continue onward, since it would allow them to use their existing agents in Loudwater and elsewhere who represent the western end of their present route.

If they can't use the Delimbiyr, then they would have to travel the harder way: west across the headwaters of the Delimbiyr and along the southern edge of the Nether Mountains to the valley of the Rauvin, and down through the Silver Marches.

The best Zhent strategy would be to establish all of these routes, but heavily use only the one that proves to have the lowest losses of men and cargo, turning to the others if the prime route is threatened by rivals or blocked by some natural occurrence.

While Manshoon was in charge, the Zhents did just that. Later, under Fzoul Chembryl, the Zhents started to try to accomplish all sorts of things at once, and although they seemed everywhere and more powerful, they became far less effective at actually finishing anything they set out to do.

Increasingly, as time passed, personal ambition on the part of most Zhents led to infighting that was likely to flare into open brawling whenever failure was perceived.

## Zhent Battle Tactics

In the field, Zhent forces in the mid 1300s DR were commanded in many different ways as various commanders—some far from competent—sought to impress their superiors or just win the day dramatically, by trying new maneuvers. So aside from obvious responses, such as rushing to contain intruders or trying to surround foes, an adventuring band encountering Zhents would seldom see the same tactics twice.

Mounted Zhent road patrols near Voonlar or Yûlash set out with at least twenty Zhentilar warriors, sometimes accompanied by up to four raw

recruits, learning on the job. These warriors were commanded by a priest, who was sometimes accompanied by an underling, and a wizard of lesser stature than the priest who sometimes had an apprentice along. If neither the priest nor the wizard had a lackey, they were instead accompanied by at least one mounted crossbowman of skill.

Priests on missions—either in Zhentil Keep, another Zhent-dominated urban setting, or out in the countryside—traveled in groups of five or six, along with their errand runners and whatever number of Zhentilar fighters the priests deemed necessary for their own safety. In determining the strength of their guard, they tended to be more cowardly than bold.

When sallying forth into known battle rather than patrolling, Zhent forces were smaller than three patrols combined. These Zhentilar troops were composed mainly of fighters and bolstered by a handful of magelings, each of whom was accompanied by at least one personal bodyguard from among veteran Zhentilar crossbowmen. Priests of Bane magically observed from a safe distance, guarded by their own (stronger than the wizards') bodyguards, and with defensive spells prepared. Their task was to observe and report back, fighting only to win free of enemies.

If the foe is deemed formidable, such as veteran adventurers would be, a "snake" force was also deployed. This group was composed of a trio or a quintet of experienced Zhentarim wizards with full battle-spells ready, usually accompanied by a few magically controlled monsters. This force waited in concealment—magical or natural—until it was magically directed from afar by the force commander to emerge and attack the enemy from behind once the foe was engaged with the Zhentilar troops.

The magelings accompanying the Zhent warriors could use any sort of spell, including experimental disasters. They hurled their magic recklessly; they were out to prove themselves and cared little for the defense of items, territory, or their fellow Zhents. They cared a lot for the defense of their own persons, however, and if the battle turned against their side, they would flee, ignoring any orders to the contrary.

(As a DM, I have always used core rulebook arcane spells for Zhentarim mages, but tweaked every last one slightly, in terms of the appearance of the unleashed magic, its area of effect, or its

material components and casting details. This technique keeps players guessing and roleplaying rather than running their characters in combat on the basis of what they know of spells from the rulebooks.)

The experienced Zhentarim wizards in a snake force wore magic rings to teleport themselves out of danger, and attacked in coordinated unison, seeking to strike hard, do damage, and get out, rather than to rescue Zhents or win the field. They heeded Manshoon's orders to harry enemies through repeated fighting, wearing them down rather than doing anything overly risky or heroic in trying to destroy all foes as swiftly and decisively as possible.

The watching priests were usually far enough from the main fray to be able to flee easily. If they were chased by a determined enemy, their retreat was through an area where more powerful Banite clergy could ambush their pursuers with multiple magical attacks.

A Zhent force that knew it was going up against particularly persistent foes would often send monsters against them first. Once the enemy was bloodied, but before the foe defeated the beasts, veteran Zhentarim mages would attack with a construct, and finally with their spells. Zhentilar troops then charged in to prevent the enemy from reaching the wizards.

Manshoon often sent Zhent forces (in particular ambitious magelings) up against tough foes as a means of testing them. If they were weaklings, they were better gone, but if they succeeded, they eliminated or weakened those foes and became more experienced, confident, and useful to Manshoon.

## Zhent Garrisons

During the time when Manshoon led the Black Brotherhood, Zhentarim strongholds, storage caches in caverns and old tombs, and Zhent-allied naga lairs were usually guarded by helmed horrors, because casual intruders were more likely to be more terrified of them than of any human. Secondary guards, in Zhent fortresses and warehouses, were often banelar nagas or dark nagas, with bored, resentful "duty wizards" as backup. Duty wizards are Zhentarim mages assigned to such duties as punishment, or because they are out of favor. The backups always had

some means, from message pigeons to magic, of reporting attacks on the stronghold—or other interesting events—to other Zhents elsewhere.

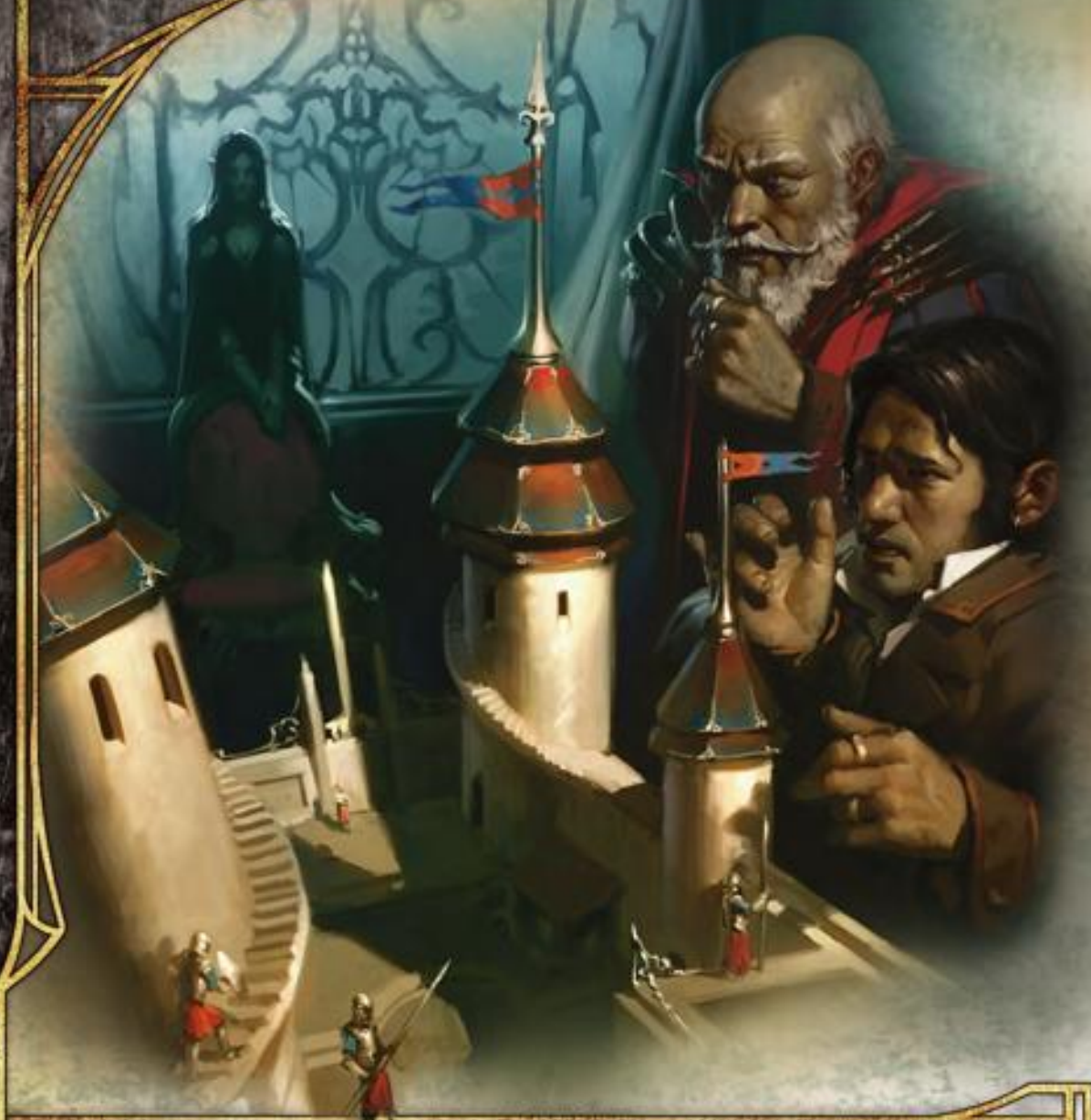
No foe of the Zhentarim should ever expect to raid or overwhelm and seize a Zhent-held building or even a roadblock without other Zhents knowing about it. Getting the word out *right away* is a firm, standing order from Manshoon. And after a few Zhents died slowly and painfully as lessons to others, that order rose to supersede any fears of consequences that might lead a Zhent to be slow to report.

## The Right Air of Menace

The Zhentarim have achieved a lot through intimidation, but they are far more than jackbooted thugs who turn cowardly when faced with real resistance. They have their spies, and they often make uncooperative people "go missing" rather than showing up to publicly butcher them or to set their homes on fire. Sometimes they magically assume the likeness of someone they've killed or taken captive, to hide in plain view and to lay blame on that person for something the Brotherhood did. Sometimes they leave false messages or "dropped items" to be found, to mislead others. Never forget that some Zhentarim are *very* smart.

The Black Brotherhood long ago realized that a fearsome reputation can cow people into doing what you want them to—if you make the right examples of a few, and spread (and steer) precisely worded rumors so the populace takes your hints and outright directions—better than the most exhaustive policing and patrolling can. Folk will even eagerly do things if you can make them think what they're doing was their own idea, or is a clever dodge around detested taxes or rules. Why get a sword rusty killing a farmer, when he could work hard feeding you for years to come?

All Zhentarim can act like menacing butchers, but most of them are far more than that.



### 3 HEARTH AND HOME

The so-called mundane details of daily life have spurred many an adventure. Whether spurred by the need for somewhere warm to sleep, food and drink, or something to properly and protectively clothe oneself, everyday life is the nucleus around which adventure is built.

Every player whose character has been attacked at home, in bed, or has arrived home battered and weary after a hard adventure to find that home looted, burned to the ground, or under the bulk of a grinning dragon, knows the sickening shock, the violation, of having one's home messed with. As

the beggar Jorthyn famously told King Azoun IV of Cormyr: "I'll fight for my best begging spot, Majesty, just as fiercely as you'll defend yon Palace."

Azoun—and the people in wider Cormyr, when they heard what Jorthyn had said—agreed with his every word. Sage or shopkeeper, farmer or noble, your home is nigh everything.

Beginning with that topic, here follows discussions of those aforementioned mundane details: gathering places both private (the home) and public (the neighborhood tavern); the dishes and drinkables Faerûnians prepare and consume; and

the various ways in which they outfit and adorn their bodies, ranging from everyday wear to the highest of fashion.

## WHERE ONE'S HAT IS HUNG

In the Realms, people can live in anything, from grand palaces and fortresses to dirt dugouts and caves.

For instance, in the windswept, cliff-top Sword Coast coastal fishing community of Ulgoth's Beard, almost everyone dwells in dirt-floored, windowless stone cottages with roofs of growing turf, planted with herbs and edibles. Most such dwellings have an entry room that doubles as a dining and living room (and in winter, as a kitchen), and opens into two or three inner rooms that are used for bedchambers and storage. The hearth is central, and in cold weather, stones are heated and placed in beds and cold corners to warm the dwelling as much as possible. The fisher folk of Ulgoth's Beard refer to these humble cottages as their "dens."

In summer, they gather peat and wood, some of which they "slowburn" in clay-choked fires into charcoal, for use in winter cooking. They also gather berries from thickets in the "breaks" along the cliffs, and smoke and salt fish. Most homes in the Beard have outside chimney ovens for summer cooking, and racks on which the fisher folk spread their nets for drying and mending. Filleted fish are laid out under fine bird nets for curing.

Folk of the Heartlands are far more familiar with root cellars and such for the winter storage of vegetables and fuel. Their usual dwellings are timber-framed homes, the oldest and grandest having fieldstone foundations and ground floors. Most farming families in the Heartlands till six acres or less, though some own or claim far more. Much land is left to grow wild, as woodlots have proven a vital part of their commerce, providing a source of firewood, poles (from coppicing), and such, and untilled meadows provide handy wild grazing land.

Grim past experience with fires has led many folk in the North, and much of the Heartlands, to build small, scattered barns and outbuildings instead of one barn close to a lone house. Where marauding beasts are a problem, people lay thick

thorn hedges or wooden stockades as barriers and make use of nearby streams as crude moats, helping to protect the livestock in these scattered buildings.

In cities, most buildings are rectangular blocks of brick and stone, with gently sloped slate or tile roofs. In areas that see snow, buildings often have steeply pitched roofs so as to shed it more quickly. A typical city building has shops in the "first down" (cellar level) and on street level, with two or three (and in a few of the more prosperous and crowded cities, four) floors above the street-level shop. In the priciest heart of a city's urban area, the lowest of those upper floors, or all of them, are apt to contain business offices. Elsewhere, they are usually rented out to tenants as living space, very like real-world low-rise apartment buildings.

Walled cities with growing populations and prosperity experienced rebuilding throughout the 1300s DR that continues unabated thereafter. This effort created the "tallhouse," a tall, narrow, tenement-like building sharing side walls with adjacent buildings. Tallhouses are now abundant in Waterdeep, Athkatla, and the cities of Sembia. In a tallhouse, each tenant either owns chamber pots and kitchen facilities, or is forced to use a communal outdoor brick oven and privies at the end of the back garden—if there is a garden. Where tenants occupy entire floors, cooking tends to be on a back balcony to minimize the risk of fire, except in the coldest winter weather, when warmth is desired.

Increasingly, in wealthy neighborhoods in Waterdeep (North Ward and Castle Ward), and in Selgaunt, tallhouses are owned by one person and rented out by the floor, not divided up into the usual warren of small rooms or "darchains" (suites of linked rooms, usually three).

City tenants usually cook on small iron-cauldron wood stoves with iron legs set on layers of stones. These wood stoves are used to heat surrounding walls of stacked stones that can be carried to beds or other rooms to radiate warmth. Each stove has a cylindrical metal chimney that branches horizontally through the rooms to the windows, where shutters can be opened to let out the smoke. This arrangement offers warmth and a hanging place to dry damp clothing.

An isolated farm might be a "steading" or a "croft" (and its owners, "crofters"). It is called a

“hold” only if it is fortified or defensible in some way. This could mean it has earthworks or stone towers, or even a cave.

The word “cabin” is unknown in the Realms. There are cottages, but most who live in them call them “my hearth.”

“Standath” is the Dragon Reach and Moonsea name for a rectangular stone building that has cellars. Shops are often located on the uppermost cellar level, entered by a “duck down steps” route from street level, as well on the ground floor, and sometimes even the second floor. The upper floors of a standath, of which there are two or more, are usually given over to residential suites. Sometimes the ground-level shop extends to the floor directly above it. The vast majority of crowded, square, stone-block central city buildings are standaths.

A “murdath” is the same as a standath but with no cellars beneath, usually due to hard bedrock near the surface, swampy ground, or ever-present flooding danger.

In the 1360s DR, fine city dwellings started being called mansions rather than manor houses or villas, with some exceptions, such as in Waterdeep, Amn, and Tethyr. A fortified grand house is called a keep even if it doesn’t look like a castle, and the general term for ritzy digs is “grand house.”

Any run-down hovel, from cottages to mansions, is a “darkhalls” or, if really dilapidated, a “roofwrack.” Indoor toilets are “garderobes” in grand houses or castles and “jakes” otherwise; only outdoor toilets are “privies,” “thunder-thrones,” or “gloryhouses.”

Typical furnishings for poor folk include a bed and a table with an oil lamp (or “candle-cup”). Possessions and extra blankets are kept in a strongchest that is either stored under the bed or used as a sideboard. The average strongchest is a large rectangular wooden box fitted with sturdy handles and a series of rings on the side, through which timber spars are slid through to enable the strongchest to be carried up on the shoulders by groups of people. Valuables are often hidden under the floorboards beneath the strongchest or the bed (or both), with strings of scrap metal attached to the furniture, to sound a *clang* if either is moved.

As wealth increases (and space accordingly), folk furnish their homes with chairs, then side

tables, followed by couches that aren’t just beds dressed up with cushions and sat on during the day. Lamps become far more numerous and decorative. Strongchests remain the most common means of storage.

The average strongchest is a large, rectangular lidded wooden box fitted with sturdy handles and a series of rings down the sides, through which timber spars are slid to enable the chest to be readily carried by groups of people. Only wealthy folk can afford wardrobes and other pieces of fine storage furniture.

Likewise, only the truly wealthy, and the guilds who work for them, can afford elaborate building plans. Many nobles proudly display detailed models of their country places in their city residences, for the less fortunate to gasp over at revels. A few even hire mages to populate their miniature structures with moving miniature people for such evenings (often transformed rats or mice—but sometimes hirelings who have displeased their noble masters).

## Hospitality in the Dales

It’s the custom throughout most of the Dalelands to give a visitor in summer a cup of water to drink, and a bowl of water in which to bathe one’s feet. Visitors do the bathing and the removal of footwear themselves, and can refuse either kind of aid without insulting the host.

In winter, a visitor is given warm water or warmed oils for his or her feet, and a place by the fire, stove, or whatever source of heat is available, plus something warm to drink. Again, refusing is not an insult.

Visitors who come armed with battle weaponry are expected to promise “peace upon this house,” which is a literal promise of “I won’t draw a weapon or use it while under this roof, nor set fire to the lodging itself.” Thereafter, visitors are expected to offer their sheathed swords to the lady of the house for safekeeping until their departure. By tradition, the lady of the house, who is the senior mentally competent woman in residence, puts the sheathed weapon in her bed overnight so no one can get to it in the dark hours of slumber and shed blood; but in actual practice the weapon is often hung from the rafters, laid on a mantel, or hidden. If it is hidden, it must be yielded up speedily when the guest announces his or her

intended departure, or else the guest is entitled to do violence to recover it.

## Heating and Cooking Fuel

In the Realms, as in the real world, fuels for producing heat have traditionally been ignitables that are plentiful, near at hand, gained with relative ease, and cheap—for example, wood in forests, peat near bogs, or livestock manure mixed with straw and dried in grasslands.

In desert areas across the Realms, people use dried camel dung as fuel, and the cold northern areas use the dung of local pack beasts. Additionally, some areas of grasslands, such as the Shaar, use cut sheaves or “stooks” of dried grasses (straw), and some coastal areas use fish oil or whale oil. Regardless, firewood is still by far the most plentiful and widely used fuel in the Realms.

Lands such as Cormyr, Chessenta, Tethyr, Turmish, and the Dales use coppicing on country estates to produce high wood yields. This is done by cutting limbs from living trees with care not to kill the tree, so they will regrow fuel for cutting again in a decade or less. (Coppiced trees have a distinctive appearance, which can be seen in real-world rural England.)

Much wood destined for cities is pre-burned (over a fire built in a hut to cut the wind) and smothered with turf so that it smolders, forming charcoal. The burning charcoal is then extinguished, and when cold, is transported to a city for sale. Charcoal is favored because it burns hotter and faster than wood and with less smoke. It can also be scented with various liquids to give off pleasant odors.

Dragon dung is reputed to have all sorts of wild properties and powers. Alchemists have discovered a handful of these assertions to be true, such as that it causes rapid growth and regeneration when used in a poultice, in some cases of sickness and disease. Adventurers have confirmed some others—such as that dragon dung ignites easily, even in freezing or drenched conditions; that it can in some confined conditions be made to explode when lit; and that it burns with an intense blue flame. All such tales stress, however, that only the dung of certain types of dragons does these particular things . . . and the accounts differ on which types have which effects.

## INNS AND TAVERNS

Inns are primarily places where a traveler can sleep for the night, stable one's horses, buy semi-secure short-term storage, and get simple meals either in one's rooms or in a “common room” (dining room).

Alehouses (taverns) are mainly places for drinking, sometimes with rentable private booths or chambers for conducting business meetings. Such chambers can also be rented for overnight stays, and simple food of the sausage, meat-pie, stew, and bread-loaf variety can be had. (Taverns in the Realms seldom offer extensive menus.) The main room of a tavern is a taproom, and taverns have tavernmasters and even tankard-tenders (but never barkeeps, barkeepers, or bartenders). Female servers are known as wenches (not a disrespectful term), and male servers are known as keghands, never waitresses and waiters. Taverns serve ale in tankards, and wine in tall glasses or flagons (no one uses the words “mug” or “pint”).

The Realms has uncounted thousands of both inns and taverns. A small wayside settlement might have just an inn that serves also as a tavern. Conversely, backcountry hamlets and villages not on a trade road often lack an inn; the tavern serves both functions, with a stable loft offering crude overnight sleeping facilities for travelers. Although generalizations are by nature oversimplifications, taverns are generally noisier and less formal than inns, and taverns tend to welcome everyone, whereas inns are restricted to paying guests—and perhaps one or two persons who come to meet with each guest. Local law keepers tend to be slightly more lax in disciplining the patrons of taverns (“Well, what did ye expect? Drunkards brawl, and you went to a place where folk go to get drunk!”) than they are for the guests of inns, where it's understood that patrons are paying for some measure of peace, quiet to sleep, and security.

Taverns and inns often have stables, run by stablemasters who direct hostlers to tend to horses (these handlers are rarely called grooms). Both inns and taverns have cellarers who see to the procurement, storage, and retrieval of drinkables and sometimes of food, too. Female servants are generally known as maids, and male servants as jacks.



A wayside inn or tavern might buy, sell, and trade mounts and pack animals, but in cities and market towns, such guild-dominated trade is done at “livery stables” instead.

In a small inn where one servant sees to everything for multiple rooms, that servant is a “chambermaid” or “chamberjack” (less formally, just “maid” or “jack”). If the inn is a little larger, it will have “chamberers” assisted by “warmers” (more formally, “warming maids” or “warming jacks”) who see to chamber pots and to ewers, basins, and towels, for wash water and drinking water. These names are used even in inns that never heat water.

An even larger inn will separate the warmers from those who deal with chamber pots, who then are “nightmaids” and “nightjacks” or, less formally, “potmaids” and “potjacks.”

Typical superior tavern fare throughout Faerûn consists of inexpensive drinks—such as mint water, small beer, local ales and wines, and some offering of stronger spirits—as well as an assortment of nuts, wheels of cheese, small round loaves of salty bread, sausages, soups, and “everything in” stews. One of these stews usually contains boar scraps and barley, the broth thickened with mashed yellow peas. It is always salty, to encourage more drinking, and always served in tankards with long spoons chained to their handles for use in scraping out the last food at the bottom of the tankard.

## Public Dining and Menus

In the Realms, the most popular everyday terms for “restaurant” are “feasthouse” and the slightly grander “feast hall” (more often these days “feasting hall,” to avoid confusion with “festhall”).

The Chondathan word “skaethar” has crept into Common as formal usage, meaning “dining establishment,” where the word “feasthouse” has a meaning closer to “eatery.”

Small wayside inns and taverns that offer the only public dining in a town don’t bother with menus. Whatever’s “on” tonight is it, with usual meal choices so simple that the plattermaid just verbally imparts them (“What’ll it be, goodsirs? The fish or the joint?” or “Full meat or the stew?”) and outlines the drinkables and desserts—the latter being the real “treat worth

paying for” in the eyes of most commoners and farmers in the Realms.

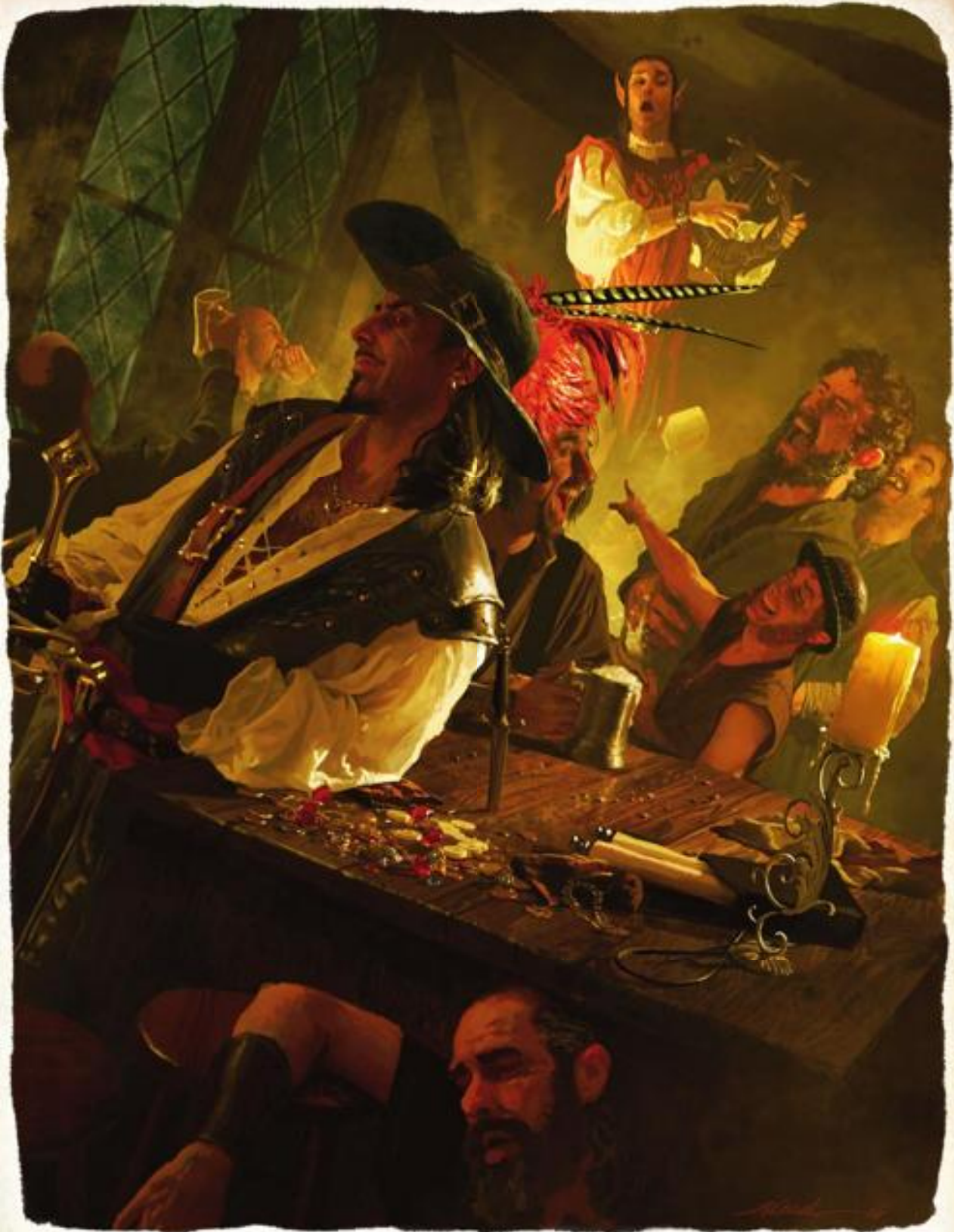
A larger settlement might have multiple places to eat but little true competition. For example, a village might have a temple that serves food only to pilgrims and night guests, an inn that serves a different sort of fare but only to patrons, and a tavern that serves only sausages, cheese, and hot hardbread with lots and lots of ale to everyone who comes in the door and pays. Again, no written menus are needed or used.

Most feasthouses and feast halls inside inns and taverns are located where there’s true competition, as is usual in market towns and cities, as well as places where food sources change often (fresh fish landed at ports, for example). Newly arrived fare is chalked up on menu boards, typically on display beside the bar as well as on a pillar not far inside the front door.

Royalty, nobility, and wealthy social climbers have always regarded beautiful printed menus (often taken home as remembrances) as a mark of what they call “proper” or “superior” dining. As a result, all highborn feasting halls and inns that have ornate feast chambers or agreements with feasthouses and dining clubs tend to prepare handsomely calligraphed “provender bills.” These provender bills cover both sides of one sheet of heavy paper; menus are a field in which exotic papers are the rage, not parchment. In Waterdeep, almost every eatery in North Ward, Sea Ward, Castle Ward, and Trades Ward west and north of the City of the Dead employs such printed menus. Even some of the more exclusive “upstairs clubs” in Dock Ward, frequented by young nobles, use either printed menus, done by the broadsheet printers, or handwritten cards.

A few establishments boast what we would recognize as coated-paper, multipanel foldout menus. The coating is wax, to keep stains from stews and sauces off the paper, which is usually shield-shaped rather than rectangular. These establishments are mainly in Calimshan and the Tashalar, but there are a few in Amn, coastal Tethyr, and the Vilhon.

An old tradition around the shores of the Shining Sea—still seen in some places there, and flourishing in Var the Golden—is that of the banner maids. These are provocatively or grandly dressed lasses who accompany the plattermaid to a table of diners. The banner maid is literally



MICHAEL KOMARCK

*When the evening rowdiness hits its peak in the local tavern, it might be hard to find a quiet corner for a hushed conversation . . . but if all else fails, there's always the cellar.*

wearing the menu, as a fore-and-aft stiffened fabric that fits close to the body. She stands and moves as diners direct, they choose their meals, the platter-maid records the orders, and off both maids go to the next table. Good-looking and attractively dressed banner maids often get called back several times throughout a meal. It's considered good fun and acceptable to "call forth" the banner maid once more or even several times as one eats, but it is not considered good form to dally over the initial order, or to recall her multiple times immediately after making that order. Some restaurants use their banner maids for dealing with rowdy diners, equipping them with bulbs of swiftsleep gas or liquid drugs that act as sedatives when mixed with wine or ale hidden beneath their menu boards.

## WHAT'S TO EAT?

The bounty of the land and agriculture are watched over by Chauntea; however, no deity governs food and drink. Many faiths use special foods, meals, food preparations, and drugs in various holy rituals, but food and drink are not exclusively the portfolio of any one deity.

The best food nowadays is never imbued with magic, after centuries of accumulated fear and abhorrence of the results of magical tinkering with food. Too often in the past has magic been used to poison foes, transform foes, or just trick someone into eating dung, glass shards, or other disgusting or harmful substances that had been temporarily transformed into something more appetizing. Just about every Faerûnian society down the centuries has shunned magical meal preparation—except for specific tasks such as peeling and ingredient mixing—and the prevailing attitude across the Realms is admiration of cooking done without magic. That said, no one will cavil at someone who uses a spell to get drenched wood burning for a cooking fire in a rainstorm, or uses a spell to thaw frozen food in a blizzard.

Some jaded and wealthy nobles see enchanted food as exclusive, rare, and special because it's forbidden or frowned upon, and they handsomely pay wizards—especially sorcerers, who can work magic without a lot of obvious casting preparations—to prepare food magically at private feasts and revels. Of course, nobles who love such fare

claim it has a taste that more mundane food can never achieve; many lonely wizards who are poor cooks privately disagree.

The backbone of many human diets is grain and meat. Most meat in the Realms is marinated simply and cheaply in stale beer with sugar, garlic, salt, and mustard, or the cook's preferred handful of herbs, to taste. An alternative marinade is fruit juice, most often the wet mash of grape skins left over after grapes have been pressed and the fluid poured off for wine making. Meat that's been salted to preserve it is soaked overnight, and the water is then poured off to cut its saltiness. Lamb and boar are often scored, with cloves or garlic buds thrust into the slits, before cooking. Most meats are painted with a mix of powdered spices (sage, rosemary, and the like) before being spit-roasted, and Calishite cooks even add certain substances to the hearth-coals so the aromatic smoke will permeate the meat as it's roasting. The aromatic herbs are always secrets of the cook, however, most are tinctures or tisanes made from rose petals or the leaves and petals of other flowers. The blood from slaughtered animals is always saved to be cooked as drippings or used in making gravy, sometimes with a few drops of vinegar to prevent congealing.

## Handfoods

Snacks are popular in most places in the Realms, particularly in crowded, fast-paced cities.

Here follows a far from complete list.

**Hand Pies:** Meat-and-gravy-filled, savory palm-sized pastries of an astonishing variety of ingredients and tastes, from curries, to leek-with-bacon, to minted lamb. Popular in the Heartlands, the Dales, and the Savage Coast North.

**Salted, Roasted Seeds:** Especially pumpkin and loalurr (pistachios). Popular in the Tashalar.

**Wheels of Sharp Yellow Cheese:** Some with ground nuts or diced olives inside, or laced with zzar or various liqueurs. Popular in the Heartlands, the Dales, and the Savage Coast North.

**Raisins:** Popular in the Heartlands and on the coast of the Sea of Fallen Stars.

**Date Cakes:** Served as pressed, flat ovals. Popular in Calimshan and the Tashalar.

**Fig Cakes:** Served as pressed, flat ovals. Popular in Calimshan.



*The folk of the Realms, even those of lesser means, eat well. If something is edible, or can be made so, then chances are good that someone in Faerûn has made the consumption of that something into a . . . memorable . . . culinary experience.*

**Cranberry Cakes:** Served as pressed, flat ovals. Popular in Sembia, the Vilhon, and Turmish.

**Dried Apricots:** Popular in the Tashalar, Luiren, Var, and Estagund.

**Quince Sticks:** Cakes of dried quince pressed together with various beetles and formed around edible kloor roots (licorice-like roots of a parched wilderland bush). Popular in the Vilhon, Shaar, Var, and Estagund.

**Honeydrops:** Thumb-sized candies of honey mixed with an edible gum and spices to provide flavor and keep the honey from melting and running in hot conditions. Popular in Calimshan, the Vilhon, Mulhorand, Raurin, and Chessenta.

**Sugar Cakes:** Like real-world petit-fours, sugar icing-drenched confections of baked cake that have been laced with jams or chocolate or herbal distillates. Popular everywhere, but they tend to be in short supply and expensive.

**Cherrybread:** Like real-world fruitcake, various diced fruits, marinated in spirits, baked into a molasses cake and sold as small whole loaves or as slices wrapped in leaves. Popular in the Border Kingdoms, the Vilhon, and on the coast of the Sea of Fallen Stars.

**Blood-Drops:** Beets sliced very thinly, fried in oil, and then dusted with salt and various spices, from sugar, cinnamon, and nutmeg to the various hot spices (like vegetable crisps).

**Potato Cakes:** Like real-world Irish wedge-shaped griddle cakes.

There are many more, but almost all large markets during summer and autumn, across most of Faerûn, should have the majority of those mentioned above for sale.

One appetizer popular in Sword Coast ports in the early 1300s DR that crept into Cormyr, Westgate, and then Sembia as the century unfolded is the talyth. This morsel is a cracker the size of

a small human palm with a thin slice of sausage on top, and various sorts of herbs, spices, and mashed-down-flat foodstuffs in between, lightly baked to glue it together. Talyths are usually savory, and can include anything from snails and oysters and spiced worms right up to diced eggs and mixed cheeses.

Talyths have been made fresh in Waterdeep, Neverwinter, Luskan, Mirabar, Elturel, Everlund, Silverymoon, and Scornubel for decades. In winter, talyths can be premade and packed on ice, for later heating or reheating, to be served immediately.

Also popular as appetizers are sugar bladders. These are confections wrapped in pig's bladders, heated on metal plates over fires to drive out their moisture, tied shut, and then painted all over with tansel (an egg- and plant-based mixture that provides an airtight seal). The bladders are then packed in pitch-sealed tins full of edible plant oils to guard against spoilage. Caravan companies ship these tins to shops and eating establishments.

Some handfoods aren't suitable as traveling fare, but others are prized by adventurers and wayfarers across Faerûn as essentials, particularly if they go beyond the standard hunk of sausage, whole pickle, and wedge or small wheel of cheese.

## REGIONAL CUISINES

It could go without saying (but won't) that different nations and cities and areas and races in the Realms have foods they prefer; the following sections highlight a few of these special dishes, and the creative names that many have been given.

### Cuisine of the Cold North

It's a very old joke to say that inhabitants of the Frozenfar eat whatever they can catch—all too often, each other.

The North is home to myriad hardy plants that survive years of successive hard freezes and thaws, growing low to the ground with abundant berries. Many an adventurer digging a snow cave to survive a night's sleep in the howling open has uncovered a good meal of tharberries (large, beige-to-white, chewy berries), laum berries (honey-sweet, orange, tiny berries), blooddrops (bright red berries that taste like cooked onions), or one of the other threescore edible berries.

Yet in a region where orc hordes rise every few decades to scour the land of everything edible in their path, the true essential for humans in the North is the rothé. This large, shaggy beast provides its milk and meat as food. The milk is used both as a liquid for drinking and cooking and to make cheese, and the meat yields roasts that are either stewed in rothé blood, fire-roasted, or "long-roasted" into long-lasting "trail gnaw." The rothé's dung can be used as fire-fuel, and its hides and the warmth of its living body can be used to protect against the cold. Roaming wild herds of rothé and cultivated, "trapped" herds of hobbled or penned-in-mountain-vales rothé, plus deer, have made human settlement possible in the North.

### Cuisine of the Inner Sea North

Hunted game has always been prominent on the tables of all lands on the northern side of the Sea of Fallen Stars. This fare is in contrast to the farmed livestock and poultry that dominate in the kitchens on the southern side of the Inner Sea. Typical city food in the lands north of the Sea of Fallen Stars is much like the cuisine of the Dragon Reach port of Tantras.

Tantras has lots of fresh fish and eel shops and stands, and its streets often reek of cooking fish in early evening. Yet a baeranth is the most popular everyday evening meal for Tantrans. The dish is a meat pie or tart with a peppery gravy inside, baked to a golden brown finish. A true baeranth mixes the smoked meat of cattle, goat, and hogs in a three-one-one ratio, but there are the inevitable tales of dogs and even humans going missing and winding up in these ever-present pies.

Baeranth vary in price from 1 sp for six to 2 cp each, depending on the size and freshness of the pie and the reputation of the shop. They are always sold hot, and can be bought from about highsun to dusk from dozens of serving-shutter-on-the-street-wall shops with names like Karvin's and Thurnan's Oven and The Meltmouth.

Sarkul (smoked fish) is also popular in Tantras. The fish are caught in the Reach, immersed in honey and seasonings, and then hung and smoked for several days in closed sheds to produce the savory sarkul. Fish is never put in a baeranth.

Up to six times per 24 hours, a Sting Fly can voluntarily jet a paralyzing, corrosive poison (save or be paralyzed for 1-6 rounds, and take 1-4 points of damage with purple flesh discolouration and 'melting'; a successful save will decrease this damage by half) along its stinger when it strikes. Its venom cannot as yet be duplicated by alchemy, and dries rapidly when in contact with air.

Sting Flies have nimble, deft legs that can carry and manipulate objects with precision. Females bear 1-3 live, miniature young, in flight, 2-3 months after mating, and ignore them the instant they have emerged from her anal opening and fallen away (they learn to fly on the drop to earth, or perish). Such young are AC8, move 1"/14", have  $\frac{1}{2}$  HD, and do 1/1-4 damage, with only three jets of venom per 24 hours; but these grow rapidly, all hunting alone. Sting Flies can communicate with a limited (10") telepathy, and some few have learned to speak a few hissing words of Common, and understand much of that spoken language. Severe cold conditions can slow a Sting Fly, and cold-based attacks will do it double damage.



A Blow Fly.



A Horse Fly.



A Horn Fly.



A Sting Fly.

*As a young student bored in a classroom, I liked to draw flies. Anything can become a monster—and in my hands, anything all too often does. I'm not trying to destroy civilization by overwhelming it with deadly devourers, but seeking to slay an early problem. When every player read every rulebook, "module," and The Dragon issue, all too often every last spell, magic item, and monster would be part of players' metagame knowledge. So, drown them in too much Realmslore for anyone to keep track of—and presto, it's real roleplaying time again.*

Locally, for some unknown reason, the very idea of fish pies is considered revolting.

Tantras has many taverns, but few dining halls or anything else similar to a restaurant. Its inns typically lack dining rooms or taprooms. Instead, they serve warm mulled cider and cold ale with buttered bread—often mraedin, a very dark, rich nutbread akin to pumpernickel—up in the rooms of guests. The taverns of Tantras serve the usual drinks, plus hot buns covered with melted cheese (but little other food). Some taverns put sliced olives or slices of sausage on the cheese of hot buns so they'll stick to it, to make their buns distinctive and popular.

Across the Inner Sea, the Akanamere supports local fisheries that bring in crabs, eels, and druth (a brown flatfish that resembles the detached sole of a leather moccasin). The eels and the flatfish are sun-dried to prepare them for transport and sale; when soaked in water or shredded into a soup or stew, they readily reconstitute. The eels have an odd, nutty taste and the flatfish have a hearty smoked bacon-like flavor but a leathery, hard-chewing consistency.

The crabs are often called stone crabs for their mottled gray color and rounded shape. They are usually tossed alive into layers of salt in barrels for transport elsewhere, an act that kills them and preserves them. After being bought out of the barrel, they must be soaked for a day to get rid of the salt, or boiled very briefly with kurlath leaves (the broad green leaves of a wild, shade-loving ground plant otherwise useful only for wrapping things in) to drive out the salt. Then the crabs can be prepared however desired. Eaten raw, stone crabs have a taste somewhat like real-world tinned smoked oysters, though they're not at all oily. The flavor of the meat readily awakens when it is cooked with herbs and spices, becoming stronger and more crablike. The crabs are extremely tasty when steamed, boiled, fried, or fire-seared.

Along the Chessentan and northern Turmish coast, tall broadleaf reeds grow thickly, forming what some folk call giantgrass forests. These serve as ideal places to hide for aquatic creatures, or for those who have access to a small, slender watercraft that can be poled and paddled. The reeds can be interlaced and woven into improvised roofs, clothing, and carrying containers—and are edible as well, though they are stinging hot, like the green ends of leeks, when chewed raw. When

boiled or stewed, they exude a gummy essence used as a thickener in many kitchens—and such a stew is nourishing in itself. Coastal dwellers usually add frogs, snails, fish, or meat scraps to such stews to yield full and satisfying meals. Families often sit around the stew-pot dipping wedges of stale bread into it, which they then eat, alternating bites with strong cheeses. This activity is known around the Inner Sea as a bowl feast.

## Tethyrian Cuisine

Tethyr is a verdant, long-settled country with many farms, and active fishing along its coasts and on its rivers. Its cultivated vineyards are located mainly inland, in the south and particularly southeast of the realm. Local meals vary with the wealth of the diners and the resources available—such as fresh fish in ports and along coastal roads, and smoked or salted fish elsewhere—but in general, daily meals in rural Tethyr tend to consist of large morningfeasts, light afternoon snacks known as runsun, and long and large evenfeasts.

Morningfeasts tend to be evenfeast leftovers, such as vegetables and scraps of meat or fish, fried in onions and oil.

Runsuns began their existence as field meals for farm workers, consisting of a drink and a savory pie—the sort of thing that is also standard tavern fare, and is served at inns in the dark hours. The pies are cold, filled with spiced roast fowl or leftover meats such as ham, diced beef, smoked meats or, along the coast, fish. All of this meat is chopped and mixed with diced parsnips or potatoes in a spinach-and-mint or spinach-and-hot-peppers “simmer sauce.”

Evenfeast is the longest meal of the day, typically served after dark (when day work is done). At expensive inns and in grand houses, it is a large meal of multiple courses, including spiced vegetables in various sauces, and fowl stuffed with herbed meats and “frothed” vegetables. The meal is washed down with various wines, and ends in a sweet fruit tart of some sort. In simpler households, evenfeast tends to be a large, hearty “manymeats” stew. In coastal settlements, the stew is often replaced by skewers of roasted-with-diced-vegetables fish (fish-kebabs), accompanied by garlic bread or cheese-flavored bread, and with a dessert of diced cheese and apples, or even a sweet (berry) pie.

## ROASTED COCKATRICE

- 1 cockatrice carcass
- 2 leeks
- 2 handfuls of morels (or 1 handful nightcap mushrooms)
- 2 plants (whole stalks, with hearts) celery or marsh lettuce
- 1 handful bean tubers (or marsh grass roots)
- 1 pinch thyme
- 1 pinch salt
- 2 pinches pepper
- 1 pouch flask red Lythton (or similar semi-sweet) wine
- 2 pours\* of hot brown Merithian sauce
- 2 knives of animal fat

\*=1 pour; tip bottle upside down, then directly upright again. Amount of contents expelled is 'one pour.' Merithian sauce is roughly equivalent to Worcestershire or "HP" sauce.

In a skillet or upended iron shield over a small fire, chop and mix leeks with the salt, pepper, and bean tubers, and sauté in animal fat until soft. Turning to the cockatrice itself, cut off the bony head and neck (which can be boiled for a soup), and slit the carcass up the breast, turning out the gizzard (with its sometimes-poisonous contents) and internal organs. The cockatrice need not be skinned, for its leathery, scaly outer skin protects the tender flesh from being burned during cooking. Don't let the blood and bodily fluids drain away, or the bird will cook too dry. Tough or dried carcasses should be doused in diluted (1 part to 2 parts water) wine before roasting.

Stuff the carcass with celery and thyme, and put in the skillet atop the sauté, roasting for sixteen verses of 'The Unicorn and the Maiden' (eight rounds) before turning.

When both sides are brown, turn the carcass about until it lies with the flattest side down, and douse it with the wine. When the bubbling and the sizzling dies, baste the carcass with the brown sauce, and roast for the space of a good sword-sharpening (6 turns), basting often with the sauce, and turning when necessary to keep the colour even.

The skin will dry and crack like old parchment, lifting and flaking away like woodash when the meal is done. Take from the fire and let cool until it can be held for eating. Goes well with beer and greens.

*I've always invented recipes that made use of monster carcasses—ever since a Realmsplay evening in 1978 when I had swooping wyverns snatch the characters' horses and mules, packed food and all. "That's all right," one player snarled, in character. "We'll eat the monsters we kill—wyverns first!" Then he looked at me, out of character, and asked, "We can do that, right? I mean, they're edible, aren't they?" The Realms has a history, and these wouldn't be the first hungry adventurers (or foraging peddlers or marching soldiers), so . . .*



Large, wealthy Tethyrian households seldom serve fish in any form; the meal of choice for those who fancy themselves of discerning taste among the wealthy is spitted fowl. This usually means skewers of many small quail and other forest game birds that have been marinated, partially boiled in broth, and then finished by being turned over a fire as the melted fats of boar and other beasts are ladled over them (and the resulting flames roar).

Children, nursing mothers, and sick folk drink either mint water or warmed mead with every meal. The usual beverages for other folk are the beer made in every household and a clear, faintly yellow, bitter white wine from southern Tethyr called llurdren or just llur (or less polite things, by outlanders encountering it for the first time). Farmers who keep livestock (and their immediate neighbors) drink the milk of goats and cows, but most milk goes into making the sharp-flavored (like real-world extra old Cheddar) orange, crumbly local cheeses (called by such names as Aerdruth and Hammaree, after the long-dead Tethyrians credited with concocting their recipes).

Berry mash (made of boiled, crushed, over-ripe fruit, when in season) is drunk, but tends to act—and be used—more as a laxative than a beverage. No other juices appear on menus, though no one cutting or biting into fruit would dream of wasting the juice that gushes forth. For that reason, cutting is done in or over bowls that are then drunk from.

Sausages aren't unknown in Tethyr, but tend to be purchased from northern Calimshan. (A taste for the highly spiced Calishite meats is slowly spreading north.) It's rare for smoked meat or livestock to be imported into Tethyr, which has more than enough of both already. In winter, root soups are popular, as are stews made from the tough bits of slaughtered animals and stored vegetables that must be used before they rot. Tethyrian cuisine tends to be simple and lightly seasoned, as befits a land that has an abundance of good, fresh food.

## Elven Cuisine

Elves have created and refined a huge variety of incredibly complicated special feast dishes, some involving cantrips that allow dry ingredients to

be “breezed” (a human observer would probably describe this as “swirl-mixing” the ingredients in midair). More modest everyday elven fare across the Realms is far simpler. Wine is commonly drunk with elven meals, a dry vintage with main fare and a sweeter quaff to finish. Most elven wines aren't nearly as intoxicating for elves as most human wines are for humans—but some humans and halflings find elven wines potent indeed. Most dwarves find elven wines both weak and odd-tasting.

**Quaffs/Slakes** (nonalcoholic): Sprucebark quaff, used to cleanse the palate and freshen the breath before and after meals; mint water; and various unfermented berry-juice drinks.

**Vegetables** (eaten raw, sometimes diced and fried with herbs and other vegetables): Brown-buds (brown Faerûnian wild forest radishes); chives; coushoots (the green new shoots of certain forest vines, such as chokevine and thaelthorn); cress; greenspear (asparagus, a staple with many elves, both raw and steamed with herbs); hot-whips (spring onions); leeks; parsley; searshoots (wild Faerûnian vine onions, a staple of elven cuisine—if left to dry until fall, they grow as hot as garlic, but don't impart pungent odors to an eater's breath); and various ferns, from fiddleheads to stewed broadleaves.

**Fruits:** Rhubarb; roseapple (a mild-flavored applelike fruit that grows at the thorny junctures of the rosethorn, a vine that grows abundantly in the Heartlands); and many sorts of berries.

**Soups** (usually served cold): Blackbark soup, which is literally the stewed bark of four or five different sorts of forest bushes, and which tastes and looks a little like a thick beef stew; blalatha soup, which is made from certain mushrooms, diced and then boiled; darblalatha soup, which is made from certain mushrooms, diced, then fried with leeks, and then mixed and boiled; haendur soup, which is made by simmering glow worms with seasoned sharp-tasting leaves; leek soup; snake soup, made by taking four sorts of snakes and beheading and then boiling them until their skins separate from the flesh and can be discarded; and turtle soup.

**Meat and Fish** (some elves eat flesh, some do not): Groundsnake, beheaded and roasted on skewers over a fire; hooroun, which is moose, always marinated with herbs to counteract the natural seasonal tastes the meat gains from the

### BAKED STIRGE ON TOAST

3 stirge carcasses (per eater; for each such quantity, use the seasonings listed below)  
6 pours white wine  
4 knives of animal fat  
1 lemon  
1 handful parsley or dill  
1 pinch salt  
(Optional: a dollop of sour cream or gravy)  
Toast  
& 2 knives animal fat

The only safely edible portion of the stirge (due to its blood-drinking habits, much of its tissues are tainted or carry diseases passed on from its liquid diet) are the knots of muscle at the bases of its wings. These must be carefully cut away from the carcass (boil your knife afterwards, and wash in fast running water) from above---that is, going in from the back, avoiding the poisonous guts of the animal and as much blood as possible. Hold the wingtips down while cutting, and once severed from the body, turn the piece so that the wing hangs entirely down---for a stirge's leathery wings are filled with blood; the animal uses them to cool its body by fanning cold air over the thin-walled blood vessels. Cut away the wings and discard, always keeping them lower than the lump of muscle. Take the fixed lump of muscle and plunge it into cool, clear fresh water. Wash it thoroughly, and don't cut away any of the revealed yellow fat; this will melt away in cooking, and keep the meat from becoming too dry and strinev. Slain stirges must be thus dressed within a day or they will be inedible (note: if the legs of a specimen have stiffened, it should be discarded).

In a skillet or upended iron shield over a fire, melt the animal fat and roast the salted stirge meat in it until browned. Then douse with wine and the juice of the lemon, cover the skillet, and let bake for sixteen verses of Laying Out The Trolls (8 rounds). Warning: overcooking will dry out the meat and make it very tough!

In a separate pan fry (in 2 knives of animal fat) toast. When done, lay the stirge meat atop them, cover with sour cream or gravy, and garnish with parsley. Let this sauce soak into the toast, and eat hot.

*One of my favorites. Having trouble finding stirges? Substitute pork ribs sprinkled with rosemary, tarragon, or diced fresh chives, bacon if not too salty, or even leftover pork chop if not too well done or dry (if it is, marinate it in half-and-half beer and barbecue sauce). For all too obvious reasons, blood sausage will probably be closer to the taste of a Faerûnian stirge, mind you. Doesn't appeal? Well, sell your stirge kills in the next village, to someone too hungry to be choosy.*

moose's eating habits; lulleth, which is a thick stew made of either muskrat, shrew, vole, or branchcat (a tree-climbing cross between a mink and a raccoon); boar, which most elves dislike, prepared the same way as lulleth; seared rabbit; silvereyes, which is a fish stew of silverflash and other small forest stream fish; sornstag, which is roasted hotspice (curried) venison; surkyl, which is porcupine with its belly slashed to insert leek and herbs, then rolled in clay and fire-baked so that the hide and quills can be removed with hardened mud shell; and lastly, thaenwing, which is spiced-and-diced grouse, partridge, quail, and woodguth (wild turkey). Most elves are revolted by the thought of eating owls, which they deem intelligent souls, and they believe that dining on raptors brings misfortune on oneself and one's kin.

**Trail Food:** Marruth (sometimes disparagingly called root pies by dwarves and humans) are pastries into which spiced and herbed mashes of vegetables have been baked. Once cooled, these pastries are rolled into rallow leaves (heavy, oily, waterproof broadleaves) to keep them from rotting, and carried for eating cold when on the move. Mint nut cheese, nuts, and dried berries are also popular trail food, as is taece, which resembles a brown, finger-length sardine and is made of fire-dried, tiny forest-stream fish. These fish contain a lot of fat, and are "crunched" (eaten whole, bones and all).

**Desserts:** Mint jelly and tarts made of various berries, sweetened with a mash of berry juices.

## Drow Cuisine

The green wine of the drow is made from orbloren, an Underdark rock fungus, distilled in a mixture of water and the juice of another sort of subterranean fungus.

Orbloren is an abundant, greenish vegetation that grows on moist rock walls. It is not nutritious, but it is also not harmful either. To be made into wine, it must be boiled in water into which another sort of fungus—abundant gray scaly scabs of marrult (imagine dun-hued slices of pepperoni thrown against a stone wall and sticking, in clusters)—has been crushed. Not much marrult is needed to make the water right for distilling the orbloren, but lots of marrult yields

the richest, most tasty, and most highly valued green wine.

The distillate is captured in a cold metal hood-and-bowl affair above the boiling vessel. It is then chilled in the dark, often by immersing metal containers of it in subterranean streams, for forty days or so. After that, it is drinkable green wine. If drunk earlier, it burns the tongue and throat. If it is murky, adding just a few grains of salt will clear it. It keeps for years, unless boiled, which gives it a disgusting burnt taste and a black, oily hue. It's still not poisonous—just horrible.

There are strong drow alcoholic drinks that use spider venom or secretions as ingredients, but don't believe the rumors: Green wine is not one of them.

Drow eat a wide variety of lichens stewed into soups, as well as Underdark worms, insects (fried in pack-lizard oil), and lizard flesh. Lolth-worshippers do not eat arachnids.

## Gnome and Halfling Cuisine

Halflings tend to dwell among humans and often make their livings producing food for humans—especially baked goods, stews, and sauces, but also portable foods such as sausages and wheels of cheese. They also make versions of all of these edibles for themselves that differ from the human versions in texture and seasonings. Halflings prize the chewy, rubbery consistency disliked by most humans, and halflings hate strong human spicing such as pepper, vastly preferring the subtle, gentle meldings of various herbs. In winter, most halfling homes have two ongoing stews simmering on the hearth: a light broth that can be drunk by the tankard, and a heavy broth, which is full of lumps of meat and vegetables.

Halflings dominate the populations of two Heartlands locations, Secomber and Corm Orp, so these places provide a glimpse of what halflings produce when left to their druthers. In both settlements, cuisine is dominated by flavored cheeses, wines and table grapes, and goat and sheep flesh prepared in many ways.

In Corm Orp, local hin produce pottery from the rich local clays, and grapes in profusion. The common grapes are both sour wine grapes and "blue eyes," edible grapes named for their color that grow in halfling-fist-sized clusters. Corm Orp produces wines and grape-based dyes for

export, and mixed food crops for local consumption. Many goats and sheep are kept in the hills overlooking Corm Orp, yielding milk, wool, and cheese. The cheese made from these goats and sheep is a soft, buttery yellow substance called Orthin (after its long-dead first maker); it's not much different from real-life Brie, but is never runny and has a very thin rind. From time to time, a few blankets made of wool or goat-hair are exported, but the rest of what the herds yield—including all the meat—is consumed locally. It has been accurately said that “cheese, bread, ale, and more cheese are what fill a happy hin’s stomach.”

Gnome cuisine is very like halfling cuisine, except that gnomes tend to make savory puddings. These are typically mixed vegetables and meats bound together in a rich gravy so heavy in natural gelatin that the whole sets into quivering semi-solidity. Gnomes prefer large savory pies for family meals, and sausages (or just drawstring sacks of cut-up, cold spiced meats) and very sweet dessert tarts for portable individual meals. Gnomes tend to like thick, dark, heavy beer, often fortified into something much more fiery. So where a halfling looks for cheese, a gnome turns to savory pudding. Gnome puddings made for travel are often sewn into skins, like real-world haggis.

## Dwarven Cuisine

Among humans, dwarves are known to be hearty eaters—especially of roasts that a human would consider dry and overdone—and are legendary for their prodigious capacity for ale and strong drink. They avidly devour food so salty that a human would shudder, but seem little attracted to sweets.

Down in their mines, dwarves always keep rock salt handy, and they lick salt from the “living rock” around them as well. Food is whatever can be caught—or must be fought—in the caverns, eaten raw if need be but preferably cooked, with an always-going simmer-pot to render tendons, fat, and blood down into gravy.

Dwarves won't eat orc flesh unless they are starving. Orc blood in gravy, however, is perfectly acceptable. Like humans, dwarves have depended on rothé to expand across the northern regions, and their tradition of axe-throwing was born from hunting rothé, deer, and other fleet-footed beasts in the mountains and rolling hills of the Realms.

These days, by preference, dwarves are hearty meat eaters. Vegetables (except for raw parsnips, which most dwarves carry and gnaw on as snacks) are mere garnish. Sausages are subsistence food for the trail, nothing more than “fillbelly” (the dwarves' term for edibles eaten to sustain life rather than for pleasure). Cheese and milk fall into the same category, good only for fuel and not considered “real food.”

A guilty secret among dwarves is their love for certain small cave-worms and earthworms, munched raw. These are a prized and addictive candy to many dwarves and are the reason why a dwarf who butchers livestock always looks for tapeworms and other parasites of such beasts' innards. Dwarf-only dens (city cellar alehouses that lack signs and usually have several entrances from adjacent cellars belonging to other businesses or residences) always set out bowls of live worms on tables for drinkers to take freely. If they want patrons to leave, collecting these bowls is a silent but firm—and except in rare instances, well heeded—signal to go. (Now, and quietly.)

## FOOD FROM THE WILD

In most wilderland areas of the Realms, outside of an easy bowshot away from any caravan road, Faerûn still teems with readily edible plants and game, unless recent forest fires or other scourges have taken their toll locally.

For instance, in the Skull Gorge along the River Reaching in the Heartlands, wayfarers can readily find wild food along the swift, icy-cold river. From the Misty Stair cascades to below the Gorge, the river is the spawning beds of dreel—short, fat, green-black river eels that live on algae and carrion, and keep the river waters clean and clear. They taste like mucus but are quite nourishing, and if fried with the right herbs or spices, can actually taste nice. Due to their appearance, dreel are sometimes called trollfingers.

Also prevalent in this area are dartflash, which are small-human-palm-sized, bony silver fish that swim in short, very fast darting-straight-ahead rushes. Dartflash are usually netted or scooped out of the water in handheld nets. They are edible, often steamed until the bones are soft enough

to crunch and eat, though a human adult needs a helm-full pile of them to make a meal.

Lastly, mursk are quite common. Mursk are fat, slow-moving, green-brown fish that are unpleasantly oily in taste, but can be fried, allowing the cook to skim off the oil for use in lamps.

Across the Heartlands, traethe (*tray-thh*), a kind of wild radish, grows abundantly and can be plucked and eaten freely (except, of course, in city garden plots or on a farm). Many adventurers, pilgrims, and other wayfarers fall into the habit of stooping, picking, cleaning off the worst of the earth, and eating as they walk throughout the day. Most traethe are mild, with a hot aftertaste, and are considered boring but functional fare.

Humans dwelling near swamps tend to use lots of marsh plants for cooking and alchemy, and eels and savory, clam-like swamp mollusks for eating. A large marsh is one of the richest places for foraging in all the Realms; the children of a household in such an area can expect to spend most of their days playing, since they can gather enough edibles for a large evening meal in a relatively short time before sunset.

Finding fresh, clean drinkable water near a marsh isn't always easy. However, if one doesn't mind drinking brownish, muck-tasting water, there are herbs that can be dropped into containers of water to "kill the squiggles" and make the water safe to drink, and also some forest plants that can be boiled for a juice to added to marsh water to precipitate the floating brown sediment out of it and alter its taste to something less strong. Other tisanes (teas) of rose petals and other floral petals can then be added to the water to make it quite pleasant to taste. Selling "sweet" water in villages along trade routes is a widespread, sustaining industry across the Realms.

## Masters of the Marsh

Lizardfolk dwelling in most marshlands will trade warily with other races, if they are not threatened and if they can do such trading in ways that don't require leaving the vicinity of the swamp, because they feel very vulnerable away from easy reach of the waters. Such bargaining must be done without a lot of speech or long bargaining, since lizardfolk will not put up with such. Lizardfolk are not unthinkingly, unobservantly stupid; within their

home area, they know the land very well, and tend to be cunning.

Lizardfolk can set snares, flush out prey by working in well-organized hunting bands, are stealthy foragers, and often prepare hideouts in overgrown wilderness areas to keep themselves hidden from the eyes of humans and others who might offer them harm. They are particularly learned in what swamp plants can be crushed and smeared on themselves to entirely baffle anything trying to identify them by scent—as well as what undergrowth they must pass through to thwart those trying to track them. They turn hostile if they think they are being stealthily surrounded, or being distracted by one group of traders while another group readies an attack.

Some lizardfolk know what diets and marsh substances smeared on the skins of snakes will make those reptiles mate more often and produce more young, and the lizardfolk raise and tend such snakes to make sure the maximum number survive and grow to adult size to keep the breeding stock strong and to fill the curled-leaf "platters" that hold lizardfolk meals. There is no truth to the rumor that lizardfolk won't eat the flesh of any reptile; snakes and small lizards are staples of their diet.

## DRINKS OF CHOICE

On a daily basis, most Faerûnians drink water, grass broth (a salty soup made by boiling water with local greenery in it, sometimes augmented with dumplings to make it a meal), teas, cider, and small beer (household brewed ale). When people dine out, or visit the local tavern of an evening, stronger drinks are usually consumed.

### Coffee

Known as *kaeth* or *kaethae* in the Realms, coffee is rare north of Calimshan and the southern Vilhon shores, except in the most cosmopolitan ports such as Waterdeep, Athkatla, and Westgate.

Its major sources are located south and east of Durpar, about halfway up the east side of Anau-roch, and overseas to the west in Maztica.

Sacks of beans from overseas are brought in to Baldur's Gate and from there shipped elsewhere, mainly south to Calimshan and the Tashalar.



*Folk in Faerûn imbibe all sorts of strange beverages. Some do this, so they say, because the water can't be trusted. Others, such as this inquisitive drow, might sample a drink that looks delectable just to see what will happen.*

These beans are large, soft (crumbly), and reddish brown.

The Bedine of Anauroch call coffee “qahwa” or just “qaw,” and they trade little in it. Since the reappearance of Shade, the surviving Bedine consume almost all of their qaw themselves. Through the machinations of the D'tarig, a tiny trickle of Bedine beans formerly reached Zhentil Keep, and thence Hillsfar and Sembia. This source is now extremely unreliable and paltry, though wealthy Sembian coffee-drinkers have bid the price up high. Anaurian beans are small, hard, and are so dark a brown that they look black.

The beans from beyond Durpar are usually known as Thondur's, after a now-deceased trader who for a time controlled the entire trade in coffee reaching Calimshan, the Tashalar, and the Vilhon. Thondur amassed a staggering fortune, much of which has never been found because

of his habit of establishing hundreds of secret caches, all over Faerûn. After he was publicly torn apart by a “pet” dragon some sixty years ago, his fortune was entirely lost. Thondur's beans are now more plentiful and cheaper, thanks to the shattering of his monopoly, and they form the bulk of the supply enjoyed in southern lands of the Realms. Thondur's beans are large, have a pronounced cleft or depressed line running their length (making them somewhat like cowrie shells in shape), and have a bluish tint to their chestnut brown color.

Although the coffee beverages of the Realms vary from place to place, they're all derived the same way: the stunted mountainside coffee trees yield beans that are dried in the sun, put into sacks, and shipped long distances to consumers who grind the beans just before brewing. Sacks of beans are put into coffin-like, battered, reused

crates for wagon travel or barge trips, but they are tossed loose into ship hulls, so they can be arranged evenly as stable ballast.

Coffee is drunk black in Calimshan and the Tashalar, its taste often altered with dried, ground nuts and roots and even sprinklings as strong as ginger. In Sembia, on the other hand, it is usually mixed with melted chocolate or liqueurs.

Tankards are usually used for coffee drinking in northerly places, but in southern places, small palm-sized bowls with out-flaring tops and drinking spouts are favored. These are known formally as kavvar or colloquially as just cups, and coffee is formally called kaeth and colloquially known as fireswallow. Bad coffee is described with any handy oath in northern lands, but in the South it's ortulag (*or-tu-lag*), derived from a now-defunct dialect word meaning "warmed-over chamber pot rinse."

Coffee is prepared and consumed in a variety of ways in Faerûn, from a thick black near-syrup stirred into sweet liqueur in Sembia and Chesenta, to roasted beans eaten whole, to the more familiar brew drunk black, sometimes with medicines or mint leaves sprinkled over the surface. This black coffee is made by stewing the beans in a pot over a fire or a hearth, and is hence much stronger than what most of us in the real world are accustomed to. Brewed coffee is the most popular form of consumption in Calimshan, the Tashalar, the Heartlands, and the North, but peddlers, explorers, and adventurers often chew the beans as they travel.

## Tea

Unlike with coffee, few teas in the Realms are shipped far, or sold for high prices. However, clubs of tea-fanciers in Athkatla, Calimport, and other rich cities are filled with wealthy connoisseurs who'll pay much for favorite blends.

This limited commerce in tea doesn't occur because tea isn't popular or well thought of. It's because the majority of teas in the Realms are tisanes, or infusions, or herbal teas—made from leaves of various plants other than "tea" plants. Moreover, the vast majority of tea beverages are made from local wild plants, and travelers in the Realms expect teas to vary in taste from place to place—so not a lot of long-distance shipping (from one realm to another) goes on.

Most crofters and other country folk view tea as something they (or their children) glean from the leaves of wild bushes that they pluck as opportunity and need arise. The leaves are usually kept in metal coffers with "sticky-rim" lids (coated with an edible oil or gum to keep air out). Unlike in the real world, the container is worth a lot more than the tea!

Most teas are made by pouring boiling water onto a container full of leaves, and then straining the leaves out. In the poorest households, the leaves are often reused; people dry them on a shield in the sun, then put them back in the pot (perhaps along with a few fresh leaves) before brewing again.

Tea is always drunk clear, never with milk. However, murky brews from powdered leaves whisked in a bowl are the norm in the Shining South, and in ports where travelers from many places mix, all sorts of tea-making habits and techniques are used and copied. Tea in most dining houses (restaurants) replaces the real-world "dusty glass of water on the table."

Except for places that have docking or gate-entry fees levied by the conveyance (a wagon or a ship), no one levies import or export duties on tea. ("Tea? *Tea?* Pass, merchant, and may you know better fortune within than to have to trade in tea!") Even someone with a caravan-full wouldn't be charged duty, though he or she might thereafter be watched, as if a madman or a liar who must actually be up to something else.

## Beer

Like teas, beer is made locally all over the Realms, and the flavor and appearance of brews vary widely. Beer is a cheap, daily drink often enjoyed with gusto.

In beer making and drinking, the Heartlands city of Berdusk is typical of many locales, and so can serve as a model. Made-in-every-kitchen "small beer" is generally sneered at in Berdusk, as so much good beer is made locally. The alehouses serve "red," an orange-red, fiery (peppery) hard cider; a fiery, black, almost licorice-tasting smoky stout known as Old Dark; and a lot of light ales.

These ales, called goldens, are wheat beers sweetened with honey and flavored with all manner of local berries. Five of them are detailed below.

**Annasker:** Named for the family who first made it, annasker is a sparkling, pinkish pale ale that tastes sweet but tart, like lemonade mixed with several berry juices.

**Belbuck:** A halfling-brewed beer, and by far the most popular, belbuck is sweet and a translucent green thanks to fermented herbs that make it both strong and minty. Like spearmint, it clears other tastes, and it chills the throat like menthol. It's deceptive; many a traveler has drunk deeply before feeling the effects, and afterward been unable to rise and walk across a taproom unaided.

**Darndarr:** A sandy or nutty flavored beer, darndarr goes silkily well with both seared meats and fish. This ale keeps well, even out in the sun. The small earthenware jugs it is served in collapse into powder if flung or swung against something hard, making them into preferred "drench people" missiles in pranks. Many locals have crocks and kegs of darndarr around the house for casual drinking and for use as a marinade or to "jug" perishables in, for longer keeping.

**Helmatoss:** A sweet, oily, clear pale ale, helmatoss sits heavily on the stomach. Some say it was named for the long-dead tavernkeeper Alanra Helmatoss, and others say it's named for the violent retching it induces in those who overimbibe. In smaller doses, it's known to neutralize many poisons and settle raging acidic stomachs—Harpers have tested both contentions and proven them true—and is definitely an acquired taste. Those who have acquired that taste often drink great amounts and swear by it, whereas one large tankard will leave a first-timer spewing. Warning: highly flammable!

**Zeskorr:** A dark brown pale ale, zeskorr tastes of salt and, some say, fish; others just say it tastes strange. Apt to upset the stomachs of the unwary, zeskorr is deeply enjoyed by those who have acquired a taste for it.

## Cider

More popular than beer in many places, cider can be sweet and nonalcoholic or hard (alcoholic), and anything from semi-sweet to bitter. Cider is cheap and easy to make in apple-growing country (the mid- to southern Heartlands), and if it "goes off," it can be used as vinegar in both cooking and preserving (pickling). The strong reek of cider vinegar is used by some folk to confuse creatures

that track by scent, such as the war dogs used for perimeter defense by some nobles, and tracking dogs used by authorities everywhere. Though many children and women prefer the taste of cider over more bitter beers, cider is not generally considered a lesser drink than beer. It doesn't travel as well or keep as long as beer does when handling and conditions aren't optimum, and so it is less available in locations not near to apple country.

## Wine

Faerûnian wines range from opaque, glossy black to clear and nigh-colorless, from sugary sweet to "wrinklemouth" bitter, and from local "tath" (poor or very ordinary) to expensive, far-traveled "dance in your glass" vintages sought after by collectors, argued over by snobs, and unobtainable by the ordinary "jack in the street." Literally thousands of vintages exist, from the little-known and the local to those whose volume fills hundreds of casks that are shipped far across Faerûn for local bottling. In particular, the production of Tethyr's coastal vineyards has climbed steadily throughout the 1300s DR and 1400s DR.

Elves, and to a lesser extent half-elves, can consume large amounts of wine without becoming inebriated, whereas red wines contain some substance not yet identified that leaves gnomes reelingly imbalanced—or puts them rapidly to sleep—after they imbibe only a small amount.

Whereas beer kegs are intended to be tapped with a bung or a spigot and slowly emptied tankard by tankard, wine kegs are more often stood on end and opened (the upper end removed) to fill many bottles or skins—or both—in one session, leaving the keg empty. This custom has led many sly persons to entertain notions of using wine kegs as smuggling containers, usually by floating sealed containers in the kegs seemingly full of wine. These containers are usually animal-bladder bags sewn shut and waterproofed with some sort of grease or better, an elven-devised concoction that won't taint the wine. This means of smuggling has become so prevalent that authorities in some places, such as Baldur's Gate and Athkatla, routinely stop wine shipments to open a random keg or two. This generates the expected complaints from shippers that the law keepers spoil and spill or even drink much of the wine when doing such



inspections—but a lot of contraband has been found and seized, and such seizures are increasing, not petering out, as the popularity of the tried and true “float it in” method of smuggling soars to ever-greater heights.

## Stronger Drink

All hard liquor is known in the Realms, and favored by dwarves, gnomes, and goblinkin over all other drinks. As the very old dwarf joke goes, about a “stalwart” served tea: “*Water?* I’m thirsty, not dirty!”

Increasingly, among humans, spirits aren’t drunk straight, but are mixed with other drinks to increase the potency of the secondary drink.

Generally, in the warmer climes, and as far north as Amn, intoxicating drinks are blended for taste reasons, sometimes mixed with fresh fruit juices. However, they are almost never deliberately made stronger by combining one alcoholic drinkable with another.

That said, from Westgate northward, and Beregost northward on the Sword Coast, most inns and taverns serve fortified drinkables. These are of two sorts: the booze that the house waters down habitually and every patron knows about, and the mixed drinks that are done on the spot, at the request of a patron or when a patron accepts an offer to “warm” his or her drink.

The first group of warmed drinks includes zzar (Waterdhavian fortified wine) and what’s called deep ale or fire ale (beer to which a grain-based spirit has been added). These beverages might be watered to make them go farther if the taste is harsh (and to save some coins), and are often fortified with distilled spirits. These spirits are usually potato-based, akin to real-world vodka: essentially clear, colorless, and tasteless.

The second group of warmed drinks includes those that approach the elaborate recipes of real-world cocktails, but such beverages are found only in places like Waterdeep, Silverymoon, Luskan, Neverwinter, Sembia, Westgate, and the coastal ports of the Dragon Reach. Usually this kind of warmed drink is a simple “Warm your wine by stirring in a little throatslake, goodsir?” concoction (“throatslake” here meaning an unspecified distilled spirit). If the throatslake’s strong taste clashes with the wine, the result can be horrible.

## THE LATEST FASHION

Most folk in the Realms are wealthy enough to have extensive wardrobes, and do not stray far from practicality in everyday wear. Many have but one “fine wear” garment for special occasions.

Any city or market town will have seamstresses who alter garments, cut down clothing into other items, and dye and adorn clothes to make them flashier and stimulate sales. Adornments (cheap “feathers-and-buckles” jewelry employing enameled metals, cut-glass false gems, and painted, dyed, and sculpted wire and cloth rather than expensive components) are always popular, and almost all new-garment clothiers in any city are accustomed to doing small on-the-spot alterations to make a sale.

## Everyday Wear

Children are often clad in smocks (knee-to-calf-length loose “shirt dresses”), with leggings or pull-on hose (long stockings tied to an underbelt to keep them from “riding down”) with boots, clogs, slippers for indoor wear, or bare feet.

Youths of both genders often wear hand-me-downs, and usually adopt a style to distinguish themselves from their parents’ generation (feminine clothing rearranged and belted to bare one shoulder, or supplemented by scarves worn around shoulders or at wrists or belt).

Adults tend to wear what’s best suited for work, with “fashion” outfits reserved for cities and large towns, market-moots, and special occasions.

Both genders customarily wear breeches (lace-up-front trousers, often leather) and boots or covered-toe sandals. In hot climates, smocks and woven wide-brimmed hats are often worn, augmented with leggings (worn under smocks when working in thorny fields and underbrush, and by women in winter for warmth, under gowns).

It’s rare for men to wear gowns, but women often wear tunics and jerkins. Skirts (as opposed to gowns) are rare. Conservative gowns are ankle to mid-calf length, and expose little bosom, but there’s nothing daring about bared arms.

In the Realms, a tunic is a long shirt, usually open-fronted and laced up, often gathered at the waist with a belt, and usually meant to be worn overlapping one’s breeches (though a light tunic may be tucked in at the waist).

A Faerûnian jerkin is a heavier fitted garment that fastens down the front or front side with a series of toggles and loops, and always overlaps breeches, often extending to not far above the knee. It often has shoulder padding and a stand-up collar, and might have external or internal pockets (a tunic never has pockets).

With their clothing, Faerûnians haughty or humble usually wear belts and baldrics (belts worn diagonally from waist to shoulder) to hold garments up, and to hang sheaths and scabbards for weapons or tools on.

Popular augmentations are the tammalar, a baldric of many pouches (sometimes removable, but more often securely sewn on); the bracelar, a leather wrist-bracer with pouches sewn to it (often used by merchants to hold ready coin when selling); and the scrip, which in recent centuries has come to mean a large piece of leather or cloth with sewn-on ties or thongs, and sewn-on loops or sleeves for those ties to go through. It is gathered up (around goods, to form a carriesack) into a bundle, and kept that way by threading ties through the sleeves (and a user's belt, to carry it at the hip or hanging from the rear waist).

## Cloaks and Daggers

Nobility and the wealthy wear tailored, ankle-length greatcloaks for cold weather, and soft leather longcoats for driving rain, and when deep snow or heat makes a greatcloak too much.

They also have what less wealthy Faerûnians must make do with in all kinds of bad weather: weathercloaks. These are near-ankle-length cloaks, lighter than leather and lacking fastenings beyond brooches (pins). A weathercloak tends to blow about, and provides poor protection against cold, because it clings tightly to the arms and shoulders when pinned shut.

Folk also wear swirlcloaks (half-cloaks worn for looks rather than utility, that hang from one shoulder and usually drape to just below the waist), and shoulder-cloaks (shawls, always cloth lined with cloth and never an open-work weave).

A conservative rural or town matron would wear ankle-length gowns with a shoulder-cloak. (If gardening or out walking in wet conditions or muddy places, she wears breeches and leather boots under her gowns, and might hike up gowns to her knee and belt them up at that length.)

Thin, “for looks” cloaks are habitually constructed with a pocket along collar or shoulders, so the cloak can be rolled tightly, stuffed into this pocket, and the result hung from a belt or around the wearer's neck on its own sewn-on thong.

Some heavier cloaks sport drawstring-closed (and then knotted) miniature pockets along lower edges, for easily carrying emergency coin (fares for conveyances, a night's lodging, a meal), and to double as weights to keep the cloak down in a breeze (prevents embarrassment or momentary blinding by having a cloak blow up into the wearer's face).

Expensive cloaks have a deep, small-opening “handy pouch” pocket, usually at lower rib level, for carrying small items (a kerchief, or supporting the weight of a spare purse hanging on a thong around the neck). Thieves often use such pockets to carry garottes, or thongs for binding wrists and ankles.

Cloaks with larger pockets usually also have linings that make identifying carried items difficult. The bulk or bulge of carried items can usually be seen (concealing a betraying shape is why many merchants wear a loose scarf knotted to hang in an arc across their upper chests; the scarf also covers mouth and nose in dusty or stinky conditions), but a good cloak hampers identification of what's being carried.

Peddlers, adventurers, nobility, royalty, and “knaves” (opportunistic thieves) carry at least a concealed dagger at all times, and often rather more weaponry. Many folk employ hidden breastplates and gorgets inside bodices, or jerkins reinforced with armor plate.

## Headgear

Hats vary widely with location and passing fashion. A style of headgear that often returns to fashionable status is a prowed, peaked soft leather cap (think Robin Hood), very long and thin, and attached to a hair-comb so it won't fall off easily and to keep it raked at an angle to one side of the head—and always “low in front, rear up at back.”

Such caps sport at least two large, colorful fluffy feathers, one on each side of the cap. Fops and the haughty wear caps with nine or more feathers stuffed in, raked back (plumes to the rear). Some caps of this sort have gauze-work woven among the feathers to support tiny,

dangling “sparkle” in the form of faceted gemstones. Such headgear is formally known as a fancy-me, but more commonly just as a dee.

Headgear fashions tend to be widely popular for two seasons, thereafter retained for a few seasons more by those desiring to signal they are not “irresponsible younglings” any longer. Rural areas ignore hat fashions.

## Clothing with Style

Those able to indulge in fashion usually dress either to minimize perceived shortcomings in personal appearance or to make a specific impression (truly rich, or beyond-caring-about-coin rich, or conservative, or “I’m an adventurer above all this society nonsense,” or “I’m the special guest wanting to stand out or surpass,” or “I belong here”).

The cheapest “wealthy” style of dress is the Realms equivalent of the little black dress—a basic black gown with high collar and/or plunge front, matching sash and boots, and a few pieces of small, tasteful jewelry (moonstone or pearl earrings and perhaps a pendant and/or finger ring). This look is never out of fashion except among a wild gathering of the rebellious young, and even then it can be “dressed down” by exchanging the black sash for an orange one, pinning the gown (to the inside of the sash) half-open to expose skin or a chemise (lace-trimmed white silk for a classy look, almost anything to present other images). “Chathra” are petticoats adorned to be seen, and in winter, fur cuffs and scarves are often added. One fashion fallback is to wear a simple gown with a “showy” trimmed slip or chemise (sized for someone larger) over it, with a sash or a belt of contrasting hue to “bind the whole look together.”

Nobility and social climbers seek to set themselves apart from commoners with ever-changing fashions and arrays of specific accessories. Their hirelings (staff) wear livery, or “greatsleeves” (shoulder-to-wrist armbands of the family “color,” pulled on over everyday garments).

## Other Races

For one reason or another, the dictates of fashion are not as much of a concern to elves, dwarves, and other races as they are to humans.

Over thousands of years, elven clothing has changed from near-nakedness adorned with

growing plants worn as semi-garments, through diaphanous, flowing robes extending to wrists and ankles, to increasingly practical garments (leather boots, belts, carry-pouches, and form-fitting clothing). These days, elves wear what they please, expressing their individuality. Fashions sometimes sweep a city or realm, but not since insular Cormanthor times have elves scorned fellow elves as “out of fashion.” So both elves and half-elves wear just about anything.

Dwarves, gnomes, orcs, and half-orcs tend to prize practicality and “hard wear” in their choice of garments, and to avoid bright hues. “Leather and homespun” is their everyday dress, with “haphazard wool, burlap, and dirt” being a less polite description.

Many halflings, goblins, and kobolds are fashion chameleons. They usually seek to blend in and wear clothing that permits quiet, agile movement—but when celebration or formality is in order, they explode into a riot of garments displaying all manner of gaudy hues and adornments, with frequent “color clashes” and overblown impracticality.

## What Folk Wear Underneath

Daily utilitarian undergarb for both men and women on the lower half of the body is the garment known as a clout. The first part of a clout is a very tight leather, cloth, or cord belt worn around the hips and held tight by multiple small hooks (like those on real-world bras) on the front. The second part of the clout is a long strip of rectangular cloth, usually cotton, which is passed between the legs, up through the front of the belt to dangle down, and up through the back of the belt to dangle down. In many cases, the dangling front and back ends are designed to be tied together, and the cloth can be folded in on itself for extra absorbency or padding—such as when the wearer expects to be riding a mount. Decorative, “made to be seen” clouts and freshly perfumed new clouts are sold in cities, market towns, and by most passing peddlers.

Women often wear a dethma, a tight cloth breast binding or sling. This garment is the equivalent of a modern sports bra, although instead of stretchy fabric covering a lot of skin, the Realms version is more like a trough or shelf of tightly stretched cloth sewn to a network of cords,

because stretchy fabric is largely unknown in the Realms. In colder climates, soft hide bras are worn most of the time.

Which brings us to Faerûnian lingerie. The Realms doesn't use wire for breast support and shaping, and corsets are laced-up boiled hide without whalebone or any sort of stiffeners. Stomachers that cinch the waist tight are popular, and many have shaped panels for the hips and a top shelf for support. Corsets are very common. Fat male merchants and female goodwives just wanting to "improve their shape, as meets the eye," don various foundation garments, meant to stay hidden under clothing. Others wear all sorts of alluring garments meant to shape the body, and at the same time be displayed as adornment. Many such garments have hidden pockets to carry a coin or two, or a tiny knife or less weapon-like item that's been sharpened into a cutting edge.

The highborn often wear underdresses of thin cotton (like a real-world chemise). Low-cut peasant blouses and even lace trimmings are widely seen on these garments, some of which are intended to show through around the edges of an apron or a heavier overskirt.

Across Faerûn, erotic colors are black and red, and provocative garments often feature lace, straps, and panels of these hues. "Show" nightgowns and nightshirts tend to be of opaque greens, blues, and browns. Conservative underwear tends to be white, cream, beige, or the natural hue of the material.

## Skin Adornment

Aside from piercing the ears to wear earrings, navels for wearing jewelry, and some clerics who perform piercing for religious purposes, body alterations of this sort are rare in the Realms. Piercings that use bone fragments for adornment are seen among humans, dwarves, gnomes, and halflings in Chult, and among serpentfolk. Common places for these types of adornments are the ear, the lower jaw, and the forearm. These bone pieces are usually shaped and polished into little figurines or tooth-shapes marked with luck runes. In the case of arcane spellcasters, the bones themselves can serve as material components for necromantic spells, and the runes they bear can have magical uses.

## Hair Fashion

In the Heartlands, the majority of men have facial hair, in a wide variety of styles, though generally only barbarian tribes attribute status or vigor to the length of a man's beard. In Calimshan and the South, hair is often oiled or perfumed to keep it smelling nice and free of bugs—a practice that tends to get sneered at in the North. Other than that, all fashions prevail. Aside from any local "in this particular royal court" custom, there's no such thing as a fashionable—or unfashionable—sort of beard.

In general, eastern and southern men in the Realms tend to shave their chins bare and grow long mustaches, "side-dagger" long sideburns (also called "daggerboard"), and the like. Northern men tend to have full beards, kept either long or short as profession, daily safety, and practicality dictate. Longer "lipspike" (Van Dykes and longer) beards are most common in the Vilhon and the Shining South.

Many minor magics and truly effective (if expensive) ointments exist for altering hair color and stimulating hair growth, sometimes at astonishing speeds such as inches per day. These all have long and fanciful names like "Embelder's Efficacious Divine Dew." Collectively, hair products that change color or cause hair growth go by the name of "thurdrixes." The use of one can swiftly and markedly alter a person's appearance. There are drinks reputed to affect hair growth, but most such are useless.

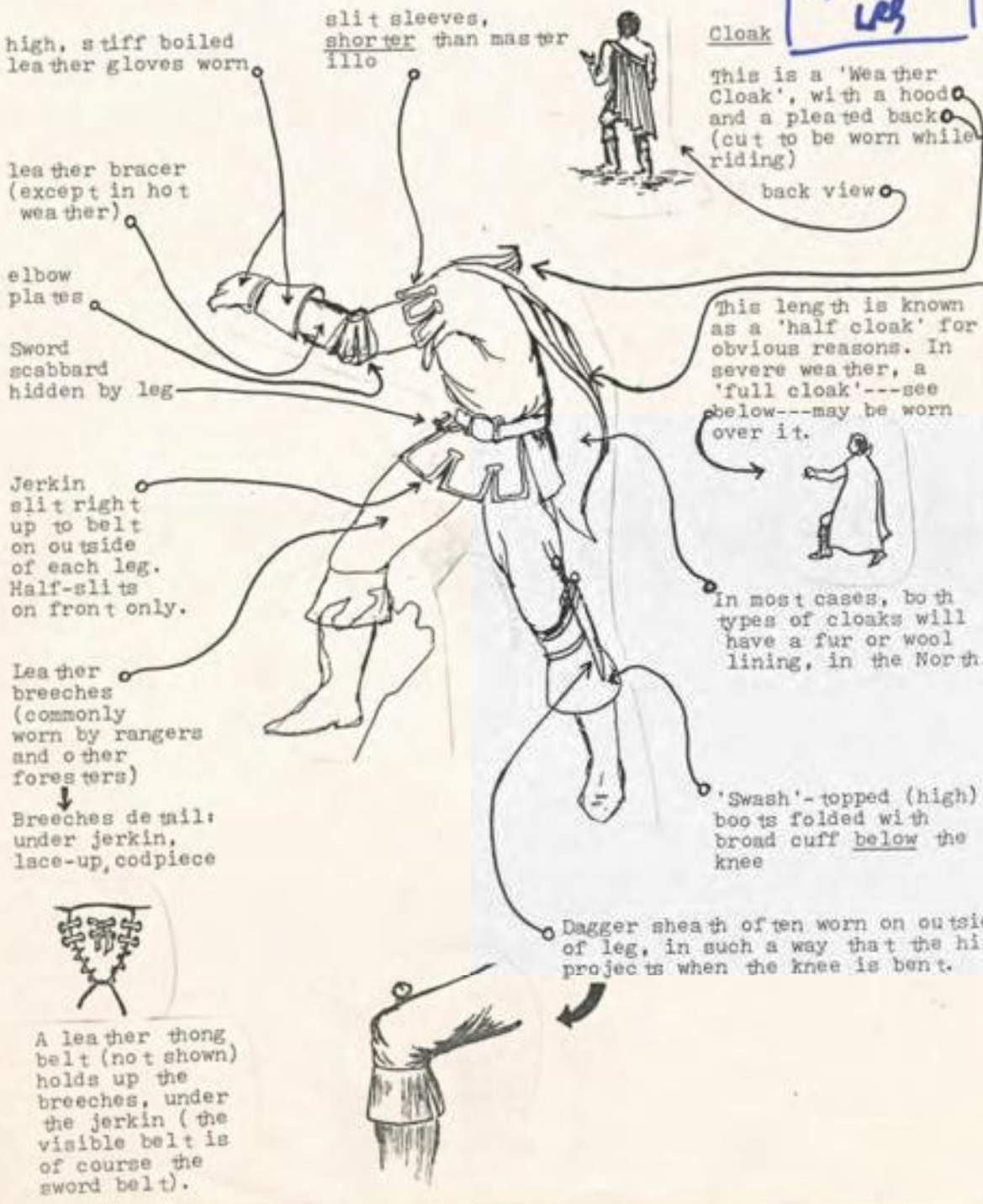
Skilled barbers (as opposed to hairdressers) are rarer than they might be, principally due to the fact that many family members cut each other's hair crudely, as needed, or even shorten hair by the backwoods method of soaking it in mud at the desired length, and burning off the hair beyond the muddy part. Body hair is often trimmed or removed, particularly in the South, by oiling and then scraping the body, and unsightly hairs are often plucked out.

The presence or absence of beards and their styles in the Realms is not linked to class, wealth, nobility or royalty, or any other status. The closest Realms beard fashions have to evoking status is their adoption by minor religious fashions and the passing popularity of a populace adopting beards like that of a popular leader (such as Azoun IV of Cormyr).

SUGGESTED REALMS COSTUME DETAILS (Male Fighter)

(Lay over Master Cover Sketch)

1-50  
6/25/01  
LRS



**Cloak**  
this is a 'Weather Cloak', with a hood and a pleated back (cut to be worn while riding)

This length is known as a 'half cloak' for obvious reasons. In severe weather, a 'full cloak'---see below---may be worn over it.

In most cases, both types of cloaks will have a fur or wool lining, in the North.

'Swash'-topped (high) boots folded with broad cuff below the knee

Dagger sheath often worn on outside of leg, in such a way that the hilt projects when the knee is bent.

A leather thong belt (not shown) holds up the breeches, under the jerkin (the visible belt is of course the sword belt).

Both of these pages contain rough sketches of mine that were a response to a prototype sketch for the cover of the Realms boxed set (what is now often called the "Old Gray Box," or sometimes "FR0"). So the poses of the male and female characters come from that sketch. I was asked to make sure the costumes "looked Realmsy," so I was trying to shift them from a "hot climate/abbreviated brass/Conan-Frazetta-like" look to closer to what I saw as right for what Jeff Grubb dubbed the "Heartlands" of the Realms. "More Robin Hoody, please."

SUGGESTED REALMS COSTUME DETAILS (Female Fighter)

(Lay over Master Cover Sketch)

Jerkins in the Inner Sea lands will always have shoulder-cuffs; only surcoats are sleeveless.

If an open-throat jerkin is worn, a female fighter will always wear a gorget (throat armour), as follows:

metal, curved, and sometimes polished


leather strap (buckles in back; women usually have a tiny dagger sheathed at the back of their necks, on this strap).



A female fighter will also usually wear a pectoral plate, as follows:

gorget overhangs at top; plates over belly to belt

straps to belt fore and aft



Large swash-top boots, folded over into cuffs just below the knee.

light or 'longhair' helm

metal bars open between

'cap' usually has a crest to deflect blades



round shields rare (unless of wood); usually they are of this shape:



full darts, both sides (reinforced stitching to stop ripping of half-darts)

Leather breeches worn beneath jerkin (female fighters usually wear men's breeches, with lace-up codpieces, too (see male's sketch), but stuff theirs with armor plate.

For a slightly lighter-duty pectoral plate, refer to the illustration of Asper that accompanies the Realms tale "To Slay A Black Raven", in this package.

These two sheets of costume notes are meant as suggestions for the establishment of a possible 'look' for clothing worn in the Realms in the North and in the Inner Sea lands, not as directives to any artist. The costume styles shown are just the way I have always imagined it.

Thanks to years of superb plays at the Stratford (Ontario) Festival, and the bill of largely Shakespearean plays put on there, I grew up seeing all sorts of Hellenic, medieval, Renaissance, and fanciful costumes up close and "in the flesh," so I knew what "looked like the Realms" to me. Note the mention of the still-unpublished Realms short story "To Slay a Black Raven," which tells how Mirt and Durnan and Florin Falconhand helped Randal Morn reclaim Daggerdale from the Zhents' Lord Malyk. Four wisecracking heroes rode in ...



# 4

# MONEY MATTERS

If kings are the brains and the brawn of the body of Faerûn, the ones who determine borders, start wars, and decree laws, then merchants and the trade they foster are its beating heart and arteries. Merchants (and money) determine whose throne is gold and whose is made of sticks bound together. In the words of the sage Calathra “Lady Coinmaster” Mralahard of Athkatla, “Flows of coins are like the pumping blood of dragons—where they are hot and thick, life is vigorous, but where they are cold and few, life is feeble.”

To bards and other tale-tellers, intrigues are thickest in the courts of rulers. But the truth is

that most intrigues are smaller, more sordid, and more concerned with trade deals made in back rooms, bribery, and favors done and returned.

As King Palaghard II of Cormyr once famously said, “Coins are what matter. And to earn coins, one needs roads—or the love of Umberlee.” Because storms at sea during his reign made shipping an unreliable source of commerce, to guarantee prosperity for Cormyr he had to build, maintain, and patrol the roads, so merchants would prefer to ship by caravans, through his kingdom. This state of affairs is still true; in many lands, the respect that rulers receive from

merchants depends on light taxation, little oppression, and good roads.

Of course, taxes can only be paid if you have coin. Most folk would be wounded or worse trying to steal or seize coin, so they must work for it. Everyone who doesn't hunt for food needs a daily dose of income just to pay for meals and drink. Even the luckiest of adventurers will from time to time see the real need for a day job.

Work, and income, underlie everything in a society. No, that food on the table didn't just arrive by magic. (If it had, you wouldn't be able to afford it.)

## WORK FOR ALL

Daily existence in the Realms involves hard work for almost everyone. In rural areas, this work tends to be primarily a matter of survival, such as getting food, water, and fuel enough to last through the next winter. The reward for such work is the food, water, and fuel thus gathered. In urban areas, on the other hand, work is not directly related to survival, and it usually takes the form of effort compensated by income.

### Suzail's Labor Force

A look at Suzail in Cormyr serves to illustrate what sorts of jobs are considered "paid living" in a typical capital city in the Realms.

Lots of poor citizens dwell near the docks at Suzail's western end. Many of them work as dockhands (casual day laborers, loading and unloading cargo) or repairers and makers of simple household wares (pottery, cutlery, tools, stools, benches, and the like). Others make a living through illicit trade (forgery, drugs, or smuggled goods). Such urban poor, known as hardhands, lowlives, or graspers, make up about twenty percent of citizens.

A step up in income and respectability are the commoners. This group includes the maids and independent house servants who work in middle- and upper-class homes cleaning, cooking, fetching things, and generally acting decorative. It also includes most shop assistants, who restock goods, fetch and carry, and sweep up. They might or might not be well fed or well treated, but they are underpaid and do not enjoy stable employment. These laborers make up about forty-five percent of citizens.

Above commoners are journeymen, trusties, and fairhands (skilled casual laborers). These are the governesses, really superb cooks, mercenaries, bodyguards, excellent seamstresses, skilled smiths recently arrived from other lands, and so on. They are highly sought after, and so command good wages and stable employment. They make up about eight percent of Suzail's inhabitants, and are middle class.

The next social rank up is the middle class proper, sometimes referred to as "burghers" but usually just "citizens," meaning the speaker thinks of these folks as the residents who matter. These are the shopkeepers, landlords, investors, crafters, and shippers. Guild members are in this group. Thanks to Suzail's size and wealth, it makes up about twenty-five percent of the city's inhabitants.

This leaves roughly two percent of folk who form the upper class: courtiers, the wealthiest merchants (who often aspire to nobility), and nobility ("highborn" in polite terms, or "highnoses" less politely).

In a city that's not a capital, all three of these upper-class elements are less numerous, and crafters might outnumber shopkeepers.

## DAY JOBS FOR ADVENTURERS

To some extent, the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game has always been an escape from daily life. A chance to be more glamorous, beautiful, skilled, important, dashing, and truly heroic than we are in reality.

Yet that doesn't mean D&D should be fast-action clowning in which any behavior is allowed and there's no risk or opposition. The world must be a challenge, and the deeds of the characters should have the power to really change their world, to foster hope and improve lives and do things of lasting importance.

Which all sounds very grand—but how? If being an adventurer is simply a matter of chopping apart a dark-hearted tyrant on a throne, or slaying a fearsome dragon, what happens after you do that?

Oddly, it comes back to daily, real-world conditions (such as needing to work to have enough money for food and a place to live) and



competencies (such as acting decisively, making good decisions, building friendships, and networking).

Let's have a look at day jobs for adventurers in the Realms, starting with the obvious ones.

Many adventurers have the skills to readily land more mundane, less dangerous work as bodyguards, caravan guards, "drawn-dagger agents" (the polite term for a spy, hired killer, or outside-the-law facilitator, usually for a wealthy patron or a guild), or envoys (when such a post involves perilous journeys or negotiations in which intimidation is likely). Guard duty (of a person, property, or place) is common "winterbound" work for adventurers.

Yet some wayfarers seeking work are more creative, and not always in ways that involve breaking the law. In general, if a job is dangerous, unpleasant, or exacting—and the hirer wants discretion, absolute secrecy, or loyalty—the rewards are high.

Grave digging, for instance, is poorly paid and unglamorous in some places, but very well paid in others. Working in the sewers in Waterdeep (because it's guilded work, and highly dangerous to boot) is well paid, but unpleasant. Stonemasonry concerned with fortifications (castle and wall repairs; shoring up vaulted cellars; and mining to enlarge cellars, tunnels, and privy chutes) is generally underappreciated, but is always well paid.

Every city has to decide how to dispose of excrement, and sewers seldom work well unless they're flushed by streams and not subject to tidal flooding (a problem in most ports). Because of this, many places—such as Suzail, in the kingdom of Cormyr, and Athkatla, in the kingdom of Amn—have "night-soil" or dung wagons that collect chamber-pot refuse from the populace (1 cp per pot) and cart these collections out of town to be dumped on fields where they are mixed with straw and left to rot down into compost. More than a few dung carters have smuggled items—and even people—out of cities under the noisome heaps in their wagons, for payment of a lot more than a wagonload normally earns them.

Animal training (and monster capturing, which is almost always adventurers' work) tends to be low in status but well compensated. So, for that matter, is finding and bringing back rare plants or unhatched eggs for herbalists and alchemists.

Painting and plastering palaces and nobles' mansions, styling hair, and sewing and custom fitting fine garments for nobility are also generally unglamorous but well-paid lines of work. In some communities, smiths, plumbers, and slaughterers (butchers) are paid well for their work. So are bed nurses for royalty and nobility, particularly those who bathe, tend, and guard the mad or the long-term afflicted . . . and royal or noble tasters, who sample the food and drink of important persons to take the fall for them in cases of bad cooking or murderous malice.

A lesser-known line of work that pays well is writing love letters, job applications, and delicate apologies on behalf of noble, royal, or merely wealthy patrons. In short, a scribe who poses as another person, writing for that person and keeping both the writing task and the contents of what was written utterly secret. A variant on this kind of work (believed to be the source of one court lady's fortune, some centuries ago in Cormyr) is writing "lust tales" or "heartwarms" (flowery romance) intended for the eyes of one royal patron only (and sometimes written to order, using real individuals as characters). A few bards secretly hire others to write their jokes, and conversely more than a few royalty and nobility employ bards to write ballads and witty poems they can claim as their own.

## Rooftop Climbing

Suzail is typical of busy cities across the Heartlands and the Sword Coast, and so can serve as an example of these risky professions. Even where guilds exist to perform roofing or chimney repairs, falls and injuries are frequent occurrences, so hiring casual "hands" to fill out a crew is likewise frequent.

Fog is more rare in Suzail than in many other port cities because of the prevailing breezes. Strong winds are rare, except during out-and-out lashing storms, though they do occur. Rain is frequent, though it tends toward brief, vigorous downpours followed by clear skies, not "gray day after gray day" weather. In winter, wet snowfalls are common.

Most of the buildings in central Suzail (excluding the dock warehouses, the military bases, the westernmost hovels, and the mansions north of the Promenade) are stone or brick structures (or

older stone patched with newer brick) that rise three to four floors above the street and have steeply pitched roofs to shed snow and rain. Balconies are found on upper floors, outside the reach of thieves' ladders, spires are relatively rare, and there's a recent fashion for installing glass skylights (three panes thick, for strength). Most buildings have tile or slate roofs (wooden shingles are still found, but they rot swiftly, tend to leak, and offer rooftop clamberers very spongy footing), a decorative repeating ironwork pattern along the roof's peak that can be used to anchor safety ropes while doing roof repairs, and corner downspouts. A climber should not depend on these downspouts to support much weight as climbing ladders, nor should one swing from them (which risks crashing down with the spout tearing away and coming down alongside). In a storm, beware: Lightning rods are increasingly popular, and are found at both ends of a peaked roof—connected directly to the downspouts.

Dormers are common architectural features, as are rooftop window box gardens for herbs and "pipeleaf" attached to them. Dormers with the windows open are used for hot-weather sleeping, rather than lying out on the open roof (because level areas on roofs are too rare and too small for this practice to be safe or popular). Trapdoors are found on almost all roofs, but are sealed from below with gum or pitch to prevent leaking, and barred shut. Rooftop clamberers should not expect to easily—and never stealthily—force entrance into the building below by means of a trapdoor. Laundry does often get strung from balconies or high windowsill spars to similar features on adjacent buildings, but is rarely hung above roofs (except in the aforementioned westernmost hovels), and very few roofs are well lit at night.

A daring and agile being can use a long sequence of rooftops as a highway of sorts; the small gaps between buildings allow for such travel in many routes throughout the city. Climbing down from a building when you run out of roof can be deadly difficult in wet weather. In hot weather, open shutters and the like often lessen the severity of a fall or a jump from a rooftop by breaking the descent into stages, allowing someone to slow his or her fall by making "snatch-grabs" (snatching at things on the way past, then letting go before dislocating an arm). Leaping down into a wagon is all too popular a practice (thought to be preferable

to simply hitting the ground), but usually ends in severe injury for the jumper—and, of course, damages the wagon and its contents as well.

The traditional method of descent used by thieves in Suzail uses long coils of oiled cord. One end of a coil goes around a chimney (chimneys are abundant) or a roof-peak decoration, and the other wraps around the thief's body so that he or she can use a "body belay" to unwind the coil as slowly as possible to lessen the rate of fall. Even if the cord ends up breaking under the thief's weight, the resultant fall is from a lower elevation than the roof. If the cord suspends the thief all the way down, so much the better; or the thief touches down, cuts the cord, and vanishes into the night with the remainder of the coil (so it can be used for the next descent).

## Burials

Grave digging is backbreaking, often unpleasant, widely feared work. (Temple influence keeps this from being guild-exclusive work, in most places.)

The written or publicly expressed desires of the dead are considered paramount, so a few eccentrics have been buried in their own cellars or in various odd places, in accordance with their stated-before-death requests. Devout persons with coin enough and a life of good character (whose families don't express wishes to the contrary or refuse to pay) are interred by temples. In this case, the ceremony, preparation, and interment is all done by priests, who prepare the body in such a way as to prevent undeath (or at least make rising into undeath unlikely). Such interments are in crypts in the temple proper if a sufficient donation is made, in a common temple crypt for a lesser donation (or for deceased priests and temple workers), and in a plot on consecrated temple grounds for the less wealthy.

Faiths not well represented by local clerics frequently establish their own burial sites. These are often small, boulder-walled rectangles of ground with lots of mature trees to provide shade.

Unknown decedents, the homeless, and outlaws tend to get buried in waste ground that is fairly close to a settlement but well away from streams and marshes. Those who were diseased or poisoned or tainted by necromancy are burned in an outdoor pyre, and their ashes are interred in a regular grave.

## Outlaws and Bounty Hunters

Some hired adventuring bands go rogue and decide to keep the lands and properties they seize for their own. Once this activity is discovered, the perpetrators are denounced to local rulers, who usually declare such bands outlaw (unless they are bands who are covertly working for those same rulers) and send other adventuring bands out to deal with them.

In 1400 DR, a shift in public attitude toward bounty hunters began. In that year, the Masked Lords of Waterdeep issued a decree known as the Tarnsmoke Proclamation (after the wronged merchant Lorigo Tarnsmoke, but publicly referred to as “hardhand justice”), by which it became legal in Waterdeep and its patrolled environs to hire bounty hunters (usually adventurers, but sometimes out-of-work caravan guards or sellswords) to go after outlaws whom you see as having wronged you. These bounty hunters attempt to get your property back or at least eliminate the outlaws and so “repay the debt in blood before the gods.” This practice became very popular over the next decade, and is now legal in most places along the Sword Coast, though many faiths still frown on it.

## Blood for Coin: Mercenaries

True loyalty takes time to build, and loyal soldiers vary widely in fighting capabilities, so truly dedicated fighters in the corps are always too few for a leader’s liking.

Building a professional standing army takes time, both for combat training to be honed to an edge and for mental discipline to become iron-clad tradition. It also takes the right environment, usually an ordered, law-abiding land, such as Cormyr, and a lot of coins. Monetary costs must be borne even in peacetime, which is one reason why some rulers get so aggressive about border patrols and expansion, reasoning that “If I’m paying for these sword swingers, I’m going to use them!” and “If they sit idle, someone may use them against me, or some might get dangerous ideas about their own capabilities—so let’s keep them busy, by the gods! Besides, their aggressive vigilance will keep any citizens from daring to oppose me in anything.”

For everyone else in the Realms, who are probably poorer and who don’t need an army all the time but might pressingly need one right now, mercenaries are the answer. Leaders use their best, most loyal fighters as personal bodyguards and generals, and turn to hireswords for the bulk of their fighting force. (Hireswords are also known as sellswords, though this term is more for individuals and impromptu bands, whereas hireswords are well organized—with ranks, insignias, or even uniforms—chartered companies.)

Mercenaries are particularly suited to raiding, pillaging, and wild charging attacks, activities they enjoy and ones in which breakdowns in discipline won’t matter as much as, say, when withstanding a siege or holding a vital pass.

A reputation for unreliability inevitably clings to mercenaries, because saving their own skins usually trumps dying for a cause. It’s not their own homes and families they’re fighting for—although their self-respect, their prospects for continued employment, and their standing with Tempus all demand they fight well.

Those same societal pressures make mercenaries trustworthy in limited ways. Most patrons who hire them don’t have to worry about said hirelings double-crossing them in the midst of a battle, because hired blades “bloodsworn” to one side in a conflict dare not switch sides. Even if they are captured or offered more money, they must sit out as neutral, usually withdrawing from the battlefield to keep from having to fight on the wrong side in self-defense, and departing the region of the conflict to avoid being imprisoned by whoever captured them. When proper prisons or soldiers enough to garrison them are lacking, captured hireswords are often put on a boat to “a far, fair port” to keep them at sea for a month or more.

Mercenaries also dare not switch sides because heralds and priests of Tempus would proclaim their deeds to everyone, so no one would hire them thereafter. Even if such turncoats change their names, trudge halfway across the Realms, assemble into different groups, and start over, they might still be recognized and scorned. Those who are not shunned outright can most often find work only as “dullblades.”

Dullblades are inexperienced, untested, or untrustworthy muscle sent on the most dangerous assignments and deemed expendable. They are paid the bottom rate: 1 cp a day plus two daily



*This doughty quartet of mercenaries has seen its share of action but is always looking for more—because, of course, the pay's the thing.*

meals, a bed blanket, and wound-dressing—a wash and bandages—if needed. If adventurers are not known to be capable and accomplished combatants, they are hired on as dullblades.

At the other end of the salary scale, employers can expect to pay as much as 25 gp per day per soldier for skilled individuals, such as nightblades (commandos) and sappers, who can build bridges and plant bombs covertly and while under heavy attack.

Standard mercenary rates are 1 gp per day plus three meals with drink, provision of a tent and a new pair of boots, and a bonus (usually 5 gp) for every major battle won, such as the seizure of a city.

The commander of a mercenary force is paid a large negotiated amount for expenses upon hiring, a 1,000 gp bonus for the achievement of agreed-upon objectives, and a large negotiated fulfillment fee when the ultimate objective is achieved. Such payments are made to surviving soldiers and never to the kin of the fallen (except

by fellow comrades-in-arms, out of personal sentiment).

Very few employers of mercenaries dare to try to get out of paying them by having them slain (either by attacking them with other friendly forces or by sending them to or leaving them in an impossible battlefield situation). Heralds and priests of Tempus witness the signing of such agreements, retain copies, and will proclaim against those who betray such agreements on the altars of the Wargod and publicly, meaning no one would work with them and Tempus would frown on their battle fortune.

From Chessenta eastward and southward, and east and south of Raurin, the situation is slightly different. Mercenaries, like royalty and nobility everywhere in the Realms, have a ransom price that their families or treasuries pay if they are captured. So if you capture a king, a lord, or the head of a mercenary company, you can slay, exile, maim, or enslave that person if you can square such treatment with local laws and with the gods, or imprison him or her—or you can demand a

ransom, and when you receive it, return your quarry safely home. The gods and the heralds frown on those who collect a ransom and then deliver a mistreated, near-death captive, or free the victim far from home in dangerous territory so that he or she could well be recaptured and ransomed again.

An old Faerûnian saying runs, “Spring is for planting and getting stuck in mud, summer is for loving and fighting, fall is for harvesting and getting stuck in mud, and winter is for shivering, cursing, and starving.” Mercenaries in winter, “not fighting season,” without a local war to wage, as well as disgraced and untried swords for hire, are often employed by merchants as bodyguards, cargo loaders and unloaders, and guards for warehouses, shops, cargo, and wagons. Such jobs are negotiated on an individual basis, but merchants typically don’t offer much below the common minimum of 3 sp per day. In addition, pay usually includes “one light and one square,” meaning two meals, the evening meal being the large or “square” one; “decent shelter,” implying some privacy, a bed, and warmth; and vacation, which is almost always a tenday on, then two days off on a repeating cycle.

From the 1350s DR onward, the hitherto ever-larger mercenary companies (such as the famous Flaming Fist) began to dwindle and disappear. By the mid-1360s DR, most standing companies consisted of a charismatic leader plus a staff of four to six trusted battlefield officers, commanding forty mounted and fully armored fighters, with a handful of veteran trainers (often sorely wounded oldsters) training a reinforcements force of twenty-odd copper-a-day hopefuls.

A few of these smaller companies are detailed below. Most such groups formed in the 1350s DR, then found their reputations rising a decade later because they were left standing when other forces had disbanded.

**The Bold Blades of Berdusk:** Commanded by “the Sorceress with a Sword” Dauntarra Helgorhand, based in Berdusk and widely believed to be riddled with Harpers.

**Sammarth’s Swords:** Led by the much-scarred warrior “Mad” Madreth Dorl, based in Scornubel and considered vicious.

**The Ready Gauntlet:** Commanded by the self-styled “Lord” Argreth Harhawk, an effete half-elf highly skilled with a sword; based in

Saradush and considered the ultimate professionals at playing politics.

## The Retired Adventurer

Few adventurers survive long enough to succumb to the infirmities of old age. Others choose not to, instead striding lightly clad into a blizzard or provoking an armed brawl they have no hope of winning. Many who do survive are disabled in ways that limit the professions they can undertake—ruling out, say, becoming weapon trainers or guides for younger adventurers.

Many ex-adventurers find somewhere warm enough to sleep under the stars the year through, and take to frequenting taverns and selling embroidered tales of the heroics of their younger days, directions, and maps (however fanciful) to younger adventurers.

A few retain enough skill to become expert weapon sharpeners, or “eyes and ears” spies for rulers or other organizations. Some become despairing, or uncaring, enough to hire themselves out to be experimented upon by alchemists, necromancers, wizards, and makers of scents.

Then there are the truly desperate, those who’ll try anything for a chance at having their youthful vigor restored, or a new life in a new body (perhaps that of a monster, or an automaton, or even the sentience of an enchanted sword). “Everybody knows” that some sorely wounded and pain-wracked elderly have—by the grace of the gods or through fell magic—gained new lives. The mightiest priests of Tempus transfer the minds of great heroes into swords, and into suits of armor worn by temple guards, so such steel can reason and speak advice. A handful of the walking suits of armor popularly known as helmed horrors, animated in secret by very powerful clerics and wizards, house the most valiant warriors their creators could find.

Ostur “Oldbuckles” Olbrawvyn of Scornubel was a legless man dragging himself along on a cart with crutches one morn—and by that very night had become the brains of a wizard’s mighty dragon steed, transformed and melded into the body of a crazed, nigh-mindless wyrm hatchling. Varendur Zhal of Tashluta gambled his lands, horses, belongings, and left arm away in games of chance with the senile Brothers Torlaene of

his city, but in the end won a potion that made him young and strong and restored his arm, so he could live life anew. So it *can* happen!

Less dramatic but more successful is the sort of retirement managed by the veteran mercenary Harondus Sardgard. He wanted a little ease, and a far lower public profile than the infamous Mirt the Moneylender or the famous Durnan of the Yawning Portal. So he kept up his contacts in the sword-swinging business for protection, sank his coin into rental properties all over Waterdeep, and lived in one of his own buildings, on all the rents coming in. There are scores more like him—and they are the greatest source of treasure tales, battle wisdom, and distant contacts in Faerûn.

## GUILDS

The official trade organizations collectively known as guilds are by nature specific to a trade or a group of (usually closely related) trades, and are almost always found in cities. Over time, many of them tend to sit in unofficial opposition to the local rulers and nobility.

Shelves of books could be written detailing the deeds, internal intrigues, and unfolding histories of the guilds of Faerûn. The guilds of the city of Waterdeep are infamous across the Realms for their abundance, their ongoing squabbles, and their investments and sideline dealings outside the City of Splendors. Over the centuries, guilds have had a lot of influence over trade customs, other guilds, local laws and regulations, and the way things are done all over the Heartlands.

Most guilds have heraldry, badges, and colored wax seals of inspection they stamp on goods. These change with bewildering rapidity, often to denote dating and therefore old goods, or to try to foil fraudsters who have gained or duplicated a seal stamp.

Suzail, the capital of Cormyr, is home to a smaller number of guilds than Waterdeep and in that respect is more typical of cities across the Realms. These guilds should prove a good model that can be modified for other cities.

Guilds in Cormyr have far less power and wealth than in Waterdeep, and are far friendlier to authorities. They operate only in Suzail and the lands immediately around the city (on the southern or Suzail side of the Starwater River, plus

Hilp but minus Marsember). Thanks to the rebellious histories of Arabel and Marsember, most guilds have trade agents and observers in both of those cities, but no real power or organization. This is reinforced by the traditional resistance of nobles to anyone, even the Crown, meddling unnecessarily in life, customs, and matters befalling on “their” lands—which covers much of the countryside.

Guilds in Cormyr perform the following functions, for the benefit of themselves and their members.

1. They publicize rosters of their members in good standing, intimating that all do work of the best standard, and agreeing that members shall not hesitate to repair or maintain any item that is the work of another member. This means a guild member will never tell a would-be customer: “Pooh! I can’t fix that! Utter trash; hurl it away and buy one of mine!” Most guilds secretly try to fix prices by agreeing on a going rate for certain goods or services that members aren’t bound to, but which they will refer to when negotiating with clients. They do not have the legal right to set prices or even standards. They do have almost complete control over who qualifies for membership, dues, and the local conduct of the trades they represent.

2. They agree on approved glues, finishes, and other materials. Sometimes, guilds also approve of suppliers for their materials, as well as—when members desire—procuring supplies in bulk to get discounted prices for members. Nonmembers who buy raw supplies from guild members are charged a markup over standard street prices.

3. They provide warehousing or materials storage facilities for members. Most guild charters provide for immediate emergency storage for members who have been burned out of their own facilities or otherwise prevented from using them. In addition, most guilds secretly provide one or more hidden locations not officially owned by or linked to the guild for members to temporarily stash goods, themselves, or apprentices who are wanted by the law or who are being hunted by personal foes.

4. They maintain, with the agreement of the royal court, precise and public definitions of objects, sizes, and amounts used by guild members in their trade. This ensures that one member’s “firkin” or “ell” is the same as another’s.

5. They support indigent retired guild members, usually by a monthly measure of grain, ale, and meat or fish, or a few coins in lieu of such supplies. For instance, 12 gp is the monthly munificence wage paid by the Guild of Coachlars, Carriers, Waymen, and Locksters, but the Seafarers Guild doles out only 8 gp. Some guilds maintain an “old bones lodge” for retired guild members, which sometimes take in nonmembers for stiff fees to support the care of the retired guild members, who are charged little or nothing.

6. They offer money changing and money-lending services to members in need at set rates (always lower than market) agreed upon at guild meetings. Most guilds also provide secure money storage for members, who often prefer such silent storage to banking their coins with the royal court, enabling tax collectors to take note of the amounts of funds specific individuals handle.

7. They provide guild members as observers when caravans arrive for fairs at Jester’s Green, elsewhere around Hilp, or south of the Starwater, as well as when ships unload at the docks in Suzail. In fact, they insist on guild members being present in order to see what cargoes are arriving, in which containers, where they are intended to be sold, and to whom. This supervision allows the guilds to see if everything adheres to regulations as well as gives them a day or so of warning on price fluctuations.

Guilds in Cormyr also unofficially perform a lot of other functions, from investing members’ profits to engaging in (or hiring others to perform) arson, vandalism, or theft against rivals. All guilds lobby against competing outlander peddlers and ship captains who don’t adhere to court-approved guild measures. Additionally, guilds quite openly gather information about who is trading in what sort of goods, and they argue before the royal court as to which guild should have a say over a newly introduced product or service. For example, the Tanners and Leatherers Guild and the Guild of Coachlars, Carriers, Waymen, and Locksters might argue over who has purview over clip-in harnesses made for attaching additional draft animals to a coach or a wagon.

Almost every guild charges membership fees—and its apprentices or would-be members even higher fees. The royal court must be kept fully informed of fee changes and of membership requirements, and court officers aggressively

investigate all complaints regarding apprentices or probationary members facing unusual difficulties in acquiring full membership. The Crown prohibits any non-Cormyreans and any Cormyreans of noble or royal blood from being guildmasters. In addition, most guilds withhold membership from persons who don’t own land in Cormyr. Crown law prevents race or gender from having any part in guild membership rules.

Almost every guild tries to control the professional behavior of its members in some way, either through formal rules or through informal secret edicts and temporary boycotts. For example, “No member of the Vintners and Falconers Guild is to trade with any member of the Brewers and Cheesemakers Guild until further notice from the Grand Hooded Vintner” (the guildmaster).

To form a guild, its proponents must first successfully petition the Crown. A royal charter is granted that sets forth membership requirements, a founding roster of members, a rota of officers, and the guild rules. It also includes the grant of a badge or a device (a physical object, such as the miniature helms mounted on scepters and shop signs by members of the Armorers) for guild use. This is not a heraldic grant of arms, though the Heralds keep records of these badges as well. Heralds can, of course, separately grant arms to guilds who desire and pay for a grant. All guilds are required to keep up-to-date rolls at court and in their headquarters, recording all changes in membership, rules, and fees. In this case “up-to-date” means “must reflect all changes fully and accurately within a tenday, or face stiff fines and a mark of censure.”

Two marks of censure against any guild means an automatic War Wizard investigation of all guild activities, taxes, and finances. Six marks means the guild charter is forfeit. Marks are officially rescinded after an investigation is passed, but are never automatically removed after passage of time.

## Illegal Guilds

Every civilized realm has so-called or self-styled guilds everyone knows about that are actually illegal organizations regulated only by themselves.

In the case of Cormyr, these outlaw guilds include the infamous Fire Knives and an endless succession of small, local thieves’ guilds that are

inevitably crushed by the War Wizards and the Highknights but often re-founded. Such illicit organizations have traditionally held little power in Cormyr, except in Marsember and in small but frequent Dragon Coast smuggling operations. In fact, at any one time, Marsember usually has a Guild of Marsember rebel organization and three or four small Guilds of Goodsrunners that adopt various fanciful names and try to import goods from Sembia, Westgate, or the Vilhon Reach without paying taxes or enduring government inspections. The Crown usually infiltrates and shatters these false guilds, sometimes hiring adventurers to assist when fighting is expected.

## Craft Guilds

Apart from the grand, official high guilds of Cormyr, small, local craft guilds are found in every town and city in Cormyr. Some villages have fledgling, disorganized craft guilds, and those in cities are often little more than powerless complaining societies.

A craft guild is a collective of all the various crafters and shopkeepers in a particular place (as opposed to just those engaged in a specific profession), who band together to try to buy materials in bulk for the sake of lower prices and shipping costs. The guild also tries to argue taxes down to a minimum and seeks to establish common working conditions for its members. The goal of a craft guild is to eliminate what the weaver Lurdruth Thaloane of Waymoot recently called “unfair advantages gained by merchants who work family members, children they’ve taken in, and debtors they have holds over to death in near slavery!”

Craft guilds tend to have high-sounding names such as the Benevolent Muster of Merchants of Eveningstar, and the Loyal Council of Coinfellows of Espar.

The chief benefits of both the craft guilds and the high guilds are social. Members can swiftly spread word among fellow members of prices, practices, swindles, and other news. This quick communication aids in cutting down on impostures, false rumors of shortages designed to drive up prices of materials, and confidence tricks. In addition, guild members more easily hear which journeymen are seeking new employment and which masters are seeking new hires, as well as which apprentices have acquired real skills.

Information of this last sort opens up alternative employment opportunities for skilled apprentices, should their current masters prove unscrupulous enough to avoid granting them recognition. In turn, novices can learn who is best at this or that specialty of guildcraft (the best knife polisher, the best toolmaker, the crafter whose work is most fashionable among lavishly spending nobles, and so on).

## High Guilds

These true Cormyrean craft fraternities—that is, organizations of workers largely engaged in the same specific profession—have been somewhat curbed in powers, hauteur, and fripperies since their excesses during the time of the Tuigan Horde. These excesses included uniforms, secret handshakes, arcane festivals and rituals, passing internal laws, advising their members on which Crown laws to obey and which to flout, and closely allying with certain noble families who had their own treasonous agendas for financial gain.

The hitherto-flourishing Bricklayers Guild, for instance, no longer exists because it became a front for several noble families plotting to overthrow the Dragon Throne. Those nobles used the guild to enrich themselves by smuggling stolen goods and small valuables, evading taxes, and hiding valuables inside hollow bricks.

Cormyr’s guilds traditionally held little political power, but were “feeling their brawn” (as the Cormyrean expression has it) just before the arrival of the Tuigan Horde, led by the aforementioned Bricklayers, the Sculptors and Masons Guild, and the Guild of Carpenters and Joiners. The surviving two construction guilds are now carefully law-abiding. However, flush with the coin from those aspiring to live in ever-grandier residences and erect ever-fancier follies, they have learned the value of their work, and they continue to be locally politically active, pursuing and guarding their own interests with passion and manipulative skill.

The Guilds of Cormyr currently recognized in the Forest Kingdom are detailed below, presented in roughly descending order of influence.

**Sculptors and Masons Guild:** Controls stonework, statuary, quarrying, plastering, mud-daub, and waterproofing. This guild knows its true power more than any other. However,





*For centuries, kings and ruling lords with their armies and hired wizards shaped the Realms. Now the merchants want their turn—and they will take it one purchased throne at a time, if need be. The High Guilds of Suzail won't be left behind anymore.*

it is also steadfastly loyal to the Obarskys for their striving to maintain a fair and prosperous Cormyr.

**Guild of Carpenters and Joiners:** Controls wood cutting, curing, staining, furniture making, fitted carpentry, and joinery. This is a wealthy, energetic, “into everything” (such as new styles of coffers, chairs, and stools) guild. It’s also fractious; the guildmaster faces almost constant challenges to his authority from what he calls “pompous fat little trumpet-mouths” who think they can do a better job of running the guild.

**Armorers Guild:** Controls armor- and weapon-making, plus the making of tempered tools from sewing needles to tiny gears and cogs. This guild is watched by the War Wizards to prevent any noble from equipping a private army without the Crown’s knowledge. Members resent this scrutiny even as they accept its necessity.

**Guild of Coachlars, Carriers, Waymen, and Locksters:** Controls wagon makers and wagon owners, locksmiths, coachlars (coach

drovers), carters (those who operate local delivery wagons), and draymen (deliverers and loaders of ships at the docks, on wagons everywhere, and in warehouses). “Locksters” is the Dragon Reach term for owners and guardians of warehouses. Rampant ambition within the Coachcows, as most of Cormyr calls this guild, was curbed by the War Wizards and the Highknights in the wake of the battles against the Tuigan Horde.

**Truebreeds Guild:** Controls trade in horses, oxen, sheep, cattle, guard dogs, and sheepdogs, as well as the breeding, care, and sale of all kept beasts. This guild is an often fractious group of ranchers. Due to offers from Sembia, Westgate, and certain Cormyrean nobles wanting exotic guardians or pets, the guildmaster is privately considering breaking the guild rule that Vangerdahast forced on his now-dead predecessor Belivaerus Daethul: Members of the Truebreeds would never attempt to crossbreed species nor make any use of magic enabling features of one

beast to be added to another. Or, more simply, they'd never try to "make monsters."

**Seafarers Guild:** Includes sailors, captains, fleet owners, navigators, mapmakers, ropers (the local name for rope makers), sail makers, shipwrights, and ship repairers. Interests in Sembia and Westgate frequently try to bribe these guild members to aid and abet smuggling and even slave running. Under the guildmaster's firm, diligent hand, this guild is courteous, abides by both guild and Crown laws, and cultivates a trustworthy, stolid, reliable, "no changes, please" image.

**Vintners and Falconers Guild:** Controls falconry, raptor breeding and trading, wine making, vineyard owning and tending, wine blendings, and sales. Many guild members are flamboyant revelers and hedonists who consider a fun-loving lifestyle the proper aim and achievement of a successful life. Because the falconers and the vintners of Suzail aspired to serve the same noble clientele, they were the first to join ranks and form a guild. Their success led to the other "anvil-and-flower" (the Realms term for "chalk-and-cheese") combined disparate-trades guilds.

**Brewers and Cheesemakers Guild:** Made up of brewers, spirits blenders and importers, and cheesemakers. The guild's headquarters, called the Caskhouse, often hosts days-long drinking revels for members (and one guest each).

**Roofers, Thatchers, and Glaziers Guild:** Made up of roofers, slate masons, shingle cutters, thatchers and thatch cutters, glaziers, "sandglass" makers, and glass stainers.

**Tanners and Leatherers Guild:** Composed of tanners, leather dyers, glovers, corvisers (boot- and shoemakers), cobblers, harness makers, battle leatherers (makers of leather armor and under armor), trimmers (who sew leather trim to garments), weatherdarrs (makers of leather caps, hats, "deep-snows" leggings, and weather-cloaks), and leatherwork repairers and alterers.

**Guild of Weavers and Coopers:** Made up of coopers, weavers, textile dyers, garment cutters, embroiderers, clothiers, and drapers (sellers of draperies and tapestries)

**Guild of Naturalists:** Controls medicinal, edible, lubricant, dye-source, and craft-worthy uses for plant and animal matter, either as distillates or as solids (and all who work with such substances, and associated research and vending).

The current Naturalists Guild is more of a sages' debating society than anything else.

## TRADE AND MERCHANT PRINCES

Over the 1200s, 1300s, and 1400s DR, the merchant class rose steadily in size, wealth, and influence. This class includes the crafters, shopkeepers, traders, and shippers who produce food and desired items and get them into the hands of buyers. The influence of nobles and kings has waned, except in such cases as they can back up their authority with wealth. This situation has led to some unusual alliances and "sellings-out." Wealthy merchants have been elevated to the nobility and received lucrative court posts. And in Waterdeep in the late 1400s DR, noble titles were sold on the open market to settle the crushing debts of old-blood nobles.

Over the years, some mercantile terms (such as "coster") have broadened their meanings, and others (such as "priakos") have fallen out of favor and almost disappeared. However, urban merchants still fall into several broad categories, to wit:

First are the crafters, who make things; in rural areas, crofters dominate this group.

Second are shopkeepers, who sell you what you need, often brought from afar and gathered "handy" in their shops.

Then come traders, who buy and sell, negotiating prices and determining what shippers convey around the Realms. Some say traders also manipulate markets to create false shortages, so as to raise prices.

Finally there are the shippers, who are the sea captains and caravan merchants.

The lines between these categories have always been blurry, thanks to peddlers and caravan masters who sell as they travel, traders who are also shippers (many of whom call themselves costers if they want clients to know they do both), shopkeepers who are also crafters, and so on.

If you find a sign beside a door that opens onto a stair leading to upper-floor offices, and that sign has the word "Trading" on it, you can be confident you've found a trader. That trader is someone who finds particular merchandise for clients, or finds buyers for a client's wares and

arranges for a shipper to deliver them—whether halfway across Faerûn or down the next street. Some examples of these businesses are Faulkon’s Trading in Beregost, Sorkilt’s Fine Trading in Everlund, and Donnatur’s Trading in Port Llast.

All four sorts of merchants might have warehouses, depending on how large the business, how large the things it sells, and how swiftly those things get moved into the hands of buyers. For instance, shipping is hardest and rarest in winter, when some roads become impassable and most ports in the Heartlands and more northerly areas are iced in. So in winter, crafters work long hours producing things for sale in the next season—or to trade with someone nearby for firewood or food to last them until spring. This season is also when shippers are most idle, and many of them hire on as help for crafters, or “turn crafter” themselves, making items such as harps, crates, barrels, furniture, weapons, or tools as a sideline.

Slavery declined from the 1200s DR through 1400s DR everywhere except in Thay. As a result, with the growth of the merchant class and the ever-increasing demand for items and production of items, labor costs have risen. This state of affairs led to cutthroat competition in some places—as well as more piracy, smuggling, and trade wars between rival merchant cabals. And these trade wars are not price wars, but include real violence. In other places, it led to protectionism in the form of the rise of guilds and their influence. Some places, such as Waterdeep, are large enough to contain both strong guilds and cutthroat daily trade dealings. An entire land, Sembia, has risen from being a prosperous farming breadbasket to a glittering, bustling land of riches and mercantile pride. From the early 1300s DR onward, Sembia was known impolitely across Faerûn as “the land of fat rich merchants.”

This prosperity and growth pushed farms out of the land immediately around growing towns and cities, which in turn made for ever deeper carving into the wilderlands to create new farms. Wild beasts are fewer, foraging is harder, and forests cover less area than formerly. Druids are losing power and influence, predatory monsters come into contact with humans more often, and as news travels ever faster, people all over the Realms perceive dangers as becoming more numerous.

Hence the rise of two professions: factors and adventurers.

A factor is a trade agent employed as a salesman, paymaster, and buyer for someone else. In rural areas, a factor might be hired from afar, and might be employed by many people. Factor is a profession that didn’t exist before about 1270 DR, except in the largest noble or royal households or courts. It’s a high-stress, travel-intensive job that ages and devours many who hold it—unless they grow very fat and successful, or succumb to a slayer’s knife or some other misadventure. The most infamous factor is Sammereza Sulphontis of Waterdeep, who spent most of his life traveling far from the city, making deals and working intrigues to shore up rulers who were friendly to his trading—and to tear down those who tried to play tyrant at the expense of merchants, the unhampered flow of trade, and the purses of their citizens. The Realms is familiar with his type, if not him personally, thanks to oily characters in many plays, and to the factors who represent nobility in markets everywhere.

A few factors have risen to become kingpins—such as the infamous Mirt the Moneylender, who came to employ dozens of factors of his own—but most spend their careers wearing out their boots and backsides in endless travels, competing with ever more and ever younger rival factors.

Adventurers are nowadays increasingly prized or considered useful, where they were once widely regarded as lawless nuisances little better than outlaws—an attitude encouraged by rulers and many temples, who disliked the competition to their “lawful authority.” People have increasingly more coin to hire adventurers—and at the same time more need to hire adventurers to protect their coin.

Factors and up-and-coming merchants need bodyguards—or at least want bodyguards to impress others and to discourage snatch-and-grab “toughs” (thieves). The rise of guilds and the accompanying inevitable rules, regulations, edicts, and competition have frustrated many who see such things as barriers to getting revenge on those who have bested them. Adventurers, those who “step outside the law or proper behavior, where I dare not,” are seen as the best way to settle scores or recover stolen (or at least contested) items or even people (kidnappings are rising, too).



Symbarae  
Life, endless life,  
the way of things,  
the Cycle Unending



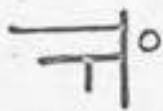
Rune: Ullathar  
=Trail Mark  
(this is the  
safe passage  
through swamp or dangerous  
area, entrance/exit from cavern  
or concealed area)



Uttuebyn  
Place/Item/Structure  
sacred to religion/cult/  
group of people in the  
past, and possibly still  
the site of magic/guardians/  
means of summoning or  
conjuring deities, creatures,  
etc.

Way-Markers of the northern Realms, as compiled by Elminster the Sage

("Those glyphs, carved in stone in deep caverns, remote valleys, and high mountains, that so mystify travellers"---Elminster)



(Concealed)  
Entry --marker  
of the ancient  
Duartan



Caravan  
route marker  
of the Drow



'Safe Place'  
glyph of the  
Dwarves



Food cache  
Svirfneblin  
mark



Orc-mark:  
'Safe Trail'



'Warning: Danger'  
symbol used by  
rangers in the  
days of Myth  
Drannor



'Entrance  
nearby'  
glyph of the  
Kobolds



'Man Trap'  
snare or pit  
warning  
marker used  
by rangers  
and delvers  
of old in  
the Realms



'The Horns of Evil  
Ranger-mark' used  
of old to denote  
the territory or  
nearby presence  
of evil mages,  
devil-worshippers,  
and orc or other  
'goblin race'  
settlements



Camping-Place  
(trail mark used in  
Inner Sea lands: denotes  
safe drinking water,  
level ground, firewood,  
etc.)



=Magic Here  
(Warning rune used  
by many in the  
Realms)

A few of the most often seen glyphs, of many used all over the Realms. Some lore notes: 1. "Symbarae" is an elven mark, now more widely understood. Drow use it to mean refuge or healing. 2. Beware drow marks with horizontal lines above them; such lines denote false marks, placed to misdirect the uninitiated. 3. The "magic here" rune is Halruaan (ancient Netherese, actually; much used before the scattering among Low Netherese, to warn each other away from wild magic or powerful magic placed among them by archwizards from above).

It was once fashionable among nobles to hire adventurers to do their dirty work so they could portray themselves as loyal to the throne and too civilized to threaten social order and etiquette by getting personally involved in disputes. (“Have your champion meet my champion, and we’ll settle this with their swords and blood—as we watch, over wine.”) Now, it’s fashionable among wealthy, rising merchants to hire adventurers to show that they’re *practically* nobility. And of course, such patrons want to see their adventurers doing dashing, adventurous deeds—both for entertainment, and to reassure those patrons that they’ve hired capable, true adventurers. Some nobles and wealthy merchants even hire bards to script pretend or “play” disputes, which the adventurers of both sides (all sides, in some of the more confusing cases) act out roles in, complete with moonlit raids, swordplay along balconies, thrilling chases, and grand confrontations. It’s lucrative work—and a few adventurers even like it.

In recent centuries, the unpredictability of mercantile matters has meant busier and more complex lives for most people, and ever more coin in circulation, driving increasing greed, need, and opportunities.

As the merchants’ prayer puts it, “All thanks to Waukeen that we live in such interesting times!”

## Wealthy Traders

There are two sorts of merchant princes. The first is very rare in the Realms—royal princes who happen to be successful and busy merchants. One such royal prince and successful merchant is the self-styled Prince Erendor of Highspires, a new and tiny kingdom in the eastern Border Kingdoms. Another is “Prince” Galarth Hevedryn, the son of a bastard son of King Azoun IV of Cormyr, who has lived all his life in Ormpur, comfortably far from the Dragon Throne, as a wealthy trader using his inherited-but-self-augmented riches to live like royalty.

The second sort—common-born merchants who have amassed enough wealth to live like princes, often acting imperiously and having more real influence and reach than a real prince—has become numerous indeed in the Realms.

The exalted uppermost ranks of merchant princes are the fabulously wealthy, whose worth outstrips any need to engage in ruthless, energetic

daily trading, so they can—if they wish—fully indulge their every whim.

The current Faerûnian term for a fabulously wealthy person is “coin mountain,” and here are five such coin mountains, all of whom are independent individuals, not rulers.

**Stort Melharhammer of Mirabar:** This shield dwarf, a former soldier, is a black-bearded, honey-voiced, well-groomed trader who acts as a moneylender, a money changer, and a go-between for dwarves and visiting ship captains, smoothing out negotiations. He often engineers false shortages so as to increase gem prices for the dwarves, and always takes a cut of any increase he orchestrates. Stort is completely amoral and doesn’t drink, and his only forms of enjoyment are watching elf maidens dance and listening to harp music. He lives and breathes to scheme, manipulate, and win the next deal. When he runs out of space in his underground abode for his accumulated coins and gems, he pays trusted young dwarves handsomely to go and buy him some more property in Neverwinter, Waterdeep, or Baldur’s Gate. As a result, he’s now a landlord of more than a dozen buildings in each city, though he’s never seen any of them. If he didn’t spend money to influence politics in Luskan and Ruathym so as to prevent widespread warfare, he’d be even richer than he is—unless, as he judges, said warfare would have hurt trade through Mirabar, and thus cost him more.

**Elmraeda Gondoalyn of Iyrynspire:** Gondoalyn is the quiet, elegant, shrewd, and aging rich widow of three wealthy Chessentan merchants, all of whom she loved and none of whose deaths she had anything to do with. Now gaunt and frail, she protects her person with some powerful items of magic, mainly rings—though tales vary as to which sorts, because she has a large collection. Gondoalyn dwells in Iyrynspire, a castle in the Chessentan countryside built for her by her first husband, the shipping merchant Yarlos Melrorn, with a devoted staff and a strong bodyguard of “knights.” This bodyguard force is a sixty-some-strong private army of full-plate-armored veteran fighters. She entertains herself by watching others live their lives through her crystal ball (a magic item that can detect others’ thoughts). She lavishes money on her people but spends little on herself. Her steward, Deln Maerintor, is a powerful wizard who is devoted to her. Her

wealth increases steadily through the rents from properties in a dozen cities, and (through several trading costers) the ownership of over forty trading caravels. It's rumored (correctly) that one of the towers of her home is in truth the only privately owned Halruaan skyship in Chessenta.

**Fuorn "Fallingstar" Avilanter of El-ventree:** This moon elf sorcerer is a seller of spells and enspelled gems of his own making, who trades discreetly with rich Sembian buyers through trusted adventurers of the Dales. A reclusive master of disguises, Fuorn wears teleport rings and makes himself impossible to find for those who come seeking him. Fuorn spends all his profits buying up city properties in Yhaunn and Saerloon by way of agents and largely fictitious Sembian trading companies. He also owns a few buildings in Suzail and in Teziir, and spends his free time magically spying on certain humans he has found by accident. He likes to watch their intrigues, achievements, and pratfalls, enjoying their lives vicariously as entertainment in much the same way that Elmraeda Gondoalyn uses her crystal ball.

**Burnyl Talongar of Phsant:** Talongar is known to most Theskans only as "the Lord of Gems." This unusually tall and thin, taciturn gem cutter and appraiser secretly acts as a bank and a sponsor for many merchants throughout Thesk. His loans and deals are single-handedly responsible for slowing the spread of the Shadowmasters' influence in the region, but that group tolerates him because certain senior priests of Mask owe so much to him that the deity has personally ordered the Shadowmasters to "keep him untouched—by anyone." Talongar is unaware of this fact, and simply goes about his business, which is to make fair deals with everyone and to adhere to those deals strictly, dealing always with politeness and honor. As a result, he is trusted by everyone, gets a lot of business, and grows steadily wealthier. Operating through sea captain clients, he regularly invests this wealth in farms and warehouses in Impiltur, Alaghôn, and Westgate.

**Nalune Tassarat of Ormpur:** Tassarat is an aging former escort who throughout her early life invested her earnings in shady smuggling, slaving, drug-dealing and thieving. Her investments earned a lot of coin that in later life she put into building luxurious pleasure houses and

palatial city towers that she split into rental housing, floor by floor. The palatial rentals proved a huge hit with Ormpurrians who weren't quite wealthy enough to own and maintain large mansions, but wanted luxury and haughty addresses. "Old Nalune" always wanted hidden tunnels and chambers in her buildings, and made much side-line coin aiding individuals who needed to go into hiding for a time, or who wanted to meet pleasure partners discreetly. Now, in the twilight of her years, she is increasingly investing in clever traders from Tharsult and Lantan, sponsoring them on fair terms—and raking in coins as a result. It's said she sleeps on a bed of cabochon-cut, smooth-polished rubies, and that she is beginning to consort with necromancers with an eye to achieving undeath.

## Cabals

Most folk of the Realms will never meet or be crushed by the actions of a coin mountain. Their foes, manipulators, and governors of what they can buy or sell and at what prices, are far more likely to be merchants of lesser power. That is, local families and trading companies or just handfuls of ordinary shopkeepers who meet in back rooms to divide up local markets ("Azreth can sell all the apples he wants, so long as he leaves the parsnips to me!"), fix prices, set availability, and decide which fellow merchants are welcome, and who should be ruined and forced out of the community.

These cabals can be benevolent, but—human nature (which is really the nature of most demihumans as well) being what it is—they are more often ruthless. Until one is uncovered and someone sees a way to shatter its power or goes to the trouble of taking it away, a cabal can be very effective.

Cabals give jobs to each other's sons and daughters and "slow" relatives, cooperate to buy up land or vacant shops, and generally arrange matters to their mutual benefit. Few cabals do any harm to caravan traders who stop for a night and sell pots more cheaply than their own members do—other than to explain away the price disparity by saying, "Those are stolen wares, of course—or scavenged from the homes of folk who died of terrible diseases!" Yet if an outlander pot maker tries to settle locally and sell his pots, or

a crofter takes to often walking into town to sell pots, something bad will happen. The interloper gets beaten up and robbed by masked “outlaws” who are really cabal members or their hirelings, and if that doesn’t settle things, the pot maker’s shop or the crofter’s hut catches fire and burns down.

All across the Realms, day by day, such sordid, local behind-the-scenes dealings govern life for many. Family ties, secret pacts between merchants (“Boots? Ah, I don’t deal in boots no more; ye’d best see young Eldro Aldraunth, down yon street, if it’s boots ye want!”), and the illicit acts of cabals rule the lives of common folk more often and more firmly than do distant kings or lordlings.

All of which leads to more work for adventurers, of course—either as hired thugs working for a cabal, or as the only way those under the thumb of a cabal can strike back at their oppressors.

## COINAGE

A bewildering variety of coinage is strewn across the Realms, with many different local names for the familiar copper, silver, and gold pieces. There are triangular coins, square coins, circular coins, and oval coins—which are by far the most common. They are of different metals, and some are pierced when minted for stringing on rings or cords. Many other coins are pierced with small holes by merchants when in use, though very few are cut in half, since partial coins are seldom considered to have any value. Decorations on coins are almost always stamped on their faces, and edges are left plain. These decorations can be anything from crude numerals to detailed illustrations, although certain countries tend to cling to a consistent style, or at least an equivalent artistic style. Calimshan, Sembia, Amn, Cormyr, Silverymoon, and Waterdeep are generally considered to have the artistically finest coins.

Most coins bear simple devices, usually heraldic badges. Some display stylized crowns with a ruler’s name underneath, and a few, mainly the artistically finest coins of valuable denominations, have lifelike rulers’ heads impressed on them, usually in side profile.

In general, Waterdeep’s coinage, except for the harbor moon and the taol (or “toal”; either name

is correct), is accepted without question all over the Sword Coast lands, the Sword Coast North, and offshore from Calimshan north. Coins of Cormyr and Sembia are considered the regional standard for the Dragon Coast, the Dragon Reach, the Vast, the Dales, the Moonsea, and the Vilhon. The authokh and the bebolt (detailed hereafter) are common coinage from Chessenta southward. “Common coinage” means that a given coin will be accepted at face value by most folk. Merchants who travel accept a wider variety of coinage, but are better at detecting false coins.

The origin of a coin (where it comes from) is an important factor, as coins from different origins command different degrees of respect, based on consistent quality and freedom from counterfeiting—or at least, freedom from counterfeits using less valuable metal than the originals. Coins of Amn, Cormyr, Luskan, Mirabar, Sembia, Silverymoon, Tethyr, and Waterdeep are considered the best-made in Faerûn and are the most highly valued in trade. Cormyrean coins are extremely pure metal, very heavy, and resistant to wear; Sembian coins are deemed slightly inferior to Cormyrean coins.

## The Authokh and the Bebolt

These currencies are widely used in Chessenta, the Vilhon, Border Kingdoms, the Tashalar, and everywhere south of that. They began as the coinage of a single city in Chessenta, though exactly which city has been forgotten.

An authokh (*oth-awk*) is a square coin stamped out of “delmed” silver with a small central hole to allow it to be strung onto a pay-thong or a wire loop. Delming is an alloying process that stops silver from tarnishing by combining it with copper and certain white metals in precise proportions. This process has the side effects of turning the silver a translucent green and making its surface incapable of taking a high shine, no matter how it is polished. On one face, it bears an engraved ring of twelve leaves encircling the central hole, and on the other side a ring of twelve radiating daggers.

A bebolt (also called a “belbolt,” usually shortened to “bolt”) is a thick, heavy gold coin of a curious shape. A circle with two shallow, matching cut-outs in its edges, a bebolt looks like two axe-heads fused back-to-back with their curved blades outermost.

Authokhs and bebolts are accepted in Amn, Scornubel, and Westgate, but not in Cormyr, Sembia, the Dales, the Dragon Reach, the Moonsea, the Sword Coast lands, or Tethyr. In Calimshan and Waterdeep, an authokh is considered simply a silver piece, and a bebolt is classed as “a heavy” (a gold piece valued at 2 gp rather than just 1 gp).

## Shining Examples

Here follow details of some of the most elaborate, artistic, and widely esteemed coinage in all of Faerûn.

**Calaunt:** Coins of this city are roughly stamped-out circles of gold, silver, and copper with the Scepter’s sigil on one side and a key on the other. The sigil is a vertical human right hand clenched in a fist around a horizontal scepter. The fingers of the hand are toward the viewer, and the scepter is a plain metal bar ending in a four-pointed star at each end. The key is a long-barreled device etched on the diagonal, with a two-flange-end at the viewer’s lower left, and a three-loop-leaf handle at the viewer’s upper right. Behind it are three parallel wavy horizontal lines, representing waves and Calauntan shipping.

**Cormyr:** Modern Cormyrean coins bear the monarch’s face and name on one side and a date, a denomination, and a mint mark on the other. For nine out of ten coins, this mark is a full-on bearded, hatless wizard’s face, referred to as “Old Vangey” but meant to represent all War Wizards and denoting the Royal Mint in Suzail. About ten percent of coins instead bear two parallel crescent moons, their horns to the dexter. This mark denote a High Horn minting. The High Horn fortress has always had a smithy and nearby “dungeon” caverns used to store metals mined in the surrounding mountains.

There’s been only one minting since the death of Azoun IV. Rather than an Obarskyr’s face, such “Regency” coins bear the Purple Dragon royal arms with five parallel bars on its body. Older Cormyrean coins (minted in 1290 DR and earlier) don’t bear dates, but instead have a line saying “first minting,” “second minting,” or the like, in reference to the reign of the monarch under which the coins were issued. There were eight mintings during the reign of Azoun

IV, but three is the highest count any earlier king managed.

**Sembia:** Sembian coins have become more numerous, thanks to the country’s growing wealth, size, and ever-soaring mercantile activity. They tend to be larger but thinner than most other coinage. All have the arms of Sembia on one side and, on the reverse, the denomination on the top of the coin and the date (in DR) curving around a “proof stamp” (mint mark) in the middle. Sembian coins often have a bluish tinge from being fire-cleaned of the grease they are exposed to during their stamping. The grease is deliberately cooked into the iron coins to inhibit rust, and it does a fair, if not foolproof, job.

**Westgate:** After 1364 DR, Westgate stopped regularly minting coins for about a decade. As a result, its already easy acceptance of the coinage of many lands became entrenched. In Westgate, almost all outland coin is valued the same way currency is in most places: by condition, purity of the metal, size (as pertains to the amount of metal), and origin. Exceptions are Cormyrean and Sembian coins; those coins are accepted as common coinage, just as they are in the Dales, the Moonsea, the Vilhon, the Dragon Reach, the Vast, and the Dragon Coast. However, Westgate also accepts the authokh and bebolt, whereas those other places do not.

## Zhentil Keep’s Currency

The Keep has been a trading center from its founding, and so home to all manner of imported currency. It also has a good deal of rough-smelted trade bars—a result of the wealth the metal mines north of the Moonsea pours south through Zhentil Keep. The Keep has had various local mintings, most of them rough-edged and irregular. Zhentil Keep coins usually bear the crude stamping of a portcullis gate on one side and a diamond-shaped gemstone on the other.

In the years since the rebuilding of the Keep in the 1370s DR, a few copper and silver coins and a lot of gold coins have been minted, as needed by the Zhentarim to pay their Zhentilar and suppliers. The copper and silver are mere coatings on iron, deemed worthless by most folk outside Zhentil Keep. However, the gold coins are made of the “real gleam,” a slightly reddish gold found mainly northeast of Glister (and there are rumors



of vast amounts of the smelted red gold buried under or near the Citadel of the Raven).

The details that follow apply only to these latter mintings.

**Copper Coin:** Square, pierced by a central hole to allow stringing, the four sharp corners snipped off. Face side: the Wingless Dragon (a scaled serpent with a fanciful head) biting its own tail and curled around a central hole; its head faces counterclockwise. Obverse: ten tiny four-pointed stars, encircling the central hole. Known as a fang in Zhentil Keep and the Dales, but elsewhere as a dung piece.

**Silver Coin:** Triangular, pierced by a central hole to allow stringing, all corners intact. The silver usually wears off quickly. Both sides: six four-pointed stars encircling the central hole. Known as a talon or a naal (*nah-ull*; probably a distortion of the word “nail”) in the Keep and the Dales, but everywhere else as a dung-flea bit or just a flea bit.

**Gold Coin:** Square, with corners intact and no central hole. Two parallel sides are concave for easy grasping by thumbs. Face side: three crenelated castle turret tops, the central one slightly taller than the others. Obverse: the profile of a wolf’s head with its nose to the dexter and with three drops of tears or blood falling away beneath it. Known formally as a glory, but called a weeping wolf everywhere, even in Zhentil Keep.

## Take My Coin, Sir?

Throughout the Realms, the acceptance of older or unfamiliar coins depends on their condition and the metal of which they are made. Gold coins are accepted everywhere at face value unless they are broken, unusually small, or obviously impure. Silver coins that have tarnished to black are seldom accepted, but if they are cleaned without ruining their markings, they’ll probably be accepted, too. For everything else, folk must go to a money changer, which is no hardship since most cities on any coast or major trade route have several.

The oval, rather than round, shape of many Faerûnian coins comes from the comparative ease of getting oval coins “lined up right” in wooden molds for striking their second sides. When the coins are round, doing so is much more difficult and takes longer. The striking itself creates

distortion, causing meant-to-be-round coins to be rejected because they’ve ended up oval instead. So, long ago, most realms just adopted oval as their standard.

Coins from long-gone lands that have been drilled, are lighter than today’s norm, or less pure are worth less. In present-day lands, even for mintings from the reigns of much earlier kings, the collective will of far-traveling merchants firmly prevails. This influence is the same reason why outland coins are present and accepted at all, rather than being melted down for their precious metal content and refashioned into something else. The merchants, mainly caravan traders, want a gold piece from Amn to be equal to a gold piece from Sembia to help keep every single merchant from being cheated in every last transaction.

“Slighting” coins (shaving them, cutting bits off, and the like) reduces their acceptability but not necessarily their value. A merchant might say, “I’m not taking that coin, friend—find a *real* gold piece in your purse, or the deal’s off!” If a merchant accepts a coin at all, it will be for its stated face value, except in transactions when both parties privately agree otherwise. For this reason, contracts sometimes specify “to be paid in lawful coin of Cormyr,” or some other realm or city. Moreover, coin alterations such as hole punching and bisecting don’t affect the acceptability of the coin at all when such alteration is done officially by the realm or a regional ruler.

In effect, the merchants of Faerûn act in concert—without any formal agreement or discussions—to establish the equivalent of a “gold standard.”

## Trade Bars

Trade bars are widely accepted because they must conform closely to a given size and weight to be accepted at all. They are an easy way to melt down and reuse suspicious coins, because an existing trade bar can be pressed into clay to make a mold for a new trade bar.

A 25 gp trade bar is a brick with rounded corners of just over an inch thick, three inches across, and six inches in length. The corners were not always rounded in the past, but squared corners broke off too easily, and the unscrupulous had a habit of deliberately breaking off corners,

so rounded corners became the norm. Calishite trade bars—also used in Tharsult, Tashluta and the Tashalar, and other Southern trade—are seven inches long, but both long sides bow smoothly inward half an inch on each side, making the bar easier to grip.

A trade bar valued at 50 gp has the same dimensions as a 25 gp bar, except it is three inches thick rather than one inch thick. It also tapers inward across that thickness, so the top surface of a 50 gp trade bar is a half-inch smaller than its base. There are no legal bow-sided 50 gp trade bars.

A 75 gp trade bar is an inch thicker than a 50 gp bar, with no taper to its sides at all.

A 100 gp trade bar is two inches thick, three inches across, and nine inches long, with a central hole for carrying on a cord, or for using a cord to tie several trade bars into a bundle. The hole isn't much more than an inch across.

Proof and ownership marks are commonly stamped into the bottom surface of a trade bar, and don't affect its value.

Trade bars minted more than two centuries ago vary widely in dimensions and value. For this reason, when they are traded they are either weighed to ascertain their value or melted down and recast. Most hidden hoards of trade bars are the results of hasty burials in the face of advancing foes or fierce weather, and are soon snapped up when nature or chance digging uncovers them.

## Putting Money to Work

As the clergy of Waukeen—and soon, everyone else—have said for decades, “Coin kept at home is begging to be stolen.”

All wise Waterdhavians invest the money they make, if it's enough to more than cover their debts and ongoing needs in the “sure and certain.” Often these investments are loans to guilds or real estate in the city—which usually means new buildings in new wards, or buying collapsed or tottering buildings in Dock Ward or elsewhere grim, tearing them down, and putting up nice new ones that they then rent out. Those who have a taste for greater risk with higher margins invest in caravan or ship cargoes.

Temples tend to fulfill the functions of real-world banks, but their rates are ruinous to the small lender and borrower, which includes most laborers and commoners. These small lenders

and borrowers instead use moneylenders, such as the infamous Mirt. Moneylending is a common living for an adventurer or a mercenary who is too old or wounded to continue that profession, who has made a few coins and kept up on connections with hireswords.

Most moneylenders are “smallcoin” folk who deal with laborers. Stereotypically, this sort of character is a Scrooge-style miser in charge of a gang who'll beat you up if you don't pay.

More genteel lenders, known as rollcoins, make large sums available to outfit a shop, or buy an entire cargo or a herd or other large “sure thing” purchase. Only the genuinely ruined default on one of these short-term loans, because doing so means they're finished in the city. Rollcoins always demand collateral that's either nonportable, such as real estate, or “under the hand” (given into their keeping), so either way they don't lose.

Rollcoins are treated with respect by all, since successful city dwellers are always planning for what might happen if grim days come, and rising citizens are always looking around to learn who will be useful to them. This respect is exhibited even when a lender is cordially hated behind the smiles, as happens with grasping, leering, unpleasant rollcoins who casually pilfer from clients or prospective clients—in other words, the sort that always features in ballads and nasty tavern tales.

An example of such a moneylender in Waterdeep in the 1370s DR is the thin, long-nosed, nasal-voiced, black-robed, always-humming Ulkroun of Ship Street. Baerenth Ulkroun was a wily and long-lived man who was succeeded in 1441 DR by his son Harlatlam, who in turn was succeeded in 1469 DR by his son Azimurl; all three were very much alike.

## Banking

Faerûn has no places or organizations called banks, but there are providers of banking services, which the Realms calls “manycoin services.” Manycoin services include moneylending, money changing, and “keepsafe” (safe storage).

In the Realms, several groups provide manycoin services. Temples offer them to individuals of the right faith, guilds provide them to members, and some caravan costers provide them to

everyone located in the cities in which they are based. In addition, independent moneylenders offer manycoin services to everyone—including adventuring bands and noble families.

By tradition—and because they want to stay in business—independent moneylenders across Faerûn provide manycoin services with no questions asked. That is, they won't report to local authorities when and how much anyone “proffers” (deposits) or “redeems” (withdraws), or if someone proffers something stolen or sought after by the government or anyone else (such as a royal crown an entire army is searching for). As the moneylenders' saying runs, “Utter discretion, with coded receipts (priests of Waukeen refereeing).”

“Keepsafe” refers to the holding of coins (which the moneylenders invest, to make themselves more funds), contracts and other valuable documents, and small portable valuables such as expensive jewelry worth too much to comfortably store at home, or to carry while traveling.

So, a moneylender makes money from you on loans, and charges you small storage fees for holding your money, without paying you any interest. Which is why most noble families do their own investing, or have their own factors (trade agents) to handle such matters for them if they don't have the time or interest for daily transactions and wealth-building.

Citizens high and low often conceal their funds by melting gold or silver and hiding the resulting thin platelets inside thick castle doors, under roof tiles, and the like. A farmer might bury a pot of coins under the muddiest part of his pig wallow.

Many wealthy individuals and groups in the Realms see the need for what we might think of as a Swiss bank account and the Realms calls a “silent safehold.” That is, a stash for money the owner wants to quietly hold onto for later needs, far from where foes can steal it or governments can tax it or spy on it. So paying someone a modest annual handling fee to quietly “safehold” large amounts of wealth, for certain individuals, is both a bargain and an ideal service.

Moneylenders tend to be individuals, except for a handful of upper-crust lenders. A few of these haughtiest are partnerships, yet still use their partners' own names, and so end up sounding like real-world law firms. A few Waterdhavian examples:

Anasader & Thelmuth

Bertoltan, Dunther, and Haroond

Kelthtor & Navarl

Tanntannath & Frynych

In addition to these partnerships, a handful of individuals are moneylenders to the nobility, in particular Gaerethus Haldrand (Horn Street, North Ward) and Molneth Drathorn (Tharleon Street, Castle Ward).

Dealing with an upper-crust moneylender is done in a private room. Servants accompanied by hulking uniformed guards accompany every patron to his or her own room. There are generally three or four of these rooms clustered around a central strongdark, in which the moneylender and the cash sit. The word “strongdark” is derived from “darkened strong room,” and it's usually a room with many stub walls concealed by black curtains that the occupants can hide behind if attacked.

The entrance to the business, and all areas that patrons see, are of imposing polished stone, with ornate metal furnishings and trim. Everything is crafted to be impressive and fireproof, so no visitor can start a blaze and try to seize coins in the resulting tumult.

Those going to one of the loftier Waterdhavian moneylenders to access a safehold are conducted alone through nigh-silent, lofty passages and rooms of polished marble, gold (gold-plated, rather, over cheaper and sturdier metal) doors, and the like.

A safehold owner desiring to access his or her funds then murmurs through a chased and worked slotted metal barrier to the moneylender, “The [code name] safehold.” This code name is a word or phrase that represents the account; it is not the owner's name. Usually it's something like “High Falcon” or “Three Toes” or some unusual phrase or word not directly related to a family's heraldry or names.

The moneylender then asks, “In or out?” while thrusting forward a shallow tray of smooth sand. “In” means a proffering, and “out” means redemption. The requester replies, “In,” “Out,” “Both,” or something else, and draws a symbol in the sand. Whereupon the moneylender pulls the tray back through the slot, examines the symbol and perhaps checks it against a coded ledger, then immediately draws a knife across the sand to smooth the tray “blank” again. At this point,

the moneylender either refuses the requester if the symbol was wrong, or, if the symbol is right, offers the first part of the pass phrase (which is recorded in another coded ledger). The refusal of a requester is often backed up with guards, loosed war dogs, or the release of unpleasant gas or a spray of onion juice.

The pass phrase works like this: The lender speaks a word or a phrase (never a question), and the person desiring to access the account must make the correct response.

Typical examples of pass phrases are:

“High tides” answered by “Land more cargo and fish.”

“Three fingers” answered by “One is too many to lose.”

“North of Silvermoon” answered by “Fell my arrow.”

## TRADE GOODS

Naturally, almost anything can be bought and sold—and is—across the Realms. Ranging from the pervasive to the esoteric, here are a few of the most noteworthy examples of what Faerûnians produce, purchase, and covet.

### Mongery

“Mongery” is the usual Realms term for nails and more exotic fasteners, hinges, hasps, hooks, and the various straps, bolts, framing irons, and the like used in building doors and windows and their frames. Not to mention pots, pans, cauldrons, spits, trivets—and horseshoes. In other words, anything made of metal that’s not a tool or a weapon.

There are thousands of smiths in the Realms, with the usual wide variety of skills, and they all work to create countless thousands of metal things folk want to buy. The pace of their creation *almost* keeps pace with the destruction of rust, hard wear, and extreme cold. So there’s “always good trade in useful things made of metal.”

In the 1370s DR, screws and threaded bolts are “holy secrets of Gond,” and pretty much limited to temples and to furniture and special devices built, guarded, and used only by priests of that god. “Link bolts” are created by dwarf and gnome smiths, and by human smiths up and down the Sword Coast and around the shores of

the Shining Sea. However, these link bolts are the threadless sort: a rod pierced by a hole that can be filled with a pin or a wedge. In use, the rod is run through a hole in a timber or a stone block, and the pin is applied to the hole on its far side to keep the rod from being pulled back through. Shim-wedges are used when it is necessary to make the fastening secure and rigid rather than loose.

Metal strap hinges with simple, single pivot pins are known and widely used, as are rigid angle-braces of the same design. These angle-braces lack a hinge, and instead feature a bent right angle of metal. Both hinges are used to protect and strengthen the corners and sides of carry-chests and strongchests. Hook-and-eye catches are known but are used only for small-sized, interior projects. Seasonal freezing problems make larger and exterior usages of hook-and-eye catches rare in the North.

Nails, spikes, and wedges (wooden, metal, and stone) are known everywhere, though only dwarves and gnomes make and work with stone ones, and wooden ones are less popular due to weathering and short-life problems. Delicate work such as needles and wire tends to be rare and expensive, except in Calimshan and the Tashalar.

Most mongery production among humans is performed by smiths hand-making what is pressingly needed plus a few extra for sale. Apprentices are often kept busy making nails and spikes, so successful smiths tend to build up a fairly impressive inventory of nails and spikes of all sizes, as well as hooks and “eye spikes” (nails made for driving into tree trunks or wooden walls, with a long shaft made for fashioning into a ring on which one can fasten ropes).

However, there are mass makers of mongery, including surface human foundries, in Waterdeep, Amn (several), Tethyr, Sembia, Turmish, Calimshan (many), and the Tashalar (many).

In Cormyr, there are five very busy local smiths but no mongery-only foundries. One in Arabel sells much of its wares either in Suzail or to the wider Realms through the docks of Suzail, with a trickle of trade flowing through the Dales to the Moonsea. This foundry is known as Garthen’s Hammer, after the now-aging smith Askarl Garthen. Askarl Garthen is a human whose family came from Everlund, and his own numerous children and grandchildren work and run the foundry to this day.

Garthen's Hammer is a series of connected buildings on the north side of the street that runs right through Arabel, just inside High Horn Gate. It was formerly across the street, due south of its current location, but it expanded into the premises of a decaying old inn, and Garthen sold his former location to a wealthy and ambitious Suzailan merchant. The merchant, one Handren Tharmarklor, tore down the old smithy and built on its site a mixed-shops complex that he rents out. Tharmarklor himself inhabits the uppermost three floors of Tharspire—the tower that rises from the northwesternmost building of the Tharmarklor's Doors complex. Garthen more or less permanently rents the southernmost House of Thond warehouse for his inventory of nails, spikes, axe heads, hooks, eye-spikes, door plates (both kickplates and lockplates), and strap hinges. Traders' wagons run almost constantly from this warehouse to Suzail and elsewhere. Garthen himself takes no part in marketing his wares, restricting himself to selling from his premises in Arabel.

## Glass and Ceramics

Glass is common in some parts of the Realms and as rare as gold and gems in others. In most places, windows are leaded affairs of many small panes, rather than huge, rectangular unbroken panes. Moreover, most glass is "shifty"—full of bubbles and uneven thicknesses and whorls that distort reflections and anything seen through them. Shutters are the norm: in winter, full overlapping boards sealed with pitch, and in summer, slats over which layers of gauze are tacked. The gauze keeps the insects out, and if the dust gets bad, occupants wet down the gauze to impede it. The abodes of the poor have shutters but lack glass, and some homes have frames around openings into which boards are slid on a daily basis, but precious glass can be used on special occasions, such as royal visits and marriages.

In most parts of the Dales, drinking vessels are made of carved wood, soak-sealed leather, or ceramic, and a "glass glass" is regarded as an incredible luxury. After all, why make a drinking vessel out of something breakable, when glass is so expensive? The wealthy tend to favor glass drinking vessels to flaunt their wealth. They capitalize on this display of wealth by concocting

social rituals that involve the deliberate hurling and shattering of glasses. (A "tallglass," the etched wineglass of the wealthier Realms, is something like a champagne flute but slightly larger. Capacity varies, but in real-world measurements, it usually holds around 10 ounces.)

Mica is used in place of window glass in areas where it can be easily found and mined, and some dwarf and gnome clans know how to cut certain types of stone very thin, producing slabs that admit a glow of light when set into window frames.

Homemade ceramics and copper cups in daily use have a maker's mark on the base and a single badge-like design on the bowl or body that identifies the owner. ("That's *my* cup—see?") Commercial pieces are either decorated with badges, runes, or devices for specific buyers ordering such finishes, or they have a few simple decorations to encourage someone at a market to purchase them.

A typical Dales ceramic drinking vessel has a flat, rough, unfinished base that flares inward slightly. The outside walls of the cup are either vertical or slightly convex, and the inside resembles a smooth bowl. The base and the handle are often dark brown, the lip usually a natural clay hue. The middle of the body is usually glazed a deep blue, and the body is often decorated with repeating waves, stippling drawn with a finger, or even a series of fingertip impressions to outline a face, sun, or flower head.

Ceramic containers share several kinds of adornments with copper vessels. For instance, some have a bearded smiling face sculpted in relief on the body, across from the handle; some have a handle shaped like the head and scaled neck of a serpent, a wyvern, or a dragon, sometimes with a suggestion of wing outlined across the body of the vessel; and some have an oval frame on one or both sides of the body, enclosing a scene. Such a frame is often shaped to look like a snake biting its own tail, or a sword belt with various elaborate buckles. The scenes inside these frames are sometimes of birds or the heads of animals (stags are popular), but are more often simplified scenes of heroism, such as a lone knight defending a bridge against many mounted foes, a man wrestling off a hungry bear, or a depiction of a local legend. A couple of popular local legends are a wronged wife turning into a dragon or a

swan, and a castle cracking and falling because its owner broke his word or lost a bet.

Many folk imbibe out of a drinking-jack, which is a beast's horn or the ceramic equivalent fitted with a frame and feet to hold it upright when it is not being held in the hand.

In the cities of Amn, Tethyr, Calimshan, and Sembia, and in Waterdeep, glass is relatively common, and there are even glass ornaments for sale.

## Exotic Trade Woods

Certain rare woods of the Realms have value as trade goods because of innate properties that make them ideal for carved furnishings and household objects. The wood of the barausk tree, found in Harrowdale and Deepingdale, has the hardness of iron (once the green wood is dry). Rosecork, native to the Inner Sea isle of Prespur, is virtually fireproof and thus increasingly popular with builders.

When cut to expose its grain, barausk is dark brown mottled with gray-green to the casual glance. When it is more closely examined, the gray-green tinges come from places where the grain is folded back in on itself very tightly. The grain of barausk looks like a maze, or like meatballs resting in much-folded spaghetti, or like the "crazed" banding that surrounds burls in other woods. The wood dulls or breaks blades when dry, but can be readily cut when wet and green, or after being soaked in water for a day or so. Spraying the wood with water repeatedly for a few days will make the surface soft to a depth of only about a finger-width; once this much is carved away, the newly exposed surface must be wetted again to soften the wood for deeper carving. Dry barausk turns brittle—and stays that way—if heated, but otherwise is both iron-hard and durable.

Rosecork, on the other hand, is useless for detailed carving work because it splits along its grain readily and cleanly. This same property makes it ideal for inlays, building panels, and the like. It has a pleasant light, reddish, speckled wood-grain appearance akin to that of the more abundant and familiar cork tree. It absorbs and holds moisture, which is one of the reasons it resists fire—think of a wall that emits its own steam-sprinkler when exposed to heat. This quality makes untreated rosecork horribly susceptible to molds, and thus a good base for the deliberate growth of fungi for

food or medicine, or for that matter for dungeon traps (at the bottom of a pit, for example). Certain herbal water concoctions, when brushed on rosecork, forever prevent spores from growing within the grain while allowing the wood to retain its water-holding qualities. Though it is spongy to the touch, rosecork doesn't leak water if it is sucked on, crushed, or prodded, though a thirsty person could slash a panel of rosecork and glean a few drops from each cut.

## Smokepowder

This rare, legendary substance is viewed in most places in the Realms as unreliable and often considered "dangerous, corrupting magic." Many colorful false beliefs about smokepowder abound among commoners, some of them due to falsehoods spread deliberately.

Most places have strict rules about its importation and possession. Importing smokepowder into Cormyr during most of the 1300s DR requires a Crown license and a full explanation to a senior War Wizard, such as Vangerdahast, his second-in-command Laspeera, or one of the six or so mages a single step down from them, plus Alaphondar or a court clerk. This explanation must include what the smokepowder is required for, where and how it will be stored, how soon it will be used, and so on.

In the case of someone officially trying to conquer the Stonelands, approval will be automatic so long as the Crown is satisfied that the smokepowder will be guarded well enough so that it won't immediately fall into Zhent hands.

The interview process is kept as secret as possible to keep the information from the ears of treasonous nobles, and the license might come with conditions. Common conditions are that the smokepowder can't be taken south of Waymoot, or into Arabel for any reason.

The license costs 500 gp, which pays for the deployment of two War Wizards and two Purple Dragon bodyguards, who become full-time spies watching over the licensed smokepowder. The precise strength of this watch isn't shared with the importer of the smokepowder, but that person is warned that selling, giving away, or moving and hiding the stuff—particularly by trying to split it up and put small amounts in many places—will result in its immediate confiscation.

What the importer isn't told is that if this confiscation occurs, it will be carried out by dozens of War Wizards with Purple Dragon bodyguards, all of them acting with alertness, weapon and spell readiness, and ruthlessness in keeping with full wartime orders.

As for individuals creating their own smokepowder in Cormyr, anyone trying to become Baron of the Stonelands is already under covert magical surveillance by the War Wizards. If such a person reports making more than around a handkeg's volume of smokepowder, he or she very swiftly receives a visit from an unamused court official, bolstered by all of the above-mentioned force, who demands the purchase of a license and the assumption of all the conditions described above.

In Waterdeep, smokepowder is banned, aside from what the City Guard possesses and very small amounts granted to specific Watchful Order magists for experimental purposes. Even those limited uses must be observed and supervised by city officials.

Smokepowder can be bought freely in the "wild" trading city of Scornubel (and in later years, in Mistshore and Downshadow). In Luskan and Westgate, small quantities can be purchased covertly, but any buyer invariably acquires an interested trail of spies.

## Lantan's Works of Wonder

In pre-Spellplague times, two factors govern what fantastic gadgets from Lantan get into circulation in mainland Faerûn: price and self-control.

Price is based on demand and the nature of buyers. How many folk will pay serious coin for, say, a clockwork toy, or even a clock, when the sun and local religious observances govern daily events and when no one makes or keeps appointments "by the minute" or "on the hour"? Palaces and temples have their own timekeeping, and no one else lives in accordance to a clock.

Self-control is the usual merchant's internal battle between greed and the wider implications of selling an item. Really powerful weapons, beyond individual battlefield firearms and the printing press, which have already found their ways onto the mainland, are likely kept on Lantan. Such items are sent out of Lantan only under strict conditions, such as having a Lantanese "minder" with them at all times, under the

fiction that the gadget in question is so complex that it will keep working only under the supervision and maintenance of a trained Lantanese. In other words, young maverick inventors of Lantan are restricted in what they can export by their forward-looking seniors, who thanks to the religion of Gond have the moral authority to do so.

Lantan-made clockworks of great complexity are known mainly through rumors on the mainland. Many nobles have complex toys, clocks, and even water clocks. However, full-sized clockwork tin soldiers are another matter, thanks to the severe weather and the tasks a garrison must perform. If a client wants "dummy soldiers" that can march along the battlements, or move in very simple formations to block an entry arch, lower pikes, and fire (not aim) loaded crossbows, fine. If someone wants to rig a means of replacing the windlass that each crossbow requires with a "mass-cranking" mechanism, also fine. If one desires a very slow way to power simple wagons or handcarts without steering them, or a means of helping to load cart-mounted cranes and winches, fine again. However, anything more complex is beyond the machining competence or maintenance time (all that oiling!) of a lone Lantanese expert. Mechanicals can't run on uneven ground or stairs, or use the judgment of living warriors that is required for even simple tasks such as aiming at a visible foe, reacting with speed to enemy tactics, or doing anything else of the sort.

If the intent is to create metal men that ape the movements of a human controller (telefactoring), years of spell research are necessary. Additionally, such a pursuit requires a lot of space—courtyards and large chambers, not confined passages or small rooms—for a cluster of rod-and-link-driven mechanicals to surround the human operator. Mechanicals that sprout from the faces of doors, and those that carry out repeated movements—threshing blades, for instance, or devices that "fire arrows in a repeating high-medium-low pattern down a passage"—are both practical and deadly.

Not many rulers or law keepers seem to have yet realized that all manner of drugs, poisons, weapons, and contraband goods—if sufficiently disguised—can be readily hidden "in plain sight" inside elaborate clockworks, and thereafter brought into close proximity to rulers, important officials, or wealthy individuals.

It does seem that mind flayers, doppelgangers, kenkus, and others who regard civilized folk as prey, dupes, cattle, or potential victims have grasped this ruse all too well.

## Scents and Perfumes

Many humans in Faerûn use scents or perfumes on themselves and their surroundings. The term “perfume,” in contrast to “scent,” is increasingly used to mean stronger smells that can be used on objects or misted into the air to provide a lasting smell that masks less pleasant odors.

Most scents are made from natural substances such as plant saps and distillates, and beast ichors and organs, combined with each other along with herbs or spices. The base is usually alcohol distilled from vegetable sources. The source for most Waterdhavian vegetable alcohol is the nearby, sprawling temple-farm of Goldenfields.

The combinations and processes are secret, because it’s not easy to create scents that don’t stain garments and skin and are stable. Unstable scents tend to “go off,” rotting into a disgusting, sticky mess, or separate.

The price range for most scents is from 1 gp to 16 gp per flask, with less savory equivalents (the sort sold in Dock Ward, in Waterdeep) available for 4 sp to 3 gp per flask.

Guilds try to control scent-making in Waterdeep and Cormyr. However, Waterdeep is so full of purveyors—independent alchemists; charlatans pretending to be alchemists; importers from the busy perfumers of Calimshan and the Tashalar; and elves, gnomes, halflings, and dwarves who make, use, and prefer their own traditional scents—that any guild control over perfume-making is a mere fiction. Almost every shopkeeper has a bottle of something to sell you, as do most festhalls. (“Like how our staff smells? Take some of that home with you!”)

Some large-scale producers and some fairly well-known formulae do exist, resulting in many producers making very similar scents. Some of the most widely available and best-known scents are discussed below.

**Bluestars:** A blue translucent liquid with gold flecks, bluestars has a strong medicine smell until it is applied to the body of a humanoid, whereupon it turns transparent and smells like fresh before-storm winds (with the exception of orcs,

on whom it smells like fresh-baked bread). It also instantly and lastingly banishes body odors and strong food-related smells such as curry and garlic. The effects last for about a day. Bluestars is purportedly made from forest dew that has mirrored starlight, virgins’ tears, and a distillate of alicorn (unicorn horn), but in fact it contains none of these things. It is actually derived from a specific kind of clay, the powdered shells of a particular type of snail, and the saps of three weeds. The cost per flask (holding about a pint) is 220 gp—its high price due to its odor-banishing properties and alleged but false efficacy as a ward against poisons.

**Darkdew:** A scent that has been associated with dangerous women for nigh a century, this opaque black oily ointment is said to come from the Underdark and to have something to do with both the blood of monsters and the sweat of female drow. In truth, it is a combination of three plant oils, six herbs, and a distillate of slugs. It turns transparent upon contact with the skin, and it imparts a musky smell to the wearer for most of a day that most folk, from fey to goblinkin, find arousing. Darkdew tastes like black, bitter, unsugared licorice. The cost per flask is 176 gp.

**Harlyr:** The cheapest widely known perfume in Waterdeep, harlyr (*har-leeer*) is a rose red translucent liquid that feels slightly oily or gummy, and smells of nothing at all. When applied to the body of a humanoid (except for goblinkin), it turns transparent and sinks into the skin and for the next three hours or so, the wearer smells strongly of a clear and pleasant fragrance like that of freshly opened roses. If the wearer is a goblinkin, the smell is like scorched urine. Harlyr is correctly known to be made of nut oil, alcohol, and the sap of three abundant, nondescript field flowers. The cost per flask is 4 sp.

**Jassal:** Subtle but capable of wafting for long distances, jassal is a fashionable scent that looks like a blue-green translucent alcoholic drink and smells like ripe cherries. It feels chilly when applied to the body, turns transparent, and imparts that same cherry smell to the wearer for around six hours. It is widely believed to be made from cherries, alcohol, and some secret ingredient, but in fact is made from alcohol and the distilled roots of thistles, nettles, and three small flowering weeds. Priestesses of Loviatar long ago discovered that if a body drenched in jassal is whipped, the



skin briefly feels intense, “on fire” pain, but heals itself of all scratches, weals, bruises, and other small wounds. The church of Loviatar now uses jassal in many rituals because of these properties. Jassal-coated flesh makes a loud, cracking sound when struck, and emits an intense cherry odor, even if the initial smell has faded almost to nothing. The cost per flask is 140 gp.

**Sunrise:** A yellow-orange translucent liquid, sunrise smells like freshly grated lemons. On the body it turns transparent and imparts a minty smell with a citrus tang that lasts for around six hours. It is widely believed to be made from alcohol, various citrus fruits, and a secret ingredient. In fact, it is alcohol in which specific sorts of mussels, oysters, and snails have been boiled, with the addition of a few drops of the juice of a certain sort of melon, and more than a few drops of rabbit urine. The cost per flask is 20 gp.

**Tanlarl:** A reddish brown, oily ointment, tanlarl turns transparent and stops feeling oily upon contact with the skin. It smells of faint wood smoke before contact with a body, and on some bodies has no smell at all. However, on most female bodies it smells mildewy, and on most male bodies it smells warm and leathery, and the odor is very attractive to females. Tanlarl is widely believed to be made from the bodily secretions of rare monsters, but is in fact derived from vegetable oils, the livers of oxen, and certain herbs. The smell is a very strong aphrodisiac to orcs and half-orcs, who might be moved to accost beings they would otherwise shun. The cost per flask is 12 gp.

## Rope, Chain, and Wire

From leather thongs, to thigh-thick mooring cables, to man-sized links of chain, to fine wire sharp enough to cut flesh, “coiled goods” are among the most useful and expensive everyday items in the Realms.

Everyone needs long, flexible lines of some sort. Sailors need rigged sails in order to voyage. Cooks need chains to hold pots over hearth fires. Caravan merchants need something to bind their precious loads in place. And miners and other climbers, such as adventurers, need something to aid them in ascending and descending.

Hempen ropes and fire-hardened jungle vines have seen such use for untold centuries, and chain has been known since the first dwarves, but the

making of truly fine wire is still being perfected in the Realms as of 1350 DR, and that is a process fated to continue for more than two centuries thereafter. In the mid-1300s DR, cable (ropes woven around a continuous wire core) is still unknown, though the word “cable” is heard betimes, meaning a massive rope respected for its strength. Much wire is soft, brittle (and so easily snapped or severed where it has been kinked or bent more than once in the same spot), and thick.

Gnomes, and right behind them dwarves, are the most skilled crafters of fine wire and chain—and humans just can’t get enough of the stuff. Throughout the 1200s DR, the use of fine chain in jewelry and garment adornment blossomed, increasing the demand for fine and even finer chain. The most popular variety of fine rope among humans is the thin, strong, flexible waxed cord of the sort preferred by thieves everywhere.

Blacksmiths who lack the skills or the right metal to make wire or fine chain know the value of making and keeping in stock sturdy hooks, open links, wall-rings, “strap-rings,” and other fasteners. Strap-rings are collars that go around pipes, posts, or columns and are affixed to rings that connect to a chain or rope. Such under-stress fastenings break frequently, and someone desperate to buy a swift replacement knocks on a smithy’s door about as often.

Like food and fuel, coiled goods bring steady, high-coin sales. Every “manygoods” merchant tries to keep some coiled goods on hand, often keeping them in the strongest that serves as his trading seat. (If he’s sitting on it, it’s difficult for someone to sneak away with it without him noticing.) Along with their stores of coiled goods, manygoods merchants keep a forge-chisel and two pairs of pliers for “doing off” lengths for customers. Coiled goods are always bought by length, with long, unbroken pieces commanding the highest prices, because no one wants to climb down a mine shaft on a line made of short hunks of rope knotted together.

## Salt

The salt trade is very important in the Realms, but not quite as vital as it has been in the real world for two reasons. One, there are other means of preservation, which was salt’s primary importance in the real world; and two, salt has never



*The job of protecting a caravan doesn't end when the procession pulls into town. In the storm of activity that accompanies its arrival and the unloading of its cargo, even the most vigilant guard can't have his eyes everywhere at once.*

been as scarce in the Realms as it was in large areas of the real world. In Faerûn you can always get some salt fairly cheaply from a nearby source, so shipping sacks of it is not usually important.

So exactly where does all this handy salt come from? It can be obtained in one of the many salt marshes of the Realms by ladling salty water out on large, flat, sun-baked rocks and waiting until the water evaporates. A few of the better known salt marshes include the Flooded Forest between the Moonsea and the Dragon Reach, the Adder Swamp in Chessenta, the Spider Swamp, and Rethild (the Great Swamp). Salt also washes up and deposits naturally around certain shores, such as the Lake of Steam and around Azulduth, the Lake of Salt. Huge salt plains also exist in An-auroch and Raurin, the remnants of once-large bodies of water that have become dry land.

Salt mines operate in Chult, Calimshan, under certain islands in the Korinn Archipelago and north of Mintarn, in the mountains girdling Amn, in the Orsraun Mountains, and other places. The point is: Salt is plentiful.

Many gnome families make a good living mining small salt deposits and trundling the results to the nearest human town or village market, so you won't find a "Salt Road" or salt caravans, though you will often find a salt wagon in a mixed-goods caravan.

## Children's Toys

The most desirable toys by far are small, whittled wooden warriors, wizards, dragons, and other monsters. Also well-loved are large, whittled wooden dolls, often princes and princesses, dressed in clothes sewn from scraps of old rag. Next come marbles made of rounded stones, whittled-down nuts, frozen berries in winter, and sometimes blown glass. Finally, carved wooden toy swords and, in rural areas, slingshots are fairly popular.

A bit more pricey are the cuddle-in-bed toys known as hearth faeries—intricately sewn, stuffed with scented herbs and ward-away-sickness charms. These keepsakes are often retained into

adulthood and used as pillows. Also popular are cast metal “little warriors” (model soldiers) and dragons and other monster figurines that are large, well painted, cast from metal, and poseable (with articulated joints). Then there are large knight-and-horse figurines even more realistically modeled and painted, with real hair and such.

Temples of Gond sell very expensive little clockwork toys, such as revolving-egg jewel boxes that play tunes. The “egg” of one of these jewel boxes is an upright, ovoid sculpture that has several layers that rotate within each other by clockwork, revealing elaborately detailed etched and painted scenes inside. Common scenes for egg jewel boxes include feasts in castles, men fighting each other with swords, and skeletons escaping manacles in a dungeon. The temples of Gond also sell expensive “marching warriors” (the familiar “walking soldier with windup key in his back”). In some large cities, a few crafters make large stuffed lions, cute dragons, and other shapes that children can use as pillows, sleeping bags, play-steeds, and friends.

## SLAVE TRADE

Everyone knows about Thay, and (to quote the sea captain Bhronn Thaerin, master of the *Red Bird*, out of Urmlaspyr) its “teeming slaves, live ones and more and more undead ones.” Yet a greater concern to rulers and law keepers—and if they know the true danger in their midst, general citizens, too—are the more covert dealers in slaves who operate in lands and city-states outside Thay. At the same time, some rulers aren’t above turning a blind eye to local slavers who provide a handy means of making rivals or “problem citizens” . . . disappear.

Waterdeep provides a horrible example of a long-successful family of slavers: the House of Sultlue. This is the most depraved and villainous surviving, still titled, and still in power noble family in the City of Splendors, and demonstrate how deep into decadence nobles can go, if they’re wealthy and discreet enough.

Long ago (and, secretly, still!), the House of Sultlue was among the largest Waterdhavian slavers. The Sultlues regularly dabble in cannibalism, eating cooked slaves prepared in various ways, and delighting in serving cuts of roast

slave to unwitting dinner guests, such as other nobles and the Lords of the city. They also regularly magically transform slaves into all manner of beasts and different humanoids, including beasts of burden that they use or sell, food and breeding stock animals that they sell, and body doubles of hated rivals or lusted-after persons that they torture. They also use slaves as objects of fun and for spare parts for their own aging or wounded bodies.

The Sultlues experiment with drugs, poisons, and scents on slaves so as to refine ever-stronger concoctions for sale up and down the Sword Coast. Through intermediaries (often hired adventurers who are misled as to who they’re working for), they sell body-double slaves to those who want to frame particular persons for crimes or accomplish kidnappings without getting caught by substituting the slave for the snatched person. They have also recently dabbled in sending to foes slaves that they can magically cause to explode from afar—and in the blast emit deadly bags of nails that have been sewn into the slaves’ bodies.

In short, the Sultlues are thoroughly depraved, consider themselves above all laws, and take great care to amass magic items, hired wizards, and caged monsters so that they can make a fighting escape if the Lords’ justice ever comes for them.

The most energetic of these darkhearts are the elder Sultlue uncles Darrambur and Pelmaer, and their sultry sister Jaszmaeril. Other family members—including the patriarch Asbrior, his wife Pera, and their young daughter, Taszeana, and two of their five sons—are largely ignorant of the activities of their kin. These “innocents” also consider themselves above all laws, but know they shouldn’t get caught in lawbreaking, and are themselves guilty only of small cruelties and swindles, and the keeping of personal slaves. They know that some of their kin are up to “wildnesses” and “shady little pursuits,” and they take elaborate care never to find out much about such matters—which suits the darkhearts just fine.

From the  
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 39

Soon, ah, soon, the cottage beckons. Come into my waiting---er, stillness. Leave those winter cares behind...  
 Come and chop wood in ninety-degree skunk-scented air, standing in foot-deep mud, surrounded by a cloud of millions of hungry black flies and mosquitoes....(an exaggeration, you say? Hah! You chop!)

Ah well, at least (he said brightly) I'll be able to move in the library and around the bedroom (rather than merely cooing pseudopods cautiously along shelves, seeking a few spare inches here and there to stash the latest 'jools' in...), once I get all the cottage junk up to the cottage. And at the cottage, I'll be able to write planes articles for DRAGON to my heart's content---that is, when I'm not fixing the porch, steps, dock, pump, beds, chimney, outhouse, boathouse, steps, bookshelves, firewood bins, a-frame, and pictures...

The Abyss. Pandemonium. And (hopefully finished soon, he added with a weary sigh) a collaboration on Limbo. Oh, there'll be the usual small stuff (quickies, as Monique used to call them), but those are the main battlefields. In the meantime, I shall entertain you all in the Hack, with the usual variety of drivel. This week, it's:

A Look At Rashemen



North of the mysterious land of Thay, easternmost of the known Realms (to its east lie uncounted leagues of rock-and-grass wastelands, and several rumoured---but unreached, in recent memory---kingdoms of men), the land of Rashemen is home to a race of short, muscular men who herd goats and rothe, and are adept at stone- and bonecarving.

'Land of Berserkers', some ballads call Rashemen---and indeed, such is the fearless savagery of its warriors, and their stamina, that at least sixteen armies from Thay have been slaughtered or turned back from Rashemen in the last seventy winters, and the Far Land remains free.

Rashemen is ruled by a Muhrong (= 'Iron Lord'), or senior war leader, whose palace towers above the roofs of the surrounding city of Immilmar. The Iron Lord commands Rashemen's standing army, which consists of warriors armoured in heavy fur and leather tunics, with hand weapons, short bows, lances, and mountain ponies. Most patrol the shores of Lake Mulsantir and the broken lands east of the Gorge of Gauros (i.e. the border with Thay) continuously. There are many lesser, local Lords, each with his own followers and businesses---but the succession of rulership, and the posts of war-leaders of the army, are chosen by the Witches. The Witches dwell mainly in

*The Realms began as a "known world" of the Sword Coast, the Savage Frontier, and Cormyr and the Dales. Other areas were mapped, because adventurers could buy or peek at some very good merchant costers' and rulers' maps, but they mostly knew about them through "merchants from X look like this, dress like that, speak and act thus-and-so, sell these, and buy those." At first, Rashemen was one such "exotic faraway place." And then my characters started to travel.*



## 5 GODS AND FOLLOWERS

Almost all beings in Faerûn worship many gods; as a rule, only zealots and clergy venerate just one deity. In other words, a farmer could mainly revere Chauntea, but also pray to appease Talos to keep crop-damaging storms away, Malar to keep beasts from attacking him or his folk in the fields and to send vermin elsewhere, Talona to keep disease and blight at bay, and so on.

Any mortal of any race can worship any deity. Of course, a would-be worshiper's upbringing and moral or ethical stance make some match-ups of faith and individual highly unlikely. The most unusual ones are usually the result of an

individual searching for the right calling, or ascribing the outcome of an important life event to the influence or direct action of a particular deity. That phenomenon extends to divine casters, too, though some priesthoods don't welcome unusual races, such as drow or illithids, as clergy.

The average Faerûnian lives long enough to worship (or serve through one's actions) one deity above all others—though in many cases, which deity a given person has served most might not be clear to a dying mortal or anyone else. If a mortal dies before finishing a mission or a task for a particular deity and it's a matter he felt strongly

about in life, he could be sent back by that deity, reborn as another mortal, to try to complete that task. Otherwise, he ends up in the afterlife serving the deity most appropriate to his moral and ethical outlook. Only those who repudiate the gods (or who as a result of their actions are renounced by their gods), despoil altars and frustrate the clerical aims of any deity, or never pray or engage in any form of deliberate worship will qualify as either Faithless or False.

A few deities, Cyric being one, are insane enough not to recognize and accept the polytheistic “appease this deity and that, as life situations and strivings demand” model. These mad few demand that their faithful worship them and only them. Almost all other deities accept and engage in competition for worshipers, though most mortals can’t begin to perceive and understand the intricate, long games of divine machinations, and might well misinterpret what little they see. For almost all mortals, religion is a matter of embracing primary worship of one deity above—even if only slightly above—all others.

## HOW FOLK WORSHIP

Most people in the Realms embrace a patron (primary) deity, and carry a token, a holy symbol, or a remembrance of that primary god. Adventurers usually pray briefly to this deity in the morning, when they aren’t under attack or in some emergency, as well as at moments of crisis, such as healing a wounded friend or trying to keep a sick or poisoned person alive. They offer lengthier private prayers following evening meals or upon retiring to slumber. Such prayers are usually requests for protection and direction, and deities or their servitors often reply with guidance in the form of dream visions, or more rarely in sudden mental visions received while awake. Each of these visions is usually a snapshot seen only by the worshiper, and it usually comes tinged with a feeling of favor or disapproval.

Rarely, a divine response to a worshiper comes as a sign visible to everyone present. Lathander, for example, might manifest as a rosy glow around a weapon, a person, a keyhole, or a secret door. Lurue might send an image of a unicorn that guides by movement or by touching persons

or things before glowing blue-white and fading, to make its divine nature clear.

Upon arriving in a town or village that has a formal shrine or temple to one’s patron deity, most Realms folk attend a service and give an offering. The offering is customarily coin, but sometimes food or trophies from fallen foes, or something appropriate to the deity. For Malar, hunted game makes a good offering, and for Tempus, the weapons of defeated foes are favored gifts. Empty-handed worshipers usually offer information about their deeds and observations to priests—but paltry or verbal-only offerings often result in a request from the clergy to do a service. This service can be something as simple as “Help move this temple furniture” or “Confess in full to the superior priest tomorrow” or “Help guard the temple doors tonight.”

A traveler who comes across an untended or desecrated shrine of one’s patron deity is expected to cleanse it and pray there using one of the more elaborate prayers of that faith, usually involving a chanted or sung ritual. Wayfarers who encounter holy hermits or traveling priests of their patron deity are expected to share food and drink with those personages, and offer to encamp with the priest and provide any protection they can render.

Those residing in a locale that has a temple usually attend services at least once every two days. Priests of many faiths do a lot of “influencing the laity” work by dispensing news and gossip slanted to promote the importance of their god as well as the creed and the aims of the faith. At the end of formal services, sometimes while blessing departing worshipers, priests also try to motivate the laity to do certain things that further the work of their god.

Every settlement in the Realms has private family chapels as well as public shrines to most deities, even if it lacks a temple. So, the lack of a temple to a particular deity in a community does not mean that deity is not venerated locally. Temples, in contrast, are permanent buildings staffed by live-in clergy, each dedicated to one deity.

Folk in the Realms also pray and make offerings to deities other than their primary one. They often make these offers in the hope of appeasement, such as “We’ve got to cross the Neck in a boat, so Umberlee, please don’t sink us, and Talos, send no storms . . .”

It is not acceptable to treat any gods disrespectfully. Their worshipers and clergy can be resisted,

yes, and sometimes, for followers of good-aligned deities opposed to human sacrifice, their altars can be shattered, too. However, the gods themselves are known to be very real, so while you are thwarting their mortal servants, it's always best to not personally defame the god. Mocking their holy sayings is about as far as most folk dare go. For example, a man slaying a Stormsender (priest of Talos) in battle might snarl, "Send a storm—now *reap* a storm!"

Only clergy, paladins, and fanatics specialize in the worship of certain deities. Everyone else in the Realms is constantly poised between the gods, making offerings, participating in rituals, and seeking guidance as they see fit from among all of the gods, as the situations and necessities of their personal lives suggest is most appropriate.

## Becoming a Priest

Usually an individual desiring to become a priest has received vivid dream visions from various divine servants. If that person responds to some of these visions in the right ways, by desiring to see more and asking local clergy or deity-tied persons such as temple guards, paladins, and hermits about the visions or about a particular deity, more are sent.

If the individual chooses to respond, he or she is on the road to becoming a priest. Since those who are not brightly loyal to a deity make poor clergy, no one is forced into worship or holy service.

Stepping forward on that road often takes the form of contacting a temple or a passing preacher, or undertaking a vigil at a known holy site to receive more guidance. Someone who meditates at such a holy site might receive more vivid dreams or even a manifestation or a visible sign, such as Lathander's holy glow coming briefly into existence around the person's head and upon the altar, holy stone, marker, or site. Each faith—and in some cases, each temple—has its own way of taking in supplicants, should the character at that point reach out to the organized church.

It is possible for a priest to serve more than one deity, but it's not easy, and so is rare, even among adventurers. Both the personal nature of worship and devotion and the rarity of close sharing among deities work against such double-dealing. If a character does attempt to serve two masters, the opportunity arises for extensive roleplaying,

with ongoing moral dilemmas, god-sent tests, and the occasional tug of war between the two deities over the deeds and loyalties of the character.

## WHY PUT UP WITH EVIL?

Good-minded individuals among the common folk usually tolerate evil clergy and their deeds and practices because they must. The servants of evil are personally strong, vicious, or well-connected enough that they are tolerated, avoided, or appeased rather than attacked.

Governments, taking a wider view, put up with evil faiths because hostility won't get rid of them, and because they can be useful.

If, for example, the church of Malar in Cormyr is permitted to breed monsters or hunt beasts only in specific border areas, the Malarites can by their very presence serve as obstacles to would-be raiders from the Stonelands, Archendale, or Tundland. The presence of such a church would also discourage Sembians from conducting smuggling, livestock rustling, and suchlike along the Thunder Peaks, and cut down on brigands operating across the borders. Genuine marauding monster populations might also be kept in check by the church of Malar. So, the Crown of Cormyr handles the church of Malar in this way. War Wizards often covertly mind-scry Malarite priests to see what they have observed in the wilderlands and to uncover evidence (if any) of their working with foes of the realm for coin or other inducements.

In Cormyr, Malarite priests most often breed monsters for temple butchery in rituals, to sell trophy heads and other body parts, and for the feast tables of the wealthy. The latter two uses are major sources of temple revenue. Malarites also breed monsters for temple guardian roles, deploying them in areas where they can't get out to roam greater Cormyr, confined to temple property.

Malarite monsters are also popular among nobles as quarries for the hunt. Such beasts are released by Malarites in specific locations at reported-to-the-Crown-beforehand times, for nobles to track down and slay. The Malarites must stand watch to down the beasts if they get away, and the Crown of Cormyr holds the Malarites responsible for any monster-caused deaths to persons not of the hunting party. The War Wizards

also watch over all such beast releases, and it is a serious crime to perform such a release without informing them well beforehand—a crime proclaimed into law after the third instance of a Malarite priest hired by one noble family “accidentally” unleashing monsters into the estate of a rival noble family.

All monster breedings must be reported in detail to the War Wizards to prevent two practices. First, this requirement prevents the creation of secret crossbreeds, such as chimera-like beasts of which the Crown is unaware. Second, it prevents the establishment of secret-from-the-Crown armies or packs of monsters, in either temple or private hands.

Violent and evil faiths such as those of Malar and Loviatar get along with governments by worshipping largely behind closed doors and always within agreed-upon limits. A Malarite in Cormyr or any other well-ruled locale wouldn’t think of trying to kidnap innocents, citizens, or government representatives to be part of a hunt. No evil clergy anywhere in a well-ruled land or city would dare to use drugs, blackmail, or other coercion to gain converts or subjects for rituals. A masochist can volunteer to be flogged by a priestess of Loviatar, but neither she nor any lay Loviatar can try to gain any sort of hold over the person to force or strongly influence one’s agreeing to be flogged.

Like anyone else who conspires against the Crown, traitor priests are subject to Crown justice. Churches that openly defy important laws (criminal, as opposed to minor civil matters), or that openly work against the Crown by attacking or mistreating soldiers or Crown agents, are harshly dealt with.

Being holy confers no immunity, as opposed faiths will happily speak out against the “miscreant clergy,” and the Crown can always claim to be trying to be the impartial, secular central balance between various faiths, for the good of all. Only the loftiest holy rank or status wins any form of absolution or light treatment from secular authorities for major crimes—such as killing, torture, treason and sedition, kidnapping, slavery, coercion of the unwilling by force or threats, fraud, and theft.

As a result, priesthoods tend to work against governments only through means of subtle influence—unless they can *become* the government (at least locally).

In Sembia, for example, clergy of all faiths that are seeking to achieve something most quickly get what they want through bribery or otherwise “playing the mercantile game.” Whereas in Cormyr, the best way to get ahead is either by covert cooperation with noble families or ambitious merchants, or by quietly reaching explicit deals with the Crown and then strictly adhering to them. “Deals with the Crown” really means with Vangerdahast from 1306 DR to 1371 DR and with Alusair thereafter until 1384 DR. In other words, very carefully following the often unofficial rules set down by the authorities and in return being allowed to do certain things while the authorities turn a blind eye.

Coming to the aid of Crown agents, sometimes militarily, when a certain summons or alarm is raised is a promise that both the churches of Loviatar and Malar have made to the War Wizards. Priests of Loviatar help maintain law and order—and apprehend certain specific individuals, when asked—in Marsember, Arabel, and Suzail, and the church of Malar does the same in rural areas. In return, the Malarites are permitted to hunt certain miscreants, some of the royal deer, specific monsters, and specific sorts of beasts—an activity to which they can invite nobles, the wealthy, and others they hope to convert if they so desire. The church of Loviatar, on the other hand, has earned the right to carry on some of its more enticing rituals for nonmembers in certain clubs and other establishments in hopes of gaining offerings or converts.

No evil church can expect to incite people against the Crown or any law, or publicly practice rituals that scare or harm people or defy the authorities, and continue to be tolerated in the land. The “heavy stuff” goes on behind firmly closed temple doors, and much secrecy and excitement is thereby attached to it.

In public, the clergy of evil deities are models of good behavior. As such, although average citizens respect or fear and avoid said clergy, they will almost always not attack, deride, or dispute with them. Everyone in the Realms believes in all the gods, and so understands and accepts the purpose and major aims of every faith. This doesn’t mean everyone necessarily agrees with or supports every religion, but that they tolerate and understand the place in society each faith occupies.



Likewise, this does not mean every devout worshiper in a faith sees eye to eye with every cleric; indeed, many faiths have bitter internal fights, schisms, and ongoing debates, and many high priests are watched very closely by lay worshipers trying to decide which temple to obey the most, and gift with the most, and which to treat with by doing the bare minimum their beliefs require.

Priests who perform willful murder in public or otherwise “charge into unlawful behavior” in a well-governed realm like Cormyr suffer consequences. Depending on the severity of the crime, they’ll wind up dead (killed by the Crown or others), delivered to the Crown for secular justice, or cast out of the church to appease the authorities. More often than the general public would be pleased to know, such miscreants are hustled covertly out of Cormyr to postings elsewhere by fellow clergy, who then tell the authorities that “internal punishments as directed by the Divine One have been enacted upon the wayward.” For more minor crimes, wayward clergy might publicly repent, and their church make redress to the Crown and wronged citizens.

There have been incidents when a priest who persists in covert self-serving dealings that give his or her church a bad name is caught by Crown agents or hired adventurers because other members of the church have tipped off the authorities as to when and where to catch the offender. Such tips usually end up in the priest being caught red-handed and therefore deserving of on-the-spot justice, particularly if he or she decides to fight.

Clergy of faiths that work against law and order, such as those of Shar and Talos, thrive in socially chaotic areas like Westgate and Sembia, where they can play one group or employer off against another. However, these priests keep a much lower profile in well-policed lands such as Cormyr—where they tend to operate a service wherein you can “pay and take part in this enticing ritual, and the deity will attempt to make your desire real, over time, in some nonspecific manner.” Most of the time, these clergy prey upon worshipers more than they really achieve anything. At least this way, they reason, they can maintain a presence in the land and wait for events to make their faith more important or attractive to factions in the realm. Only then would they dare any open defiance of the authorities.

The priests of Talos in Cormyr, for instance, work magic (in their locked temple rooms) only to add strength and destructive force to natural storms that are hammering areas of Cormyr. They never cause such storms or steer the paths storms take, because they know the War Wizards watch for that. However, if a storm should cause harm to a War Wizard, how is that their fault? (They ask this oh so innocently, after helping a storm to collapse a cottage on a wizard’s head.)

Priests and priestesses of Shar, Loviatar, and Sharess often use amorous wiles to establish personal relationships with persons in authority. Through this angle, they try to sow chaos by suggesting particular deeds, decrees, and ideas to their lovers.

Even priests of the most violently evil faiths are seldom foolish enough to draw daggers and seek to carve up soldiers or Crown agents in the streets. A dead foe is just that: dead, and soon to be replaced by another. An influenced foe, on the other hand, is well on the way to becoming an ally, increasing the sway of the deity.

## CHARITY

Almost all rural temples and monasteries provide basic food and water for handfuls of “half-wits,” the disabled, orphans, lepers and other disease-sufferers, the destitute, and in some cases, even outlaws claiming sanctuary, or lycanthropes. In return, these people offer basic labor, such as splitting and stacking firewood; shoveling and transporting dung; watering and tending crops; peeling potatoes and other crops for kitchen cooking; and picking fruits, vegetables, and herbs.

As a general rule, the sick are to be tended without question or hesitation. In practice, hesitation occurs if “the sick” brought to the temple are monsters, appear to be under the influence of dangerous or multiple enchantments, or are clearly the clergy of another god. Those of this last variety are rushed to the proper temple, if one is available.

Treatment of adventurers, the displaced, and those who have fled battle or been left behind for being wounded in battle largely depends on existing local attitudes. (“These’re some of the dwarves who’ve raided us for years? Well, kill them!”) It can also be affected by what has

happened recently. For example, has the community been overwhelmed by refugees? Have other adventurers marauded locally in the past? If residents don't try to dispatch such "problems" outright, or direct them to areas of danger where a known monster will eliminate them (or they will dispose of it, making them therefore worthy of aid), the locals either provide charity ("You can shelter in my barn, and here's some stew and water and bread; please be gone in the morning") or bring local priests to examine them and decide if the church will offer aid.

## TEMPLE INCOME

Most folk in the Realms know that priests of some faiths (such as Waukeen's) sell pardons and medicines, and demand offerings or sometimes set fees for performing certain rituals, such as cleansings, weddings, and atonements.

The income of a temple is usually far broader in source and nature than that. Offerings of food, accepted from poor worshipers, go to temple kitchens to defray food expenses. Almost all clerics expect offerings in return for the utterance of certain prayers and certainly in return for spell-casting. Most clergy also expect compensation for most services, such as burials, consecrations, blessings of new businesses, or the god's favor for a journey. Almost anything that requires prayer before the altar is also cause for an offering—as opposed to advice given by priests without the guidance of prayer or ritual, which by tradition is supposed to be freely given.

Faiths of fierce deities such as Umberlee and Talona deal in protection rackets (in effect) by demanding offerings of appeasement to keep the holy wrath of their deity away from those making the offerings. Even wandering clergy of gentler faiths (such as the Alicorna, priests of Lurue) might request payment from landowners when they eliminate dangerous local monsters.

Some priests sell holy relics and their lesser cousins. "Favors of the god" are blessed items meant to bring good luck to the bearer or household, and "tokens of the god" are holy symbols of recognition and veneration for lay worshipers (not to be confused with a cleric's holy symbol).

The largest source of daily income for most churches is payment for the delivery of verbal or

written messages, documents, and small valuables over vast distances, from one individual to another. All such deliveries are "altar-sworn" safe. The priests swear before their deity to deliver their charge faithfully, without altering or distorting it, pilfering from it, or violating its privacy if possible. Obviously, the contents of a verbal message are known to the bearer, but a written message will not be unsealed or read by any member of the priesthood, nor will anyone allow a third party to read it. This oath is sworn upon pain of losing the favor of the deity—that is, being expelled from the church.

This widely available service has given rise to an interesting dodge: Someone in possession of something that could get her killed, such as stolen royal regalia, might in desperation deliver it into the hands of temple priests with a fee for delivering it to either a fictitious person or one whom the sender, but few others, knows to be dead. This enables the priests to keep and conceal the item forever as they attempt to deliver it to the proper person . . . whom they will never be able to find.

Many temples serve as banks and keepsafes (safe deposits), securely storing all manner of things for worshipers, from legal documents to great-grandma's mummified fingers. Temple storage is especially popular with the homeless; poor commoners who fear for the security of their property while they're working or seeking food; and those who travel for a living, such as drovers, caravan guards, and wagon merchants.

Temples also perform the same moneylending and money changing functions as our real-world banks, and of course charge fees for doing so. Like real-world banks, they invest such funds (and the money they earn from offerings and rents) in livestock and farm crops and cargo ships and businesses, charging interest on every loan. So, most urban and "verdant breadbasket rural" temples are usually wealthy, not poor.

Almost all priesthoods use their income to buy land, build properties, and become landlords, taking in a constant stream of rents from tenants, tenant farmers, and "rental" farmers. They also acquire houses, farms, and sometimes even caravan companies or shipping fleets, willed to them by the devout. In this way, many temples have slowly become the owners of large amounts of valuable city real estate. It's generally understood that being a landlord does not allow the clergy to

discriminate against tenants who primarily venerate rival deities, or to curtail prayers and other religious observances of other deities performed in rental premises that a temple happens to own.

Certain priesthoods, particularly those of Mask and Waukeen, often engineer price increases and currency inflations, and profit by loading or unloading their stores of coinage or goods at times of high margins. Clergy of Siamorphe work to enrich nobles who have pledged much to the church, “when we can afford it.” Priests of Mask sell disguises, and for much higher fees can hide people for short periods.

Some faiths pay children copper pieces in return for business or political information that such “innocents” see and overhear, which temple agents then resell for much, much more, saying only of their sources that “The god sees all.”

## PRIESTHOODS OF THE REALMS

Even more so than rulers, the priesthoods of the Realms influence the daily lives of folk everywhere. If there were only a few churches, clergy would be absolute rulers. However, Faerûn has so many deities—all of them believed in by everyone, albeit in different ways—that their competing efforts offset, block, or deflect each other, as well as blunt the tyranny of kings, and everyone else lives in “the breathing space between.”

Many common folk are unaware of all the official, overt aims of every deity. One might know what is demanded personally of a deity’s individual worshippers, and still not know the formal creed of a church. People of common birth are unlikely to know any unofficial aims of the priesthoods, which are often geopolitical, selfish, and secret.

Unless they become adventurers, and get caught in the “sharp points” where competing aims and strivings meet . . .

Published Realmslore details divine avatars and gives some details of their faiths and mortal followers. It would take many more books to give proper coverage to the prayers and rituals of the Faerûnian faiths, so here instead are some details of what each clergy professes to do and some hints of the more worldly efforts of their mortal leaders. This covers the creed of each church, which is

largely but not wholly the same as the dogma that applies to all worshippers. Remember, the Realms is a fantastic setting; none of these creeds are to be taken literally or applied in the real world.

### Auril, the Frostmaiden

**Creed:** Make all Faerûn embrace the cold and work to chill the Realms by means of weather magic to hasten the rightful and inevitable “Icing of All.” Willingly adapt yourself and society to increasingly colder conditions, as ice, snow, and frigid winds spread to cover the entire world.

Everyone should shiver—from cold, not fear—at least once a day. In the cold times, strive to nightly force or persuade someone not of the Embracers (from “Willing Embracers of the Cold;” Aurilian clergy) to undertake the Cold Cleansing prayer—beseeching Auril’s mercy outdoors, aloud, for as long as it takes a piece of ice the size of the praying one’s hand to melt entirely against his or her bared flesh. At least once per winter season—and more often is better—personally slay at least one creature either with cold magic or by forcing it to die of natural cold. It is best if any such death benefits others not of the Embracers by providing food or eliminating an oppressor to the greater glory of Auril.

**Secular Aims:** Rise to dominate and control all surface Realms overland roads and trade-trails in snowbound regions. Once control is secured, demand reverence to Auril for passage, both in prayers and monetary offerings. You may keep the offerings so long as the customary “scatterings in Auril’s name” are made.

Wherever there are no roads and winter wayfarers must blaze their own trails, create new trails. It is both permissible and pleasing to Auril to magically force both beasts and intelligent beings of the Realms to aid in this endeavor. When the spells given you by the goddess make it possible, create ice roads across lakes to shorten journeys, and be sure it is made known that this is done in the name of Auril, who should be thanked and revered.

Aurilian clergy make no secret of their road building—or their demands for tolls from users of these holy roads—though they will avoid admitting that they’ve been directed to try to control all surface routes. Aurilian clergy are mainly lightly organized wanderers who keep any offerings they

\*Fang dragons (see issue #134 of DRAGON<sup>R</sup> Magazine) have suddenly appeared in great numbers in Amn, apparently coming down out of the Cloud Peaks. What is driving them to attack livestock and humans is not known; they are both fearless and hungry. They seem unfamiliar with the countryside, which has led some to speculate that the dragons are being summoned or magically gated in from elsewhere. The full purpose behind this "sudden, infandous infestation" (as the sage Uibul of Athkatla has put it) remains unknown, but it appears something will soon have to be done---and in Amn, 'something' always means money. Adventurers of the Sword Coast agree that the undertaking fee, plus any reward or bounty, will have to be very high to interest anyone not of Amn to ride into the fray. Powdered fang dragon fang is a valuable ingredient in the making of a {[Sword +2, Nine Lives Stealer]} and similar magical blades.

EDITORIAL  
NOTE: yes,  
"infandous"!

...

*I never like to miss an opportunity to deepen Realmslore by adding lore and recent news about any element—in this case, fang dragons, one of several dragons I've created as lower-level, deployable "fight-'em" dragons that can duke it out with most adventurers without reducing the characters to ashes, or the DM having to play a stupid or asleep dragon to allow the heroes to survive—and at the same time introduce new NPCs with strong opinions, and dredge up neat-sounding words like "infandous." Let language be thy sharp and ready weapon.*

receive for themselves after they “render unto Auril” with snow-scatterings and castings of some coins into river ice. However, recurring attempts are made by senior Aurilian clerics to force discipline and a patrolled hierarchy upon the rest of the Embracers.

The most notorious of these organizers was Raerele “Redresses” Aronthan, a now-dead priestess who styled herself High Icemaiden. She so dominated some forty Aurilian clergy that they carved a slender-spired castle for her out of solid ice in the glaciers northeast of Citadel Adbar in the 1340s DR. Ever since, this castle known as Frostspire has been the secret heart of the church, the place its most wayward clergy are summoned to be judged by their fellow Embracers. Aronthan tried to bring every last Aurilian to Frostspire, to obtain oaths of obedience from each one and to “set them in their places” in the church hierarchy, but many defied her, and one finally slew her in 1352 DR—and received no rebuke from the goddess at all.

No one has managed to rise to Aronthan’s level of dominance since, in part because the priestess is said to haunt Frostspire in the form of an embittered and chastened spirit controlled by Auril herself. At present, two rival male Aurilians, Faerovel Hawntar of Glister and Amgrel Vlorund of Fireshear, are trying to command all Embracers by traveling and coercing each one they meet, individually. Hawntar’s aims—beyond power—are as yet unstated, but Vlorund has no less a goal than conquering one or more coldland realms, starting with Vaasa and Damara, and certainly continuing to Impiltur and Narfell. He wants to achieve this in the name of the faith, so senior Embracers can rule those lands. He is plotting to corrupt key military commanders in Vaasa and Damara to his cause, and will destroy them if they refuse.

## Azuth, Lord of Spells

**Creed:** The Art is a force for better lives and better ruling, and should always be used for such. Wielders of the Art should conduct themselves in a manner that makes them valued and respected so that acceptance—not mere tolerance—of magic will spread and grow stronger. Everyone’s life is bettered by magic, but can be enriched and exalted so much more if the Art is

used responsibly. School the irresponsible, resist and oppose those who habitually use the Art for tyranny or coercion, and aid the clergy of Mystra in their work wherever it is in accord with ours.

Help arcane spellcasters who have spells wrong or who struggle with their mastery. Curb, rather than contribute to, wild magic. Discourage irresponsible and reckless spellcasting. Locate and identify those who can wield the Art; follow their deeds and statements, and be aware of their aims. Be alert for new ways in which arcane spellcasters deceive or make war on their fellow wielders-of-Art. Craft a new spell every year, or modify an existing one to produce new effects and uses. Grow in the Art personally by constant study and experimentation.

**Secular Aims:** The Enlightened (clergy of Azuth) who are only arcane spellcasters are to pray to Azuth for guidance in tasks to be personally done by the god until he grants them access to divine magic. Enlightened who are only priests must do the same until granted access to arcane spells by the god. This access might never come to pass, but the striving to attain it must not stop.

Traditionally, Azuth’s priests had no secret, secular aims, beyond participating in all projects that the church of Mystra was pursuing. In 1352 DR, however, the self-styled High Spellmaster of Elturel, the wizard Emdrur Harvult—soon supported by the Narthraumurge of Tashluta, the wizard Leiyonar Braskrazra—began to preach that it was time to make rulers everywhere in the Realms friendly to arcane spellcasters. This was to be accomplished either by becoming rulers (by dethroning the incumbents) or by becoming the power behind many thrones—a tactic Alustriel dubbed the Vizier Gambit.

Some clergy of Azuth are certainly hard at work to usurp thrones or aid others in such attempts, but not all of them are in agreement with the High Spellmaster’s insistence that they accept his authority and maintain a strict hierarchy of command within the church. The Narthraumurge seems to have drifted from being Harvult’s ally to becoming his rival, trying to establish his own chain of command with himself at the top.

The bulk of the Enlightened, whether they agree with this bid for worldly power or not, cling to independence. They serve the High One himself, and are bidden by him to work with fellow Enlightened, the more powerful outranking the

lesser but all working as comrades, not in a hierarchy of formal ranks. The god has guided all to follow their hearts in this matter.

Behind all of this remains an older heresy, known as Yauntarism after Ilmurk Yauntar, the Enlightened. Yauntar vanished in 1347 DR and his fate remains unknown, though some whisper he took a dragon's shape and lives as a dragon. Yauntar took the view that priests of Azuth should enrich themselves by their service, charging fees to commoners and coercing funds from rulers so Azuth would truly be respected. Elminster believes as many as three in every ten Enlightened are secret Yauntarists.

## Bane, the Black Hand

**Creed:** The world is made stronger by mighty and ordered rule, with the ruled made to fear their rulers and to hate common foes. Weakness and frivolity should be publicly destroyed for all to see and heed. Good is but a shelter for weakness and the whims of those who profess noble goals. Evil is the true state of nature, for winning is everything, and oppression is natural. Fight against good, and exalt evil. Tyrannize and destroy the weak, so that all in time become better and stronger, everyone knowing their place and not daring to question or foment disorder.

Be a tyrant. Make others fear and hate you, but awaken in them hatred of others. Aid tyrants and oppressors, but if they disagree with you or fellow Dark Hands (clergy of Bane) over policy, or turn back from tyranny or oppressing others, shatter them. We are the forge that tempers rulers, to make them ever harder, stronger, and more evil. Laws and rules, not wanton chaos, should reign. Eliminate lawbreakers. Kill or thwart a good creature every day (kill is better). Bring down arbitrary law keepers, and aid the brutally law-abiding. Make others fear Bane—and fear you—whenever possible.

**Secular Aims:** Since the fall of the High Imperceptor, the church of Bane has been dominated not by the coldly correct hierarchy of obedience it had been known for, but by vicious battles for dominance among clergy. Dark Hands browbeat lesser Dark Hands and fawn over or are carefully correct to superiors—as they seek ways of betraying, thwarting, and bringing down those superiors. As a result, it's every Banite for himself,

and few personal secular aims—beyond climbing in the church hierarchy at the expense of others—are achieved.

In the lowest ranks of the clergy, personal power is so meager that most such priests become the near slaves of someone a few rungs higher up, so as to rise with that person. As a result, priests in the middling and upper middling ranks of the Dark Hands *can* get some long-term aims accomplished with the aid of these lackeys.

Almost all Banites seek to establish control over trade in a region that can be used for tyrannical purposes, such as selling or smuggling weapons or slaves. They then attempt to use the proceeds from this effort to enrich the Church and themselves, as well as to try to win themselves land, wealth, and ever-increasing influence over local rulers. Many become advisors to (or “dirty work agents” for) nobles.

Unholy Champion of Bane Ohlzrak Larandrar is one of the few who has become a local noble himself, and he is almost ready to make an open bid for rulership of the city of Ormpur. Since almost no one in the church of Bane is a fool, and Banites employ or coerce many into spying for them, fellow Dark Hands know perfectly well who among them is rising in secular power, and where. It's rare for a Dark Hand to be allowed to rise as high as Larandrar has. He is an exception because he's extremely ruthless and capable, foreseeing most moves against him and preparing fatal traps for opponents—and also because several powerful senior Dark Hands are waiting for him to succeed in his bid for leadership before they rush in to destroy and supplant him.

Quiet confidence, and cold, clipped speech or murmurs dripping with menace, is the preferred style among most Banites. Swaggering, shouting and ranting are for lesser clergy of lesser gods. Note that within the Zhentarim, the clergy and the wizards tend to loathe each other, and only the beholders keep the groups from erupting into open strife—a feat they accomplish by making examples of those individuals who lash out. This hatred isn't divinely dictated: In Darkhold and other outposts, certain clerics and wizards who must work together daily have become firm friends and even companions.

## Garb of Bane's Clergy

**In the Field:** When going into battle, Banites wear black cloaks with the red fist of Bane painted on below and between the shoulder blades, and a breastplate of the same colors and decorations over black armor.

**Casual Dress:** Dark clothing is preferred, but Banites can wear anything so long as it includes a fist of Bane. If concealment is absolutely necessary, the fist of Bane can be worn as a hidden locket; otherwise, Banites should wear a black sash tied at the hip, with a red fist of Bane design clearly visible on it.

In pre-Time of Troubles days, the fist of Bane was a closed human right hand wearing a spiked gauntlet with its fingers toward the viewer and three drops of blood dropping from the horizontally severed wrist. After the Time of Troubles, the fist changed into a bare hand with fire or lightning bursting from between the fingers.

**In the Temple:** Formal dress varies from temple to temple. Poorer, rural temples can be pretty casual, sticking to black cloaks at a minimum. At the height of the most elaborate ceremonial clothing, under the High Imperceptor's rule, dress for Banites was far more complicated. The temple's supreme priest dressed in all black; senior officers in black with purple sashes; senior priests in black with red sashes; upperpriests in black with fiery orange sashes; and general clergy in black with fist of Bane gorgets denoting rank. All of these priests wore full, black cloaks, and generally, the more fists on a priest's gorget (usually from two to seven), the higher one's rank. Lower-level priests and lay people were dressed slightly differently. Newly accepted priests wore black tunics over crimson breeches; novices wore crimson robes; and lay brothers wore orange robes. All of these lower-level priests and lay people were also allowed to wear black half-cloaks.

All priests of Bane should carry at least two consecrated holy symbols of Bane at all times: one in a hollow boot heel, and one mounted on their belts. Even when undressed, Banites should wear at least one symbol, typically on a neck chain.

## Beshaba, Maid of Misfortune

**Creed:** Lady Doom must be feared. Spread fear of her daily in persons high and low. Neglect not the low in birth and station, for ignoring them

is the flaw of lesser clergies who venerate arrogantly blind gods, such as Bane. It is person by person that the cause of the Maid of Misfortune is won. Fear of her is just and prudent, for misfortune is inevitable. The so-called "good luck" of Tymora is made of lies and bright glimmers of false hope; Beshaba's way is the way of the world. In the end, Beshaba shall reign triumphant, and will protect and preserve those who have spoken for her and served her. Be among them, or perish.

Trick people, spread mystery and worry by what you say and do. Repeat true tales of misfortune befalling those who repudiated or neglected their veneration of Lady Doom—and whenever you are faced with such repudiation, punish the repudiator in ways swift, dramatic, and public, so as to spread fear among witnesses. Evoke pleading or screams daily. Work what misfortunes you can without falling afoul of local law or authorities—and spread chaos by thwarting or destroying law keepers and government officials whenever prudently possible. Make them miserable by harming or frightening their families, or by spreading rumors about them, or by stealing or ruining whatever they hold most dear. Be the reaching, ravening talons of Beshaba!

**Secular Aims:** The church of Lady Doom has long taught its Doombringers to profit personally, taking two coins from every ten gleaned by the church, and to enrich the church whenever opportunities arise to make, seize, or receive wealth amid the chaos. Civil war is to be started wherever possible. Since 1460 DR, Doombringers have been concentrating on starting strife between Sembia's wealthy and poor, which they've been doing in Amn since the spring of 1344 DR. They've also been trying to stir nobles of Cormyr who are unhappy with the Dragon Throne into open rebellion since 1347 DR.

Increasingly, down the years, Beshaba has anointed this or that individual cleric as one of her Favored. There is never just one Favored at a time, and other Doombringers are expected by the goddess to obey any Favored unquestioningly, to the death. However, Favored status doesn't last long, and those who lose it are always informed of their loss—usually sneeringly and accompanied by an attack by fellow Doombringers. The goddess never tells those unfortunates directly. While one enjoys the status of Favored, a Doombringer tends to work in frenzied haste to "do

great things” so as to please Beshaba and retain one’s title. These works usually include attempts to conquer cities, topple thrones, or openly hunt down and slaughter clergy of other faiths who have thwarted the church of Doom’s schemes or harassed Doombringers.

A few fallen Favored have tried to seize great wealth, then disguise themselves and flee—but since Beshaba knows where each one is, such a tactic inevitably turns the short remainder of one’s life into a hunt that can have only one ending. Just two fallen Favored are thought to have survived: Avalant Rauntur, who turned himself into a dragon and has remained one ever since; and Calathra Hargentle, who slew so many Doombringers that the church of Doom stopped sending them after her—giving her time to disappear through a gate into another world.

## Bhaal, Lord of Murder

**Creed:** Murder is natural. Slaying is what all creatures in Faerûn do, daily if they can. At least daily, slay something living—and the Lord of Murder is most pleased if the victim is one of your own kind and as formidable as, or more powerful than, you. Kill with swift skill, not by torture, forced suicide, falls, or collisions. Do it personally, with ever-greater deftness and elegance, and teach others the skills and the delights of slaying.

Deathbringers are to slay with enough skill that witnesses are impressed. They are always to challenge those more powerful than themselves, the clergy of other deities being prize targets. Slay with pleasure, but never with anger. Be in exquisite control of yourself. Utter the name of Bhaal so the victim can hear it. Ideally, it should be the last word a victim hears.

**Secular Aims:** Some Deathbringers have always sought to enrich themselves by their killings, usually by thereafter plundering and swiftly reselling the wealth of their victims. Deathbringers are expected to share half of all coins thus gained, but the church has always been silent on nonmonetary gains, such as land and rentable buildings. Every Deathbringer has a designated senior priest that should be paid, if one can’t fully share at a nearby temple of Bhaal. Some Deathbringers avoid paying their superiors by bartering what they gain, so coins, gems, and trade bars are never directly involved.

After the Time of Troubles, prayers to Bhaal went unanswered for a time; then they were answered again—but the god himself remains silent. Deathbringers receive instructions from him only rarely, and only in nightmares . . . commandments that most of them inwardly believe come from some other deity. Essentially, the few surviving Deathbringers are on their own, roaming Faerûn as independent slayers. Some of them make a living as assassins or trainers of assassins, but slayings they do for coin don’t count as holy reverences of Bhaal. Several Deathbringers have managed to become city rulers or the heads of city law-keeping forces—and their minions now stalk the night streets slaying undesirables and rivals to increase their wealth and tighten their rule. Increasingly, Deathbringers seek positions where they can live comfortably, make lots of coin, and kill often with few consequences. Adventurers far from home are godsend targets, as are outlaws or brigands; few care if such folk meet a bloody doom.

## Chauntea, the Great Mother

**Creed:** The Earthmother is everything, and her health is our health. She feeds us, clothes us, waters us, and shelters us. No god is greater than her, though many are noisier. No god is more forgiving, more nurturing, or more essential. Truly, Chauntea is All.

Uphold no other gods above her, and champion no causes over her needs and nature. Fight disease and blight and those who spread it, especially the foul servants of Talona. Give seeds freely to those who will use them well, plant and sow wherever it seems best, and restore green growing things that others have despoiled. There is no higher cause than that of Chauntea.

**Secular Aims:** Chauntean clergy go by many appellations, but the most popular name used among themselves is Nurturers. Their hierarchy is based on length of service and wisdom, embodied in the accumulated understanding of nature, its cycles, and the smallest details of life. From monsters to erosion and from currents to wind patterns, Nurturers seek to learn it all. Acquiring such knowledge through action and by talking to druids, farmers, woodcutters, hunters, quarry folk, and others who work close to the land daily is one commandment of Chauntea. Opening



choked watercourses and burning diseased material so as to prevent plagues from spreading is another. The paramount duty, however, is to plant and to tend something growing every day, even while traveling. Nurturers can feel Chauntea speaking to them through the soles of their feet when they walk barefoot, and whenever they lie down and press their hands and faces against rock or soil. When she is angry, they can hear her rumbling when others can't, and feel her displeasure through the soles of their boots when they walk.

Few Nurturers have the inclination to allow themselves to take personal advantage of their holy office, and few would dare—for they know Chauntea is everywhere, and there is no hiding anything from her. However, some develop enough hubris that they think farms and ranches and even woodlots are better owned and tended by themselves than by non-Nurturers. These clerics begin to assemble land they love, to be their own. The Earthmother will drive them from these plots of land if they stop wandering altogether, but she seems to tolerate Nurturers who make their own land into a central base that they wander out from and then circle back to. As such, some Nurturers spend ever more time and effort trying to cajole, coerce, trick, or trade their way into owning good growing land. Some see nothing wrong in the slightest with stealing coins, land deeds, and other treasure so as to use it to acquire land—for what other good are these disks of dead metal, that one cannot eat or use as fuel to keep warm? Humans are much better freed from their thrall, to spend their time in healthier work with the welcoming, nurturing land. To keep land they have gained, or to prevent someone from despoiling any land, some Nurturers will attempt any sort of deceit, and lie straight-faced upon altars, for they are merely countering human foolishness with . . . human foolishness.

## Cyric, the Prince of Lies

The stability and power of the church of Cyric are by no means certain; as Bane grows in power, Cyric inevitably loses. Bane is an inherently stronger (less insane) personality, and thus will probably eventually win the “big bad guy” contest between them. The faith of Cyric is much younger than the other large priesthoods of Faerûn, and from the outset has been dominated

by opportunists from other churches seeking more personal power. This situation has proved a recipe for schisms, struggles, and a weak church. Whatever happens to the gods themselves, the church of Cyric is by no means a predictable or a consistent force for anything.

## Deneir, Lord of All Glyphs and Images

**Creed:** Written and drawn information harnesses what it describes, enabling readers and viewers to better live in harmony with the world around them and with each other. In this way, over time the world itself will be improved. Information should be freely available to all, everyone should be literate, and those who destroy or despoil writings, or conceal them, should be punished. Glyphscribes (priests of Deneir) must gather information, copy it, and share it with those who desire it and with their fellow Glyphscribes. Additionally, they should catalog and clearly identify the context of all writings—for not to do so is to spread the three sins: ignorance, uncertainty, and speculation.

Travel the Realms for at least one of the four seasons of the year and seek out records that are lost in tombs, ruins, and abandoned dwellings; forgotten in storage or in the homes of folk who don't read; or suppressed by courts, governments, and guilds.

**Secular Aims:** Certain senior Glyphscribes fell into the habit of assembling written information they knew would be precious to a ruler, an archwizard, or other powerful individual. They would then trade that information to that individual in return for access to other records they knew the individual possessed, which they could gain access to no other way.

Over time, this behavior split into two practices on the part of a handful of Glyphscribes. One is selling information, which they justify doing on the grounds that it empowers the church of Deneir to purchase other records, or to buy access to spellbooks and other valuable tomes for Glyphscribes to copy. The other is using the information they possess to manipulate or blackmail powerful beings. They justify such worldly dealings as “getting closer to recovering some part of the ultimate truth,” but in the eyes of Elminster



*While a Glyphscribe carves the mark of Deneir in the air of a forest glade before him, one of Eldath's Guardians stands by to make sure that matters don't get out of control. The symbol does not seem to be actual fire, but one never knows. . . .*

and other observers, they are becoming as adept at, and addicted to, controlling others as the Zhentarim are.

Most active among these worldly Glyphscribes are the cold, paranoid “you are with me or you are my foe” High Scrivener Ambaerostrus of Athkatla; the sly and softly smiling “everyone’s friend” Belurtus Mhellovvar of Zazesspur; and the urbane, superb actor Taumpras Irorlar of Saerloon.

## Eldath, the Quiet One

**Creed:** Seek stillness, and so find peace.

Preserve, cleanse, and repair pools, waterfalls, fastnesses (sacred glades), and groves. Take no thinking life save to defend it, to defend yourself, or to defend other life it directly threatens—and then only when there is no alternative. Replant where there is felling or burning, and work with the faithful of Mielikki and Silvanus to make forests strong, lush, and beautiful. Do no violence that is not needful. Prevail not in anger or

pride, but in sorrow. Improve something in a forest every day, from watering what has dried to tidying brush to clearing the course of a rivulet. Reflect on your own deeds, think on what is to be done, but brood not. Merely understand, accept, and find peace without seeking it. Explain to others that this is Eldath’s way and the trail to true serenity, but proselytize not. Help others whenever possible, so that they may become friendlier to the forest.

**Secular Aims:** All Eldathyn are enraged by deliberately set forest fires, and will fight with their spells to douse such blazes or minimize them and try to get as many animals safely away from the flames as possible. Any creature they’ve seen setting or augmenting such a blaze will not receive their help, and although they won’t attack them, they won’t seek to protect them, either.

Eldathyn are formally referred to as Glade-guardians but usually call themselves merely Guardians, and they are popularly known across the Realms as Gentle Guardians or the Gentle.

They are encouraged to make their living from the forest by way of harvesting plants and brewing potions, and they often serve as herbalists for nearby villages or hamlets. Very few have self-interested aims that stray from Eldath's way, though some find peace in whittling wood, painting, or making items they can sell.

A notable exception is one of the few wandering Eldathyn clerics, the priestess Hornlarra "the Feller" Braeszund, who finds peace only when the heart of a forest contains no walls, fences, or buildings. When she sees construction in the heart of a forest she fells and scatters it, calling on the aid of forest creatures such as treants when she can, aiming for its obliteration. If a building is in use, she won't fight its occupants—but she might calmly dismantle the structure around them or bring it down on their heads. If the occupants appear formidable and belligerent, she avoids confrontation, melting into the forest and waiting, silently and with incredible patience, for a time when everyone has left the building. Then she will bring it down.

## Finder Wyvernspur, the Nameless Bard

Finder is worshiped by small groups of folk who gather in secluded rooms of private homes owned by believers, and in many places in the Realms, the faith of Finder is largely an "upper room" cult. The faith isn't evil, suppressed, or frowned upon, but it has thus far taken a low-profile, "We know these divine secrets that the temples of more famous gods have missed" approach. Yet inevitably some priests of other faiths are angered by the so-called "false" beliefs and claims of those who venerate Finder because they differ from the teachings and beliefs of their own faith.

In Waterdeep, worship of Finder occurred at the Plinth and in upper rooms of private residences until 1372 DR. At that point, a modest temple of Finder was opened in Trades Ward in a substantially unaltered, commonplace building that had formerly been a street-level shop with two floors of living suites above it.

## Gond, the Wonderbringer

**Creed:** Encourage innovation and the invention of new tools, mechanics, and gadgets. Procure and record every new tool, process, and mechanical assembly. Yet preserve and record old ways of doing things, as well as improvised-from-nature processes and tools, so fresh starts can be made if any mechanized means go wrong. Assist inventors and those who sell new tools and new mechanical things, whether they venerate Gond or not. If rulers or scoundrels seek to harm or capture these inventors and sellers of inventions, to destroy or seize their works, then you must defend them, free them, and liberate their works. Copy everything, so that nothing will be irretrievably lost. Show mechanical devices to everyone, and demonstrate the lever, the swivel joint, the gear, the cog, and the pulley, so every eye can see there are other ways to capture wonder and accomplish things than just magic and prayer. When clergy or mages oppose you, cooperate rather than confront, and make common cause rather than enemies.

**Secular Aims:** Gondsmen are formally styled Wonderbringers, but since Gond himself is "*The Wonderbringer*," they prefer to address each other as Fellow Artificer, Brother Artificer, or Sister Artificer. They subscribe to both a public creed (above), and a secret creed. Their secret creed is as follows:

Influence or control every ruler possible, so the works of Gond will be embraced by—and forced on, if need be—everyone, smashing guilds and others who won't champion them. Covertly enrich oneself personally by selling Gondar wonders and by cheaply buying up the lands and buildings of those ruined by competition over such wonders. Work to become so wealthy that you can live like a king—and overwhelm and subsume the church of Waukeen, just as Gond shall conquer and wed Waukeen herself.

Whenever a wizard or other wielder-of-Art destroys something mechanical or its maker without just personal cause, avenge that blow. Eliminate spellcasters who openly deride, hate, or fear inventions and mechanics—covertly, whenever possible, but openly if you must. To the public, magic and mechanics are not at war. Privately, they are deadly foes. So smile and be an ally in

public, but await a good chance to smite spellcasters who denigrate or oppose Gond.

Both the stationary Gondsmen in Waterdeep, Athkatla, Selgaunt, Saerloon, Baldur's Gate, and the other burgeoning cities of the Realms, and the majority who wander, include ambitious individuals who hunger for power and wealth. They tend to be bold but to think ahead, establishing hidey-holes for caches of weapons and transport vehicles, inventions that entrap intruders, and wealth. Every one of them has plans of his or her own, for Gond doesn't seem to mind his clergy doing well for themselves so long as they use inventions, modify inventions, and stir others to invent and innovate as they proceed.

Hundreds of Gondsmen scheme to make themselves "coin mountains" or rulers or both, just as soon as they can. One example is the golden-eyed and urbane Aersilk Krondamar in Athkatla. Another is the striding, whirlwind-swift "Mad" Madeenan Bredart, who races around the Heartlands selling small disguised pistols and blades that fold down into scroll tubes, all the while aiding inventors and shopkeepers who want to mechanize things. Some Gondsmen are bound to succeed—or blow up Faerûn trying.

## Helm, the Vigilant One

**Creed:** Guard perfectly, attentively, and with forethought; be ever vigilant. Guard what you are ordered to guard, including that on which your charge depends. If ordered to guard the king, guard also the throne and the castle around the throne. If ordered to guard a man, keep safe also his family, his drinking water, his food, his livelihood, and whatever else he holds dearest. Be alert for slow and subtle attacks, not merely bold frontal challenges.

Yet let not your guardianship extend into officiousness and attempts to use your status or office to control others. Be prepared, know your foes, and be fair and farsighted in the performance of your duties. On duty, do not stray, sleep, or allow yourself to be distracted or lured from your post. Consider weaknesses in guardianship and deal with them. Corrupt or false guardians must be exposed and replaced. Be ever watchful for corruption, even among fellow Vigilators. Guard with your life; Helm expects no less.

**Secular Aims:** Helmite clergy are colloquially referred to as the Watchful, and are formally known as Vigilators or Hands of the Vigilant One. They are trained military personnel who keep themselves and their weapons, armor, and other gear in the best of shape and readiness. "Other gear" includes a dagger with a magnifying lens in its pommel and a far-seer, which is a sturdy telescoping spyglass. Frequent drilling with weapons and the establishment of handy caches of hidden backup weapons are church requirements.

The Vigilators have always hired themselves out as guards of both persons and places. Thieves and intruders have long known that to slay a Vigilator guard is to court Helm's disfavor—and his priesthood's, too. "If you slay a Watcher, no one who knows about it will guard and protect you," as the old folk warning goes.

Vigilators strive to be exactly attentive to the orders they are given when guarding and protecting, and the church itself is a disciplined hierarchy. As such, corruption within its ranks tends to occur only in the upper echelon of officers, who consider themselves to have some room for interpretation of orders, and for particular tactical and strategic determinations.

One early Vigilator who fell from grace was the Archangel (*arr-chan-sell*) Rhordren Thardras, who came to believe that some groups and individuals had to be protected against themselves. This belief led to his giving orders that had Vigilators commanding during a crisis and then openly ruling those they were protecting. Several Vigilators since then have succumbed to similar sins, believing that various folk need to be ruled by priests of Helm for their own good or their own protection. "Commanding in a crisis" is now frowned upon within the church.

The Supreme Watcher is the highest office in the church of Helm. The post has been long vacant, since Helm saw evil awaken within the last three holders of the office and thus decided not to affirm another Supreme Watcher for a time. Below (and nowadays in lieu of) the Supreme Watcher, four Archangels meet in council to steer the faith. Each commands the faction of the clergy of Helm that operates in a certain quarter of Faerûn. Traditionally, the first-designated of these quarters includes the Sword Coast as far south as the northern boundary mountains of Amn, everything west of that in and across the

Sea of Swords, and everything east of that as far as the western fringes of the High Forest. The second of these quarters contains the North as far east as Rashemen and as far south as the northern shores of the Sea of Fallen Stars, and from the north shore of the Dragonmere west to the northern boundary mountains of Amn. The third contains everything west and south of the northern boundary of Amn and the south shore of the Dragonmere and Inner Sea, to the Chondalwood and the Landrise. The fourth quarter consists of everything east of the first three quarters.

The four Archancels are nominally equal, but have precedence among each other based on personal seniority, which is determined by length of service combined with personal standing in the regard of Helm. Reporting to each Archancel are four Chancels, who serve as personal agents and envoys. Chancels oversee Vigilator activities in their Archancel's quarter and investigate matters of internal discipline.

These Vigilator activities include the making of arms, shields, and armor. Vigilators don't exclusively use church-made armor and weapons, but instead have over the years founded many armories to equip fellow Watchful, and also make armor and weapons for sale. These sales have proven to be ongoing sources of minor corruption, as Vigilators sometimes sell to one side in a conflict but not another on the basis of "offerings to the church" made by one side that are really personal bribes.

Below the Chancels are varying numbers of Bishous, each of whom administers to a realm, a region, or a city-state. Below the Bishous are Lectors, who are local investigators and Helmite force commanders; Ardeacons, who train and spiritually guide lower ranks of Vigilators; Prelates, who are Helmite force unit commanders; Vicarphs; Pryats, who are priests; Novices; and Honored Laity, who are nonclergy holding offices in Helmite churches and other properties.

As Ardeacon Baeryk Halholdaun famously said in 1236 DR, "Our zeal is oft our undoing. We see the flaws in those we guard, then seek to address them because they are weaknesses that make our guarding less perfect—and in our seeking we stray over the line into tyranny, or into causing strife, and so drift from the purpose and grace of Helm."

As Elminster added dryly, "Helmites mean well and are the best of sentries—but almost all of them are human, and so are forever drifting away from Helm."

## Ilmater, the Crying God

**Creed:** Share and give counsel and listen whenever needful. Be a comfort and a support. Stand up for the oppressed, guide the lost, and give food, water, medicines, firewood, clothing, and shelter to all in need—and burial to those beyond mortal need. Life is sacred and suffering is holy, but "life" implies the freedom to make bad choices or embrace danger and hurt; thus, seek not to control what others do. Sacrifice and know pain and loss on behalf of others, but do not indulge in the sin of enjoying pain, benefiting from your sufferings, or seeking revenge primarily to inflict more pain.

**Secular Aims:** Ilmatari priests are collectively called the Adorned (formally Adorned Sufferers), and include among their ranks Healers, Painbearers, and Sanctars. Healers work directly with common folk, to heal and lessen suffering. These individuals are often found in slums and sanctuaries where the destitute and ill can find shelter and be tended. Painbearers travel Faerûn and work to lessen large causes of suffering, such as wars, feuds, slavers, class and racial exploitation, and even local bullying. The Painbearers and the Sanctars work with clergy of Tyr and Torm (fellow deities of the Triad) and with priests of Lathander to further fairness, security, happiness, and hope for all.

Sanctars are the highest and most secretive clergy of Ilmater; they are the judges of other Adorned, internal investigators of the faith, and the enforcers who fight to protect fellow Adorned and their work. Where other Ilmatari merely suffer and endure, a Sanctar seeks to punish any being who has harmed or mocked the clergy of Ilmater. Ilmatari paladins are Sanctars and knights of their particular orders.

Certain Sanctars have apparently received personal direction from Ilmater—or believe they have, and have not suffered any rebuke to disabuse them of this belief—that suffering would be "shared more broadly, but lessened in its worst excesses" if wealth were redistributed from the very wealthy to the poorest. These few Sanctars

are at work in Athkatla, Waterdeep, the cities of Sembia, and elsewhere to steal or manipulate any coins, trade goods, and property they can get from the rich and successful. These spoils they then pass on to the needy. They also work to equalize taxation, to pressure governments into providing for their poorest citizens, and to ensure that courtiers and other officials found guilty of corruption are heavily fined rather than merely jailed or dismissed from their posts. Some Sanctars work tirelessly to find and expose such corruption—particularly when it involves the misuse of public funds that would otherwise have benefited the wider populace.

## Lathander, the Morninglord

Lathander's priests are the clergy most concerned with business start-ups, new ideas, get-rich-quick schemes, social renewals, and reorganizations—usually involving smaller groups rather than governments, though sometimes of government bureaucracies, too. They are the folk to see if you need a larger loan than a local moneylender will provide.

Optimists are preferred as clergy, and their upbeat nature is infectious, making Lathanderites popular. The clergy host parties to which they bring carefully chosen eloquent thinkers who like to converse. Once everyone is together, they watch over the proceedings with sober-up spells held ready to keep anyone from getting so intoxicated that heated debates turn into brawls or enthusiastic agreements drift into lovemaking. They want the revelers to listen and talk and then go home feeling inspired, uplifted by new ideas, and a part of new endeavors, movements, and ways of daily doing things.

Some Lathanderites are matchmakers, seeing this activity as fostering newness in lives, but others believe this function is more properly left to Chauntea, or Sharess, or even Siamorphe, if the partners are noble.

**Creed:** The Morninglord stands for new beginnings and ideas, innovation and artistic expression, renewal and self-perfection, birth and fertility, creativity and vitality, youth and athleticism, and dawn and spring. He abhors undeath and desires to see it destroyed, and is a fierce foe of evil and the tolerance of evil. Be as Lathander.

Support new beginnings of all sorts, be they lives, businesses, ideas, fashions, art, or ways of doing things. Scorn not old art in favor of the new, for all art is expression that stirs new thinking in those who work it and those who behold it. Plant seeds and seedlings, and make common cause with the clergy of Chauntea. Sow hope even more often than you sow seeds. Greet each dawn personally, so as to be closest to Lathander and so as to drink in the bright hope that every sunrise brings. Helping others and instilling hope are more important than laws, rules, and adherence to authority.

**Secular Aims:** The Awakened (novices of the priesthood) are trained and manipulated by Dawnbringers (Lathanderite priests) to experience hope and to share hope with others. Belief in the uplifting power of daily hope is their strength and what drives them, and kindling and maintaining this zest for life is essential for one who would do successful service to Lathander. Spreading hope and enthusiasm is “your holy task, your life’s work, and your daily salvation,” in the words of Dawnmaster Istorn Malvantur of Elturel.

Every Dawnbringer is encouraged to share new ideas, as well as to help common folk everywhere with their new ideas. Lathanderite clergy fund new endeavors and facilitate cooperation between crafters and traders by bringing them into contact, guaranteeing loans, and witnessing agreements. From there, it’s a short step into going into business for oneself—and many Dawnbringers do just that, becoming “wheeler-dealer” moneylenders, traders, investors, and lobbyists in the mercantile world all across Faerûn (but concentrated in cities, ports, and market towns).

The popular expression “as eager as a Dawnbringer seeking to sell you a rag folded in a new way” speaks to public bemusement at the tireless hucksterism of some Lathanderites. In the faith of the Morninglord, promotion of “the new” trumps possible negative consequences or the (very rare) disapproval of the church of Lathander. As a result, most Dawnbringers are avid boosters, sponsors, and abettors of swindles, new business ventures, and (often covert) “new ways” in trade. As a merchant of Selgaunt put it, “Intrigues? They’re what you can’t hear or see us doing behind all the excited bustling and cajoling done by the dawn-dancing, hope-happy-heads of Lathander.”

## Leira, the Lady of the Mists

**Creed:** The meaning of life lies in deception and falsity. To deceive is to live, and to manipulate through deceit is to triumph. Bald fact is mere existence, and even death can be an illusion. If you believe nothing you see or hear, you embrace the Goddess of Deception and Illusion, and will succeed. Plain and whole truth must be spoken to fellow Mistshadowed—among the ranks of the Unmasked, there must be no deceit. Outside our holy fellowship, let untruth always swirl strong. Lie to someone every day. Weighty and well-told lies are better than merely frivolous ones. The best sort of lie is wholly believable and spurs those who believe it to do things they would not have done had they not heard it. Foster and pass on rumors daily, and revel in the delicious sharing of confidences and gossip that are untrue. The truth is worthless; falsehood is the allure and satisfying drink of life.

Spread superior falsehoods and deceit and prosper thereby, for in your success, the Mistshadow deepens, and the Lady succeeds, too.

**Secular Aims:** The Mistshadowed (clergy of Leira) are expected to deceive outsiders as often as it is possible to do so well, and at least once daily. They are also expected to try to profit from their many deceits, and to share—without deception as to the amount—a tenth of what they make with the church of Leira. Fellow Mistshadowed are expected to aid in deceptions they deem elegant—for a share of the takings, of course.

Deceiving a fellow clergy of Leira can lead to one being expelled from the church and victimized by the Shunning of the Lady: Leira's curse, which means no one will ever believe anything regarding the cursed one, even what they can see with their own eyes—which state of affairs usually leads to the accursed becoming an outcast or finding death through bitter fighting or a swift suicide.

Priests of Leira will work together ruthlessly against anyone who deceives one of them, but otherwise tend to operate alone, working deception upon deception in every city of Faerûn. Under multiple names, they accumulate properties and hide caches of wealth in many clever places. In one Leiran priest's house, a cracked, filthy chamber pot was accidentally broken one day—and was discovered to have seventy gold

pieces hidden in an unfired clay slurry lining that had been used to reseal and repair the pot.

Mistshadowed never stop swindling and manipulating and investing. As Exalted Mistcloak Irtobrand Zamrest of Ormpur puts it, "We like to feel the Lady's smile."

## Lliira, Our Lady of Joy

**Creed:** Joy is the essence, the spark, and the reward of life when expressed in revelry. Joy bound up inwardly is joy unshared, and joy shared is joy increased for all. Celebrate daily with non-Joydancers, even if only in impromptu dances and chanted ditties and jests imparted. Awaken smiles and laughter, lighten hearts, and encourage folk to express their joy. Sing without shame or criticism; mimic without malice; lampoon without nasty intent, but only in laughter.

**Secular Aims:** Joydancers (priests of Lliira) are expected to put on revels, large and small (but larger is better), whenever they can. To share joy, they want strangers and passersby to join in, and they are pleased when crowds are lured together. Although unbridled horseplay can be a feature of many such events, Joydancers are good at revelry and so often get hired by nobility, the wealthy, and courtiers to put on events. They are experts at organization, subtle crowd control, costumes and decorations, food and drink, the establishment of proper mood, and the pacing of revels. They are expected to share twenty percent of their takings with the church of Lliira, but may keep the rest—and many Joydancers do quite well from sideline businesses such as training dancers and acrobats, selling and renting costumes, and catering.

Some of Lliira's priests aren't above covertly causing or encouraging local rivalries between the sponsors of revels. This interplay results in each side trying to outdo the other, year after year, by putting on larger, longer, and more expensive festivities—which Joydancers and others derive ever-increasing profits from. In Sembia and Amn in particular, such efforts have led to a rise in flamboyant high society over the years, setting trends among nobility and the wealthy, making increasingly florid clothing fashionable, and popularizing ever more costly feasts and revels. As Joydancer Mralaera Tretta of Saerloon put



*A priestess of Lliira and a priestess of Loviatar both love to dance, one for joy and the other for pain. Yet are their dances, all matters considered, so different? How you answer that question defines you.*

it in 1354 DR, “Times hard? Play harder! Times good? Play harder still!”

Whenever possible, Joydancers create a culture of celebration in which folk rich and poor see no reason not to hold frequent nightly feasts and revels, after the day’s work is done. These events inevitably become “the” places where adventurers meet those who want to hire them, where deals bright and shady are done, where strangers and “long aways” hear the latest local news and gossip, and many go to see and be seen.

## Loviatar, the Maiden of Pain

**Creed:** Spread pain, and the love of pain.

Visit pain often upon others, but in a kind, tender way that makes them seek it. Kiss the lash and feel its sting at least once daily, while praying to the Maiden. Do hurt, cause agony, inflict torment, induce suffering, and work torture—all in

a loving manner, so that those you inflict the caresses of Loviatar upon will seek them willingly, and want more. Never force or coerce.

Be an ever more accomplished actor, playing the part of someone who cares deeply, so that you will be loved and longed for by those you hurt. Doing so makes the hurt deeper. Seduce kings and other rulers, influential persons, and heads of wealthy families to the Kiss of Loviatar whenever possible, that those they influence shall fall into acceptance of the Sacred Pain. Be mysterious and alluring, be kindly and flirtatious, and awaken love and lust. Slay clergy of Ilmater whenever covertly possible.

**Secular Aims:** Loviathan clergy are formally called the Lashes of Loviatar, and informally known as Inflictors. They are encouraged to develop personal relationships, particularly with the influential and powerful, dealing pain with love or feigned love so as to dominate their victims.



They may keep any wealth and prizes they gain thereby, so long as they use such relationships to increase local social acceptance of the Kiss (willingly suffered pain) and bring more willing participants to the reverence of Loviatar.

In the mid 1300s DR, the goddess purged her church of many of its highest-ranking clergy, and replaced its top-down hierarchy with a far more independent, broadly based structure. The hierarchy used to consist of a High Whipmistress pontiff atop seven Exalted Scourges, and a strict hierarchy of fourteen clerical ranks beneath them. The new structure has seven Exalted Scourges and their envoys and discipline agents, the Pains, at the top. Then, there are administering Entrusted Whips, who are the heads of temples, and to whom any number of Lashes (senior priestesses) and Lesser Lashes (ordinary priests) report. This change stimulated personal initiative in the lower ranks and started the transformation of the faith from a widely feared, secretive cult catering only to the wealthiest and highest-ranking in secular society to an increasingly trendy church. Inflictors who have risen since this great change include the following personages.

*“Lady” Ladaeliya Larkoond*, the Entrusted Whip of the Tower of Sighs, which is the temple of Loviatar in Zazesspur. Larkoond is an alluring beauty who has entranced wealthy merchants in Amn, Tethyr, and Calimshan, and been gifted with no fewer than six castles and more than a dozen vineyards and farms.

*Tathjanesse Waerntyr*, the Entrusted Whip of Lashtail House, a temple she founded in Saradush with the personal approval of Loviatar. She accomplished this after making great personal advances in the region—several rulers seek her as their consort, and no less than sixteen important merchants publicly want her hand in marriage. She is a political confidant in the region, with ever-increasing influence. As she once told Exalted Scourge Hevendra Vrayn of the Whip of Athkatla, “They come for the pain, and stay for the embraces and advice.”

*Andratha Dorntalon*, Pain of Elversult, is one of the most energetic and far-traveled Inflictors. Dorntalon is a priestess whose exploits would shame many a veteran adventurer. By turns submissive and a charismatic ruler who projects absolute authority, Dorntalon enjoys a special relationship with Loviatar. She carries out secret

missions given to her by the goddess, answers only to the Exalted Scourges (who treat her with great respect), and always seems to have concealed weapons or waiting allies to rescue her if she faces doom. Fellow Inflictors know that her duties include destroying the most formidable foes of the church.

## Lurue, the Unicorn

Followers of the Dancing Unicorn believe she is the Art embodied in divinity. They believe that all that is good and natural in magic, as opposed to the self-interested castings of mortal spellcasters, is due to Her—not to Azuth or Mystra, who respectively curb the excesses of wizards and see to the magical balance of all Faerûn.

The touch of Lurue’s horn restores life. It can cleanse and purify, driving out insanity and the strongest poison, and even change a person’s psychological makeup or race.

Contact with Lurue’s horn brings the greatest rapture possible to anyone who can cast magic, imbuing such people—one time per individual—with glowing inner peace and endowing them with nine spells they can cast, by silent act of will, once each at any point later in their lives. These spells appear instantly in the recipient’s mind, are chosen by Lurue, and might be linked to a destiny or an intended mission the recipient is unaware of—or the spells might inspire him or her to walk a certain path through life.

Luruans travel the Realms interviewing witnesses of Lurue’s dancing and consulting records of her past dances, trying to visit every spot where the Bright Unicorn was seen dancing. Or, rather, right *underneath* every spot Lurue was seen dancing, since she usually dances in mid-air, a tall man’s chest height off the ground. They believe that for every dancing place they stand under, they rise in Lurue’s regard, and she will impart through dreams more and more magical lore to them. Such lore might be the locations of lost or hidden magic items, scrolls, or spellbooks, or it might be knowledge of areas of wild magic or nodes of power they can draw on simply by stepping into them.

Wild magic areas and nodes can harm most mortals, but those who enter them with the blessing of Lurue can only be aided by such free magic—or so Luruans believe. And there’s strong

evidence—many personal reports of benefits—that they're right. Usually it heals, restoring lost or withered body parts and closing all wounds.

## Malar, the Beastlord

Malar tends to be worshiped in hunts only in rural areas, not through city streets, except where there's a local tradition of “a night of misrule” or “a night when the old gods walk.” Local Malar worshipers often take advantage of such traditions to stage their own hunts on the same nights—and persons who go out on these nights often wind up as corpses lying on the cobbles in the morning.

Urban-based holy hunts can take place in sewers, large walled gardens belonging to wealthy worshipers of Malar, and within Malar's temples. When a hunt takes place in a temple, participants are sometimes blindfolded and in the dark, lightly armed and unarmored, with all the doors of the temple spiked open, to give the quarry a fighting chance in the small confines.

Malarite clergy and fanatical lay worshipers prize the scars that they receive from wild beasts, though one such must be gained through unarmed grappling with an angry or hungry monster to be truly worthy.

Some Malarites drink the blood of wild animals and monsters as if it were fine wine, believing that such imbibing imparts some of the power of the creatures to them. A few hold “blood feasts,” using whatever blood they can harvest when a great beast is slain. Other Malarites see this practice as foolishness, or even blasphemous straying from the way of Malar, because it denigrates beasts that should be exalted.

**Creed:** Hunt often, in honor of the Beastlord. Slaughter your quarry bloodily, so it knows its slayer and its doom. Slay no young, no gestating creature, and no deepspawn, so as not to lessen the quarry for hunts ahead. Ignore laws, and battle law keepers. The only true law is the will of Malar, and where Malar is silent, the law of the wild prevails: The strong do as they please, and the weak flee, obey, or die.

It is Malar's will that a quarry that escapes a hunt not be hunted ever again, but instead be treated with respect as an Unblooded. Stand against woodcutters and clearers of the land, feed the hungry from the bounty of your hunts, and obey no priest of another god. Taste the blood

of those you kill, and never slay from a distance. Know cunning and the ways of the wild, but never fear. Face your foes and prevail.

**Secular Aims:** Malarite clergy are known as Bloodhunters, though in some lands they're called Beasts, a name of which many are rather proud. Nominally allied to the clergy of Bane and Loviatar, and subject to the priests of Silvanus, in practice Bloodhunters trust no one and make allies only if they see no other hope of survival—and then only temporarily and reluctantly. They are bidden to slaughter clergy of Nobanion (Malar's mortal foe) on sight.

Because their kind has been spurned and treated with open contempt and mistrust for centuries, some Bloodhunters decide to become implacable foes of all societies and peoples. However, they do not attack openly and in so doing risk getting overwhelmed, but skulk with subtlety. These Bloodhunters pounce on rulers, courtiers, envoys, and law keepers they can assault without witnesses, and tear them apart so that the aftermath looks like the work of wild beasts.

From the 1350s DR onward, in Cormyr, the environs of Westgate, upcountry Sembia, and the forests of Tethyr, some Bloodhunters have taken to quietly accepting payments to make certain “inconvenient” individuals the quarries in their hunts. In this way, they have slowly built up small personal fortunes. They are well aware that they are easy scapegoats, though, and are alert for attempts to betray them or send them into hopeless missions. Notorious among these skulker Malarites are the huge, bearlike Orn Belaskar, who is the Talon of Malar in Daerlun, and Trusk Mrond, who is the Fang of Malar in Westgate.

Other Bloodhunters have taken to living wild in caverns, dedicating themselves to out-hunting bears, leucrottas, and goblinkin for their lairs. From there, they mount infrequent raids in great force on nearby settlements, passing caravans, and farms. Raiding Bloodhunters seek to kill everyone and leave no witnesses. Then they withdraw in such a way as to lure any response into a prepared trap where they can slaughter from positions of advantage. Then they plunder the fallen, taking food and other gleanings back to their lairs, and plan where next to strike.

## Mask, Lord of Shadows

**Creed:** Steal or deceive daily; the Lord of Shadows is most pleased if you manage both. Subtle deception and manipulation always triumph. Convincingly feigned honesty is a sharp daily sword, misleadingly selective honesty is subtlety, and pure honesty is for fools. Acquire, deal, deceive, and acquire more. Give a single gem every month to the Shadowed Altar, or 2,000 gp in coin or trade bars only if you cannot thieve a gem. The rest is yours—if you can keep it. Steal not from fellow Darkfingers, but with style and frequency from everyone else.

**Secular Aims:** Priests of Mask are known as Darkfingers, or sometimes Darks informally. Collectively, they are referred to as the Circle of the Gray Ribbon, though they consider “Circlers” an insult. Mask doesn’t require them to steal daily, but he does command his clergy to engage in deceit daily—and to steal when the time is right, to gain the best prize or the most wealth. So long as the altar tithe is made, Darks may keep everything they steal. This not-so-fringe benefit has made Maskarran clergy into some of the greatest and most energetic swindlers, smugglers, and thieves the Realms has ever seen. Most of them spurn pickpocketing and “snatch-and-grab” work in favor of stealing entire loaded coaches, or ships, or the contents of a warehouse.

A few have sideline businesses in quickly making “exact look-alike” replica gems and jewelry, for nothing delights a Dark more than stealing the cost of a castle in gems—and deftly replacing the gems with high-worthless duplicates so the theft isn’t discovered for years, if ever. That sort of act combines theft with deceit, which earns Mask’s highest approval. The Darks Nathel Awbrunton of Mordulkin and Torsel Halivar of Yhaunn make particularly fine false gems that can fool many jewelers and gem cutters.

In earlier times, when Mask was God of Intrigue, Darkfingers were encouraged to dabble deeply in local politics, so as to hide their thefts behind a swirling web of possible treason, suspicious dealings, and misdirections. This web of intrigues lured law keepers and spies away from Maskarrans and their illicit activities. Darks often thrust realms or city-states into civil war or to the brink of it for amusement, easier thefts, and swindles—and to the greater glory and praise of Mask.

After 1358 DR, Mask grew angry with Darks who engaged in politics, requiring of them less bold public activities. Henceforth, they were to deceive on a personal level and cling to the shadows. Most Darks are inwardly relieved by this edict, because avoiding politics is far safer and takes a lot less time and effort. Presently, Darkfingers keep lower profiles, buying and selling properties by means of hired factors unaware of whom they’re really representing, and concern themselves with growing richer.

## Mielikki, the Forest Queen

**Creed:** Our Lady of the Forest requires her Arms of the Forest (the clerics and druids dedicated to her) to defend the trees, and keep the Balance. An Arm of Mielikki should drive out or destroy magical and unnatural blights and evil beasts not native to forests. Each one should live in the woods, be as one with the woods, and teach others the ways of the woods. All should be taught to love and respect wood life, not fear it. Plant anew wherever the woods are lessened or harmed. Protect, support, and when need arises obey the clergy of Silvanus and Eldath.

**Secular Aims:** Forests must be kept healthy, and accomplishing that goal might well require manipulating or bargaining with rulers and governments. For instance, an Arm of Mielikki might let local authorities cut down dead or dying trees in one place so long as they leave alone a re-growing area in another place. Mielikki’s priests maintain hidden-vale nurseries of seedlings of all sorts of forest plants, and defend deep-forest preserves where rare forest animals can breed and flourish in peace.

Often, in the 1340s DR, the relatively few elves in the Dales lived and worked hand in hand with Mielikki’s Arms, relying on them to be “our shields.” The term arose because if an Arm fell in battle, there were many more humans to replace the victim—whereas when an elf perished, there were no reinforcements to be had. A decade or so of being battle-companions forged a deep and abiding trust between Mielikkians and local elves that survives to this day.

In the 1350s DR, Mielikki marked Florin Falconhand with her favor. Her avatar made love to him, set him special tasks, and later commanded him to wed Dove of the Seven Sisters “because

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### Some Features In The Realms

**ASBRAVN** — This town lies in the center of a thriving area of farms, which serve the nearby cities of Berdusk and Triador with food, and produce wool for local use and for export elsewhere in the Realms. The woolen mills are in Berdusk but the gathering-place for most of the farmers is here, where several small caravans ply a busy trade over the roads between Asbravn and the two cities. It is here that the large local farmers' market is held, and it is here that the Riders with Red Cloaks are based. The Riders are local volunteers commanded by experienced warriors, and are paid a benefice by Triador to cover their costs of operation. They can supplement this with any battle-loot they may take. In return, they patrol the area (particularly the mountain slopes to the east), fighting off bandits, orcs, bugbears, and predatory monsters to keep the farms safe.

**THE BATTLE OF BONES** — Here, some two hundred winters ago, a titanic battle between human forces and the various goblin races that had overrun the North since the fall of the early kingdoms of men and the disappearance of the d warves. After almost a week of continuous fighting, the humans triumphed; but so numerous were the dead that their bones are said to cover the ground here over a foot deep. This area is avoided by most travellers because of the great numbers of undead creatures that are said to now be here, and those who do come this way, seeking a route along the edge of the desert, speak of some power organizing undead into patrols, and thereby controlling the area. No one has yet investigated such claims.

**BEREGOST** — The small town of Beregost is home to one of the foremost smiths in the Sword Coast area, Taerom 'Thunderhammer' Fuirvim, and is also the abode of the wizard Thalantyr and a large temple to Lathander, God of the Morning. The High Priest of this temple is Kelddath Ormlyr, once a merchant of note whose ships <sup>were seen</sup> ~~were~~ <sup>ground down</sup> the Sword Coast. On a hill to the east of Beregost rise the burned ruins of a school of wizardry, founded some three hundred years ago by the mage Ulcaster, and destroyed eight years later by mages of Callimshan who feared its collective power ~~was~~ had come to rival their own.

*By the tenth Realmslore package, my faithful typewriter had run out of ribbons, and my move to the countryside (and the house wherein I still dwell, amid ever more perilous stacks of books and games) had left me in territory devoid of office supply shops. Yet my editors (and beyond them, the gaming world) were waiting, so I sat down and handwrote, at top speed, short alphabetical entries regarding names on my maps that the TSR folks wanted to know more about. Pronto. Decades later, that "We gotta know more now" situation hasn't changed.*

this union—and its issue—are needful.” Florin and Dove had a son, Azalar, whom they took turns raising in Evermeet.

After the mid 1360s DR, on the outskirts of Secomber and in upcountry Sembia, some Arms of Mielikki began purchasing large tracts of land with coins they had recovered from forest ruins and hidden caches. They planted these ranches in ordered plantations of trees rather than as a natural woodland, creating “forest shields” to provide the expanding populations in both areas with ready timber that the Arms felled and sold very cheaply. This practice was later repeated in Amn and Tethyr. Woodcutters in these areas who instead prefer to despoil the natural forest are met with violence, often at the hands of outlander adventuring bands that the Arms hire as “armies of the trees,” in preference to fighting most of the battles themselves.

## Milil, Lord of Song

**Creed:** Teach music and the making of instruments, always with joy. Encourage those who make music to teach it to others and record its lyrics and tunes, so that no music will ever be lost. Seek new tunes and new instruments constantly, and master both. Work for ever greater acceptance of music, everywhere, so that spontaneous song and instrumental performances will be accepted and not merely tolerated, or shunned. Perform music freely, and awaken the love of song in all creatures. Work with the clergy of Oghma, Lliira, Sune, and Mystra, and make common cause with elves whenever possible. Encourage the clergy of Gond to remember music in their mechanics—and all clergy to use more song and music, not just more volume, in their rituals.

**Secular Aims:** Sorlyn (priests of Milil) are called upon by Milil to perform and to teach how to make instruments without charging a price, but they need not tutor for free or give away instruments that they have made. Many Sorlyn in their travels tutor the poor and hard-working commoners at no charge, or perhaps in return for a meal or a drink, but when they become regular tutors of nobility, royalty, or the very wealthy, those same Sorlyn charge fees. The casually organized priesthood of Milil expects every Sorlyn to donate what coins he or she can spare to church coffers once a year, preferably in winter or at the

coming of spring. Some Sorlyn engage in friendly competition with their fellow priests, donating ever-increasing amounts to show off their personal success. Nonetheless, Sorlyn are essentially entitled to keep every coin they make. Many Sorlyn charge healthy fees for making or repairing instruments (how healthy depending greatly on the perceived wealth of the client) and become quite rich.

One such affluent individual is the minstrel Ilmer Yuskalorn, who is famous around the Inner Sea by his last name alone. Yuskalorn settled in the Sembian city of Selgaunt and worked tirelessly to make “paerehel” (personalized entrance) tunes a customary feature of government meetings and rituals. In other words, whenever a courtier, a ruler, or a guild representative formally enters a meeting place or a room of state, that person’s “very own” brief tune is played, rather than merely a war-horn fanfare for the ruler and nothing for everyone else. Other people attending such affairs started to demand their own tunes, and Yuskalorn was happy—for fees, of course—to compose tunes for them and to teach those ditties to other musicians. The fashion of paerehel tunes has caught on and is spreading, notably to Cormyr and the rest of Sembia, though it has thus far been frowned upon in Westgate.

Another Sorlyn of interest is Daretha Haelimbroke, a bard in Chessenta who has some small talent for the Art. She works with three independent wizards—Endrelle Laryndar of Mordulkin, Berem Duntrel of Luthcheq, and Aumdror Velazskyr of Gheldaneth—on linking spells to tunes. Her short, simple melodies, when played correctly, in the right key, and with the right instrument—trigger the magics they are linked to, opening doors, turning on or shutting down wards, unleashing offensive spells, and so on.

## Myrkul, Lord of Bones

**Creed:** Make certain daily that all fear the Lord of Bones—who cannot be evaded, hidden from, or shut out. For the dead are his subjects, and the slide into death his pleasure and his dominion. Speak daily to all you meet of the Doombringers to come and Doombringers past—those moved by Myrkul to bring death, delivering souls to the one who shall have them all in the end, the mighty and the low-born, the cloaked in

proud Art and the barely able to speak. Silently remind folk of death by your garb, the skulls you carry, and the finger bones you trail behind you as you travel. You fear nothing, for to harm you is to die.

**Secular Aims:** Myrkulyte priests are known as the Anointed, and are sometimes called the Grinning Anointed in reference to the human skulls they carry and the skull masks some of them wear. They tend to remain silent, and when they speak, it is in a whisper or a calm voice, and it is only ever a few words. It is poor form among the Anointed to show emotion when one can instead speak coldly and flatly, and maintain apparent calm.

Word spread during the early 1300s DR that to do any violence to a priest of Myrkul was to die. Not on the spot; the belief is that Anointed of Myrkul know when one of their own dies, and how, and inexorably hunt down any responsible slayers. This reputation led to a few thieves and desperate individuals seeking to escape justice or manhunts by masquerading as clergy of the Reaper, so that no one would be inclined to approach them. These people dressed in black robes and skull masks and carried skulls or scythes to look like Anointed—or like Myrkul himself. For these folk, Myrkulyte clergy make an exception: They slay on sight anyone who had been attempting this ruse—and as painfully as possible. Word of such encounters has got around, with the result that fewer and fewer folk dare even get in the way of the unhurriedly strolling Anointed.

In turn, this enhanced reputation means that priests of Myrkul are free to just walk up and take almost anything they desire. This freedom extends only to nonliving objects; the loved ones of someone an Anointed assaults or attempts to take captive typically will fight to protect their kin or beloved. Some Anointed use this privilege to go through life never paying for a meal or any item they fancy; others use it to amass large personal fortunes—which Myrkul doesn't seem to mind.

The Anointed are a casually organized priesthood, with rank (Higher Anointed, Anointed, Lesser Anointed, and Initiate) based largely on seniority and experience in the presence of Myrkul himself. Myrkul is known to visit those he favors personally, chilling them with his touch or embrace. Those who survive the terror and permanent withering that such contact brings

improve their standing in the church. Myrkul did away with supreme high priests at the head of his church after several rebelled against him or sought to deceive him. Lower-ranking priests must obey, aid, and give money, food, or shelter to higher-ranking ones—but this is expected to be temporary “aid of the moment,” not a way for the higher-ranking to live off those in the lower ranks. Such abuse is rightful grounds for a lower-ranking Anointed to simply defy a higher Anointed.

Anointed of Myrkul are expected to slay (or at least coerce into changing their ways) law keepers, courtiers, and rulers who harass, arrest, jail, or slay necromancers or anyone purely for practicing necromancy. Otherwise, they are free to spread fear daily—and to enrich themselves in any manner they see fit, short of betraying the faith.

## Mystra, Mother of All Magic

**Creed:** Seek to learn and create new magic always, and love the Art for itself, not for what it can do for you. Know when not to use magic and when a little of it, skillfully applied, can suffice. Be deft and efficient in wielding the Art, never careless or reckless. Be mindful that the Art is the gift of the Lady of Mysteries, and use it humbly, not proudly. Teach magic to all, high and low, and use it to benefit others, so that acceptance of magic grows and the ability to wield magic widens from a select few to almost every creature of Faerûn. Let magic prevail and brighten life, not reign over it and constrain it.

Craft new spells and magic items as the Lady's visions and mysteries move you. Delight and thrill in the use of magic, but strive to master it ever more precisely, so that less of it can achieve more. Preserve magical lore, but share it rather than hiding it, that all may taste it and set aside their fear of its power.

**Secular Aims:** Of old, priests of Mystra were known as Mystrels, and later Mystwardens or Bearers of Mystery. By the 1300s DR, they were popularly called Magerobes, though they called themselves Servants (after “Servants of Mystra”). Like the Chosen of Mystra who are so infamous in tavern tales and legends, her Servants travel the Realms instructing creatures in the use of magic, and leaving spell scrolls, workbooks (simple spellbooks), and even magic items to be found. The intent is to leave so much magic in so many

places that rulers, law keepers, and selfish wizards can't hope to find all of it. Servants of Mystra are to work against those who seek to restrict magic, and humble or throw down those who seek to use magic for tyranny. Yet they are also to make sure that magic is alive everywhere—and used for good as well as for evil and selfish reasons, so that folk have some respite from brute force and the sword, and so that succor does not become a worse scourge than the sword it opposes.

The Servants of Mystra are few, and in the early 1300s DR they were so often attacked by evil spellcasters, and by rulers or rebels seeking to capture and control potent magic, that increasingly they took to traveling in disguises. A common disguise for Servants was as caravan merchants, in trains full of ordinary traders who had no idea who was in their midst. These Servants revealed themselves only in private to spellcasters or to those who had a gift for the Art but knew it not, or knew not what to do with their abilities.

So long as the Servants teach magic and spread it, Mystra cares not if they pursue side projects or hobbies, such as ruling small villages, founding or joining families that rise to wealthy near-nobility through their magical aid, or making themselves rich through their magic. Several became reclusive rulers in the Border Kingdoms, but covertly taught scores of people in upcountry Sembia and the Vast to cast spells. Others did the same in the Tashalar and around the Lake of Steam, intending that no Calishite conqueror would succeed in expanding into such areas without being unexpectedly opposed by fierce magic. Mystra's Chosen meddled in politics on a grand scale, and some of her lesser Servants have followed those examples, seeking to curb rulers who use brawling brawn in favor of those who respect magic and use it wisely, not tyrannically. Others prefer to work illusions to delight children and elders alike around a campfire or in a tavern taproom.

## Nobanion, Lord Firemane

**Creed:** The Lion God of Gulthmere decrees that hunting must be done to eat or feed those that one provides for—never for sport or mere slaughter where the meat is wasted. True strength lies in teamwork and compassion, protecting the weak rather than bullying them. Live with the land rather than against it. Seek not to tame, nor

to prolong suffering. Kill swiftly and cleanly. Learn dignity and honor from the visions sent by Nobanion. Make offerings to Nobanion by giving hunted meat to the hungry. Lead rather than command. Inspire by example, and do your own hard and dirty work.

**Secular Aims:** Priests of Nobanion are collectively and individually known as Nobanim, or the Pride of Nobanion (not Prides, and *never* “the Proud,” though their foes in the clergy of Malar customarily call them so). They are charged to disrupt and frustrate the practices of Malar when they encounter them, scattering Malarite hunts and rescuing the quarry whenever possible. They are to demonstrate compassion rather than ruthlessness, and are expected to be noble examples at all times. Nobanim may not sell beasts nor break them, though they may assist in the sort of animal training where one animal (or a herd) teaches another animal, rather than a human forcing an animal into obedience. They are encouraged to help breed, birth, and tend injured, sickly, and very young or very old beasts. They are charged to befriend animals and guide them to shelter, their own kind, water, food, and a way out of a place they no longer want to be. The Pride of Nobanion are allowed to accept breeding fees and payments for animal feed or grazing rights, but water must always be given at no cost. They can accept payment to tutor animal handlers and trainers who work with animals rather than seeking to command them.

Nobanim work to encourage views among civilized Faerûnians that wild animals must be allowed to share the Realms with society, not all be tamed, eaten, or slain as monsters. In horse breeding and ranching country, they encourage the belief that some herds must be allowed to roam free, providing stronger breeding stock for domesticated herds to occasionally mingle with. At least one Pride of Nobanion is the “Herdlord” of a pack of mixed wild beasts in the Chondalwood, where he hunts Malarites, leucrottas, and hunters in his quest to prevent the Chondalwood from being encroached upon by farmers, ranchers, and woodcutters.

Most Nobanim have little use for grand homes, possessions, or much coin. They live simply, close to nature, and they prize vigor, clean water, good food (much of it raw leaves, tubers, and nuts), and the freedom to roam.

## Oghma, Lord of Knowledge

**Creed:** Whether a member of the orthodox church of Oghma or the Oghmanyte church in exile, the two branches of the divided priesthood of the Binder, a priest of Oghma is popularly known as a Keeper. Orthodox Oghmanytes say this is short for “Keepers of the Faith,” while their rivals, the exiles, claim it’s an abbreviation for “Keepers of Knowledge.” The schism occurred over who was truly the true Grand Patriarch of the faith, and a difference in outlook. The orthodox church places the highest value on recording the past and analyzing records to “know all that can be known about what is and has been,” whereas the exiles hold that “knowledge of the past is the key to the future,” and that it is unholy not to make and continually refine predictions and preparations based on that knowledge.

“Active and passive,” some have termed these two approaches, though Elminster warns this is a gross oversimplification. Exiles were originally centered in Sembia and later Cormyr, before relocating in the mid 1400s DR to Akanûl.

One heresy—or true belief, depending on one’s point of view—among Keepers is that the Grand Patriarch who disappeared during the Time of Troubles was hidden by Oghma himself as a test of his clergy, to see if they would remain true to the quest for uncovering and recording knowledge, or would be tempted into the human failings of power struggles and reinterpretations of the faith.

**Secular Aims:** Keepers of both branches of the faith are formally known as Namers, and remain charged to assemble and preserve written knowledge—particularly ideas—and to share it whenever possible. A priest must copy out valuable written lore and give it away at least once annually, and must teach others how to read and write at no cost. As a source of income, one may sell writing implements, maps, and written lore, and give learned opinions, definitions, and explanations in return for fees. Some sell and make books of all sorts, including blank ones, or provide “to order” writing services, covering anything from love letters to advertisements, and from formal business letters to torrid fiction for personal entertainment.

Namers encourage a love of reading, theater, and music everywhere, and push for the social

and court acceptance of sages, bards, experts, actors and performers, and researchers. Namers might sponsor and be investment partners in publishing endeavors, theaters, touring productions and troupes, and scrivening businesses. A few, located in larger cities, have done very well from such livelihoods, including:

Sartrove Kalisskryl of Athkatla  
Simbrew Archyne of Baldur’s Gate  
Erdrem Savallaskur of Calimport  
Tammurth Tarndrover of Iriaebor  
Dar Lassen of Ormpur  
Imreth Hyldohbrand of Procampur  
Danneth Trelbrand of Saradush  
Surue “Ladylore” Layvenvore of Saerloon  
Faerdar Ophardyn of Selgaunt  
The sisters Ilidue and Narlylle Jahnessper of Silverymoon  
Ildor Marcownt of Tharsult  
Gordryn Haeront of Waterdeep  
Belaphar Saltune of Yhaunn

## Red Knight, Lady of Strategy

Typical offerings on the altar of the Red Knight are coins won in wagering over games of skill (such as lanceboard, a version of chess) but never in games of chance. The greatest possible offerings are new strategy games (board, pieces, and rules) personally devised by the worshiper, provided they are well designed.

If such an offering is given in a temple, these new games always vanish from the altar, taken by the clergy, of course. If given in private, whether in the open or at a shrine, the worshiper buries the items along with a symbol of the goddess in earth into which a single drop of his or her blood has been spilled. (A crude horse-head chess piece design scratched into a piece of bark or onto a stone will suffice as a symbol, if nothing better can be had.)

It is sinful for the same worshiper to unearth such things and reuse them as offerings, or for other faithful of the Red Knight to knowingly use the offerings of another in their own prayers to the goddess. However, it’s quite acceptable to use the offerings of others in different ways—wagering with them, selling them, or giving them away.

Devout faithful of the Red Knight often have scores of red horse-headed lanceboard pieces



made for them to use as symbols in just such situations. If nonclerical worshipers of the Red Knight are traveling with a priest of the Lady of Strategy and make prayers to the goddess, it is acceptable for the priest to collect and carry along all such offerings, meaning to turn them over to a temple of the goddess at the first opportunity. If doing this becomes impossible, such sacred goods should be buried.

Typical prayers to the Red Knight are whispered pleas for insight into the thinking of foes and requests for inspiration, both when strategizing. A true follower of the Red Knight believes that all tactical thinking or dreams of battles and battle strategies are bestowed by her. A devout worshiper never takes credit for a brilliant strategy or tactic, believing such inspiration always comes from the goddess.

When a devout follower suffers defeat, overlooks some stratagem of an opponent, or is outwitted, the follower typically makes an offering to the goddess by procuring a shard of good quality battle armor, gashing himself or herself with it, and leaving the bloodied metal on the altar with a prayer. The supplicant does not bind the wound or seek healing for it until the prayer is complete. Many worshipers of the Red Knight take good armor from opponents they have personally felled and shatter it, so as to have a ready supply of such shards for times of failure.

Great victories are celebrated by placing trophies of the defeated foes on an altar of the Red Knight, accompanied by prayer. Such trophies can be weapons, armor, or blood and body parts. If no altar is handy, the prayer may be offered literally on the body of the fallen, on the battlefield or by the place of death.

Prayers to the Red Knight often begin “O, Lady of Clear Calm,” or “Great Lady of Armor Blood-Red,” and the goddess betimes gives long-worshipping individuals a secret name by which they can call her. This name is imparted in dreams and is different for every individual. These names are not thought to be even echoes of her true name, but rather personal tokens or pet names symbolizing her favor of the individual.

Formal priestly prayers often include the lines “lady whose armor is drenched in blood for us,” and “armor blooded to remind us of our faults and defeats, but eyes bright to make us mindful

ever of unquenchable spirit and the battle mastery of fields to come.”

## Selûne, the Moonmaiden

**Creed:** Worship the moon and embrace moonlight. Fight darkness, evil, and those who shout down the moon. Fight fell darkness in the forces of Shar. And fight the Twisted (evil lycanthropes). Call on the power of the moon’s magic and what it “tells all in silence” (navigation). Dance in the moonlight to the glory of the Moonmaiden. Pray in the moonlight, for Our Lady of Silver gains tangible power from prayers made to her at these times. Meditate in the moonlight, for Selûne can guide all who do, even if they do not venerate her. And love in the moonlight, for the moon-conceived “have the moon alive within them” and will cleave to the worship of Selûne.

**Secular Aims:** So long as priests of Selûne (popularly called Mooncloaks and formally called Ladyservants) follow the creed, they are free to make coin by any means they desire. These sources of income can include wandering the Realms leading worship under the moon and accepting offerings, or weaving, shop keeping, smithy work, or even farming in accordance with the phases of the moon. They are particularly valued as ship navigators and as guides through forests and wild places by moonlit nights. Most Mooncloaks are female humans, and they range from barefoot-poor, rural, uneducated, brawny farm girls to sophisticated, stylish urban nobility. Most are content to make a comfortable living rather than engaging in shady dealings in an effort to get rich or rise in political power or social influence. Clergy of Selûne regard being pushy as poor form for anyone, not just fellow Mooncloaks.

The Mooncloaks are more collegial than hierarchical, though they do have ranks, from Postulants, who have expressed an interest in serving Selûne but not yet been taught anything about the faith, through Novices and Runrae (*roon-ray*; singular Runra, meaning “simple priest”), up through Alrunrae, Tenembrae, Sartembrae, Trintelrae (upperpriest), and Aumrae (singular Aumra, akin to a bishop). Outranking Aumrae are the Calunala (*cal-loon-ah-lay*; singular Calunala). These are independent agents of the Moonmaiden who go their own way, talk



*Above a battlefield strewn with bodies, the Lady of Strategy appears—her aspect bearing a striking resemblance to her symbol. When a master stroke of strategy is needed to win the day, nothing can inspire the followers of the Red Knight more than her presence.*

often and personally with the goddess, and are something akin to holy secret agents of Selûne.

Aumrae and Calunala can “go moon glow” if they see the need: When an Aumra or a Calunala is partly or wholly in moonlight, she can at will instantly change into a glowing gaseous form for as long as several minutes. A Calunala can also call up moonblades. These moonblades, unlike the famous elven swords of the same name, are glowing swords of force-forged moonlight that last for a minute or two at most. They strike silently, are weightless, and deal significant injury to their targets on every hit.

To become a Runra, a Novice is typically given a small, simple task—an adventure the applicant should be able to accomplish alone. If she acquits herself well and is accepted by the goddess, who will signal this acceptance by sending her a vision in her dreams, she is thereafter a priest. Each priest has normal holy duties plus two missions at a time: something small assigned to her by a higher-ranking Mooncloak and something greater

(and secret) that the goddess personally asks her to do. Selûne often gives her Ladyservants temporary abilities or spells to aid them in carrying out her missions, and Mooncloaks often lend their services to other Mooncloaks to whom they’ve given tasks. In the words of Calunala Alyzmra Hantulgard of Everlund, “The Moon waxes and wanes, and the fortunes of holy folk of the Moon rise and fall—but the Moon is ever with us, sailing on no matter how dark the sky.”

## Shar, Mistress of the Night

The Lady of Loss has always dealt in fear of the dark and the unknown, and she offers alluring guidance to those lost in grief or poverty. She whispers suggestions in the dreams of mortals, appearing in their visions as tall, beautiful, and unclad, but more than half-hidden by darkness and her swirling hair. Her hair moves at her bidding, slithering, clinging, and coiling like a den of serpents, not in response to gravity or breezes.

Even when enraged, she hisses or speaks very softly; she never shouts. She is cold silence and soft menace, not storming or bragging.

Yet Shar can be frightening indeed. She sends the severed heads of humans flying silently out into the night to watch and listen, seeing and sometimes speaking through them. She needs humans, for human suffering is her sustenance. When she feeds, she takes the misery from those she feeds on, leaving them temporarily uplifted, and in this way gains faithful who revere her. She calms the mad and brings them silent serenity—for a time. She sees all mortals as tools, to be cast aside when she tires of them, no matter how powerful they have become in her service, for all should know loss—every mortal, and Shar herself. So, if she uses Shade and its princes as her tools now, there will come a day when she destroys them utterly, in favor of someone much weaker and very different. For that is the way of Shar. She is no tyrant, to build dark empires. That is Bane's delight, and Bane's work. She is Shar, the Lady of Loss and oblivion.

In her words, "Out of the darkness we all come, and to the darkness we all return. Some swifter than others, and many not swiftly enough."

In homage to the Dark Goddess, some Sharran clergy of both genders walk by night unclad except for magical nightcloaks and their own long hair. These cloaks are actually garments that enable flight and can mute any sound around them when willed to do so. A priest's hair is sometimes natural, and sometimes a wig of the braided hair of many others, enspelled so the tresses can carry daggers, small lanterns, and other items of like size and weight, as well as catch and cling to things. These enchanted wigs are not strong enough to hold the wearer's body weight, but they could, for example curl around a branch while maintaining hold of a lit lamp, so the cleric can part company with the wig and do something in the lamplight.

A cleric of Shar undergoing penance or being punished by a superior might go around lit by magical light cast on him or her for a day or several. "The darkness is for those who deserve it."

**Creed:** Darkness is your cloak and your spur to action. Strike down the moon and those who serve it, and work against laws and law keepers, rulers and the powerful, by corrupting them and sewing dissension. Weave discord through secrets

and rumors and falsehoods, so that all that is now mighty shall in time be swept away, and all that will remain is the darkness of Shar. Work in secret when necessary, obey your superiors in the Night Church without question or defiance, and give your life when Shar deems it needful, for you will reap her Dark Reward.

**Secular Aims:** The Night Church works in secret in many parts of the Realms where it is forbidden, such as Cormyr, the Dales, Waterdeep, Baldur's Gate, and Amn. The places it can show itself in the open include Calaunt, Mulmaster, Scornubel, Sembia, and Westgate. Sharran priests are popularly known as Darshars (a corruption of "Dark Sharran"), but they refer to themselves as Martyrs, because their lives are forfeit to Shar, whom they know will eventually claim the existences they owe her—probably sooner rather than later.

Popular belief has it that Shar is malicious (true), ever-present (true), and an implacable, nigh-unbeatable force of evil—which is false, as many priests, worshipers, and allies of Shar have learned at their personal cost. The Dark Goddess is fickle and has repeatedly turned on or abandoned hitherto-favorite agents. Those who flourish under her support, such as the princes of Shade, might suddenly find it withdrawn, or even used against them. Shar is, after all, the goddess of loss, and she delights in reminding mortals never to rely on anyone or anything, lest a painful price be paid all too soon.

The "Dark Reward" her senior clergy promise is the prospect of being raised as a undead—usually a lesser undead—under the control of the Martyrs. Sometimes Shar prizes especially capable and accomplished priests of the faith enough to bring them back to life augmented in some way. Usually such priests, called Shadowed, gain a short-term ability to become invisible or assume a gaseous form, but are marred by having a black talon for a hand, or a short black serpent's tail in addition to their legs. All such individuals are greatly feared within the clergy. They universally return bearing jet-black eyes without whites or irises, and voices that are hoarse, cold whispers.

Priests of the Night Church are encouraged to sow discord and weaken order and respect for laws. They do this by abetting rebels; murdering peacemakers, trade negotiators, and accomplished diplomats; goading those engaged in feuds into



*The Martyrs who devote their lives to Shar receive considerable blessings from their goddess in return. This priestess has the ability to reach into a realm of darkness and pull forth a hideous creature to do her bidding.*

deeper bloodshed; and spreading hatred-of-outlander rumors. Those they kill should always know they are being slain in the name of Shar, not taken when asleep or unawares. Indeed, if these deaths aren't intended to foment strife by being mistaken for the work of someone else, Martyrs write the name of Shar in the victim's blood beside the body.

Martyrs often travel the Realms posing as merchants, refugees, or pilgrims of another faith. Although their eventual fate depends on how well they have pleased Shar before they die, nothing in Shar's commandments or the Night Church's doctrine bars priests of Shar from stealing, banditry, murder for gain, smuggling, or any other legitimate or illicit business dealings. They are free to enrich themselves throughout their vowed service to the Lady of Night as they see fit. Using pawns, such as rebels or discontented guilds, and hiring "talons" (often adventurers) to aid in the work of the Night Church is considered good form, not cheating or a sign of weakness.

As a result, many Martyrs have made scapegoats of hundreds of people, and have amassed vast fortunes in lands and property—most of which they don't have time to enjoy before death greets them (and Shar sends someone else to use what they gained). In any land or city where Shar can be worshiped openly, her clergy are forbidden to work against the ruler and the law keepers—but everywhere else in the Realms, in ways great and small, Martyrs of Shar are at work to stir up dissent, dethrone kings, and sow cynicism and disrespect for principles, authority, and "the way things are."

Some notoriously successful Martyrs are outlined below.

*Rortryn Waend:* An accomplished actor and murderer, usually based in Athkatla, later in Crimmor.

*Crella "Cruel" Lannathond:* A former dancer, based in Yhaunn, who usually poses as a traveling vendor selling scents and flashy "revelwear" clothing, and who is an expert at passing

information to and from Martyrs and Night Church allies and spies. Lannathond covertly dabbles in politics wherever she goes.

*Abran Dathengar:* A retired veteran soldier of Tethyr now based in Saradush. Darthengar is an enforcer within the Night Church who also follows up against foes who have defeated or escaped Martyrs that were sent after them.

*Dracol Havnor:* A cool-headed, acrobatic, and stealthy skilled slayer and master trap maker who has killed many courtiers—and even more adventurers who were hired to eliminate him.

## Shaundakul, the Helping Hand

**Creed:** Guide the lost and the uncertain, widely share all you know of hidden places, and fight against the loathsome servants and works of Beshaba and Shar. Visit all the shrines of Shaundakul in your life, tend them and worship at them, and encourage others to do so as well. Build new shrines where it seems right, by the divine signs sent to you. Find, repair, and master portals and learn their destinations. No matter what the weather or the perils, bring common folk safely back home.

**Secular Aims:** Priests of the Helping Hand are popularly known as Windriders after the annual holy rite of the Windride, when they all take gaseous form for a day. However, they call themselves Seekers of the Trail or more often, simply Seekers.

Seekers live off the land, hunting and gathering as they need, and are allowed to work for fees so long as they keep traveling. Many hire on as guides and guards for adventurers, caravans, pilgrims, explorers, and prospectors—or become explorers and trail makers for various costers and rulers.

Many Seekers sell accurate-as-possible maps of trade routes, ways through mountains, and even the layouts of castles and palaces with their known secret rooms and passages marked. They also sell maps of short underground routes, such as the cellars of ruins, catacombs and sewers under cities, and “merchants’ shortcuts” in the Underdark. As one Seeker, Thal Pevrem of Berdusk, put it, “My telling you a route is free, but if you want a map, it’ll cost you coins.”

Seekers give maps and information regarding portals reluctantly and in small amounts. They will give out only one portal link at a time—that is, one portal and its destination—and only for a very high price. Before giving such information, Seekers need to know those who seek it don’t plan to do anything that would harm a portal, or that would force a ruler or a powerful organization to move to destroy, magically seal, or stand heavy guard over a portal.

For a time, foes of the faith cast magical traps on portals to make them dangerous to Seekers, but this deterrent moved Shaundakul to grant his clergy special abilities. Seekers can now merge with the magic of a portal and hide within one indefinitely, use its energies to heal and restore themselves, and “ride through” the harm of any portal traps simply by being part of the magic of the portal.

Rumors have recently risen that every shrine to Shaundakul incorporates an underground shelter room with basic provisions (true) and has a portal nearby (not true, yet). As Seekers know, there are plans to expand the portals of the Realms into a vast network—but not until the church is powerful enough to defend it against any conceivable foe, such as illithids, beholders, dragons, or the priesthood of an evil god. Therefore, as any Seeker will ruefully admit, “Such a dream will be no more than a dream for a long, long while yet. In terms of years, several thousands. Or more.”

## Siamorphe, the Noble

**Creed:** Instruct royalty and nobility in the right way of conducting themselves—not mere etiquette, but the manner in which they should think, speak, and plan ahead. Do this so they will rule well, support good decisions, and oppose bad ones so as to bring about correction rather than dissension or strife. Support nobility and royalty in their times of doubt, grief, and need, and bring them into the company of wise counsel wherever you can’t provide it. Seek to prevent them from making dire mistakes that lead to widespread dissatisfaction, rejection of royalty or nobility, or war. With the divine right to rule comes great responsibility, and great rulers supported by great nobility can lift a realm so that its citizens high and low enjoy better lives. See that this happens often and wherever possible.

**Secular Aims:** The clergy of Siamorphe (*see-ah-morf*) have never been numerous. They usually come from the ranks of older nobles and courtiers throughout the Heartlands, the North, and all the lands around the Shining Sea except for Calimshan. Known as Scions, they sometimes serve as court viziers and sages, but more often attach themselves to rulers or noble matriarchs and patriarchs as secular, practical, and ethical spiritual advisors. More than one Scion has sprung into action as a bodyguard, or even impersonated a ruler or a noble when an assassination attempt was likely. Scions represent what is good, steadfast, and truly noble about nobility, rather than the decadence, pride, folly, and corruption that all too often creep in after generations of privilege. Faerûn has seen its share of corrupt advisors and courtiers, many of them even agents of a ruler's foes, and Scions try to expose such false advisors as well as to provide a balance against those corrupt advisors they can't touch or haven't yet discovered.

The church of Divine Right has kept rulers on thrones and enabled nobles to be tolerated far more than they would be otherwise, and has led to better governing and better lives for the governed throughout the 1300s and into the 1400s DR. As the years pass, its reach and interests grow steadily to encompass noble houses and ruling courts far from its bases in Waterdeep and Tethyr.

As of 1359 DR, Siamorphe is incarnate as the former Lady Durndatha Greatgaunt of Cormyr, a gruff, crusty "hunting, riding, and reveling" sort who married Lord Harmantle Helmfast of Waterdeep in 1357 DR and so became Lady Helmfast. She was poisoned by a Zhentarim agent a year later, but exposed her slayer—the wizard Ultcantle—and foiled his plot to poison wine in many noble wine cellars across north Waterdeep rather than seeking help for the poison that ultimately slew her.

As of 1360 DR, her ablest Scions include the following individuals.

*Darlynd Immur:* The retired former High Vizier of Tashluta, Immur is an advisor to the Rowanmantles, and fleetingly, from time to time, to various Obarskyrs and senior courtiers of Cormyr.

*Melvurth Horncasset:* A pompous, prissy, thin-as-a-spear veteran courtier from Zazesspur,

Horncasset knows every court dodge, is a shrewd judge of human nature, and has a secret wild talent: From time to time, unreliably and intermittently, he can read snatches of the inner thoughts of individuals he is either alone in a room with, or close enough to touch. This talent allows him to utter particular remarks, "hear" the thoughts they evoke, and sometimes thereby know the true loyalties or intentions of someone.

*Ilmurra Tarlhawk:* A vivacious escort who works for the palace in Waterdeep, Tarlhawk is a superb thespian and a very good sympathetic listener and spy who can manipulate and befriend effortlessly. Cynical and world-wise, she smells deceit and spots most schemes and ploys the moment they're launched—yet sees in her holy work the salvation Faerûn needs. She tirelessly strives to inform, improve, and support nobles, urging them to do better and think better for the benefit of all.

*Felvor Elcaskur:* Elcaskur is descended from a noble of Tethyr who escaped the Black Days (the start of the Tethyrian civil war, in 1347 DR), changed his name and—with magical aid—his face, and fled to Waterdeep to live out his days as a seneschal to the Waterdhavian noble family of Kormallis. Elcaskur grew up knowing all about the gossip and peccadilloes of the nobles of Waterdeep. He knows who owes whom favors, who's feuding or just quarreling with whom, and how to delicately negotiate ways to strengthen friendships, improve relationships, and deepen ethics among the nobility.

## Silvanus, Oak Father

**Creed:** Maintain the sacred Balance, the natural cycle of life. Work against those who disturb the Balance and make others see it more clearly. Prevent the felling of forests, fight disease, and plant anew the sylvan green growing things, daily if possible. Seek, befriend, and serve dryads, and guard the forests by seeing threats, anticipating what lies ahead, and quietly manipulating. Use violence only when necessary. Be vigilant against fire, woodcutters, and other despoilers of the wild, and limit farms and ranches to land already cleared. Fight those who do the bidding of Malar and others who threaten forests. Work to deepen your understanding of the Balance and of the lives of all growing things.

**Secular Aims:** The Forest Father gives his clergy simple, firm dictates, but allows much personal leeway in his priests' lives, so long as the activity engaged in deepens one's understanding of life. For instance, a Silvanite could assist a farmer in his egg-selling business, or attend the butchering of a boar, or help in a human childbirth, all to learn more about life in one of its many forms.

Silvanite clergy have been called Forest Masters or even Staglords, but they prefer to call themselves Tenders of the Forest, Balancers, or Oakservants—the last of which has been gaining popularity steadily as the years pass. Priests of the Oak Father work with woodcutters to minimize the felling of good trees and the clearing of land, in favor of removing diseased trees and selectively thinning a forest to open it up to the sun. They often teach or compel woodcutters to replant as they cut, and see a forest as a “slow farm” to be tended and harvested over decades, rather than a waiting woodpile to be cut from the outside in. Oakservants sometimes go into business with others to produce platter candles, which are multiple-wick, slow-burning candles as wide as a platter, lit for warmth as well as for light. They also collaborate to make peat and manure cakes, charcoal (from downed wood), flammable oils, and other alternative fuels for cities. All of this manufacturing is meant to lower the demand for firewood. Others work with dryads and other forest folk to compel and control dangerous beasts, such as wolves, owlbears, and the like, that prowl forest verges. Their presence helps bolster local beliefs that forests are dangerous, monster-roamed places best to be avoided rather than casually invaded for foraging.

Oakservants are encouraged to magically take beast shape or tree shape from time to time, so that each can experience the forest more fully and come to know it better. Many of them hide in the forest this way to evade enemies or to be alone to think or deal with grief, or to await and entrap or eavesdrop on foes.

Oakservants are responsible for some of the “underglass” (greenhouse) and hanging-basket and window-box gardening fashions in cities. These city gardens are meant to help with food production, and therefore reduce the incidence of new farms and forest-clearing operations. This is the only way in which Oakservants will deal

directly with the influential and powerful; they shun any wider political involvement. In places such as Cormyr and Tethyr that have active rural nobility, Oakservants encourage boar and stag hunting in the woods, because they know that those nobility who own such territory and indulge in such hunting will fight to protect or even expand their woodlands.

## Sune, Lady Firehair

**Creed:** True love wins all, and so love should be encouraged everywhere—for people, for beauty and the arts, for hobbies, and for well-done accomplishments. Foster attraction, allure, and the display of beauty. Perform a loving act every day, and acquire things of beauty not to keep for private enjoyment, but to share and display. Move beautifully, dress beautifully, and meet others with warm affection that deepens into friendship, respect that deepens into admiration, and flirtation that deepens into romance that becomes love. Let all of this behavior be genuine, for true beauty is found inside rather than in the artifice of outward display.

**Secular Aims:** Sune (*soon* or *soon-ay*; the latter is more recent and rarer) expects her clergy to guide others to follow her creed as well as follow it themselves. As such, they're called Heartguides. In a similar fashion, the upperpriests are known as Heartwardens, and the high priest is the Heartwarder. Sunite clergy network very well, having many friends to whom they offer support and loyalty. They are valued partners in any businesses concerned with fashion, such as garments and accessories as well as those involving body enhancement, such as corsets and other reshaping foundation garments, scents, cosmetics and adornment paints, and jewelry. They also aid businesses concerned with dance and “carriage” (gait and stance), etiquette, singing, and voice control, and they have established themselves in many businesses that provide provender and “dressing” (props and transformations) for revels, feasts, and more intimate gatherings. Especially in larger urban areas, some Heartguides enjoy great financial success as a result of such work. Thanks to their winning ways and extensive networks of friends, ever since 1349 DR onward they have even been hired for lucrative but short stints



*An Oakservant of Silvanus, on patrol in the forest she tends, happens upon a priestess of Sune who has chosen this spot to perform a prayer and a dance to celebrate her deity. Fancy meeting you here, indeed!*

to spread word of new wares and artists of note and to sway public attitudes or political initiatives.

Heartguides tithe twenty percent of all they make to the church of Lady Firehair to maintain temples, to aid other Heartguides in displaying themselves to their best advantage, and to make temple rituals as attractive and popular as possible. Some of those tithes go toward embellishing rituals with moving song performances, dances, and prayers accompanied by lush instrumental music. Most Sunite clergy live a high lifestyle, spending lavishly and never accumulating all that much—but never needing it. The church is charged to provide shelter, nursing, and food for its elderly, ill, or maimed members, and later to tend their (beautiful) graves, usually in remote (but sometimes inner-city) “Goldenrest” monasteries—and it diligently does so.

## Talona, Lady of Poison

**Creed:** Pain is pleasure, and although poisonings, disease, and plagues are natural and should be embraced rather than feared or avoided, what is important is not that they slay, but that to be fully alive one must experience their ravagings, disfigurements, and painful effects. A poison that slays swiftly or instantly, particularly one that plunges its victim into torpor or sleep, is worthless and should be despised. Poisons should creep slowly, so that victims feel and know their effect. Likewise disease and plague should work slowly, for the true glory of life is respected and experienced only by those fighting to keep it—not those who in robust health unthinkingly expend it. Spread poison, disease, and plague in the name of Talona, and let others know that it is the power and grace of Talona that sickens them and that may let them survive.

**Secular Aims:** Talonite (or Talonar; both terms are widely used) clergy are widely feared,



hated, and shunned. They are known as Terrors and sometimes Walking Plagues. Terrors are often attacked by fearful people using polearms or missiles, to drive them away or keep them at bay. Such attacks are always done from afar for fear of getting too close to the Terrors' poisoned daggers or any diseases that Terrors carry. It's widely known that Terrors covertly spread disease and seek new blights and afflictions to spread to regions that haven't yet known them—and so will be ripe for succumbing to them. They are readily recognized because it is a holy custom for Talonar to dress in ragged robes and to scar or disfigure themselves. This disfigurement is usually done by cutting, burning, or the use of acid, but the holiest way is to introduce a disease to do its work—a purpose for which leprosy is popular. As a result, some Terrors pose as beggars so as to move around unidentified, or else don masks or disguises, or use magic to conceal their true nature. Most Talonite priests carry multiple poisoned daggers or needles at various places on their persons. At least one of these weapons bears a fast-acting poison for personal defense, but most impart slow-acting poisons that cause convulsions, loss of balance, and intense internal pain. Talonar also carry small drawstring bags containing dusts, dead skin, and other disease-carrying substances for deliberate “blight sowing.”

Most Talonars are expert poisoners and have a high natural resistance to diseases and poisons thanks to repeated exposure. This resistance enables them to drink the same poisoned wine as others without ill effects, even when other drinkers are stricken or slain.

Terrors are allowed by Talona's decree to seize and use all property, from coins to land, that they gain from victims, though they usually have to fight secular claims for such property from heirs or co-owners. Most of them make an income in this way, though their lives are never idle or easy. Fanatical Talonar have often sought to poison wells and work other widespread afflictions, but the Lady of Poison frowns upon such impersonal reverences, strongly preferring a one-on-one approach in which the victim is made aware that Talona is involved.

The church of Talona is secretive and underground in most places. Impromptu altars are often the deathbeds or graves of victims who succumbed to poison, disease, or plague delivered

in the name of the goddess. Terrors roam the Realms tirelessly doing Talona's work, and have little need for large or elaborate temples. However, most cities contain a hidden cellar or “upper room” temple inside or beneath buildings used for other purposes. There are large and public temples of Talona in Scornubel, Arrabar, and Calant. The main temple of the faith is the House of Night's Embrace, in Tashluta. Within its dark, soaring-spired walls, injured Terrors are nursed and sometimes augmented with grafted-on beast body parts, or with features from people who died or were dying from “Talona's Gifts” (poison, disease, and plague).

Infamous veteran Terrors who have accomplished much include these individuals.

*Saldrissa Vauntyr*: A beautiful, alluring seductress whose skin looks scaled like that of a snake or a yuan-ti thanks to a rare disease. Vauntyr makes much use of poison when romancing nobles and wealthy merchants—whom she then relieves of a lot of wealth. She's immune to most poisons, and has assembled a small arsenal of magic items from her victims, which she doesn't hesitate to use. When she travels the Realms, she usually hires evil adventurers as her bodyguards.

*Hauldron Lethur*: A jovial, healthy-seeming, energetic traveling trader who buys and sells up and down the Sword Coast and along the Heartlands caravan routes. Lethur passes on diseases with casual ease. When threatened he resorts to poisoned weapons (often his sharpened fingernails) and invokes Talona's name triumphantly.

*Yawsravin Nilmurt*: A plunderer of the fallen who goes from battlefield to armed skirmish to local brawl seeking wounded and dead he can relieve of goods and wealth. He spreads disease to others as he works, and he is not above provoking tense situations or brewing hatred into open conflict that he can then exploit. For over four decades he has wandered the Inner Sea and Heartlands overland trade route regions, yellow-smilingly doing this dirty work.

## Talos, the Storm Lord

**Creed:** Obey every bidding or sign of Talos. His voice speaks in the howling winds, his face and hands appear in storm clouds and your dreams, and his lightning bolts point the way. Destroy order, destroy crops, and destroy bridges

and buildings and the monuments of other gods, preferably with wind, rain, hail, and lightning. Use your magic to aid forest fires and hard freezes. Breach walls and split roofs as storms approach, so that natural fury can enter and sunder those no-longer-secure shelters. Sow fear of Talos as you sow destruction. Destroy something every day.

**Secular Aims:** The Storm Lord expects his clergy to stroll naked through a storm once a season, to feel its full fury and so become closer to Talos, renewed and purified as mundane concerns and distractions are swept away. He understands that humans need to have moments of relaxation and enjoyment, and to gloat over achievements. For this reason, the Storm Lord allows his clergy to reap material rewards, such as plundered wine or coin they can use to purchase luxuries and indulgences, and to take some time off between actively destroying things. Talossan priests are expected to personally profit from their deeds, and they need not share anything—though more powerful priests of the faith may take from them, and this too is deemed proper by Talos.

Talossan clergy are known as Stormheralds, Stormbringers, or Devastators, but they call themselves Tempests. They have no formal hierarchy; powerful veterans coerce younger-in-service Tempests if they can.

Like Cyricists and Sharran clergy, the small and disorganized church of Talos works to foment chaos; to challenge or weaken respect for authority, laws, and law keepers; and to smash things, large and small, from glass bottles drying for reuse to castle walls and towers.

Tempests are well aware that the “mad keen” among them, those who slaughter and smash wildly and constantly as they travel, are soon ganged up on by increasingly fearful neighboring folk, and soon eliminated. So most Tempests prefer to fulfill the “destroy something every day” commandment by crushing insects or shredding weeds, and then spend they spend the remainder of their day living more reasonably. Doing this enables them to live undetected as they wait and plan for prize targets they can spectacularly shatter or bring down. The best incidents of holy destruction are those perpetrated by a Tempest who can then seize wealth and move on without being pursued by infuriated witnesses or the victims of their destruction.

Many Tempests live in idle luxury wherever they fled to after their latest sacred deed of destruction. Here they await chances to do great public destruction, such as burning down a temple or a town hall, before moving on again.

In early spring, when mercantile trade routes open up, and again in late autumn occur a number of large festivals and trade gatherings. These events often draw many Tempests, each working alone and perhaps unaware of others’ presence, to try to cause ship collisions, explosions, fires, and ruinous storms. They falsely blame others and start disquieting rumors in the hopes of causing strife and confusion so that they can steal what they may. They might get in each other’s way in such situations, and in such cases must obey the will of Talos that a Tempest not deliberately attack or harm another Tempest. However, a Tempest may, by invoking the name of Talos, prevent another Tempest from doing or taking something. Tempests might also suffer competition in thieving from the clergy of Mask or others, but Talos is well satisfied if they frustrate or do harm to such persons.

Infamously successful Tempests of the latter half of the 1300s DR include these people.

*Cauldreth Hallowsar:* Hallowsar is a gaunt man who wears an eye patch in honor of Talos—though he can see perfectly well out of both eyes and from time to time shifts the patch from one eye to the other. Hallowsar prefers to dress in ragged black and wears long, sweeping cloaks. He eats little and drinks prodigiously, and yet seldom becomes drunk. An accomplished actor and swindler with a deft touch when it comes to manipulating others into feuds or open defiance of authority, Hallowsar often uses sleep spells, smoke bombs, and arson as distractions to get away from sticky situations.

*Rhoazwe Silmer:* A honey-blonde, petite woman who looks, acts, and dresses much younger than her years, Silmer is often mistaken for a naïve youngling. She flirts and manipulates men into doing her bidding and makes extensive use of Talos-stars—little bombs made of old helms or buckets filled with smokepowder and small, spiked metal balls. Silmer deftly uses them to kill people, breach vaults and doors, and otherwise reach coins and gems. She has amassed fortunes in this manner and cached her wealth in small hidden places all over Faerûn.

*Halauntra Qeszen:* This tall, raven-haired beauty usually plays the part of a haughty, icy, traveling noblewoman who can defend herself with four magic flying daggers she can unleash. She cows many would-be foes or harassers by revealing a talking skull she stole from a wizard long ago, which she uses to make folk think that either she has magic enough to compel and control—or that it's her uncle and a lich of mighty powers. She likes to identify key persons of authority in a village or town, murder them, take what wealth she can, and move on, using storm magic to frustrate any pursuit.

## Tempus, Lord of Battles

The clergy of the Wargod are weapon tutors to the world. They are *the* priesthood to visit for free weapon training and advice on the care of weapons. Most temples of Tempus also maintain and repair weapons, as well as sell new ones, but they charge fees for these services: Weapons are full price plus 1 sp, and repairs are up to half the price of a new, finely made weapon.

An unofficial but common priestly saying, often mocked by those opposed to the faith of the Wargod is “We come in peace: smite to slay!”

More official and equally common priestly sayings are these:

“A battle-death is a holy ending!” A common proverb, this saying is the reason why devout worshippers of Tempus salute corpses, burials, and graves with murmurs of “holy ending.”

“Laws are but words until blood is shed for them.”

“Men fall, but Tempus rises!” This proverb originated in an older saying: “Men fall, but Tempus rides on!”

“Nothing is truth that has not been tested in battle.”

“Peace stands on a sharp sword.”

“The sun rises out of blood and sets into blood, and all the time between belongs to the Lord of Battles.”

While fighting to defend Shadowdale from one of the innumerable Zhent attacks, some of the Knights of Myth Drannor ended up swinging swords alongside a wandering priest of Tempus, a grim and aging man who sported an eye patch and wore chainmail adorned all over with

welded-on sword tips taken from the weapons of foes he had slain in battle. When he struck at opponents, he often shouted one of a few seemingly obscure phrases: “By the bright blood of Thammaera!” or “By the sweet limbs of Breindra!” or “By the proud beauty of Sannandra!” When asked what those phrases meant, he explained that he was dedicating his attack to close friends he'd had among the clergy of Tempus, who were now either dead or “Broken Blades” (too disabled to fight in the field for the god themselves), and so could no longer deliver such attacks themselves.

**Creed:** Show no fear, make no reckless war, and obey the warriors' code of battle as decreed by Tempus. Evade no fight, yet harm not clergy who without violence work for peace—as without peace, the full fury of war cannot be appreciated and its rewards cannot be seen. Wanton butchery is unholy. Fight for a clear purpose, and with discipline and a formal challenge. Treat prisoners properly, show mercy to noncombatants, and plunder only what is needful, such as food and water. Destruction for its own sake is foolish; never vandalize, pillage, or rape. Confronting a foe with weapons is preferable to tricking an enemy, and hard bargaining with bloodshed averted is better than attacking without parley. Fight for a cause, and let no bully cozen you into surrendering for an ill reason.

**Secular Aims:** The Lord of Battles calls upon his clergy to accompany active combatants everywhere in the Realms, that his creed might be respected and followed. Tempuran clergy call themselves Hammers, from “the small, hammering hands of the Foehammer,” as Brom Bellowharl, a famous long-ago priest of Tempus, once described the priesthood.

The church of the Foehammer is organized in a strict hierarchy, and its temples are fortresses. Each temple is a stout, stone, castle-like building with well-stocked armories. Each is built to be defended by a few Hammers against many foes, and features portcullises, multiple sets of doors, firing ports overlooking all entrances, and passages that make abrupt turns so defenders can shelter behind corners.

Hammers all have specific ranks, and ceremonial armor is crafted with clear rank differences. Acolytes wear leather jacks and baldrics, Stalwarts (priests) wear chainmail vestments, Hardhar (warrior-priests) wear breastplates and bracers,



*Many folk of Faerûn sleep safe of nights because priests, paladins, and dedicated lay warriors of Helm, Tempus, and Torm fight day and night to keep the Realms from being ravaged by creatures that care not for concepts such as honor and duty.*

Arahar (battle-chaplains) wear splint mail, Rauthar (swordmasters) wear shoulder-spike-adorned plate mail, Direhar (guardian-priests) wear full plate, and the Warlyon (high priest) wears gilded magic plate armor that enables flight.

Whenever they're not praying to Tempus or fighting, Hammers train with their weapons, drill to hone battlefield discipline, tend the wounded, repair arms and armor, and tend to pack beasts and their harnesses, in the service of transporting an army's provisions.

Hammers are allowed to accept fees for weapon training and for making and repairing arms and armor, and most do so. The forges in Temples of the Lord of Battles are seldom silent, as the priests take turns at being weaponsmiths, armorers, and farriers. Many farmers who never want to be closer to war than hearing tales at the local tavern pay their coppers regularly into the treasuries of Tempus to have their horses and oxen shod.

Hammers are not encouraged to exalt themselves or establish personal reputations, and are strictly forbidden to hire or lend themselves out

as battlefield generals, except when leading a holy force of Hammers against a religious foe. As a result, there are no known prominent Hammers, though Tempuran clergy are everywhere and are universally respected by professional soldiers.

## Torm, the True

**Creed:** Be loyal, obedient, and dutiful, upholding laws, rules, and the most ethical stances through both unwavering support and armed vigilance. Seek corruption constantly and stamp it out. Give swift but brutal death to traitors. Where laws are unjust or flawed, urge improvements and alternatives rather than a confusion of ever more laws. Train law keepers and judges to be just, and watch over them to ensure that they perform with impartiality. Serve with all your heart as well as all your reason. Every failure of duty diminishes the Loyal Fury; every success empowers him and brightens the world. Be vigilant always. Question your actions and stances rather than sinking into the sin of self-righteousness. Torm watches you, and expects you to watch and guide others.

**Secular Aims:** Torm's clergy are known as the True and Loyal and the Watchful Guardians. Over time, most folk—members of the church of the Loyal Fury included—have combined the two terms and come to call Torm's priests the True Guardians, or the True for short.

The True are a strong part of secular politics almost everywhere with a developed legal system, public order, and a rulership that isn't tyrannical or dominated by another faith. They strive to keep law keepers aboveboard and free from corruption, both by training and spiritually guiding them, and by spying on them and occasionally openly opposing them. They question racist or markedly unfair ruling policies, as well as those that antagonize neighboring lands. As Azoun IV of Cormyr once put it wryly, "The Tormites are the wagging finger in all of our lives."

Although many resent this patriarchal scrutiny and constant public judging, the common folk grudgingly accept it as necessary, deeming it "the shield that protects us all, good and bad, so as to be ourselves and not oppressed slaves."

Mirt the Moneylender, speaking in 1361 DR, explained the role of the True this way: "They are the wise old man who reports all lawbreaking he's seen to the Watch—but when the Watch haul down a miscreant and start to beat him in the street, he steps forward to firmly halt the beating and says, 'Here, now, there's no call for that.' If those who rule or enforce the rule disappoint the citizens, they lose the support of those citizens. The True remind us of that daily. I'd venture that thousands of uprisings, large and small, never happened because they didn't let matters get that bad."

The True are armed, armored, and tutored frequently by their superiors in the well-disciplined church hierarchy. Although they are very active in watching and guiding in most lands of Faerûn, they do not do so for personal gain, other than the benefits all citizens of a place enjoy when just law and order prevail. They also do not act for glory—no member of the True wants or enjoys personal public prominence or unfettered power free of laws and hierarchy.

Tormites who gather wealth for themselves and do violence to retain it or keep it secret are cast out of the church if discovered. Those who succumb to this temptation in small, minor ways might regain the favor of Torm by announcing

what they have done, yielding up what they took to the church, and doing a penance. Such a penance is usually a dangerous mission to establish the presence of, and respect for, Torm's ways in a hostile region. Few fall from grace in this manner, however, and the True do not regard amassing, hiding, and so controlling weapons of war, including magic, as a sin, but rather as prudence.

## Tymora, Our Smiling Lady

**Creed:** To dare is to live. Be bold, take risks, and live not only according to prudence and plans. Trust in the Lady, for she is luck, and in risking you shall be the master of your own life. Yet seek to follow aims you set for yourself, for to drift unthinkingly from boldness to boldness is to fall into the unmerciful embrace of Beshaba. Leave the outcome of something, large or small, to pure luck every day. Counsel all others to live in the same way; give them encouragement and lead by example.

Some who venerate the Lady of Luck believe that planning for battle, adventure, or major life decisions is a mild sin. They believe that those who truly venerate Tymora and follow her desires should do everything by chance, "trusting in the Lady."

Some Tymorans enjoy games of chance, while others dismiss such activities as "showing rudeness to the Lady by idling away time and coins playing at something you should be doing for real, in earnest."

Most of Tymora's followers believe that calling on the Lady aloud with a murmured "Lady, be with me," when going into battle is crucial to her worship. If this gesture is forgotten or dismissed, Beshaba's ill luck rather than Tymora's good luck will accompany that person in the fray.

Elderly and infirm persons wanting to venerate Tymora often give aid, shelter, items, or even sponsorship to adventurers, who can chance things and therefore please the Lady better than they themselves can.

Jugglers—especially those who juggle sharp weapons, or otherwise court danger when performing—always pray to Tymora before their acts, and they believe their performances are offerings to the goddess.

Wayfarers lost at a choice of roads know very well that the right thing to do, unless one

beseches another deity such as Gwaeron Windstrom or Shaundakul for specific directions, is to call on the Lady. To do this, one invokes her name, drops a coin onto his or her own head from above, and is guided as to the route to take by where it falls. When guidance is deemed less than definitive, wayfarers repeat this process until “the way shows clear.”

**Secular Aims:** Lady Luck’s priests are called Luckbringers by many, but they call themselves the Fortunate Faithful, or just Fortunates. They are expected to spread stories of success and good fortune achieved through daring, and to establish, maintain, and staff a widespread web of temples and shrines to Tymora, that her inspiration and guidance be within easy reach of all.

Tymora is the primary goddess of many adventurers, and Tymoran clergy are expected to tend, shelter, and support needy adventurers—and to expect generous offerings from the same adventurers when good fortune attends them. Even a simple “roof and prevailing-wind wall over an altar” shrine to Tymora in the wilds has two or more Fortunates staffing it, plus a handful of lay worshipers. Such altars are equipped with healing potions, means of neutralizing poison, a fire and cooking cauldron, blankets, splints, food, herbs, weapons, tools, lanterns and oil for them, and cudgel torches—all for giving, renting, or selling to adventurers, wayfarers, and others in need.

A Fortunate will aid a crofter seeking his lost child as enthusiastically as will a professional adventurer—for they both enjoy boldly chancing the unknown and perils, and Tymora regards such actions as holy and desirable. Tymorans support risky business ventures as well as adventuring activities, but the church is divided on gambling. Tymorans believe that personal wagering is fine, even in gaming, but professional gambling—both the institutions that develop and inevitably cheat or tilt the odds so as to make a guaranteed cut, and the gamblers who cheat or try to count cards rather than trusting in chance, are frowned upon. It reverences Tymora to live in chance and the moment of fortune, but it sins against Tymora to try to alter the chancing to your own benefit. Of course, preparing yourself to gain the best odds beforehand is fine—it is cheating or recasting the chance during the chancing that is decidedly not acceptable.

Tymorans support hopeless causes and the underdog, and want to see chances taken. However, Lady Luck herself guides senior clergy in deciding if this stance should still be followed when such support might lead to war or open violence. As a result, some Tymorans become popular or widely known. In the mid- and later 1300s DR, these prominent Fortunates include the following individuals.

*Asmrele Staglar:* Staglar is usually based in Waterdeep but known to travel all over the Sword Coast North and Heartlands, as far east as Elversult and as far south as the northern boundary of Amn. A merry, “blades out!” adventurer, Staglar has long, flowing white hair despite her youth, and is known for flashy sword play, utter fearlessness, acrobatics, and frequent laughter. Staglar seems to genuinely love danger, and she wants others to share in her carefree daring. Rumors insist that “the Staglar” has been slain and resurrected scores of times, but the truth is unknown.

*Sandurl Sarradren:* Usually based in southwestern Sembia, but often found spending a winter over in Cormyr, this jovial and daring merchant trader is getting steadily older and paunchier. Nonetheless, Sarradren still lives for the bold—often borderline, but never illicit—trade gamble, and seems to have more bustling energy than men a third his age.

*Tannath Daerovur:* Based in Tethyr, but moving around constantly, Daerovur is a dashing handsome, living-with-gusto young man who makes friends easily and helps them carry out all manner of seemingly crazy schemes, business forays, and social and romantic ploys. As a result of this behavior—and the songs of smitten minstrels who chronicle it—he is entering local legend as a young, romantic action hero.

*Lathlan Zauntur:* Calishite-born but apt to be found anywhere around the shores of the Shining Sea, this battered-looking, middle-aged veteran is an accomplished actor and mimic. He usually poses as a weary, lowcoin trader—until he falls in with someone who has a daring plan or a crazed scheme, whereupon he grins, his eyes twinkle, and he reveals himself as an agile, swift-witted veteran of swindles, long chances, and risky business. He honestly doesn’t care if he profits, but he wants his new friends to profit. As a result, he is seldom attacked and often admired, and his name is spreading as a good friend to have.

## Tyr, the Even-Handed

**Creed:** Follow all just laws and work to get unjust laws changed. Work against injustice everywhere, and never refuse to give aid or allow your aid to be less than wholehearted. Defend against injustice as if every wronged being is your beloved. Be good and fair always, exposing corruption and remaining steadfast and firm. Where jaws fail, law keepers are corrupt, or rulers are cruel, capricious, or unfair, be the wise and even hand of justice. Always consider consequences rather than merely the judgment of the moment. Yet behave without pride or aggression, so secular authorities defer to you rather than feeling defied or disrespected. Guard against the twisting of laws, but show understanding and mercy rather than harsh conformity, for all laws are imperfect. Strive ever to make laws better. Never prejudge; let your mind be always open.

Tyr is the god of justice: the even-handed application of laws, rules, and codes within a society. In a polytheistic setting such as this one, it's important to stand back from any real-life religious views of "absolute good" and think of things as intelligent beings *of the Realms* do.

For example, the paladins of Tyr who are part of the government of Waterdeep see the continuance of a cosmopolitan, tolerant, prosperous port city as good in itself, and see their role as twofold. First, they continually work to make sure the laws and rules are the best possible to keep Waterdeep thriving and a good place to live, and as such, breeding loyalty to Waterdeep and a willingness to obey its rules and pay its taxes. Second, they work to ensure that those laws are administered fairly and impartially.

Taking a step closer in detail, the laws must be continually adjusted and refined so as to serve the populace—not just its most wealthy and powerful—as best they can. If instances occur when treating citizens differently from each other is desirable for making Waterdeep better, that's fine—if the laws are written or rewritten to allow that difference of treatment. In other words, absolute or blind justice is bad and not to be championed. Rather, Tyrrans support a continually evolving, ever more flexible and farsighted system and enforcement of laws.

This is why Texter and Piergeiron both support having shady lords like Mirt involved in

government, and have agents who covertly and continually investigate the City Guard and the City Watch to mitigate human nature and slow or stifle corruption. They know that corruption will happen, and that some Watch officers will be lazy and stupid, and play favorites from time to time. It's their business as the ones in charge to try to arrange Watch policies, procedures, and training, and the structure of civic justice, to work against that. It's desirable to understand criminals and watch their plots, rather than to always wade in at the moment when wrongdoing is detected or suspected, because Waterdeep benefits in the long run from those in government being tolerant and knowing how the city works. The laws treat nobles differently from other citizens, and that's part of Waterdeep's history, not something to be automatically struck down without much consideration. Yet nobles who misuse their wealth or high station must be resisted. It's all a huge balancing act, fraught with ever-changing obstacles.

To put it far more simply, a paladin of Tyr wants laws to be applied properly. If the law contains discrimination, that's acceptable, unless the paladin sees bad consequences to this discrimination. Then it is the holy duty of that individual to try to get the law changed or struck down. Laws are seen as imperfect, and always capable of improvement, never something to be blindly applied.

**Secular Aims:** Tyr the Just expects his priests to cultivate calm impartiality and an utter refusal to be coerced or intimidated. His priests daily reflect on their deeds in a search for shame. Could they have done anything better? Should any decision they took be altered, or any judgment changed? Should they call in a superior for advice or an "overjudgment"?

The strictly hierarchical Tyrran clergy are known as the Just both among themselves and in wider Faerûn. They are widely respected and, among lawbreakers, widely feared. In the words of Lady Lara Stormweather of Waterdeep, "A priest of Tyr is a blunt judge, but also a stern refuge, and champion of the wronged."

The church of the Maimed God frowns upon its priests exalting themselves at any time, and any Just who acquires too high a public profile is moved to a different region, perhaps even encouraged to take a new name. As a result—aside from a few who have died fighting for Tyr's holy doctrines—there are no well-known Just.

## Umberlee, the Bitch Queen

**Creed:** Spread rightful fear of Umberlee, for her wrath is the fury of the waves that swallow ships, shatter seawalls, and rise to race far inland to flood and drown. No ship reaches port without her favor, and no voyage finds its destination without her blessing. Sailors and passengers must make proper prayers and offerings to her, or she will take them, their vessels, and their cargo as her rightful tribute. Never forget Umberlee. Pray to her in need, for she yields up sunken treasure to those who please her.

**Secular Aims:** The priests of the Queen of the Deeps are formally known as the Undrowned, because Umberlee prevents them from drowning. Privately, however, many call them the Drowned. In return for offerings of at least 100 gp per passenger, plus a tenth of the market value of any cargo, an Undrowned will ride any ship on a voyage, and Umberlee will see that ship safe to shore, douse any fires onboard, and hurl back pirates or sea creatures that attack it.

The Undrowned are not loved, they are feared. Everyone knows that a priest of Umberlee within sight of the sea can call aquatic undead up out of the waves to serve or fight for them. Umberlee suffers none of her clergy to become famous. There are nine Undrowned female priestesses for every male priest. All have a reputation for being wanton, but this conduct is merely an attempt to find relief from the chill of the sea (“Umberlee’s touch”) through contact with warm worshipers, usually sailors.

## Waukeen, Merchant’s Friend

**Creed:** Every making or spending of a coin is a prayer to Waukeen. Guard your funds well, yet share them too, giving freely to beggars and in business, for mercantile trade is the best path to enrichment for all. Teach everyone to destroy no trade goods, to harm and restrict no commerce, and to call on Waukeen for guidance in trading. Waukeen’s support will in the long term lead to betterment for all. The bold find gold, the careful keep it, and the timid yield it up.

**Secular Aims:** The Merchant’s Friend expects her priests to be honest money changers, shrewd investors in trade, and smallcoin lenders to everyone—even those who are likely to

squander the loans. They aid merchants with advice, pricing, labeling, crating or uncrating of wares, and shop setup. They also help safeguard goods or money for short periods when a merchant is in need. All these services they perform for free, but with stated limitations to avoid being exploited. They remain a merchant’s friends, not his or her staff, servants, or slaves; they entertain suggestions, but do not take orders.

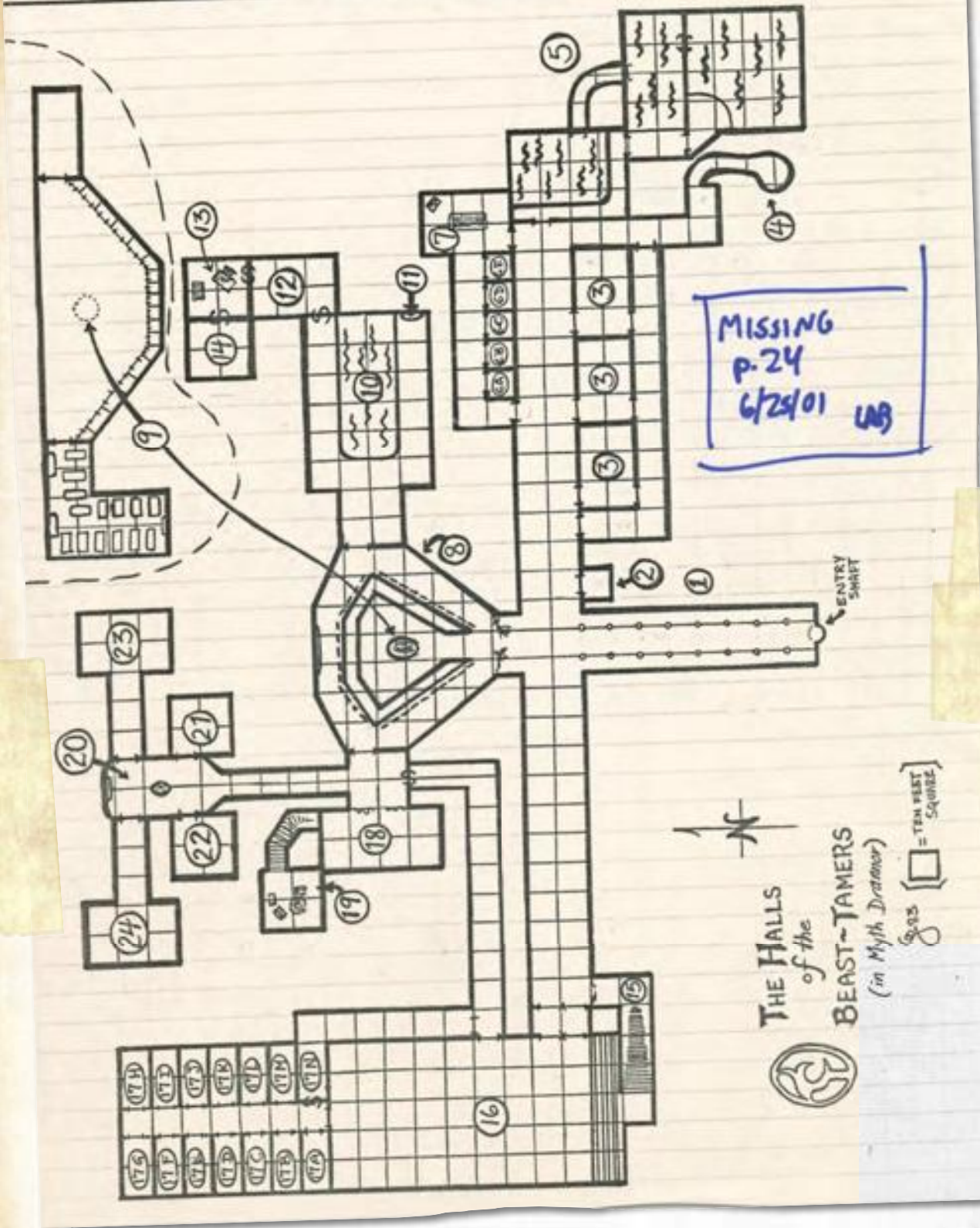
Priests of Waukeen are known as Goldpalms to the public, but they call themselves Truetraders. Waukeen expects her Truetraders to personally invest at least once every tenday, and to buy or sell something every day.

The Merchant’s Friend keeps a close watch over her clergy. She guides them personally in their dreams, and sometimes speaks to them as they work in the form of an unmistakable “voice that shines like gold” in their heads.

Priests are allowed to enrich themselves while they do Waukeen’s work. As a result, even though they monthly tithe a tenth of their profits to the church, there are many wealthy Truetraders, and Waukeen expects them to show their success when it’s prudent to do so. Most of her clergy have cloth-of-gold, gem-adorned revelwear and “great occasions” finery, but they don’t wear such garb down dark alleys or when traveling back-country trade roads.

The church of Waukeen, with the blessing of its goddess, seeks to influence politics everywhere by working through merchants. Trade barriers and unduly high taxes or seizures should be stamped out, and laws and customs should be shaped so as to let trade flow freely, to bring prosperity to citizens high and low. New business ventures should be supported by quietly aiding and abetting doings of the church of Lathander. Wars should be discouraged, because even if arming for war creates a rush of wealth, the destruction, despoiling of goods, and death of consumers always costs more than it earns. And finally, measurements and standards should be clearly understood and kept from arbitrary judgment or changes to minimize deceit and confusion.





This map has the look of my original dungeon mapping, but the dungeon is more of a purpose-built complex than my more typical "underground chambers enlarged from caverns, or that grew over time and a succession of owners" dungeons. Subterranean complexes in the Realms always have a reason for being, beyond the rather far-fetched "Let's stuff a labyrinth with monsters and treasure to entertainingly kill adventurers." The Halls of the Beast-Tamers is typical of the compact size of most dungeons in the Realms: mini-dungeons, if you will.

## THE HALLS OF THE BEAST-TAMERS

### DM's Background:

Some six hundred years ago, when Myth Drannor was a city of life and splendour, certain of its citizens---human, half-elven, and elven---who were interested in learning more of the natural habits and pursuits of wild creatures styled themselves 'the Guild of Naturalists.' Their studies resulted in much of what is now ranger lore; they travelled far in the Realms to observe creatures in all lands, and when those creatures easily studied had been dealt with, they turned to more fearsome beasts; the 'monsters' of the Realms.

As the Naturalists were already disparagingly termed 'The Beast-Tamers' by those elves and humans of Myth Drannor opposed to any interference with wild creatures, the group decided to conceal much of the extent of their researches by enlarging the cellars beneath their offices and working there, underground, moving creatures in and out by means of magical gates constructed by one of the foremost members of the group, the mage Phezul. This they did, maintaining relative peace in their underground Halls by means of a special stasis spell developed by Phezul. Those of the guild who had no other homes or pursuits lived there, died there, and were buried there. The fate of those Naturalists alive when Myth Drannor was ruined is unknown, but the Halls today are all that remains of the Guild's achievements (the offices above are a perilous ruin located on the west side of a rubble-choked north-south street in the eastern reaches of overgrown Myth Drannor), and are a dangerous place ---the stasis created so many years ago by Phezul is breaking down, and beasts magically imprisoned in the Halls down the long years are being freed again.

### KEY

1. The Halls are entered by means of a dust-choked, high-ceilinged building with great cracks in its arched stone ceiling, and scatterings of fallen rock here and there where the walls or ceiling have given way. It is strangely devoid of animal life, and contains a large stone seat or throne of massive construction, unadorned by inscription or ornament. Behind the throne is a ten-foot-diameter shaft (without lid, lip, or other protection) opening in the floor. This shaft has carved stone hand- and foot-holds running down its southern side, and drops two hundred feet into the lightless, damp solid rock beneath Myth Drannor. The holds in the shaft are themselves secure, but climbers on the shaft will be attacked from above (i.e. from the building on the surface) without warning when halfway down, by a VOLT (see FIEND FOLIO, p. 94) of 12 hp, which will seek to slay all intruders, and will attack tirelessly until itself slain.

The shaft ends in an eighty-foot-long, arched-ceilinged hallway; the ornamental arched ribs of its thirty-foot-high vaulted ceiling are supported by two rows of smooth-cut granite pillars (carved of the natural rock; the rest of the subterranean Halls are also cut smoothly from this mottled grey stone). The hallway opens into a junction with another large hallway; this second hallway has massive iron torch brackets (now crumbling into rust) set high up on its walls down both sides, but the torches themselves are long gone. All is dark and damp; patches of (harmless) mold grow here and there in the long hallway, and the place seems deserted. Very careful examination (only) will reveal a faint circle or brown stain (human blood) on the floor where the two hallways meet (see #19).

*The start of the Halls of the Beast-Tamers "key." Note the emphasis on atmosphere, and the background on why it was built and what's happened since. This enables a DM to react on the fly in response to the unforeseeable things players have their characters do—or try. The dying "T" is courtesy of my aging upright Underwood 8 typewriter, a noble cast-metal machine heavier than many cars these days. This was before personal computers, or anything called the Internet. Back then, we walked uphill both ways to our dungeons, and liked it.*



## 6 THE ART

We all know what brute force is. In the Realms, it tends to mean fleets of ships, marching armies, or the terrifying flood of a savage orc horde, and in such displays of force, amassing more soldiers than the foe likely means victory.

The Faerûnian counterbalance to the strong sword has always been magic—wonderful, awesome, terrible magic. Magic gives its users the ability to harness natural forces to do things that frustrate or counter brute force, awakening fear and respect in those who deal in force of arms, and serving as a deterrent that keeps them from lashing out at will and whim.

By deliberate design, there's a lot of magic in the Realms—too much for any one person to know, keep track of, or memorize all the rules and details of. It's supposed to take you unawares, or surprise you, or keep you guessing. It is supposed to impart a sense of wonder that occasionally rears into the spectacular. It is meant to give the weak and downtrodden some hope, by enabling them to see that chances lie ahead in their lives. Given that Mystra is opposed to tyranny, magic is not supposed to make every ruler a wizard-emperor, but rather bring about a world in which most arcane spell-hurlers are independent. Even

a humble farmer who gets surprised in his hayloft could burst forth with a wild talent—magic he might not even have known he possessed, until that frantic moment. Magic is truly everywhere.

Entire campaigns can centered on the pursuit of magic. An ideal one-to-three-player Realms campaign could be built around magical research and wizardly roleplaying. Player characters could spend their time crafting and refining spells, magic items, and spell-ink formulae. Nonplayer characters could include alchemists and those who search out or provide magical components and ingredients—such as other adventurers and more powerful, rival wizards.

Alternatively, the characters in a campaign could be a “fetch and bring back” adventuring band for a wizard—or even for two or three rival wizards competing fiercely with each other. Mystara’s servants repeatedly “seed” tombs, ruins, and dungeons with spellbooks, spell scrolls, and other magic, so Faerûnians expect such places to hold magic. Of course, so do predatory monsters, who take this expectation into account when deciding where to lurk. Certain geysers and hot springs are perfect for the disposal of magically charged poisons, potions, and lesser magic items . . . as well as for untraceable burials of artifacts, relics, magic items of considerable power, and people. An adventuring band could forge an interesting career as “finders and disposers” for an archmage, a royal court, or an ambitious noble family.

Anyone in the Realms who is involved in magical matters soon learns about important elements of the Art and its wielding, such as the annual Magefairs, and the interest that many have in anyone who works magic publicly, seeks magic or portals, and tries to acquire magic. Some of the most interested parties include beholders, liches, alhoons (illithiliches), dracoliches and the Cult of the Dragon, the Harpers, the Chosen of Mystara, the Red Wizards, and the Zhentarim—just to name a few. Rulers like to know who in their lands can cast spells as well, and what intentions such spell-hurlers have.

Then there are the oddities of Faerûnian magic: The ancient helmed horrors and their many modern copies and variants. The deepspawn that disgorge duplicates of creatures they have devoured, flooding an area with monsters or livestock. And the wingless wonder, a comical, clumsy oddity that might really be a powerful

but imprisoned wizard—since it’s a shape many mages in the 800s DR through 1160s DR were magically forced into, after losing duels with rivals.

The Art is vast, ever-changing, and endlessly challenging.

## HOW MAGICAL IS THE REALMS?

Very magical, in that a lot of magic (spells, magic items, and ongoing enchantments and wards) is always around, and that means a lot of wizards and sorcerers too. In addition, everyone has heard tales of magic, and most city folk see uses or results of magic daily, often in the form of glowstones and similar magical light sources.

However, the average common laborer, crafter, servant, farmer or shopkeeper has never felt magic cast on him or her, or handled anything bearing a dweomer or that could be called a magic item. (In the Realms, regardless of specific game meanings, most folk talk of “enchanted items” and “enchantments” rather than saying “magic items” or “There’s a spell on that chair.”) Moreover, the average person has never hired anyone to cast a spell or had such a person under command. Magic is dangerous and very expensive. Many common people have seen magic used, but usually at a distance, or in the form of the trickery spells of traveling hedge wizards who entertain. Most people are fascinated by it and will rush or creep to watch it in action, full of awe but also fear. To most folk of Faerûn, there’s nothing everyday or casual about magic; they don’t really think about how much it shapes their lives and societies.

## Waterdhavian Attitudes toward Magic

Early on in his learning of magic, the long-dead and locally famous first Lord (revered in Waterdeep for his role in establishing the city as it is today) Ahghairon said, “I am no wizard. I am a dabbler but no master of magic; it seems no mastery burns within me.”

These are famous words in Waterdeep, still known by most Waterdhavian children and all adults, and are oft referenced, as in the dry

comment “No mastery blazing forth yet,” or “A dabbler but no master, eh?” (Comments applied to skill trades and crafts, not just to magic use.)

Tuezaera Hollowhand was a famous “lone cat” thief of Waterdeep in the 1200s DR who disappeared suddenly and is thought to have come to a violent end. She once robbed a wizard, and wrote this on his wall with a fingertip dipped in his favorite red wine: “I take things. You take freedom with your spells. Which of us is the greater thief?”

This statement, too, is well remembered, and usually echoed in Waterdhavian speech by someone using the last (questioning) sentence of Tuezara’s inscription.

Laeral, Lady Mage of Waterdeep for some years (when married to Khelben “Blackstaff” Arunsun), once publicly rebuked an overambitious wizard of the Watchful Order of Magists & Protectors thus: “If I hurl spells but think not of consequences, I am nothing. If I take lives but count not the cost, I am nothing. If I steal in the night and see not the faces of the devastated come morning, I am nothing. If I make decrees like a ruler but undertake none of the responsibilities of the throne, I am nothing. And if I do all these things in the name of the Watchful Order, I am less than nothing. Doth thy mirror crack?”

These scornful words are remembered and used almost daily in Waterdeep even a century later, though almost never as the full quotation. Rather, someone will ask scornfully, “Doth thy mirror crack?” or “Hurl but think not?” or “Take but not count cost? Be nothing, then!”

## Wizards Trading Magic

Guilds of mages are many and varied across Faerûn, and unofficial, secretive cabals of wizards are far more common than formal guilds. The trade of magic or lore will always take place very gingerly, in one of two ways: private deals between members (kept secret even from other members), and formal deals (known to other members and regulated by intricate, written guild rules that have been tested and refined and complained about and refined again for decades or longer). Because of suspicion and paranoia, private deals are rare without a master-apprentice relationship being involved, or some kind of agreement that involves hostages or collateral or third-party scrutinizers.

In Waterdeep’s Watchful Order of Magists & Protectors, one of the best-known mage guilds, senior members rule openly (in quorum council) on all dissemination of lore or spells between members, and often order such transfers to be executed for the good of the order (that is, to strengthen all members, or to arm all the order’s mages to better defend Waterdeep or carry out the aims of the order).

Claims of theft, cheating, and deception are always investigated by order members who use mind-probing magic. Refusal to cooperate is interpreted as an admission of guilt, and usually punishable by expulsion and defanging, in which the order sends a large force of mages to strip the offending member of dangerously powerful spells or items, to protect the order against retaliation. If spell-battles result and such expelled mages end up brain-burned or trapped in a beast’s shape during such a defanging, so be it. The choice of action was theirs, so the consequences are also their responsibility. Problems arise when the offenders in such matters are senior order members who also have access to mind-probing magic, but such are the perils of interesting lives.

The Watchful Order holds mini-moots whenever circumstances dictate, trying wherever possible not to hear matters involving specific members without those members being present. The order also holds monthly moots at its headquarters or at another designated place. These monthly moots are largely “good cheeses and better wine” gossip sessions wherein members are encouraged to point out trends and oddities they’ve noticed in the city, new arrivals selling or practicing magic, rumors from afar brought by visiting traders, and the like. At any meeting, order members have the right to raise complaints and concerns with senior officers, in front of all other members present.

Mystra smiles upon the spread of magic, so under the urging of her clergy, and the dreams she sends, most wizards and sorcerers will attempt to give a spell to a stranger at least once during their lives. Moreover, the Chosen of Mystra and servitors of Azuth are commanded to covertly and frequently place spell scrolls and spellbooks in tombs, dungeons, ruins, and other places where the adventurous will find them.

Two mages desiring to trade in magic will probably call in a priest or a priestess of Mystra

one sigil during their careers. These tend to be long-lived mages of some power and accomplishment; most mages devise and settle upon one sigil, between 1st and 3rd experience level in their studies, and stick with it.

Here follow a few hitherto unrevealed sigils of mages of Faerûn. Each mage's name and place of abode is given, together with race, alignment (if known), sex, and (if attained) the ranks of Wizard, Mage, or Archmage, together with any other important titles, nicknames, or memberships.



Mhaerokh of Telflamm  
Human, LN male, Wizard



Ssundoun of Yhaunn  
Half-Elf, CN male



Lhathassa of Procampur  
Human, CG female, Mage



Corthrym of Marsember  
Human, LG male, Mage,  
Adviser Royal (to the  
Crown and Fleet of  
Cormyr)



Azundel of Ordulin  
(Moon) Elf, CN male,  
Wizard



Miiriskin of Calimport  
Human, LE male, Archmage,  
"The Silent One"

...

*I've created hundreds of mage-sigils with which wizards adorn their scrolls, spellbooks, the wax sealing their stoppered potions, the butts of their wands, and of course the cryptic messages they leave for others to find. Great fun when players are trying to puzzle out who killed whom in a dusty tower strewn with corpses from long ago. Mage-sigils are a big part of my one-DM-one-player campaigns of magedom, in which a lone wizard or a Crown investigator of magic tries to survive and prosper in a world of sinister or mad mages. Try it sometime!*

to secretly handle the exchange, if possible. Only clerical superiors would know about the transaction, and even they would know only what was being exchanged and not between whom (unless one was nosy and did some eavesdropping). One of the chief daily functions of the clergy of Mystra is being neutral councilors and facilitators between justifiably paranoid mages.

Such an exchange might go like this:

“Will you accept Shreena handling this?” asks one mage.

“Who’s Shreena?” asks a second mage warily.

“Anointed of Mystra, of the Weavehouse temple. You know, the tall quiet one with the green eyes and the hair down to here. Stands behind the scrying font sometimes, when you come to pray.”

“Oh, aye. Her. All right. Shall you go to her first, or shall I?”

“You decide, but I want this to be open:

Whichever one of us goes tells the name of the other to her. I don’t want her giving either of us funny looks for a tenday while she wonders who’s going to show up as the ‘other half.’”

“I’ll go. Tomorrow morn acceptable?”

“Yes. Leave word here if you can’t get in to speak to her, and let that word be ‘skyblue.’ If no message is left, I’ll assume you have seen her, and go to see her myself tomorrow even.”

And so on. Some mages see it as an honor to have a Chosen of Mystra act as their go-between, and others shun this attention because of the notice others might take of what they’re up to as a result. Rarely, a mutually trusted person who has no magic will be agreed upon as a go-between—a noble, for example, or a monarch, or perhaps even an ordinary person beloved by both mages.

## Of Other Worlds, and Portals

Among the most elite magically powerful groups (and lone, studious mages) in Faerûn, there’s widespread knowledge of the existence of other worlds and the portals someone can use to “walk through into otherwhere,” but very little about the true nature of (or passing events in) such other places, or the details of how and where to use the ways to get to them.

Groups and individuals who have mastered portals and know of other planes of existence regard this knowledge as mighty lore that gives

them an advantage over everyone else. They tend to guard it jealously, even within the hierarchies of their own groups.

They also tend to spread lies and exaggerations about the dangers of portals and “what lies beyond” so that no one else will try to use the gates. For example: Anyone who uses a portal “will be tracked, from that moment on, by an invisible creature that will always be with you and that will aid your enemies and foes by revealing your whereabouts and intentions for its own amusement, as it slowly feeds off you, draining your life-force, milking you for as long as possible, and thus ensuring that your life is long but miserable.”

Most portal users try to actively suppress practical information, as in “Portals are here, here, and here, and this is how to use them.” Getting such information shouldn’t be easy, which is why the majority of Faerûnians discover portals by blundering through one, or seeing another creature emerge from (or vanish through) one.

Very few new portals are created these days because very few beings have the magical might and knowledge of how to do so—and doing it wrong usually results in a fierce, short-lived planar rift that sucks nearby beings into it, sometimes delivering them stunned and bewildered to other planes, but more often rending, blasting, and slaying them.

It is rumored that a handful of the eldest and most reclusive illithids, sharns, and beholders know how to craft portals—but then, a lot of wild rumors surround “gates to otherwhere.” A popular one is that the lives of one or more accomplished sorcerers or wizards must be sacrificed, on the spot, to create one. (This rumor is true—but only for one gate-creation ritual, out of more than a dozen ways to create portals.)

A few of the surviving portals become active when the right conditions are met; moonlight falling on a certain rock, for example. Most of the portals that still function require a user to touch something, or stand in exactly the right spot, while the right words are uttered. A few require that users have a key (activating item), which is almost always small and portable and usually magical. A key could be, for example, a bundle consisting of “not less than three emeralds, of a total volume no greater than what will fill these two cupped hands” or “four rods of copper, of this size.” Keys are never alive.

# SPECIAL BLOODLINES

From ancient days in the Realms until today, there have always been “special” families. These families, elf, human, or half-elf, have been bold enough to make secret pacts with other magic-using races to gain magic of their own—as well as power, wealth, and influence. It’s rumored that some of these families have interbred with their patron races, though, in the words of the long-ago sage Alaundo, “Rumor can be a wild thing.” Realmslore tells us that these patrons have included dragons, illithids, and beholders.

These pact-making families tend to keep themselves as hidden as possible, often taking other names and faces while they’re out acting as the agents of those with whom they’ve made arrangements. Yet a few folk in the Realms know the names of some of these special clans: among the elves, some branches of Houses Starym and Elphaerendil; among humans, the Skeldragons and Talonmists; and among half-elves, the Alendrim, Saerendever, and Talyth families.

Much as nobles who plot treason against a ruler, these special families do much in secret, crave power, and betimes must do perilous or unlawful things. Their locations, reach, interests, capabilities, and deeds vary widely, and they—and the patrons they serve—can be compelling and mysterious allies, manipulators, and foes.

## Wild Talents

Members of the aforementioned special bloodline families, as well as just plain folk, all across the Realms can have wild talents. A wild talent is a natural magical ability needing no training, casting, or spell components, which manifests spontaneously—sometimes even when needed.

Unreliability is the watchword of any wild talent, both in terms of its efficacy and its frequency of occurrence, though a talent usually grows in power over time if its possessor works at it. Wild talents that start out feeble and remain something weak and intermittent, or that are swiftly exhausted, make for much short-term excitement—but a wild talent that becomes a relatively dependable ability and is used too much in public makes its possessor a threat whom most rulers will want to lock up . . . or destroy.

Wild talents, when they blossom, tend to have limits that are quickly reached. Many a “Talent” can walk through walls or locked doors—but most who have this ability can pass just one door every two days (or can get through a second door, only to collapse, injured and unconscious). Some can take only themselves through, not clothes or weapons. Other folk can involuntarily reflect magic back at its source for a few minutes when spells are cast at them, but can’t do so again for six days. Or they can drift down gently from heights and land unharmed, but are then so weak they can barely crawl. A few Talents can turn a spell away from themselves and at someone else—but only if a handy “someone else” is near.

Most wild talents come and go frustratingly (a tingling when a lie is heard might dissipate just as whoppers begin to flow, or an involuntary shield that appears instantly during a surprise attack might as abruptly vanish seconds later).

Wild talents have been known down the ages, and are often thought of as “the touch of the gods” (some say “the curse of the gods”). They have always been rare, and usually feeble. Talents who possess exceedingly strong abilities often become long-lasting, paranoid villains.

Many Talents find it difficult or dangerous to experiment with, hone, or just practice their abilities—because a wild talent, once publicly known, usually makes its possessor a marked person whom rulers, cabals, or local mages want to capture, and coerce, or even experiment upon.

The most common wild talents (all undependable, and usually operating only once every few days, for short periods, often draining the vitality of their possessors) are the ability to detect nearby magic, or uttered lies, or to receive visions from the past associated with a place or object.

Slightly less common are the ability to pass alive through solid barriers without affecting them, the ability to fly or to turn into a gaseous, incorporeal “ghostly” form, the ability to become invisible, and the ability to heal oneself or others.

Rarer still are the power to create brief illusions, the ability to take the shape of another creature for a few gasping breaths—and even to touch a spellcaster and thereby “steal” a spell, which the Talent can unleash later by act of will (but sometimes not knowing what the magic is, or how to control it).



# ALCHEMY

In the Realms, alchemy is a field dominated by secrets, mysteries, and danger. A few alchemists search for the means of turning stones or other dross into gold, or for elixirs to restore or preserve youth, but most alchemists think such preoccupations to be “bold madness” or centuries (at best) away from success. The daily living of most alchemists consists of concocting nonmagical painkillers, healing salves, and love potions for those whose fears or slim purses keep them from being customers of magic.

Alchemy in the Realms is concerned with everything from stuff you drink to make you slim, to stuff you rub on to remove your warts, to stuff you eat to make sure you will or won't get pregnant, to stuff you slap on manacles or locks to make them crumble to rust, to stuff you paint on manacles and locks to make them stay unaffected when some of that previously mentioned stuff gets slapped on them.

Some alchemists constantly seek new poisons and antidotes, because there's good coin to be made from folk who need them—such as the dancer in Calimport famous for performing with many deadly scorpions and snakes that bite or sting her repeatedly and harmlessly, to her evident pleasure rather than pain; and the thieves who, equipped with the same alchemical quaffs as the dancer, freely steal valuables from coffers guarded by venomous serpents and scorpions.

Alchemy isn't called “alchemy” when practiced by priests, who are not above disparaging lay folk who practice it, though (aside from temples having less experimentation and substance substitutions, and more written records) there's little real difference between a temple's “holy secrets of the gods” preparations and independent alchemy. Some alchemists and herbalists work with each other, and some sneer at each other. Truthful lore isn't widely shared in alchemy, so the “science” advances very slowly, every practitioner having to achieve mastery for oneself. Most alchemical tomes available for purchase contain wrong or deliberately false information.

Alchemy in the Realms is nowhere near as dominant and effective as modern real-world chemistry is, but specific breakthroughs might occur during the events of a campaign. If clever adventurers find wild new uses for something,



*These Guild of Naturalists notes on dragon anatomy suggest magical uses for certain admixtures that no one has perfected yet—or rather, survived trying.*

remember that alchemy can easily involve unintended explosions. Lots of them.

## The Quest for Eternity

Elixirs, potions, and drafts (in the Realms, something introduced into a drinkable, usually in sparing amounts) that engender love or lust, or confer very deep sleep, pain relief, or invisibility are the daily bread and butter of all alchemists, herbalists, and spellcasters. These simple concoctions also provide a reliable source of income for temples, shrine-tending priests, traveling preachers, and even hermits.

However, the general populace believes that only those who can work magic can create potions of longevity, elixirs of youth, and other means of extending one's life span. These are always rare, expensive, and highly sought after treasures.

Gossip and local lore abound with horrific tales of what can go wrong in the pursuit of

magical youth, from death in an instant (literally crumbling to dust from sudden aging), to being transformed into various monsters, to an ongoing curse of limbs and body parts slowly but continuously shifting through various beast forms. All the same, longevity magic remains a common pursuit of the very wealthy, who often hire wizards to help them cheat death, and among powerful mages themselves, who often try to devise their own life-extending and renewing magic.

This quest for immortality (or at least vigor) is a long process, and not something for which an adventuring wizard should be able to find a tutor. As well, subtle differences in internal body chemistry lead to magnified differences in a potion's results. As a veteran alchemist might warn, "What works for you may not work for me, and be warned—experiments that don't work age you, so a night of tinkering and gulping might bring you tottering to the edge of your grave."

Although there's a roaring trade in false elixirs of youth restored or eternal youth, very few individuals know how to make real potions of longevity. These few keep this secret to themselves, sharing such concoctions only with those they fall in love with and want to have as companions forever, to avoid being forced into slavery as captive potion producers. Thus, everyone has to discover the process anew, either by finding it written down in an ancient tomb or cache (and honestly or maliciously incorrect formulae are common) or by finding such potions as treasure.

Longevity potions were far more common in ancient Netheril than they are today, because certain magical processes were more widespread and better understood than they are now. Real longevity magic is likely to be well guarded (including false potions—usually poisons—as lures for would-be thieves), and is never offered for sale in shops. Owners such as powerful wizards might sell a single potion, discreetly and after a personal approach, to a wealthy buyer (usually presenting the item as "discovered among the treasures of Archwizard X after his unfortunate demise at the hands of Y"). Buyers should be aware that evil mages have been known to gain influence over wealthy individuals by selling them "youth potions" that grant such control.

The life of an alchemist, a family of alchemists, or an adventuring band of ingredient procurers

serving various alchemists, can make for an ideal campaign for one to three players.

## WORDS OF AWAKENING

In early Netherese magic, certain words were commonly used to activate magical wards and guard spells, as well as to reveal the presence and nature of illusions by turning them translucent. Such utterances function only when said by a living being standing in the right spot—either a small, precise "feet just here" or "hand touching this" location or a larger area like a room, according to the magic to which they're linked.

Such words were favorites of Avrauntra, the first and greatest Netherese arcanist. Avrauntra tutored so many students so well that they swiftly became more powerful than Netherese priests, transforming the culture and making possible the later empire of magic that culminated in the flying cities of the archwizards.

Though many sages uphold Karsus as the greatest Netherese mage, Mystra has said it is more accurate to see him as the "most recklessly ambitious." Avrauntra lived for centuries, suffering heartbreak after heartbreak as those she loved were slain by rival mages or perished through misadventure (often brought on by their magical experimentations). Despairing, she ultimately merged herself with the Weave, increasing its strength, vigor, and extent—and she is not the only mage to have done so. Some believe she lives still, as a sentience within the Weave that watches all spellcasters and murmurs warnings or advice to those of whom she approves.

Later spellcasters made use of Avrauntra's words without necessarily being aware of their origins, gleaning them from ancient writings and spellbooks and believing they had power in their own right. Indeed, they did, because repeatedly used Weave trigger words increasingly influence the Weave to respond in certain ways, and if Avrauntra is still aware within the Weave, she might respond to uses of "her" words.

So someone saying the right word of awakening at a particular location in a dungeon or ruin will make hitherto silent and invisible nearby magic suddenly glow—or even come to life, sometimes

with disastrous results. Yet the use of such words can reveal perils waiting ahead.

Many words of awakening have been forgotten, but those that survive include these.

**Authlaumator** (oth-*lawm*-ah-tor): Usually a command to a spying spell to reveal itself and report its results. The results of the spying spell are usually shown by playing a series of short, silent moving hologram-like images of intruders, showing their movements and what they did.

**Chelaunt** (shell-*ont*): Awaken and unleash effects.

**Ereth** (*air*-eth): All at once.

**Fethadras** (feth-*ad*-ras): Be revealed.

**Orprel** (or-*prel*): Cease instantly.

**Porro** (pore-*oh*): End/not that effect, but the next/other one.

**Qerest** (*care*-est): In succession.

**Spaereth** (ss-*pair*-eth): Be revealed and destroyed, without taking effect.

Almost all surviving words of awakening have crept into recent use as code words, by the Harpers and others (notably wizards' cabals). So all these words now have a variety of everyday, non-magical meanings—with new ones being crafted all the time. These possible meanings include "I am of the group (are you?)," and "Meet me at the agreed-upon place," and "Danger," and "Urgent," and "You are being followed," and "Renounce what's planned!"

## BARDIC MATTERS

Bardic colleges have indoor performance halls, often soundproofed by magic or by being underground and having long, "crazy dogleg" entry passages. The intent is to allow many bards to practice at once without disturbing anyone (except perhaps their tutors or fellow performers). Many colleges have teaching rooms, lounges, living quarters, meeting rooms, kitchen facilities and pantries, instrument storage rooms, a lone aboveground performance hall with galleries, and a radiating network of performance chambers belowground.

What is taught in bardic colleges varies from college to college, and from tutor to tutor. In general, the lower-order colleges concentrate on matters of pitch, timbre, and nuance. They do

this by having students sing scales, practice precisely duplicating an overheard note or tune with the voice, and mimic other voices and bird and animal calls. Students also memorize a set of stock tunes and perfect them on a limited range of instruments (recorder, lute, harp) to the extent that they can transpose them into different keys. All students are taught to make and repair a particular sort of instrument.

Higher-order colleges add instruments and greatly expand the memorized repertoire. They also add versions of songs in other tongues, so that a graduate who doesn't know a particular language can still perform a given song in that tongue with perfect pronunciation and articulation. Students learn the histories of the tunes in their repertoire, and sometimes alternative lyrics—as well as why certain lands frown on, or approve of, specific wordings. As students progress, they are gradually taught how to instruct others, and guided through the steps of making and repairing an ever greater variety of instruments.

Only the newest students are taught in large, organized classes. The whole point of bardic colleges is that they offer a lot of one-on-one and small-group instruction. Additionally, senior students are encouraged to improvise musically with younger ones, so they can learn by exploration.

Bardic colleges specialize in what they teach and what instruments they make, but these differences depend on the individual instructors practicing at a college at a given time more than they do on college policy. As a result, nonbards won't tend to rank, for example, a lute from one college as worth more or being finer than a lute from another college. They do rank "this lute by Tholomon Candras, from the time when he was at this college . . ." over "that lute by Andrath Melonder, repaired by diverse hands, from his early days at that other college . . ."

Bardic colleges in Faerûn admit would-be members according to the following procedure. Someone shows up at the door of a bardic college who already makes a living by performing, and who might already be known—by reputation, at least—to the masters of the college (both genders are usually called "masters," addressed specifically as "lord master" or "lady master"). However, any recognition of such notoriety would not be revealed. All would-be students are auditioned



Halruaan mages wander in secret over much of the Realm, always seeking items of magic (particularly unique and ancient items), and they have gathered many thousands of such treasures in their temples. The Halruar worship Mystra, and their temples are vast strongholds where they live, work, and study to further their arts, as well as worshipping The Lady of Mysteries. The most mighty of these temples lies within Mt. Talath, and is a vast and ancient network of caverns, passages, and mountaintop turrets. Most of the other large temples (as opposed to the devotional shrines of the cities) are located in the mountains ringing the Nath, or northeastern basin (where vast herds of wild rothe and aurochs roam, and are culled regularly for food).

Halrua has a small war-navy, based in Halagard and Zalasu, and with its principal fortified base and construction docks on the outlying isle of Rulasuu.

This realm is little known in the North; these paltry words, and the map, are all Elminster could tell you of it---save one thing more: the badge of the realm, borne on navy sails and diplomats' cloaks, is a star surrounded by three concentric circles, all in white (on a darker background, which may be of any colour). The Star represents Mystra, the inner circle the land; this is encompassed by the second circle, representing the Halruans, and the whole is protected and held together by the loyal magic of the Halruar (the third circle).

*This was all TSR saw of Halruaa, the realm of mages, for quite some years. In part due to the Heartlands-centric focus of the original Realmslore turnovers, and because the elaborate Halrua society I was still developing (rules and unwritten etiquette, to account for why a realm bristling with magic and skyships hadn't destroyed itself long ago in a spellstorm cataclysm or conquered the rest of the Realms in a casual afternoon) jarred with D&D's freewheeling "adventurers go here and there and find or make trouble" style.*

by at least one visible and one invisible (hearing, but not seen) master. If these two listeners disagree on whether a candidate should be admitted, additional auditions are necessary to come to a decision.

Colleges finance themselves by selling instruments and sheet music, and they take at least half the gate at any public performance put on by college students (such events are rare). Colleges guarantee elaborate funerals and burials for patrons who endow them with sufficient funds, and they undertake commissions (usually for rulers) to compose music. In general, a student's fees are tied to his or her ability to pay. High fees aren't used as a barrier to admission, and at the same time cartloads of coins can't be used to bribe your way in.

One college is ranked over another purely by opinion, which tends to sharply vary from individual to individual. To outsiders, there's simply no way to truly measure which college has the best training or instructors, or the most talented pupils.

## ELVEN MUSIC

The songs of elves are often wordless, or sung with multiple overlapping voices singing different words at once, making the lyrics hard to distinguish for non-elven listeners. Elven songs are almost always whimsical in places and tinged with melancholy in others. The instrument most closely associated with elves is the harp, but various pipes (flutelike horns) are also prevalent in elven minstrelsy. Elven musical instruction usually includes much more history than human instruction does. It also deals with the nuances of how emotion (primarily melancholy) shapes a note as it is sung, providing memory spurs to listeners, and actual "tags" or footholds to elves who work magic that brings forth three-dimensional illusory images, so a song can be accompanied by a shifting "galadrae" (movie) of animated images, one melting into the next.

Elves can reach higher notes with their voices than most humans without their tone becoming thin or strangled or going sharp or flat, and can also hold notes longer. Elven musical instruction works to develop these abilities. Certain elves (the talent is genetic but not racial) can produce a second "ghost" voice echoing their primary

vocalization, so an elf could sing, "'Twas in the early gloaming mist, that first I saw thy dancing fair," and could faintly sing again "gloaming mist" simultaneously with "I saw thy." Instruction develops this ability, and also amplifies the natural ability to produce dronesong, which is a whistle and hum produced simultaneously—a feat many humans can accomplish, too. Proper instruction turns a drone voice into a finely finished, controlled singing voice. The most common elven musical ability, the skill of splitting tone on a single held note to create a chord, is also developed, allowing lone singers to end songs with rich, full-throated chords.

Elves typically understand more of the history of a tune, its variants, and its various lyrics than all but the most accomplished human bards. Gnomes and halflings tend to be good at swift, glib, and often humorous rhymes, and dwarves prefer drones and plainsong (single note) chants.

## SPELLSONG

Scattered across the countryside are a handful of human and half-elven, and usually female, legendary individuals called spellsingers. They can dance and sing in circles with other spellsingers, usually around a fire or other central focus, to combine and work magic too powerful for an individual spellsinger to cast.

The song of one such singer typically matches a wizard's cantrip in power, and the singing of two can usually duplicate slightly more significant effects. Additional spellsingers of sufficient skill can harmonize to boost the magical might of spellsong exponentially.

As with elven music (see above), the ability to spellcasting is inborn rather than something one can acquire by instruction. Tutoring refines this talent, affording the spellsinger additional control, scope, and power. A successful spellsong can . . .

— partially heal wounded or ill creatures located amid the singers.

— send short, simple mental images, messages, or "follow this thread" directions to a specific individual personally known to a majority of the spellsingers. (Two-way communication isn't possible unless the recipient individual casts a spell establishing it.)



*Dwarves make things of lasting beauty; elves make music that moves the heart—to soothe, to mourn, to be plunged into sadness . . . or to start wars.*

— thrust lesser undead or evil creatures away, and keep them at bay.

— cause nearby magic items to glow or “rise up” or activate.

The mightiest spellsingers can by their singing call on the Weave to work spells like those of a middling-level wizard or sorcerer.

Long ago, spellsingers devised the simple code used by Harpers, minstrels, and many others that uses certain chords played or sung within standard folk songs to send messages such as “Danger; harken to me later to learn it.”

## MORE MAGIC

It is a sometimes fatal mistake to think that all arcane magic is “of the Weave” (or, like the Shadow Weave, built around the Weave). The Realms is and has long been a crossroads for planar

travelers, many of whom bring other ways of doing magic to Faerûn.

Ancient cultures of the Realms have known plume magic, table magic, truename magic, and wild magic (as something wizards strove to master, or at least steer), to name just a few.

The Weave has failed in the past, and much of the work of the Chosen of Mystra is committed to continuously repairing it and guarding against perils to it, preventing the spread of any damage. Spellcasters have found other ways to work magic—and still do. Magic evolves and progresses through such innovations, down the ages.

Magic in the Realms should never be something stripped of mystery, something that everyone can understand and “know all” about. Like the wider Realms, there should always be room for the new to slip in, to challenge—and perhaps to astonish.

## AFTERWORD



*The present-day visage of Sir Ed of Greenwood, aka You Know Who. Pensive, perhaps a bit playful . . . and pleased that the robe still fits.*

The end? So soon? Well, looking back over these pages, I see thy chronicler hasn't done as much damage as I'd feared he might.

This time.

I might even, however grudgingly, say he's been a good keeper of secrets.

Oh, aye, I said "keeper of secrets," indeed. He's kept things from all of ye.

And wisely.

As in, his desire to retain his head led him to be most wise to heed my kind suggestions.

Ye see, secrets are powerful things. To know a truth is to hold a sword. Fools and swaggerers may bluster and wave such things about, but the wise keep them hidden, to strike with swift and sudden surprise when it's needful to strike.

So certain things are missing from these pages. Some hinted at, and some not written of at all.

The time will come when such tales can be told. Who the beloved of Mirt of Waterdeep truly was, for instance, or the grand and ancient plans some Sharn pursue to this day. The fell deceits of Larloch, and the greater ones of Ioulaum. The six crowned skulls that lurk, and the seven whisperers of Narnel. Not to mention the lost left ring finger of Queen Filfaeril and why it should make kingdoms tremble, or the great peril that yet lies hidden—but now awake—in Teflamm. Nor yet the curious matter of the deadly kiss of Lady Cymraraun, or the doppelganger kingdoms—or autharkhies, I should say, as their rulers style themselves "autharkhs"—that overlap human realms, unseen and unheeded. To say nothing of the hidden politics of Faerûnian dragonkind, that underlie so much in throne intrigues across Faerûn, and led Vangerdahast of Cormyr to lay aside his aging aches for draconic wings and scales. Nor was he the first to do so.

Aye, some tongues wag as recklessly as hot-headed knights swing swords, or power-hungry mages hurl spells. They'd not stop one moment to consider the consequences of revealing where the phylactery of Larloch lies hidden, or the Lost Sword of Athalantar that holds the soul of a queen, nor yet the Nine Whispered Words that can unlock the Crowns of Evermeet.

Some would tell thee in a heartbeat how Gondegal came back out of the mists, and what he did then. Or of the city that lies buried a stone's throw from the Troll Mountains, and how and when it may rise again. Or Maskalar's secrets

of slicing open the living and sewing enchanted items into their bodies, so magic imbues their blood and changes them, healing and invigorating. Two-and-twenty strong are the ranks of those who serve him without knowing it, as I write this, thanks to his control of the enchanted things within them. Or of the flying helmed heads and what they watch for.

Yet the right day for such tellings is not this day. If ye know not that a force invincible stands athwart thy chosen path, the way to thy dreams, ye may forge ahead heedless, and reach thy goal, and so change the Realms. Which is a good thing, for if the invincible cannot be beaten by those who know no better, what is life for?

Nor is there any end to secrets and interesting—nay, essential—lore of the Realms. It is a world full of wonders and energetic folk, bathed in endless torrents and eddies of intrigue and confrontation and sly manipulation, a crossroads amid other worlds visited by outlanders with their own schemes and strivings. In short, a place where no one—nay, not even sages and gods and the privileged servants of gods, which is also to say not even me—ever knows just what's going to happen next.

Aye, even I, who can tell thee undergarment fashions from the Frozenfar to verdant Commarth beyond Ulgarth, know not it all. Wherefore the Realms continues to surprise me daily.

It is my hope that it surprises you. That you feel awe amid its mysteries and splendors. That you never cease feeling such things.

As thanks to this herald and many others, in these pages and many before and to come, the great tapestry of this world continues to unfold.

Behold the Realms, from its lightless nether depths to the stars that twinkle down upon it.

Make it thine.

Elminster of Shadowdale





FIRESIDE SONG OF OLD ADVENTURERS

Our swords, once sharp, now gather dust  
Much oil and care to fight the rust  
Where once we had not time to care  
And would give battle with brave hands bare

Our lances shone in brighter sun  
Our chests groaned heavy with treasure won  
Proud names we held over many lands  
Proud men respected our commands

In those days dragons raged fierce  
Keener, sharper blades did pierce  
Swung by bolder, stronger men  
Wine and women **both** sweeter then

So long ago, in fading dreams  
Sometimes fantasy it all seems  
But believe me not, 'Tis true!  
Taunter, my blade will answer you!

I am old now; my eyes no longer shine  
My hands are weak; far too much wine  
Has passed these lips—yet will I fight  
For old wolves can still, defiant, bite

And talk your talk not so loud  
Foolish, blind, young and proud  
Or I'll rise yet, and we shall see  
If ye'll ever live as long as me.

(Anon)

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# LET US SPEAK OF REALMS FORGOTTEN AND REJOICE

“ ’Tis the besetting doom of humans that they forget. This was in fact why thy mother or a teacher advised thee—just as sages in the Realms advise Faerûnians—‘Write it down.’ Well, now we have done just that. ’Twas about time, too!”

With those words, Elminster of Shadowdale welcomes you to Faerûn and invites you to join Ed Greenwood, the creator of the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting, on a guided tour of his famous world. This tome also presents never-before-seen notes and previously unpublished material written by Ed many years ago, when he and Faerûn were both younger.

*Elminster’s Forgotten Realms™* is appropriate reading for fans of all editions of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game.



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