



Volo's Guide to the SWORD COAST



VOLO's Guide To The Sword Coast

In all our years of wandering,
We never use up the splendid store.
At each wonder and marvel pondering,
As Faerûn proudly presents us with more.

— Revendar the Far-Traveled,
“Rhyme of the Road,”
Year of the Serpent



Dedication

To Mike and Roxy Griffith—

In hopes that your little one will join you in befriending Elminster and exploring corners of the Realms thus far hidden from us all.

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Volo's Guide to the North

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INTRODUCTION



his guidebook is the next in my ongoing tour of the Realms—I assure thee all, gentles, that you'll find no

more diligent guide than your humble servant, Volothamp Geddarm. These last few seasons I've trudded, ridden, swum, sailed, and even flown from the icy wastes north of the Spine of the World to the hot, steaming jungles of the Shining South—and beyond—all in thy service, gentle traveler. I've been to places I thought were but legends, and seen sights stranger than magic ever showed me. I've seen fallen towers rise up into the sky again and had a solid road vanish under my feet when the moonlight shining on it failed.

Where'er you may wish to go upon the face of known Faerûn, I have ventured there before you. When this guidebook proves of aid, I pray you look with favor upon the name of:



Volothamp Geddarm

Volo? Aye (sigh). He's getting, I suppose, better. Ye needn't tell folk I said that.



Elminster of Shadowdale

Volo's Ratings System

	Pipes <i>(Inns)</i>	Tankards <i>(Taverns)</i>	Coins <i>(Prices)</i>	Daggers <i>(Alleyways, Courtyards, etc.)</i>	
<i>Worst</i>					<i>Unsafe</i>
↓					↓
<i>Better</i>					<i>Dangerous</i>
↓					↓
<i>Best</i>					<i>Deadly</i>



The Sword Coast

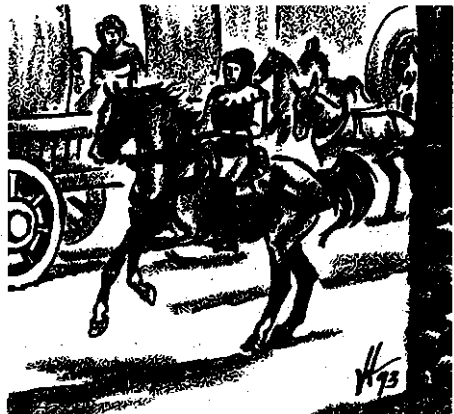
For years, the lands between Waterdeep and bustling Amn have been thought of as the Empty Lands—a vast, inconvenient stretch of wilderness folk venture into only to get from one place to another. Legends abound of grisly fates that befell unfortunate travelers at the hands of orcs, trolls, hobgoblins (and worse!) said to infest the area in veritable armies. In recent times, dark evil has arisen in ruined Dragonspear Castle, and the snakemen who inhabit the Serpent Hills are extending their patrols to menace folk far afield. As the merchant Falodel of Amn once put it, “The only reason to set foot in the Coast lands is to get down from a caravan wagon that’s going to make you a lot of coins—when it gets to someplace else.”

The strategic, in-the-middle location of the Coast lands forces most overland travelers in western Faerûn to visit them, ere long. The main caravan route to the Inner Sea from Amn to the south, and Waterdeep to the north, runs through the Sword Coast. Thanks to both human and bestial predators, the trip has always been dangerous—hence the name *Sword Coast*. Down through the ages, many folk have dreamed of founding a kingdom in the verdant valley hidden in the moors. A few have tried, notably around Daggerford and northeast of Beregost—but only tattered tales and well-hidden ruins remain of such glories today

The Sword Coast *is* home to some important independent cities: Baldur’s Gate, Berdusk, Elturel, Hill’s Edge, Iriaebor, and Scornubel.

This guidebook directs the traveler to the things to see and good places to stay in the cities. I also mention craftfolk of note, landmarks, and places it is best to avoid, and discuss key landmarks in the sparsely inhabited, lawless wildernesses between the cities. Readers should note that these wildernesses are studded with many independent holds, castles, and self-styled baronies not discussed here. Those not traveling with a caravan in the Sword Coast are warned to hire escorts of armed, trustworthy adventurers.

For convenience, I’ve divided this guide into five areas: the Coast, the High Moor, the Fields of the Dead, the Backlands, and Sunset Vale. Isles off the Sword Coast, such as Mintarn and Orlumbor, are not covered in this work. May my words prove useful, and thy journey safe.







The Coast



ane Hellar of Amn, the famous senior cartographer of the Merchants' League, once called the coast between Water-

deep and Amn: "[L]eagues upon leagues of lawless waste, home to pirates and outlaws who feast on those who must go north or south while depending on the Sea of Swords as their guide, keeping it in sight so as not to lose their way." Zane was not far wrong, but the Coast today is also home to one of the two largest and most powerful cities in the region, Baldur's Gate. (Iriaebor, far inland, is the other.) From its gates south to Amn, the Coast on either side of the Coast Way road is pleasant, verdant farmland. North of the Chionthar as far as the Way Inn, the land is more sparsely inhabited and more dangerous, but it serves as a hunting range for Waterdhavian nobles, wealthy Amnians, and those who must kill wild game to eat.

Travelers are warned that lawlessness is swiftly dealt with by ready, veteran patrols in the lands held by the nobles of Daggerford and in the farmlands under the protection of the Pact, a common defensive agreement covering the lands along the Coast Way from Baldur's Gate to Amn. Throughout the rest of the Coast, the traveler's best protection is a ready blade and friendly magic close to hand. Brigands, goblins, doppel-

gangers, and kobolds are an ever-present danger. Many stay in roving encampments, living off stolen livestock, and from such bases raid travelers, warehouses, and weakened settlements at will—particularly at night or in bad weather. Near the Troll Hills, in the broken tors known as the Trollclaws, and in the vicinity of the High Moor, trolls can be added to this list of dangers.

On the other hand, game is plentiful for travelers throughout this region. Grouse, bustards, rock doves, and other seacoast birds can readily be shot, slung, or even brought down with flung nets by those who can move quickly and quietly. It is not uncommon for a fat Calishite merchant with a hand crossbow to get three or four rabbits for an evening meal while his servants tether, unsaddle, and water the horses. It is also, one must always remember, not uncommon for three orcs with a trip-snare and ready clubs to bring down that fat merchant just that quickly, and then dine on him *and* his rabbits!

As long as safety is always kept uppermost in mind, travelers can also expect to gather plentiful nuts and wild raspberries and enjoy delicious wild greens (if the greens are gathered while young and tender). The Coast provides well for those who are patient stalkers and know where to look, whether they be traveler or fell beast.



Baldur' Gate

This port city is both shelter and life-line for the folk of the Coast. It is the only place to buy many luxury goods and offers the discerning shopper the widest selection of goods anywhere in the Sword Coast region—though usually at prices higher than those in Waterdeep or coastal Amn.

Baldur's Gate is a tolerant but well-policed city of merchants, and quiet business as usual is the general order of each day. Baldur's Gate, Berdusk, Neverwinter, and Silverymoon are probably the safest settlements in all western Faerun. In Baldur's Gate, the watch wears distinctive black helmets with a vertical red stripe on either side, if you have problems. Not only are the members of the watch vigilant, enthusiastic, wise, and observant, but the Flaming Fist Mercenary Company, over a thousand strong, is based in the city. Every tenth person or so is a member or a watch agent (well, spy) of the Fist, skilled in battle and within a breath or two of numerous armed allies.

The visitor can freely stroll and shop. If you can't carry all you buy, or need help to find your way, guides and porters can be hired at most street corners. These husky youths are known as lamp boys or lamp lasses because they carry lanterns at night to light the way for their patrons.

Landmarks

Baldur's Gate curves like a great hand or crescent moon around its

harbor. *Crescent moon* is the term used by its resident minstrels, who tend to be brassy-voiced tenors and delightfully smoky altos, depending on their gender, but *hand* describes it better. The fingers of the hand are the many docks and wharves that jut out into the harbor. A bridge from the western shore links the mainland with a rocky islet on which perches the old, massive Seatower of Balduran, which is used as a barracks, naval base, dungeon, and fortress. It has a full armory and catapults to battle hostile ships, and a massive chain can be stretched from it to the outermost wharf on the east side to bar the harbor to invaders.

The harbor boasts no less than four dry-dock slips for boat building and repair, complete with ox-driven pumps. The shipping facilities, I'm told, are among the best in all Faerûn. They feature modern warehouses, movable lamps and cranes, and tight security.

Around the harbor rises a crowded, but clean and prosperous, city. Everything is of stone and is usually wet with either rain, sleet, or fog, depending on the time of day and season. This makes the streets slippery, makes the musk and mushrooms Baldurians grow in their cellars flourish, keeps the flowers and plants that are grown in hanging baskets everywhere green—and makes mildew and mold a constant problem. If it afflicts you, see Halbazzar Drin on Stormshore Street. He's a gruff old wizard who has made his fortune with a spell that banishes mildew (12 gp per casting),



and another that drives all moisture from things without harming them (10 gp per glamer). Despite fantastic offers of gold, gems, and magic from Calishite, Amnian, and other interests, he does not sell scrolls of these spells or reveal the incantations to others.

Buildings in Baldur's Gate tend to be tall and narrow, with slit windows located high up and covered with shutters to block winter winds and nesting seabirds alike. Tall among them rises the grandly spired ducal palace of the four ruling Grand Dukes, known as the High Hall. A place for feasts, court hearings, and administrative business, it boasts a dozen meeting rooms that all citizens can wander in and use to conduct business—unless someone else is already using them. To discourage the miserly from using these as permanent places of business, there's a rule forbidding anyone who entered one of the rooms today from using it tomorrow.

Not far from the palace stands the High House of Wonders, consecrated to Gond. It is the largest of the Gate's three temples. It is a perilous place for the curious; it has been the site of many an explosion and violent self-disassembly of sacred artifacts (which the faithful call *apparati*). Its spreading eastern wings face the Hall of Wonders, also on Windspell Street, where the more successful of Gond's inventions are displayed to the public.

The wrist of the gigantic hand that is Baldur's Gate is marked by the Black





Dragon Gate, or Landward Gate, and its surrounding sprawl of slums, pad-docks, cut-rate inns, and stockyards, all of which lie outside the city walls. Not far from the Hall of Wonders, near the Black Dragon Gate, and so near the wrist of Baldur's Gate, is the Wide. This huge open space is the Gate's market. It bustles by day and night, and is usually open spacewise only in the sense that there are no buildings. Temporary stalls, bins, sale tables, and the shoppers thronging to them usually crowd shoulder to shoulder. Deliveries here are often made by tall, strong folk striding through the crowds with tall poles strapped to their chests or backs at the top of which, over an adult human's height aloft, are cribs and crates full of goods.

Prices are lower here than elsewhere in the Gate, but business is apt to be sharper. Among the more common vendors of silks, scarves, tobacco, and spices from the farthest reaches of the Shining South are masters of tattooing and disguise, and several minor wizards who specialize in spells that temporarily arrange a client's hair into intricate patterns, cause areas of the body to glow or to adhere to certain scraps of garment or pieces of jewelry, alter skin and hair hue, and even cause scents to wax, wane, or move around the body—sometimes accompanied by radiances. These artisans come and go with the seasons—and, I'm told, the approach of creditors or bounty hunters acting

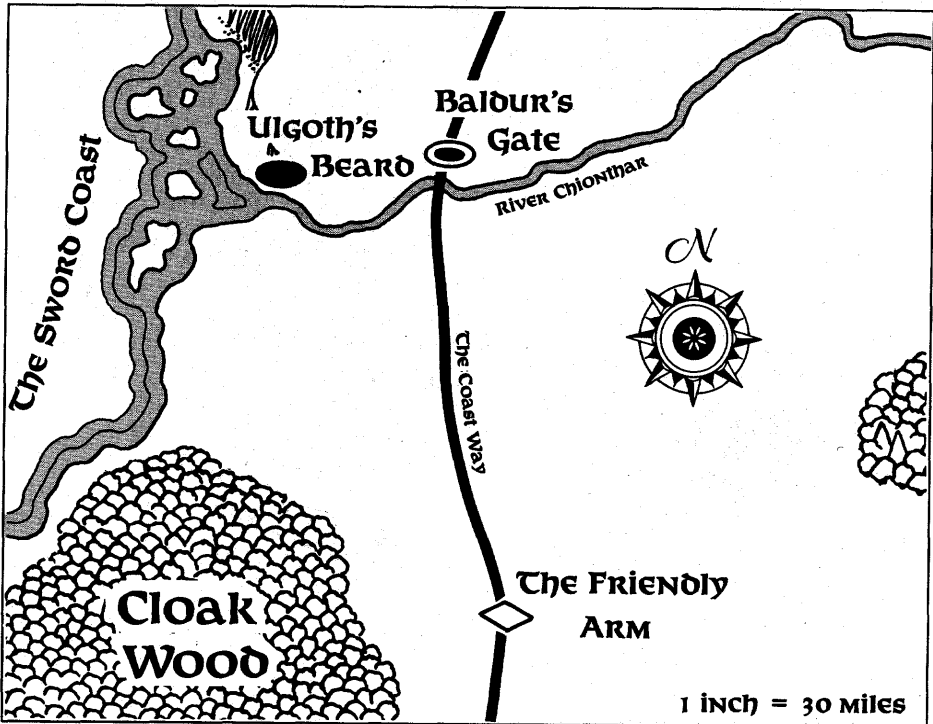


for far-off authorities. Among the more permanent of these artisans are Lonthalin Mintar and Talessyr Tranth.

Outside the Wide, Balbur's Gate lacks colorful landmarks. The ever-present damp discourages the use of banners, open shops, and the like. Windowboxes support trailing flowers of all sorts. Strolling minstrels, consisting usually of a singer playing a lute or hand harp accompanied by a flutist who also carries a hand drum and occasionally joins in on a chorus, provide another source of color. The Gate has few formal festivals. The largest is the Breaking, commemorating the last passage of ice from the harbor approaches

every spring. The Gate does, however, have a custom of holding quiet street chatter sessions known as *cobble parties* in particular spots. They are named after the cobblestones that surface most of the streets.

These parties are always marked by the use of rose-red torches—which can be bought in several city shops, notably Felogyr's Fireworks (run by Felogyr Sonshal) on Bindle Street—set in wall brackets along the street where the party is held. Baldurians frown on the drunken and debauched. These open-air fests tend to be tale-telling sessions, marked by a clutter of barrels, crates, and stools dragged into the street for folk to sit on while they talk.





Baldur's Gate





Baldur's Gate

1. The High Hall (ducal palace)
2. The Wide (open marketplace)
3. The High House of Wonders (temple consecrated to Gond)
4. Hall of Wonders
5. Elfsong Tavern
6. Seatower of Balduran
7. The Lady's Hall (temple of Tymora)
8. The Water-Queen's House (temple of Umberlee)
9. Belltoll Street
10. Black Dragon Gate
11. Stormshore Street
12. Bindle Street
13. Windspell Street
14. Sorcerous Sundries (shop and home of Halbazzar Drin, wizard)
15. Felogyr's Fireworks (shop)
16. The Helm and Cloak (inn)
17. Three Old Kegs (inn)
18. The Blade and Stars (inn)
19. The Blushing Mermaid (inn and tavern)
20. Manycoins House (office of the Merchants' League)
21. Home and Office of Krammoch Arkhstaff, Sage
22. Home and Office of Ragefast, Sage
23. Home and Office of Ramazith Flamesinger, Sage Extraordinaire
24. Entrance to the Undercellar
25. The Watchful Shield (shrine to Helm)
26. Shrine of the Suffering (shrine to Ilmater)
27. The Rose Portal (shrine to Lathander)
28. The Unrolling Scroll (shrine to Oghma)
29. The Counting House (money exchange)

Those wishing to overindulge in drink and in the company of the opposite sex are directed to the Undercellar, a little-known, damp, dark warren of linked cellars entered just off the Wide, with exits to 10 alleyways or more, and to the *Low Lantern*, a ship that cruises the harbor at night while festivities are going on both above and below decks. Daring citizens like to celebrate their marriage nights in the rigging of this vessel while perched precariously aloft or hanging over the night-dark waves from various ropes and sail booms. I've haven't rated the Undercellar or the *Lantern* because I

haven't tried them. The Undercellar is said to be reasonably priced but rather squalid and shady. Many folk like to go masked when enjoying themselves there. The *Lantern* is said to be noisy, fun, and expensive, with drinks dearer than in some of Waterdeep's haughtiest establishments.

Baldur's Gate is otherwise a pleasant but unremarkable city to stroll about in. Cats are everywhere—raised to keep down the shipborne vermin—but there's nary a dog to be seen. Livestock and mounts are kept outside the city in order to ensure maximum cleanliness.



Hall of Wonders

Museum and Shop



This high-pillared stone hall displays the grandest glories of Gond to the faithful and the curious alike for an entrance fee of 4 sp. Its cellars contain replicas of the wonders on display. These can be purchased by the very rich. Folk come from afar to see the marvels here. Many go away thoughtful, determined to devise similar artifices of their own and save themselves the awesome prices charged by the clergy of Gond.

The Place

The Hall is dimly lit by stationary, enchanted *glowing globes* and is staffed by ever-watchful priests of Gond. It is crowded with gleaming mechanisms that represent the more successful (safest) inventions devised for the greater glory of Gond Wonderbringer, god of artifice, craft, and construction. The gleaming black double doors of the Hall—and of the High House, its parent temple, which faces it across Windspell Street—levitate in midair by the power of Gond. (The power of Gond in this case is actually extremely potent spells that can be canceled in case of attack, toppling the titanic slabs onto hostile folk who are trying to get in.) These doors on both buildings bear gleaming white, many-toothed wheels—the symbol of Gond — which turn about clockwise slowly and continuously by themselves.

The Prospect

The Hall has held many marvels over the years. Currently on display are many small devices and a few large pieces. Many of the small devices seem to be locks or strongboxes so devised as to look like something else, from goblets to statues to chairs. The larger items include a mechanical scribe, a steam dragon, a pump of Gond, an everlight, a fan chair, and a farseer. Unless one has been to the Hall, some or all of these items are undoubtedly unfamiliar, so I will attempt to describe them and their functions briefly. A *mechanical scribe* is a hand-set type printing press. A *steam dragon* is a steam engine with fittings that render it capable of moving large objects along a continuous path by means of pulleys, of pumping water, of operating a lift up a cliff or wall by means of a continuous rope, of rowing a barge, and so on. A *pump of Gond* is a muscle-powered pump, worked by pedaling a flywheel, for use in farm irrigation and in filling bilges and reservoirs. An *everlight* is a system of self-filling oil lamps fed from a central oil tank. A *fan chair* is an adjustable reclining chair that can be rocked, operating a fan to cool the sitter. And, finally, a *farseer* is a seeing glass with a series of tinted and graduated glass lenses that enable it to be used for viewing tiny things up close, viewing sights as far away as the horizon, or focusing the heat of the sun so as to ignite or melt things.

The visitor will be left alone to marvel over such things. Unless one tries to damage, move, or tamper with a



device, or states a clear and serious intent to purchase, the priests are far too busy fending off ever-present, awe-eyed gnomes—who travel to the Hall daily to gawk tirelessly at the wonders there—to speak to visitors.

The Prices

The rating of the Hall refers to its entrance fee only. The prices charged for the replicas are another matter altogether. The devices on display in the main Hall are the work of priests, who duplicated original prototypes, and the originals aren't for sale under any circumstances. The prices of replicas for sale are currently as follows:

Locks: 5 gp to 50 gp, depending on difficulty of breaking or picking, and what they're hidden in or shaped as.

Strongboxes: 10 gp to 60 gp, for the same reasons.

Fan Chair: 50 gp to 300 gp, depending on design, size, and finish. Fan chairs are much in demand among nobles and the rich all over Faerûn during the warmer months.

Mechanical Scribe: 750 gp.

Steam Dragon: 9,000 gp (fittings 1,000 gp extra, each).

Steam Dragonet (small version of the Steam Dragon): 4,500 gp (fittings 500 gp extra, each).

Pump of Gond: 200 gp.

Everlight: 400 gp for two lamps, plus 50 gp per additional lamp thereafter.

Farseer: 250 gp.



Ward of the Wonderbringer Token

The Hall also sells fine parchment in blank rolled scrolls (10 gp each) and in sheets 4 handwidths across by 10 in length (1 gp each). Those willing to wait a tenday after ordering (and prepaying!) can have a bound book of 50 parchment sheets for 100 gp. Books with gilded edges, with latches, or of different sizes take longer and cost more.

Travelers' Lore

The temple is guarded by the magic of its watchpriests, by the stone gargoyle¹ adorning the roof, and by the ward tokens of the temple. All priests and persons authorized to

¹These gargoyles are neutral-aligned beings created by, and absolutely loyal to, the High Artificer of the temple. In all other ways, they are identical to the monsters widely feared by adventurers.



enter the Hall bear ward tokens. They are necessary to avoid triggering the alarm and deadly defensive spells that guard the storage cellars of the Hall, the chains connecting each item on display in the main floor and balconies of the Hall to floor rings, and all parts of the temple across the road except the public worship areas. The faithful of Gond can protect both themselves and the consecrated areas from thieves, religious rivals, and other undesired intruders by touching a ward token to the body of such an undesirable while whispering or con-

centrating on the words of Gond.²

The High Artificer or other High Initiates of the Mysteries of Gond can cause a stolen ward token to explode from any distance, so long as its *precise* location is known or learned—by scrying or other magics, for instance. Activated ward tokens of Gond unleash—while within the High House or the Hall of Wonders only!—an electrical discharge akin to a *lightning bolt*. Certain doorways, window ledges, floors, and other strategic areas in the Hall unleash similar effects if entered by someone *without* a ward token.

²The “words of Gond” used to activate a token are a secret phrase. Priests of 6th level or greater need not speak it aloud. A successful attack roll is required to touch a mobile hostile being with a ward token. A ward token discharge deals a target 4d6 points of damage per round, and a token can be used as often as desired, once per round. Clergy of Gond who are specialty priests of any level, or clerics of 8th level or higher, are taught a phrase that causes a ward token to activate when it is outside areas consecrated to Gond. A ward token can only be activated on nonconsecrated ground three times (one round equals one activation) before it is destroyed. When commanded to destroy itself, a ward token blasts apart with effects identical to a *chain lightning* spell.



ELFSONG TAVERN

Tavern



This tavern is the local watering hole, meeting place, and hiring fair for adventurers. A popular destination for pirates and outlaws on the loose in the Coast lands, it is a place the watch turns a blind eye toward, unless rowdiness and battle erupt. Those wishing to fence stolen goods, hire unusual folk for unrespectable tasks, and hear tall tales of daring adventure often come here and stay late.

The Place

Decorated by a stuffed baby beholder over the bar (the smallest eye tyrant I've ever seen—not that I've seen man. I'll grant), this place is dimly lit by many wandering, blue-hued *drifiglobes*, and is furnished with many stout, knife-scarred wooden chairs and tables, curtained off with tapestries that provide privacy. Gossips should beware, as this is visual privacy only.) The ground floor is devoted to a taproom that serves melted cheese sandwiches (spiced or unspiced, as you prefer), pickles, and fist-sized twists of dried herring—and drinks, of course. As you might guess, all the food is highly salted to make you drink more.

Several dark, twisting stairs lead up to private meeting rooms that can be rented by the candle (the time it takes a short taper to burn down) or an evening. Those with enemies are warned that the dimness on the stairs

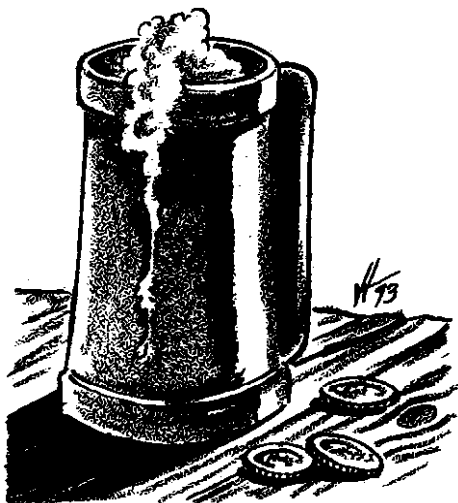
has concealed many a seeking knife thrust or poisoned hand crossbow bolt.

The Prospect

This tavern is named for an unusual haunting—a ghostly female elven voice, heard from time to time³ all over the establishment. It isn't loud, but can be heard clearly everywhere, and is both beautiful and achingly mournful. It often moves hardened soldiers, who can't understand a word of the archaic elven tongue used, to tears. Some, even though they have to drink away the melancholy it brings, come here solely in hopes of hearing it. The deaf and the insensitive are warned that anyone who talks, sings, or makes undue noise during the customary hush that falls over the tavern while the ghostly voice sings her sad lament is liable to be struck down with deadly speed by the nearest regular patron. Elves hearing the song for the first time are often stunned. By tradition, they are silently served a free tallglass of *elverquisst* by the bartender.

A first-timer of any race and either sex who breaks down into tears upon hearing the song is usually embraced and comforted by the nearest regular patron. After hearing the song, the current owner of the tavern, the half-elven maid "Lady" Alyth Elendara, bought the place for 50,000 gp from an aging warrior who placed only one condition on the sale: that he be allowed to sit in the tavern all the night hours so that he could hear the haunting song as often as he desired. The

³The voice is never heard more than twice in an evening, but usually at least every three nights, and never during the sunlit hours.



bargain was met, although the old man has since died. No one is sure just who the elven singer is—although it's clear she's singing a lament for a lover lost at sea—or how the haunting came to be. Some sporadic attempts by various clergy to banish the phenomenon have failed—and anyone foolish enough to try an exorcism today is likely to make the sudden sharp acquaintance of a bristling roomful of sailors' blades.

Patrons can—and are expected to—go armed when in the Elfsong, and the known rule is that all beings need to protect their own backs except when the sad lady's singing. By tradition, music of any sort is not sung or played in the tavern. The ghostly lady has the entertainment to herself.

The Provender

The fare, as aforementioned, is simple—open-faced malt bread and melted cheese sandwiches, sprinkled with dill, nutmeg, or powdered spices of your choice; whole pickles (heavy on the

garlic); and handful-sized chunks of pressed, dried salt herring. Lady Alyth also makes a thick stew that is beloved by many sick or chilled sailors. She keeps a cauldron on simmer all the time and throws all the food leavings into it, boils beef bones and assorted shellfish in it, and pours in all the wine dregs and soured ale. Some folk in Baldur's Gate swear by it, and visit the Elfsong just to drink a mug or bowl when they'd otherwise never enter a place where such rough and rowdy lowlifes drink.

The Prices

Ale is 2 cp per tankard (large, battered pewter things, not meager cups), stout is 4 cp per tankard, and all wine (a small and anonymous selection is offered) is 5 cp per tallglass. Rollrum (dark, licorice-laced drink from the Tashalar, with a cool, minty aftertaste) is 1 sp per flagon, and is an acquired taste—one that most seafaring patrons seem to have acquired quite well, thank ye.

All servings of provender are 1 sp, except stew. This price only covers a mug of stew. A large bowl is 2 cp extra. Most patrons will find a serving of something is about half a meal.

Travelers' Lore

Lady Alyth operates an unofficial bank for her patrons. Those who use this service are mainly sailors dabbling in shady business who've no safe place to hide their takings and no good reason for having made so much coin. Rumors abound of many wildly different places she hides the money and the ways she guards it, but inquiries on this topic are not welcome.



The Blade and Stars

Inn



This inn is named for its enchanted signboard, looted from a ruined village in Amn after a long-ago trade war. It's a large black sign displaying a curved saber held by a delicate, longfingere female human hand. The sign is enspelled so that stars wink and slowly drift around the blade over the dark surface. The inn itself is less exciting, but still a good, safe, clean, pleasant place to stay



The Place

The Blade is a long, tall building with attached stables and kitchens on one side and balconies opening out of upper rooms on the other. It rises four floors above the street, and its furnishings are clean and fairly new. There's a small lounge off the front lobby for guests to meet citizens in, but it lacks a table.

The Prospect

Service in the Blade is curt but swift. Vigilant stairwatchers on staff keep track of guests' comings and goings, discouraging street thieves and even doppelgangers, who are a growing though unreported problem in cities all over Faerûn. Your stay is apt to be quiet and unremarkable, unless your demeanor makes it otherwise. Rowdy or reckless guests are firmly warned, once—and if something else happens, firmly asked to leave.

The Provender

Meals are served in guests' rooms rather than in a dining room, so the fare is never better than lukewarm—but as it's

simple ale, bread, and fish, this is little loss. Bread can be ordered spread with herbed cheese or melted eggs (both surprisingly good). On cold nights, the proprietor, Aundegul Shawn, serves ruby cordial on request—a sweet, syrupy concoction of cherries dissolved in sugared red wine. It's nice, once you're used to the rawness it leaves in the throat.

The Prices

Rooms, including bath, stabling and meals, are 3 gp per night. A guest can order three servings of food a day, but it's always the same repast. Cordial is 4 cp per goblet. Ale is 3 cp per tankard. One tankard of ale is free with each meal, and a guest can purchase two extra a day—those requesting more will be told to find a tavern.

Travelers' Lore

Local legend says a female yuan-ti is walled up in the inn, frozen in midbattle by a desperate (and long-gone) wizard's spell. When he dies, she'll be released.



The Blushing Mermaid

Inn/Tavern



The Mermaid is known up and down the Coast lands as a meeting place in which to conduct illicit business for folk who are dangerous or criminals. It is a noisy, brawling establishment. I can recommend it only to those who go well armed, know how to use their weapons, and bring lots of loyal friends with similar skills.

The Place

The Mermaid is a long, low, ramshackle place with a confusing maze of wings, outbuildings, stockaded enclosures, and stables surrounding it on three sides—the better to give cover to those trying to approach or leave unseen, most Baldurians say. It has at least four levels of cellars—many more, some say—and rumors abound of secret passages, or even connections to an underground stream or sewer connecting with the harbor.

Rooms at the Mermaid are low-ceilinged, dingy, and apt to be furnished with mismatched pieces that have seen better days. In general, they are loot-and-salvage pieces that have seen heavy use since their installation here. The overall effect is of a rather dangerous but endearingly cluttered cellar, decorated with the flotsam of a hundred shipwrecks.

The Mermaid is apt to be noisy throughout the night. Those who

aren't sound sleepers are advised to seek lodgings elsewhere. All rooms have iron bar shutters—if they have windows at all—and heavy wooden beam double bars on the inside. They're there to be used, folks.

The lobby is the only high-ceilinged room in the place, except the stairwell to the two upper floors. A life-size and crudely carved wooden mermaid hangs overhead above the reception desk. The nearly nude mermaid's body is covered with a score or more shriveled and blackened severed hands. If asked about them, the staff will smile and tell you that they were — er, donated by folks who forgot to pay their bills.⁴ The desk has its own trophy—a huge broad axe buried deep in the wood. Be warned that the axe can easily be snatched up out of the deep cleft it caused long ago and hurled with speed and accuracy across the lobby by the balding, bearded, hairy-armed clerk who looks like a walking cask!

The Prospect

The visitor will find in the Mermaid an astonishing collection of smooth-tongued, scarred old sea dogs nursing drinks at all hours. Each one is a contact person for this or that cabal, thieving brotherhood, smuggler, mercenary band, fence, panderer, or other shady professional interest. Negotiations with such contacts usually consist of a nasty grin and a case

⁴Elminster warns that these hands are actually animated crawling claws under the command of the desk clerk. They will fall, leap, bound, and scuttle around the lobby at his direction to battle the watch, intruders, or obstreperous guests.



of temporary deafness until at least a silver piece is given them—whereupon they recall their voice, hearing, and manners, and inquire as to your own fortune. If pleasantries proceed as far as your requesting a need or desire for something or someone, the sea dog will examine the ceiling, tell it how much such information is likely to cost (1 to 5 gp, usually 2 gp), and slide over his empty tankard for payment. Once he's satisfied the coins you've dropped into it are of good quality, he'll tell you what you want to know and arrange a meeting, or send you to a contact who can. I report all this secondhand, of course!

A stay at the Mermaid is apt to be quite safe, so long as one avoids battle and does nothing overly insulting or stupid. (Some sharp-tongued killers like to taunt and goad other guests to see if they can get a fight out of them.) The proprietors, who are unknown and never seen, have instructed their staff to make the House a relatively safe, neutral ground for all patrons, whatever their race, past, or profession. It's better for business that way.

The Provender

Meals at the Mermaid are of two sorts: elaborate food, brought in to order from nearby eateries, and food prepared on the premises. The brought-in food is usually good and of generous portions, but not overly warm by the time it reaches you. The fare prepared at the Mermaid is of the simple but good and filling variety, except for a truly vile salted small-

fish stew. This stew consists of various rotting baitfish boiled with sea salt and seaweed, and even *smells* disgusting. Many sailors order only bread spread with drippings (crusty nutbread rolls with thick organ meat gravy ladled over them) or hand-wheels of cheese, but the Mermaid's kitchen also produces a splendid pork, thyme, and mushroom platter.

The most commonly ordered meal is ale, bread, and fish. Some patrons also like small squid pickled in vinegar, which I find revolting from three rooms away!

Sailors have prodigious appetites. It's not uncommon to look across the dining room at the Mermaid and *not* see several diners. They're entirely hidden by the roasts set in front of them!

Whole roast pigs are another favorite dish. It seems most seafolk are sick of marine edibles by the time they reach land, but land-treading travelers and sailors long ashore often order literal heaps of oysters, clams, or mussels and attack them with a knife. Hairy-chested men (those foolish enough to risk diseases and parasites) often eat the shellfish raw—and a crazed few like to shell them alive from a saltwater basin and devour them still squirming!

I managed to get a single (thankfully more widely appealing in nature) recipe from the cooks, as is shown on the scrap on the following page.

Beer at the Mermaid is sea ale (thicker and more bitter than most tongues find enjoyable), stout, and a light, golden-hued lager from



Flounder

Flay off the fish skins, pick out all the scales that remain, and lay the edible portions in vinegar.

Set on the fire a pot of red wine, into which add a handful each of crushed garlic, salt, and dragonseye, a pinch of tansy, and other herbs as desired. Stint not, for much savor is lost in the boiling.

When the pot is at a rolling boil, take the fish from the vinegar, the largest first, and place them in the pot. Take out with tongs when the flesh of the fish rises into bubbles, for then it is done.

While the fish boil, prepare ye a melt skillet of butter, into which stir sliced and powdered nuts, fruit peel, and parsley to taste.

When the fish has drained, place a portion on a serving platter, and pour the melted butter over it. Serve within a ring of shelled oysters and chips of cheese.

Mintarn. No wines are available, but one can get whisky strong and smoky enough to strip paint or tar from wood. It brings tears to the eyes of most who drink it, and probably worse things to their insides!

The Prices

Rooms are 2 gp per night, stabling included. Food for mounts is an extra 3 cp each. No tenday room rate or bathing facilities are available.

All food and drink is extra. A platter of fish, bread, and drippings is 2 cp, and meat dishes are all 3 cp per plat-

ter. Heaps of shellfish are 1 gp per serving, and whole roasts are 3 gp each. Ale is 3 cp per tankard, and whisky is 1 sp per tallglass (with no larger measure prices).

Travelers' Lore

Predictably, fourscore tales of treachery, hidden treasure, secret passages, and trapped chests swirl around the Mermaid. It's impossible to tell how many are pure fabrication or have grown wildly in the telling. Stolen or illegal items are definitely hidden quickly and well here for a fee.⁵

⁵Elminster says people—willingly or unwillingly—can also be hidden. Hidden rooms cost twice what regular rooms do, are windowless and buried deep to keep sounds to a minimum and discourage escape attempts, and come with manacles (if ordered). Gags, "hoods" (solid-face metal helmets), and double forearm-and-finger clamps can be ordered if one wishes to confine a wizard. Elminster doesn't recommend the practice.



The Helm and Cloak

Inn/Feast House



This grand inn, rooming house, and feasting house is favored by those who've lots of coins to spare—both citizens of the Gate, who enjoy the dining room, and travelers. There's even a floor of long-term rental rooms. Most of these are currently occupied by members of the Knights of the Unicorn, romantic adventurers described by a regular patron as elegant buffoons.

The Helm is the fashionable place to dine and chat, much favored by those of power. Many an important business deal or alliance has been negotiated in its luxurious alcoves.

The Helm avoids the haughty and gaudy unerringly choosing the best of informal good taste, traditional furnishings, and thoughtful service, such as a warmed robe and slippers brought to your room when you're heard to rise in the morn.

The Place

The Helm is actually two connected buildings. The smaller is an old house fronting on Windspell Street at the crossroads facing the Ducal Palace. The larger structure is an old rooming house that faces the High House of Wonders. A tattered cloak hangs displayed over the old rooming house's raised porch, whereas a gigantic helm—once worn by a titan, senior staff tell guests who ask, albeit





dryly—overhangs the Windspell Street doors.

The Provender

Food at the Helm means jellied eels, fresh fish in hot lemon sauce, glazed and stuffed fowl, and fried and candied meats. The fried onion-and-spiced-tubers stuffing is especially delectable. It's all cooked in wine, served by the platter, and is uniformly fine.

The wine cellar is huge in both amount and variety. Those with a taste for Saerloonian glowfire are warned that the resident Knights are apt to order entire barrels of the stuff up to their rooms of evenings. Ask early to make sure there's enough for your glass.

There's also mead (very ordinary) and cinnamon-spiced milk available (hot or cold, as you prefer), but no beer of any sort to be had. "We're *not* running a tavern, m'lord," one of the senior servants said to me, when I inquired why.

The Prices

Mead and milk are 5 cp per glass, and wine is 3 gp per tallglass, 10 gp per great goblet (a huge silver flagon that holds about a bottle), or 25 gp per hand cask. The Knights pay 50 gp per barrel, but anyone else trying to order such a large container will be told that only long-term residents are allowed to place such demands on the cellar. All platters are 10 gp. Rooms are 17 gp to 25 gp per night,

depending on size and location. The room fee includes a hot bath, a cloth-mending and dressing service, and as much mint water as desired.

Stabling is extra, and costs 3 gp per night per animal—but the hostlers are among the finest in Faerûn, able to spot and treat injuries and conditions, and attentive to a beast's every want. Think of it as a luxury stay for your mount when you pay for it, and the coins leave your hand more easily. Of course, you wouldn't be here at all if you didn't have the shining metal to spare.

Travelers' Lore

The house part of the Helm was once the home of a priestess of Sune, and its ceiling paintings of scenes of unbridled pleasure and passion have raised more than a few eyebrows. These paintings still cause lamps to be lifted today by those who'd like to get a better look—so as to elevate their brows farther. There are persistent rumors of elegantly furnished garret chambers reached by secret passages, but the staff refuses to answer queries on this subject.

It is true that the staff has quickly hidden notorious guests on several occasions—guests that in some cases were never seen again.⁶ The rooming house part of the Helm has some treasure rumors, too (the hidden loot of retired pirates, of course).

⁶Elminster hinted slyly that the hidden chambers sport some magical tapestries, containing gates leading to (unknown) places elsewhere in Faerûn.



Three Old Kegs

Inn



This cozy timber-and-stone inn has three old kegs hanging from a roof-pole on chains rather than a sign-board. Those bold or whimsical enough to enter in and stay will find one of the best inns in all Faerûn. Everything is comfortable and a little shabby, but the staff is quietly friendly. Patrons are encouraged to take their ease all over the ground floor and the one above. It feels like you're at home—assuming, of course, your home is a place where you can read or snooze at will, feet up on cushions as you lounge about in comfy old chairs and couches: Bliss!

The Place

The Kegs has two levels of fieldstone cellars and two fieldstone floors above them. The uppermost cellar is given over to gaming rooms and connected to the ground floor by no fewer than three open staircases. The two uppermost floors (for six total floors) are timber, topped with a slate roof. All floors of the place are connected in one corner by a dumb-waiter shaft large enough for two folk pressed together to stand on the platform and ride up and down by pulling on the draw rope. This is much used by servants for quick travel up and down—and occasionally by patrons for pranks and quick exits. On at least one occasion, it has been used for murder: A patron in an upper room was noosed by a foe and

then hurled down the shaft! Tales are told of the apparition of his hanged, dangling body, face a bare skull, being seen in the shaft late on dark nights—but such tales are usually told by those who've had a bit too much to drink.

The Prospect

The Kegs is a cozy place, furnished with old furniture from a dozen keeps and many simpler homes. The dusty heads of trophy elk and creatures of the deep hang on the walls, crowding for space amid old and faded paintings of elven hunts and human knights battling dragons and each other, or courting various maidens. Where there aren't paintings, there are bookshelves crammed with old diaries, travel books, collections of ballads and legends, and grand and overblown histories of heroes.

Regular patrons snooze and read the days away, rousing themselves from time to time for a glass of wine, mug of broth, or a game of dice, cards, or shove-skittles. Both the wine and the broth are excellent, but they, along with ice water and dark and nutty malt bread, are the only fare to be had in the place.

The thick beastskin rugs, paneling, books, and tapestries absorb sound. The Kegs is a quiet place. Come here for a reasonable and comfortable rest, a haven against the bustle of business or adventure.

Patrons are asked to keep their weapons in their rooms, and not to bring drinkables in with them—inside or outside their bodies.



Ithtyl Calantryn

Drunks often awaken in the morning to find themselves sleeping out back in the hay pile by the kitchen door.

The innkeeper is a tall, quiet man with a mane of long, curly black hair and a sword scar that runs from his nose diagonally across one cheek. His name is Nantrin Bellowglyn, and he's a Tethyrian noble's retired guard who fled that land when its civil strife erupted and his lord was slain. He has a staff of four daughters and hired help: a bags boy, a hostler, and three serving wenches. These wenches were huntresses in Tethyr, and at least one of them, Ithtyl Calantryn, is a sorceress expert in levitation and shielding spells. On more

than one occasion, I'm told, she's calmly hurled would-be thieves and troublesome brawling patrons bodily out of the inn—sometimes by way of a third floor window.

The Provender

As I have said, the Kegs serves simple fare. Most folk go elsewhere for main meals.

The Prices

A stay at the Kegs costs you 5 sp per night per person, stabling included. Rooms for up to four folk are available, but there's no discount for sharing a room. A plate of bread and as much ice water as one wants are included. More food and drink costs an extra 1 cp per plate, and all extra wine is 6 cp per tallglass. The only other extra charge is for hot baths (3 cp per person). Cold baths and laundry service are included in room rates.

Travelers' Lore

The Kegs is said to contain a secret passage linking it with a dockside warehouse and a sewer shaft that comes to the surface near the Black Dragon Gate. Somewhere along this passage is a lime pit where folk can quietly dispose of bodies (100 gp per corpse) by arrangement with someone who can be contacted through Nantrin.⁷ Adventurers and pokers-about-after-secrets had best not get on the bad side of Nantrin, it is rumored, or they may find themselves "searching the pit while asleep," as it were.

⁷Elminster smiled and said that someone was Nantrin himself, of course.



Beregost

Tired travelers on the Coast Way between Baldur's Gate and Amn often stop in Beregost. Beregost is located just off the road about a day's travel on horseback south of where the Way of the Lion that leads to Candlekeep branches off from the Coast Way. It's within reach of the northern borders of Amn. Merchants of that land often use it as a rendezvous for caravan assembly before attempting the perilous overland runs north to Waterdeep or east to the Sea of Fallen Stars. As a result, this small town gets very crowded at unpredictable intervals.

Begun as a farming village under the protection of a school of wizardry, Beregost is now dominated by the Song of the Morning, a major temple to Lathander. The mage Ulcaster, a conjurer of note, founded his school over 300 years ago—but grew too successful, attracting would-be wizards from all over the Sword Coast. Calishite mages came to fear the school's power and destroyed it in spell battle, though Ulcaster himself disappeared during the fray and was never found. The school burned to an empty shell, which still stands on a hill east of the town. Local fear of the ruins, which are said to be haunted by phantoms who are still able to cast spells, has caused Beregost to be expanded to the west of the Coast Way road, leaving the hills east of it to the sheep.

Beregost has only one tavern. It is called the Burning Wizard, of course. It has no signboard, but the traveler can easily find it. It's the building with

the crowded hitching rail that stands just north of where the small rivulet known as Wizards' Doom Creek—which rises on the hill where the ruins stand against the sky—crosses the Coast Way. That's where I heard of the two chief dangers to the curious and to young magelings hoping to gain spells or items who approach the ruins too closely. There's a wizshade who hurls random spells at folk, sometimes appearing as a thin, wraithlike, impossibly tall, bearded man and sometimes just as a battered wizard's hat. There's also another wizard wraith—a haunt—who tries to lure folk into the depths of the ruin's cellars and possess their bodies. Old villagers also speak of magical traps deep in the ruins and at least one *gate* that leads to unknown destinations. This last claim has been confirmed as truth by no less a pair of magical personages than the Lord Mage of Waterdeep, Khelben "Blackstaff" Arunsun, and Elminster of Shadowdale.

Beregost's governor strongly disapproves of explorations of the ruins. Although there is a five-person town council, the governor's word is law in Beregost, and he is a tireless proponent of farming, starting up new businesses, and improving the place. He is also Most Radiant of Lathander (high priest of the temple) Kelddath Ormlyr, and his temple troops police the town, keeping it safe so that trading, meetings, and spending at the shops are brisk. In this, he has two powerful allies: the wizard Thalantyr, a conjurer of great repute who unfortunately wasn't at home when I visited,



and the smith Taerom “Thunderhammer” Fuiruim. Kelddath has also successfully encouraged several important Amnian merchants to establish estates around Beregost—notably the Craumerdaun family, whose fine horses (now bred here) are highly prized in Amn and Tethyr.

The visitor today will find the following local features of note.

Places of Interest in Beregost

Temples

The Song of the Morning

This large temple to Lathander consists of a fortified church surrounded by stables, refectories, guesthouses, and outbuildings. It rises up right beside the east side of the road in the center of town, and its distinctive rose-red spires can be seen for miles. Its many clergy and 200 lay-member militia assist local businesspeople and farmers, and in return the temple receives regular and large offerings.

The servants of the Morninglord also tend temple fields of potatoes and herb flowers east of the road, and keep sheep on the slopes of the hill topped by the ruined school of wizardry. They keep them there ostensibly because these fields are more open to view than those of local farmers. The sheep are thus more easily watched, preventing theft and raiding beasts from ravaging them. The real reason that the sheep are kept here is that the servants of the Morninglord want to

keep some control over expeditions into the ruins and to prevent uncontrolled expansion of Beregost. (Over the years, various Amnian merchants have shown a distressing tendency to lay claim to all land within easy reach of the Coast Way that’s not strongly defended.)

The folk of the temple are vigilant, and stand for no lawlessness or aggression, but are otherwise helpful to strangers. Those willing to give 20 gp or more to the temple are welcome to stay in its guesthouses for two nights. People may stay longer if they are sick or injured. Priests will tend them and won’t expect any more money, although most folk do give something. Temple fare is simple but good, and baths and stabling are available.

Homes

High Hedge

Northwest of the main settlement of Beregost stands High Hedge, the estate of Thalantyr the Conjuror. It is guarded by a fiercely loyal mated pair of griffons and by some sort of invisible servant creature that has been known to spy and deliver things for its master right into town. Thalantyr is a courtly man who can sometimes be seen walking about the countryside, his long, black staff in hand. He’s had no apprentices for years and doesn’t welcome visitors. Locals say he’s interested in far-off places and things, and is sometimes absent for long periods.

Those who’ve seen his abode say that it’s a dark, turreted stone house



overgrown with pines and that he has his own fishpond behind it. Sometimes he sits next to the pond and talks with something that stays just under the surface of the water.

Shops

Thunderhammer Smithy

Armor Maker and Weaponsmith



Taerom “Thunderhammer” Fuiruim is a burly giant. His chestnut hair and mutton-chop whiskers are now shot through with gray and white, but his huge hands remain strong and deft. He is a master armorer, and his war-mongery equals the best in Faerûn. On several occasions he’s made items for Thalantyr to enspell, and even dwarf smiths admire his work.

Taerom keeps over a dozen apprentices busy with all the orders that come his way (mainly from Amn). He fights with a huge iron staff and has been known to slay orcs with a single blow, but is generally a quiet man. He is not given to leadership, but is respected in town more than anyone else.

Taverns

The Burning Wizard



This tavern is a bustling place, as favored by the locals as by visitors. Acolytes of Lathander are trained to keep lively conversations and entertainments going here, and even to gamble. (Any takings are donated to the temple, of course.) Traveling minstrels are always welcomed, stay for

free, and are paid 5 gp per night atop that. No food is sold at the Wizard, but all three local inns keep runners here to go and fetch hot covered platters from the kitchens of their establishments. In winter, don’t expect the food to arrive very warm! This is a good little place, with several small rooms to stay in adorned with donated bric-a-brac from loyal regulars. It’s a delight to find enough cushions in a room to let one sit up in bed in comfort!

Inns

Feldepost’s Inn



Named for its now-deceased founder, this is an old and comfortable place. Service is careful and kindly, if a trifle slow, but a room comes with a fire alight (except in hot weather), and a bath that is skillfully filled to one’s own taste in warmth by several old men of many smiles but few words. One can even request assistance bathing. All this makes the place a favorite with the elderly, and so makes for a quiet stay.

The food is superior. Don’t miss the cheese and cucumber buns, or the onion and mushroom fireside tarts served to all by the hearth in the evenings. (The tarts are free if you’re ordering drinks.) The inn cellar includes an excellent sherry.

The Red Sheaf



Folk come to the Sheaf for fast service. This inn prides itself on getting



you to your room or to a board in the dining room as fast as possible. If the weather is cold or wet, you'll find yourself in a warm house robe before a crackling fire just as quickly, with your wet things taken to the warming room behind the kitchen chimneys to dry on warmed stone shelves.

Fare at the Sheaf is of the warm or cold soups, cheese and grapes, bread and spreads, and whole roasts variety. The cold potato soup is delightful, and carries the homey taste of onion and celery, along with a more subtle and indefinable seasoning that I was unable to pin down. Unfortunately, the roasts are either blackened to crisp ashes or—on the other side, or deep inside—near raw. The cooks haven't mastered the slow fire yet,

only the too-hot, too-quick one.

This is Beregost's largest inn and is favored by merchants wanting to hold business meetings or sit in quiet. Those willing to part with 7 gp for an evening can rent private meeting rooms with doors that lock, though I suspect there are spyholes in the serving passage that runs behind them all. Entertainer folk—minstrels and such—aren't welcome at the Sheaf except as paying customers. The Sheaf provides no entertainment at all.

Local gossip whispers that a secret passage at the back of the inn leads down to an old smugglers' warehouse comprising caverns that were abandoned when drow tunneled up into the caverns from below. They had to be dealt with by Thalantyr, who left some sort of magical barrier.

The Jovial Juggler



This inn is on the northern edge of town, on the west side of the road. Its huge roofboard depicting a laughing carnival juggler in jesterlike garb identifies it instantly from afar. It's very much an average roadhouse, but young Beregostans love it—it's their dancing and drinking club. It outpays Feldepost's for minstrels and other entertainers, and there's scarcely a night at the Juggler without some sort of loud revelry, complete with several oxen, hogs, and boars roasted whole. Thankfully, all of that's confined to one wing, so patrons do get *some* sleep!



Bowshot

This hamlet stands on the western side of the Trade Way, a half-day's ride north of the Way Inn.⁸ Named because it was just a bowshot away from the Misty Forest, it's been a logging center for a hundred years—and it's been so successful that the forest is now miles away to the east.

Bowshot consists of the Bowshot Inn, a sawmill, six farms (two run by men who shoe horses as well as any smith), and almost a dozen home woodcarvers who turn out yokes, cofers, wheel spokes, tool handles, and whimsical carvings. The place deserves mention because of recently discovered caves beneath its western fringes. They are entered from the horse-well behind the inn, and by at least one cave mouth in the stands of trees north and west of the hamlet.

The Bowshot caverns show evidence of connections to deeper subterranean areas⁹ and of past use by smugglers. Some stolen goods were recently recovered from the caves and returned to their rightful owners in Waterdeep. With them were crates of ore very rich in silver, presumably mined in the deeps below the caverns.

There's local talk of hiring or inducing an adventuring company to dwell in Bowshot and mount a constant guard over the cavern entrances—and even of founding a company to mine and smelt silver in the depths, its workers protected by

the hired adventurers. So far, no adventurers have agreed to such a defensive role. Many *have* come to the caverns and then moved on, talking of manspiders in the deep ways.

Places of Interest in Bowshot Shops

Andalor's Mill Lumber Mill



Ulmyn Andalor is an affable, portly man with a curly white beard and a bald pate who goes about covered with sawdust. He runs an always-busy mill that provides Waterdeep and Daggerford with cheap, plentiful green lumber. A copper piece will buy three posts as tall as an adult human male, or five 3-hand's-width boards of the same length.

Inns The Bowshot Inn



This mediocre inn is a dim, chilly log structure that serves bad ale brought by the barrel from Waterdeep. The proprietor sells good hand crossbows for the traveler desiring self-protection and a little squirrel or fowl hunting. Eveningfeast here is usually a gummy stew made from those same squirrels or some wildfowl, and served with thick slices of adequate onion bread.

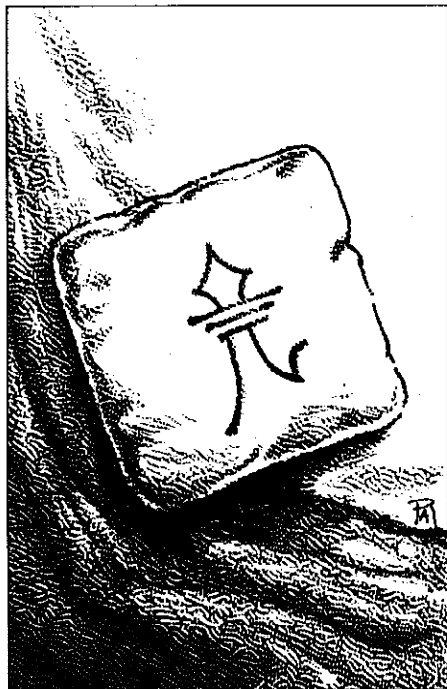
⁸Bowshot's location is shown on the map in the entry on the Way Inn, later in this chapter.

⁹The existence of the caverns became widely known when a drow exploratory band emerged from the trees one night and ran straight into an encamped, but alert, armed caravan. At least two adventuring bands have descended into the far depths of the caverns and, thus far, have not returned.



Candlekeep

This citadel of learning stands on a volcanic horn, or crag, overlooking the sea. It is a many-towered fortress, once the home of the famous seer Alaundo, and preserves his predictions along with all the written records and learning of the Realms that can be assembled. The price for any traveler to enter the Keep proper is a book. Those wishing to examine any writing in the Keep's library must gift Candlekeep with a new tome of no less than 10,000 gp value. The monks of Candlekeep (who claim to be non-denominational, and call themselves the Avowed) also purchase certain books brought to them and even com-



Inner Ward Token of Candlekeep

mission agents in great secrecy to procure writings they desire to possess. Those who wish to browse in the library must normally be sponsored by a known mage of power, so many books given to Candlekeep in payment are minor spellbooks.

This community is ruled by the Keeper of the Tomes, assisted by the First Reader (the second in authority and traditionally the most learned sage of the monastery). There are up to eight Great Readers under these two offices, who are assisted by the Chanter, the Guide, and the Gatewarden. The Chanter leads the endless chant of Alaundo's prophecies that wends its way around the citadel day and night in continuous utterance of the sage's predictions. He is spelled in this duty by three assistants, the Voices: the Voice of the North, the Voice of the East, and the Voice of the South. The Guide is in charge of teaching acolytes, and the Gatewarden deals with visitors, the security of and supplies for the community, and with the clergy, who are regarded as honored guests rather than part of the monastery's hierarchy.

The citadel bears mighty, many-layered wards that prevent anything from burning except wicks and wax, prevent the operation of teleportational magics and many other destructive spells, kill all molds and insects (such as paper wasps), prohibit the entry of bookworms, and have other, secret properties. Because of these wards candle lamps are often used, but no paper can ignite anywhere in the Keep. An additional ward, whose token



is shown at the far left, prohibits entry into the Inner Rooms except to those bearing a token.¹⁰ The Inner Rooms are where the most powerful magical tomes are kept and where none but the Great Readers may go, except in the direct company of the Keeper or the First Reader.

The central, highest fortress of the Keep is surrounded by a terraced rock garden of many trees, where natural springs rise and bubble down the rocks in small cascades and pools. These beautiful grounds descend to a ring of buildings along the inside of the massive outer walls: guesthouses, stables, granaries, a warehouse, an infirmary, a temple to Oghma, and shrines to Deneir, Gond, and Milil.

Except in cases of illness or when someone joins the order as an acolyte, no visitor can remain in Candlekeep for more than 10 days at a time, or enter the monastery less than a month after leaving it. Order in the Keep is kept by the Gatewarden's five underofficers: four Watchers (who take turns patrolling the monastery and watching the land and sea around from its tallest towers) and the Keeper of the Portal (or gate guard), all five of whom have 12 armed monks (all experienced warriors) as assistants. These underofficers are also said to wield magical rods and rings to enforce their will.

Acolytes are robed in black. Seekers (full brothers) wear robes of mauve. The Seekers are the lowest monks.

They do research and fetch and carry. Above them are the Scribes, who copy out works to order or compile books from various sources in the library for sale—the chief source of income for the community. (Visitors are forbidden to write in the library.) Over them are the Chanter and the Readers, from whose ranks the offices of the Avowed are filled (and who vote to fill vacancies). All the underofficers wear brown homespun, while holders of the high offices wear robes of various colors that bear adornments of gold thread and stripes of white. Only the Keeper of the Tomes can wear robes all of white. Travelers who enter the Keep proper clad all in white can expect to be stripped on the spot or cast out.

The current Keeper of the Tomes is Ulaunt, a proud and haughty minor mage. It is well not to cross him. The traveler should humble himself to avoid doing so or try to keep out of the Keeper's notice. Unfortunately, all petitioners who enter the central Keep must sit at Ulaunt's left shoulder for at least one eveningfeast meal and endure his searching questions. The current First Reader, Tethtoril, is often mistaken by visitors for the Keeper because of his intelligent, regal, and sensitive demeanor. Ulaunt rather resents this.

Candlekeep has but one absolute rule: "Those who destroy knowledge, with ink, fire, or sword, are themselves destroyed." Here, books are more valuable than people.

¹⁰Tokens are built into the staves of office borne by the Keeper, the Gatewarden, and the First Reader. These are known as *glow staves* for their most-often-used power. If one fails to utter or think of a watchword when passing a ward boundary by means of a token, all bearers of other ward tokens are instantly made aware of the location of the ward breaching, regardless of where the other token bearers are on Faerûn.



Daggerford

This self-styled city is really a town of about 300 folk that stands in the shadow of the castle of the Duke of Daggerford. Daggerford is named for a brave boy, Tyndal, sent ahead of his family wagon to find a place to ford the Shining River one evening some 400 summers ago. He was set upon by lizard men, and—armed only with a dagger—slew six of them and held off the rest until reinforcements arrived. The dukes of Daggerford claim direct descent from Tyndal, and their arms display a bloody silver dagger on a deep blue field.

The dukes of Daggerford claim all the lands from the estate of Floshin, south as far as the Dragonspear fields (the lands of Dragonspear Castle), east to the edge of the Misty Forest, and west to the verges of Lizard Marsh and the coast. They actually control far less—from about a half-day's ride north of Daggerford, where their forces meet up with road patrols from Waterdeep at a little pond called Waypost Water, east to the hills around the Laughing Hollow, and south to the hamlet of Bowshot. These lands take in about 20 farming hamlets. The ducal lands are home to about 1,000 folk in all.

The walled town is the largest stop on the Trade Way between Waterdeep and Soubar. Its largely wooden buildings huddle in the lee of a hill

crowned by Daggerford Castle, which is surrounded by a grassy commons and guards a bridge across the Shining River. (The old ford's still there, beside the bridge.) It is home to human craftfolk, a few halflings, and a handful of folk of other races.

The townsfolk have a charter from the duke that allows their own Council of Guilds, a masked council styled after the Lords of Waterdeep, to govern the town. All able-bodied townsfolk must serve in the militia, although only a small number are normally on duty. They spend most of their time on road patrols, though a close watch is kept on Lizard Marsh.

Daggerford has temples to Chauntea and Lathander, and shrines to Tempus and Tyrnora. Chauntea's temple is called the Harvest House, and it is governed by Lady Priestess Merovyna.¹¹ The temple of Lathander, Morningglow Tower, is under the supervision of Lightlord Liam Sunmist.

The Ford is a busy trading town, doing a lot of trade in horses, cattle, and repacking for merchants and drovers who don't wish to enter Waterdeep. Caravans are allowed to camp across the road from the town (next to the aromatic tannery), and most merchants going into town to escape the smells will find the town ordinary indeed. The most splendid building in town is undoubtedly the Guildmasters' Hall. It is surrounded by the no-nonsense homes and shops of folk who work

¹¹Merovyna is a LG hf P8, who administers 14 priests and about 30 lay brothers.

Liam Sunmist is a LG hm P9. His temple stands beside the ducal castle, and the noble family are worshippers. The shrine to Tempus, the Table of the Sword, is administered by a strict warrior from Waterdeep, Baergon Bluesword, CN hem F5/P5.

The shrine to Tyrnora, Fairfortune Hall, is run by Bando the Lame, a NG half-m P6.



hard every day. Few seem to look for more in life than the next silver piece!

Carpenters work busily making chests and crates from lumber brought in from Bowshot, and no less than three smiths turn out everything from intricate locks to broad axes. There are several jewelers in town who can't hope to compete with the great cutters of Waterdeep, but will eagerly buy any decent stones they can get from passing merchants or adventurers.

The local militia, under the stone-faced Sherlen Spearslayer, is always hiring fighting folk, because their best swords are always being hired away by caravan masters, going off to the mercenary hiring fairs of Waterdeep, or trying their hands at adventuring. The militia is always busy patrolling the claimed ducal lands, and many youths and adventurers down on their luck have spent a season fighting brigands, lizard men, and the occasional predatory monster.

Daggerford is also home to a retired adventurer-mage, Delfen Yellowknife, who dwells in a tower on the town wall and always has at least a trio of apprentices. He's content to make a good living tutoring every wealthy Waterdhavian youngster who dreams of becoming a great mage.

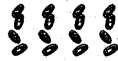
The youthful duke, Pwyll Greatshout Daggerford, is seldom seen in town. He's either out hunting or in the castle planning how to defend the land he has and enrich his family and his people by shrewd investments. There are recurring plans to dredge the river and make Daggerford an important harbor, but I suspect the duke, like

me, thinks there's no point in trying to compete with nearby Waterdeep.

A lot of travelers will probably stop in Daggerford at one time or another, using it as a base to explore Waterdeep from, so a few mentions of local establishments may prove useful. There's one tavern worthy of a visit, the Lady Luck, dealt with after the rest.

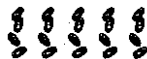
Places of Interest in Daggerford Shops

Derval's Bright Blade *Weaponsmith*



This smithy is the best of the three in town. The human smiths Cromach and Wayfel are the others. Cromach does serviceable work, but "as shaky as Wayfel's best" is a common local saying. The master smith at Derval's Bright Blade, Derval Iron eater, is the head of a respected local dwarf family that has done most of the building in stone around town. Derval claims to make the finest swords, axes, and spear blades from Waterdeep to Baldur's Gate, and his work is popular.

Farrel's Fine Jewels and Apparel *Exotic Fabrics and Jewelry*



This shop is the largest store in town. An outlet of a Waterdhavian trading company, it sells cotton, silk, rare furs, and thread imported from Calimshan, the Tashalar, and even more exotic regions—at prices even higher than



you'd pay for them in Waterdeep.

Farrel has an eye for matching hues and for resetting jewelry of dubious history. He buys and sells interesting gems and adornments of all sorts. His shop is worth a look if you're too rich to care what things cost.

Korbus's Jewels and Fine Ornaments

Jeweler and Gem Appraiser



The front window of this small shop almost always displays its long-nosed, wheezing owner, the gnome jeweler Korbus Brightjewel, hard at work on small, exquisite pieces of jewelry. As good as any Waterdhavian or Calishite finecrafter, he's regularly visited by passing merchants eager to buy his latest earrings, pectorals, ornamental bracers, dangle garters, and jeweled belts and gloves. Locals say Korbus uses magic to give his work the striking beauty it has. He's expert at identi-



fying gems—even magical ones. The nobles of Waterdeep keep him busy with special orders for their ladies.

Taverns

The Happy Cow



This pleasant tavern stands just inside Daggerford's northern gate, the Farmers' Gate. It features blended beer made by the halfling owner, Fulbar Hardcheese, that tastes like almonds, and excellent sharpcrumble cheese (lovely crumbly white stuff—3 cp per handwheel) made on Fulbar's family farm. The Cow caters to farmers, who sit here nursing tankards at all hours. Locals say Fulbar is a rich and successful adventurer who retired here not long ago. Fulbar says nothing about his past.

River Shining Tavern



This tavern is exclusive indeed, with prices to outstrip most establishments in Waterdeep: Stout is 1 gp per tankard and wine as much as 10 gp per tall-glass! The duke and many traveling Waterdhavian nobles have been known to eat here, and the tavern's main hall serves as the meeting room of the Council of Guilds. By choice, some townsfolk only see the inside of the tavern when coming to Council meetings.

Run by the Delimbiyr family this establishment claims to be Daggerford's oldest tavern. It's also the closest thing in town to an inn—for a few noble patrons of the loftiest position and wealth.



Lady Luck Tavern

Tavern



This two-story former warehouse caters to soldiers and adventurers. Its proprietor, Owenden Orcslayer, is the son of a man who was given the warehouse as a reward for slaying orcs who'd killed the owners of the warehouse in a raid. It is a popular place for taletellers and funseekers alike. The preponderance of weapons in the hands of those who know how to use them makes for a relatively safe drinking spot, not a rough place.

The Place

Both levels of the warehouse have been opened up into a single lofty room, with balconies all around it at varying levels. Each balcony contains a booth for patrons and is linked to at least two other balconies by broad flights of stairs. The tipsy are advised to get down to street level before they become too drunk to safely do so. Every night someone falls or at least stumbles on the stairs.

In the center of the taproom is a massive stone pillar bearing the weight of the ceiling. It has a ladder of iron hooks up one side. It is used to display the battered shields, personal runes, or other mementos of patrons who've died in battle or disappeared while off adventuring or on a military mission. Any toast given in the tavern must include a salute to the pillar and the words: "To those who have fallen before us." Those

who brings in the relics of a fallen comrade are given a free drink of whatever they want.

The walls of the tavern are hung with weapons, armor, banners, spitted beast heads, and similar trophies of battle brought in by various patrons. The most striking of these is the huge, mummified wing of a black dragon slain in a volcano. The heat baked and dried its outstretched wing, and when an adventurer—the lone survivor of the party that slew it—dared to return to the lair nine years later, he recovered not only the dragon's treasure hoard, but the wing. It now hangs over the taproom like a soft black canopy, depending from the ceiling on eight stout chains.

The Prospect

This tavern is named for the goddess Tymora, patron of adventurers, and despite the memorial pillar, the expressed mood of patrons is always an enthusiastic "Dare everything!" and "Let's be adventuring, then!" The entire northeast wall of the taproom is covered by a huge, splendid color map of the Realms from Calimshan to the Spine of the World, and the Moonshaes to Raurin. News and rumors of treasure finds, dragon sightings, and possible treasures are eagerly discussed, as are tidings of war from anywhere in Faerûn.

The Provender

The Lady serves salted nuts, cheese on hardbread,¹² and sugared bread-

¹²To us, hardbread is a rye cracker—or Scandinavian crispbread.



sticks. In winter, there's also stew made of beef, game, parsnips, and fish. It's thick, brown, greasy, and salty. If you're chilled, it warms you up, and that's about all the good I can muster to say of it.

That's all the food one can get, but most patrons come here because they're thirsty, not hungry. Accordingly, the Lady offers bitterroot beer (a smoky, acquired taste), zzar, sherry, and ale.

The Prices

All the food is 3 cp per serving and comes on wooden platters. Hungry people will need two servings. Drink

is sold by the tankard or tallglass only, at Waterdhavian prices.¹³ The wine list is meager, but from time to time merchants bring vintages from afar, and Owenden serves these wines as long as his stock holds out. These exotics often include rollrum (a dark, licorice-laced Tashlutan drink, which has a cool, clear, minty aftertaste), a favorite of many Sword Coast sailors.

Travelers' Lore

In the Lady, one drink always sits untouched on the bar. It's for Tymora herself, should she enter. Woe betide the visitor who touches this silver goblet—ejection and a heavy enforced offering at the shrine of Tymora (Fairfortune Hall) are the least penalty. Visitors who object to this are likely to find a yard of steel through their middles in short order. Six people have so died, and more than a dozen have made offerings—but twice in Owenden's time, the goblet has been suddenly and silently wreathed in flame, and the wine within has vanished. Patrons believe Tymora herself drank with them.

At least two wizards have hidden coins or magic somewhere in the Lady and then gone adventuring—never to return. One was said to be an illusionist, and the other was a transmuter. A few people have tried to cast *dispel magic* on everyday tavern items on the theory that the treasure might be polymorphed or hidden by an illusion, thus far to no avail.

¹³Use the prices given in *Volo's Guide to Waterdeep* under the Inn of the Dripping Dagger—or simplify to the following: ale, 1 cp/tankard; stout, 2 cp/tankard; mead, 3 cp; zzar, 6 cp; sherry, 7 cp; whiskey, 1 sp; and all wines, 1 sp/tallglass.



The Friendly Arm

This walled hamlet located on the Coast Way several days north of Beregost consists of a stone keep (the inn) with stables, gardens, a horse pond, and caravan wagon sheds. It also features a few houses, a large meeting hall with a grand many-pillared entrance, and a temple to Garl Glittergold, chief god of the gnomes.

The Friendly Arm was once the hold of an evil priest of Bhaal who was destroyed in undead form by a band of adventurers led by the gnome thief and illusionist Bentley Mirrorshade. Bentley set his comrades-at-arms to work renovating the keep, and it soon opened as a fortified waystop on the Coast Way in territory often endangered by brigands and raiding bands of orcs, kobolds, bugbears, and even trolls. Though these perils have lessened somewhat since the Arm was founded, the safe, clean inn is still a favorite stop.

Places of Interest in The Friendly Arm Temples

The Temple of Wisdom

This low building has interior walls studded with gems and gold nuggets. Guarded by many illusions, it is a temple to Garl Glittergold, primary deity of the gnomes. Human worshipers, some of whom have dubbed the place the Shrine of the Short, are welcomed here.

INNS

The Friendly Arm



Inside the walls of the Friendly Arm, peace is maintained by a common agreement among guests that this be one of the rare neutral havens in the Realms, by the magic and adventuring help might Bentley can call on,¹⁴ and by a rumor that some of the fetching human barmaids are really iron golems concealed by powerful illusions! I was unable to test this belief beyond learning at least one serving wench at the Arm has a grip like iron—before she threw me back out of the bedroom she was tidying! (Perhaps the inn was named after her. She did help me up out of the ruins of the hall table afterward.)

The energetic, wise, and affable hosts of the Arm are Bentley and his wife Gellana, who presides over the temple. She wears a circlet of gems to signify her devotion to Garl Glittergold. The pair of them are kind, very perceptive, and could probably deal an Amnian merchant out of his last copper piece.

The house they keep has large, airy rooms, and good, simple food. Everything is clean, cheerful, and uncrowded, unless there's a meeting going on—for the Arm has become a favorite spot for business gatherings and neutral ground negotiations alike.

¹⁴There was a murder at the Arm recently, and the murderer was swiftly apprehended—with the magical aid of a mysterious cloaked man who some say was no less than Khelben “Blackstaff” Arunsun, the Lord Mage of Waterdeep! There have always been rumors that Bentley could call on folk from afar and that some sort of gate exists in or near the Arm—perhaps in the cellars of the old keep.



Gillian's Hill

This hamlet stands on the east side of the Coast Way a half-day's ride south of Daggerford¹⁵ and about as long a ride from Liam's Hold. The community is named for a now-dead half-elven ranger of great beauty. Gillian Cantilar dwelt here in a long-vanished house atop a wooded knoll overlooking the road. Today, Gillian's Hill is a grass-girt mount topped by a covered fire cairn used as a signal beacon to warn Daggerford of approaching enemy armies—from Dragonspear Castle or the Serpent Hills, presumably.

Typical of a hundred or more small farming settlements in the Sword Coast region, Gillian's Hill wouldn't even be mentioned in this guide except for a surprisingly good shop there and a dungeon that has both lured many adventurers hither—and slain many. The dungeon seems to be a truly ancient human tomb—as old as Netheril, or older—where someone of magical power and political might was laid to rest. Just who was entombed here isn't clear. The tomb was pillaged long ago—from the Underdark beneath it! The location now serves as a spell-guarded entry to the Realms Below.

Unfortunately, those ancient and mighty binding spells originally set to stabilize and guard the tomb make it an ideal lair for creatures of the Underdark. About 20 winters ago, a band of illithids used it as a base from

which they stealthily stalked and raided passing caravan merchants, controlling the minds of unfortunate victims to make them lure many others to a mindless doom.

A brave band of adventurers defeated the mind flayers, but warned that the danger could well recur. It seems that an even greater evil has moved in: A Harper note was found recently on the slopes of the hill that said only: "Beware—Phaerimm! Spread the warning!" The writer of the note presumably perished beneath the hill, as no further news has come to light as to its authorship—or its subject.

From the surface, the tomb in the hill can only be entered by wandering about until one finds the precise location of one of several invisible portals—snatch gates that whisk any person or object entering them into the heart of the hill. Egress is by the same method, although the exit spots inside the tomb are apparently different sites than the entry or arrival locales, and hard to find.

Attempts to tunnel into the hill uncover stone walls that emit bolts of lightning¹⁶ when exposed to air—bolts that continue to lash out until earth is thrown onto them, and they're covered again! This magical lightning can easily stab across the trade road, imperiling all passing traffic. Several mages of power have tried and failed to remove the spells that cause this deadly effect.

¹⁵The location of Gillian's Hill is shown on the map in the section on the Way Inn, later in this chapter.

¹⁶These effects are like two bolts of *chain lightning*, each causing 12d6 points of damage per round, when one translates Elminster's description into AD&D® game terms. He added the dry admonition, "Leave this alone, if ye have any sense—but (sigh), ye won't, will ye?"



Places of Interest in Gillian's Hill Shops

Torleth's Treasures

Oddities, Curios, Antiques, and Junk

This shop is a large, ramshackle old barn that has been extended in random directions by diverse hands over many years so that its floor and roof change level often and alarmingly, and a forest of rough tree trunks studded with pegs that hold merchandise stand here, there, and everywhere holding the roof up. Customers can often be found wandering in bewilderment in the dimly lit aisles, searching for the way out.

Torleth Mindulspeer is a tall, cadaverously thin man of dry wit and a gloomy manner. He delights in buying old things, garbage out of ruins or abandoned buildings, and oddities dug up or brought back from the far corners of the Realms. Then he sells them to passersby.

Want a dancer's mask from the vanished realm of Valashar (now part of Tethyr)? A mirror that once hung in a Calishite harem—before someone put a magical painting of a slithering snake on it that circles the glass by itself, moving constantly? Some old rope, stained here and there with the blood of adventurers? Some dusty wine bottles from a shipwreck, terribly old but contents unknown? A book in a language nobody seems



able to read? A stuffed wyvern head with one tooth missing? Some old court clothes from Calimport? Torleth will sell them to you—for whatever low price you can both agree to shake hands on. It's a place some adventurers refuse to pass without striding in for just a quick look around—a look that can last all morning, of course.

On a recent visit, I found a scabbard that was once worn in Evermeet—now minus its gems and magic, of course, but still a splendid trophy. Thieves, bards, and actors get many of their costumes and props here, Torleth told me—and I believe him.

There's a tale told in Gillian's Hill—

among the stolid farmers, who lack an inn or tavern and gather of evenings when the weather's good in each other's orchards to smoke and share the contents of a keg rolled out of one of their cellars or bought from a caravan—of someone who found the crown of a barony in the Vilhon Reach lands in Torleth's and bought it for 33 pieces of gold! There's another about an artist's sketchbook that contained a powerful spell written in code and scattered in the illustrations throughout the pages that a sharp-eyed wizard had for 11 gp. A third tale tells of a magical *ring of resistance* sold by Torleth for 4,000 gp that turned out to have several other powers, such as the ability to emit an invisible sword blade that could cut magical barriers and the means to let the wearer *jump*.

Such rings are called *Harvyn's rings* according to Elminster, after the mage who devised them. There are—as far as Harvyn's writings can be trusted—only six in existence, and their powers are considerable.¹⁷

Torleth also sells tents from armies that no longer exist, polearms gleaned from battlefields up and down the Coast, helmets that fit giants and helmets only a sprite could don, ship steering oars that are 50 feet long, teeth from dragons that aren't much shorter, stone lions and weirder beasts from half a hundred demolished mansions, fading coats-of-arms (on shields, wall bosses, and surcoats) of forgotten noble families, coracles, and more.

¹⁷Details of this magical item, furnished by Elminster, appear in Appendix III of this guidebook.



Julkoun

This village, once known as Shining, is upstream, or northeast, of the Laughing Hollow. It stands on the banks of the River Shining, or Delimbijr. As it is located roughly halfway between the two, it looks to Daggerford and Secomber for supplies. However, it is home to farmers of independent mind.

Julkoun, for whom the village is now named, gave the hamlet of Shining new importance some 80 winters ago when he built a large stone mill and a shrine to Chauntea. Julkoun is long dead, but his gristmill is, still run by his descendants and has been joined by a clothyard mill that produces whole cloth for sale in Waterdeep or Amn.

This pastoral village of about 40 homes holds busy farmfolk, pleasant gardens, low stone-and-stump walls and hedgerows, and many strong manure smells. Its grassy streets are often full of grazing goats, sheep, and cattle. Julkoun is notable for an inn of surprising excellence and for some interesting local legends.

Places of Interest in Julkoun

Shops

Julkoun's Old Mill

Flour Mill (Gristmill)



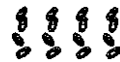
This huge, impressive stone mill and warehouse grinds, stores, mixes, and bags hulled or crushed grain,

flour, and seeds. It is always busy, and employs over 60 folk, almost all of them descendants of Julkoun. Cats, kept to keep down rodents, and small sling-wielding boys, whose job it is to drive off birds, are everywhere, and the mill always has enough output on hand to sell a traveler a belt sack or enough human-sized sacks to fill six wagons. The prices aren't below those elsewhere, but the product, carefully scrutinized by the mill staff, is "as good as Goldenfields"—and that's high praise from Amn northward.

The senior millers, Alaslagh Eljulkoun, Taunner Eljulkoun, and Irythyl Eljulkoun, sometimes buy nuts for blending, to make nut flour. Irythyl's dark eyes miss nothing, and local rumors whisper that she's a Harper.

Shining River Mill

Clothyard Mill



This barnlike wooden mill still looks new. Run by four millers for absentee Waterdhavian owners, it produces a coarse brown looseweave little better than homespun in appearance, but valued for its toughness. It's often used as the base material for sacks or tarpaulins that are made prettier and more watertight by a layer of finer material. The mill also produces a finer, smooth gray material known as shimmersteel for its overall hue and habit of catching the light. It is much favored in the Coast lands for use in cloaks and hoods.



Bolts of cloth come out of this mill. Although the millers will sell scraps to passersby, they're not tailors, and aren't interested in selling small cuts or amounts for the making of individual garments. Locals sometimes combine funds to buy and share a whole bolt of Shining River cloth.

INNS

The Jester's Pride



This excellent inn is named for the Jester of Julkoun and is akin to a halfling hole or a druid's roothouse in appearance. It's dug out of a hillside and planted over with a rock garden and rough stone walls. The roots of trees overhead curve across the

ceilings, and many little round windows let in the light to the south. Dwarves, gnomes, and halflings all feel at home here, and those who don't detest caves and damp, earthy smells should also enjoy the charming tile-floored passages, which jaunt up and down in gentle slopes. The cheery service and luxurious furnishings should delight anyone—my chamber had a copper tub set into the floor, with piped hot water!

The inn is run by the Yevershoulder halfling family, who have found no less than six delightfully impish—and breathtakingly beautiful! — half-elven ladies to serve at the inn as chambermaids. They all give as their name "Elsharee," and may in fact share that name for all I know. Some



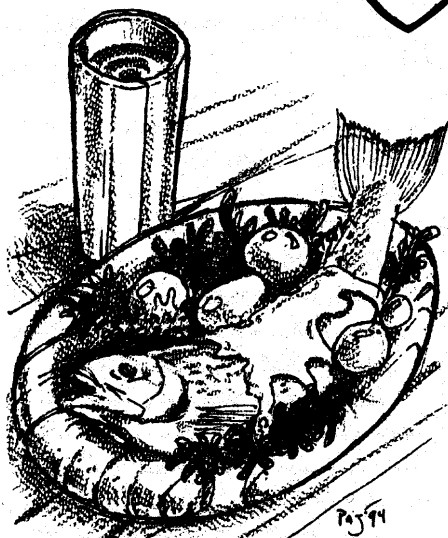


lonely merchants seem to arrange their travels up the Delimbiyr to include Julkoun just to see them—and I suspect that some of the odd folk I saw dropping by on several moonlit nights knew how to harp—if you catch my meaning—and were welcome here because of it.

The Jester's Pride underlies a wooded ridge that is surrounded by extensive herb and floral plantings. The ridge itself is crisscrossed by many meandering paths that link several little bowers with benches for guests to rest or relax in. By night, these sheltered garden refuges seem to find use both for romantic frolics and for somewhat shady business meetings full of code phrases, false names, and dangerous-sounding plans. Perhaps I was overhearing visiting adventurers—or perhaps there's more going on in Julkoun than one might think.

The Jester for whom the inn is named was a local thief-adventurer of mysterious powers. He seems to have been an acrobat of astonishing skill, and to have commanded exotic magics. He disappeared some 20 summers ago, presumably coming to a sticky end, but until then enjoyed a colorful career of robbing rich merchants, nobles, and wizards who came through the area—and surviving!

The Jester was a man of unusual height who hid his identity behind a jester's mask. The bells of his headgear were silent and were actually magical tokens of various sorts that afforded him lucky escapes on many occasions. Several of his victims



hunted him with ready spells or many swords or both, and he somehow outfaced them and sent them fleeing, their hireswords slain and their plans shattered. (Tales of the Jester's escapades come complete with furious debates as to whether he was really the god Mask, a dragon in human shape, a Master Harper, a deranged archmage, or a mighty being from another plane.)

The Jester vanished suddenly, leaving his lair—and whatever he'd managed to keep of the vast amounts of treasure he'd wrested from rightful owners—hidden. Unless someone's found it since (and no hint of this has found its way into the local tales of the Jester's daring), a king's treasury's worth of coins, gems, finery, and magic waits hidden somewhere near Julkoun. Some stories say the lair is elsewhere, reached via an invisible *gate* in midair above a local ruin or atop a local tor—an entrance revealed to an unintentional observer one



Four Daggers Fowl

Named because, lacking a spit, one can use four daggers, this method prepares a trio of good-sized groundfowl (or more, if the birds are small) for a hearty meal. Note the use of a trough. This metal basin of the Sword Coast lands can be replaced by an inverted helm or shield on the trail (albeit clumsily), and is an innovation that more cooks in the Realms would do well to adopt.

Take first at least three grouse, quail, or partridge. Cut off their necks, clean out their innards, and run them on a fair-sized spit. Submerge in a trough of old wine, port, or sherry. Put the necks in a small pot with water, a few grains of salt, and a few drops of wine, port, brandy, or sherry. Lacking these, if you have beer, use only that and not salt nor water. Boil the fowl in the trough and the necks in their pot over a warm, not blazing, fire. Into the

pot, as it warms, put cloves and raisins or grapes that have withered had, crushed almonds or walnuts, chopped ginger, and chopped onions (or better, leeks). When this reaches a rolling boil, cover and remove, and build up the fire.

Set the spit over the flames. Let the feathers flame and the skin blacken and crack. Thereafter, turn whenever the juice bubbles forth. To keep the fowl from drying out overmuch, baste them from the pot wherein the necks were boiled—or better, pour the pot out into a clean trough, and roll the sizzling spit in it from time to time, putting it back over the flames between. When first a wing or other part falls into the fire, fetch it out with a sword blade, tongs, or a flatknife server. The birds are then done. Remove them from the flames and eat them as soon as they are cool enough not to burn thy upper lip.

moonlit night by the Jester's use of it. Some say the invisible portal is reached by leaping off a cliff or crumbling parapet wall in just the right place—and that those who misjudge its location will plunge to their deaths.

Whatever the truth about the Jester,¹⁸ the inn that bears his name serves excellent food. I especially recommend the fresh river trout on toast with a sauce of lemon, cream, and pepper, and the delicately prepared venison. Tables at the Pride always sport dishes of interesting relishes and sauces made on the premises. Some are fiery, but others are subtle delights—and approach the finest

fare of the Elven Court, I'm told by elven friends. The wine cellar is excellent—I was astonished to find Saerloonian Glowfire and the pale green wines of northern Calimshan (both 1 sp per tallglass, or 3 sp per bottle) among the more usual winter wine and local vintages.

I've included here a hearty recipe from the inn's kitchens because of its usefulness to travelers on the trail everywhere in Faerûn. Another trail tip from the cooks at the Pride: When reheating beef stew for a later meal, add some basil, chopped garlic, and chopped or crushed lemon or other fruit—berries will do—to liven it.

¹⁸Local rumors say the Jester has recently been seen again, upriver—but I was unable to find word of this outside Julkoun.



Kheldrivver

This hamlet nestles between grassy knolls at the eastern end of the Troll Hills.¹⁹ Once an isolated monastic community dedicated to the veneration of Oghma, it was raided many times by trolls and several times overrun, with the monks all slain, driven out, or forced to flee into hiding.

Some 200 years ago, all the monks were dead, and their hold was in ruins. An Amnian adventuring band of vicious reputation, the Circle of Scythes, came to the ruined monastery in search of spellbooks and other riches, but disappeared while exploring the monastic cellars. A servant left with the horses told wild stories of many-tentacled things rising out of the ruins with the adventurers struggling in their grasp.

Other adventuring bands went out to the ruins of the House of the Binder (as the monastery was known), but came back empty-handed. The cellars had fallen in, and there was no trace of spellbooks, adventurers, or any monsters beyond all-too-numerous trolls. The rubbery-skinned menaces took over the hold for some years, until they grew so strong as to imperil all use of the trade road. A great war band was whelmed in Amn to deal with them under the leadership of one Kheldrivver, a warrior-turned-swordseller who promised to sweep the area clear of trolls and keep it that way.

He did so, and transformed the

House into a stone-walled cluster of fortresslike, stone-turreted homes, with slate roofs. As little as possible was made of wood so that fire could be used with enthusiasm in the event of troll attacks.

The community became home to a few mercenary warriors who wished to retire. Under Kheldrivver's leadership, they gave protection and dry, guarded warehouses to farmers wishing to settle in the area. Many times since then the trolls have been hurled back, and Kheldrivver's Hold, which over the years has become known just as Kheldrivver, remains a farming center today, visited by many enterprising merchants who sell the splendors of far-off places and buy fresh produce for sale in Waterdeep and the cities of the Sword Coast.

Kheldrivver himself disappeared mysteriously soon after the rebuilding of the monastery. Locals whisper that he was definitely digging alone in some of the deeper local cellars, in search of whatever monks' treasure might remain—and most folk believe he found something and then something else found *him*. Local legend now speaks of him being seen only by night—with stag's antlers growing from his head!

There are pits, walled off corners, and stone piles in many cellars in Kheldrivver. Most folk don't speak of them, while others let adventurers go down into their own cellars in return for fees of 50 gold pieces or more. While certain village people may be getting rich on this, so far now adventur-

¹⁹The location of Kheldrivver is shown on the map in the section on Roaringshore found later in this chapter.



ers have returned from the cellars any more wealthy than when they went in.

Places of Interest in Kheldrivver

Shops

Ungairmer's Bootery

Secondhand Shop and General Gear



The foreporch of this converted warehouse has a large overhang, big enough to shelter horses at the hitching rail that runs along the porch front. Many lamps hang here, and of evenings this is the closest thing Kheldrivver has to a tavern. Tall lidded tankards of ale are sold by stout, placid Oeth Ungairmer at 5 cp each to all who'd like to gather for a chat, perching on old chairs, chests, barrels and the like. A spell cast each night by Oeth's daughter, the fat and good-natured minor sorceress Shulunda, keeps insects away from the porch while folk chat and play at cards, shirestone, fiveknights, and other board games.

Ungairmer's shop buys and sells secondhand material of all sorts, from sails and wagons—a wizard once even reported finding something he excitedly called a spelljamming helm there, though to most observers it looked like an old chair in need of repairs—to daggers, belt buckles, and old boots. Ungairmer calls his place a bootery because he can order in new, custom-made boots from corvisers in Waterdeep. They usually cost a steep 20 to 25 gp

per pair. Older footwear, and most things in the shop, range from 3 cp to 50 gp in price. Wagons and harness are the top-priced items. Waychests and good gear that farmers can use, such as rope, spikes, and plows, are in the mid-price range. Buckles, daggers, and the like are at the low end. It's a useful place to poke about in, though nothing beside Torleth's Treasures in Gillian's Hill (also covered elsewhere in this guide).

Inns

The Troll's Nose



This inn's name comes from the stuffed, painted, incredibly long (almost 6 feet!) troll's nose mounted on its signboard. From time to time, local wags hang lamps or "borrowed" undergarments on it. Unfortunately, it's the only exciting thing about the inn.

The fare at the Nose is solid but unexciting beef stews, thickly sliced breads, and diced vegetables smothered in brown sauces. The Nose is a dank, dimly lit place of stone, looking rather like a cramped old castle inside. Its low-ceilinged dining room is decorated with blackened troll skulls everywhere—in rows on shelves, along the mantel, and hanging from hooks on pillars and over the tables. I felt as if I was in the midst of a minstrels' mummery show.

In addition to its unique decor, the Nose is as expensive as an top-rung Waterdhavian inn. However, it has proven a haven to many a troll-harried traveler.



LATHTARL'S LANTERN

This small fishing village appears on few maps of the Realms, and most merchants don't even know it exists²⁰ Part of this seclusion is because of its marshy surroundings, and part is due to its proximity to the dangerous lich hold of Larloch's Crypt. (*Larloch's Crypt* has become corrupted over the years into *Warlock's Crypt*, and that's as good a warning to travelers, I suppose.)

Lathtarl was a pirate some 300 winters ago whose greed drove him to fall afoul of the elven ships out of Evermeet. Forced to flee for his life in a sea fight, he ran his ship ashore here as a wreck, most of his crew dead and himself a cripple, the arm and leg on one side of his body useless.

The wreck gave him an idea, and he became a wrecker, luring ships ashore by lighting many lanterns along the coast to fool sailors running along the coast in storms into thinking that they'd reached Baldur's Gate, Orlumbor, or some other secure harbor. Instead, if they turned ashore they found rocks, with a pebble beach just beyond. Sailors who didn't perish in the wreck were slain by Lathtarl's surviving crew or held for sale into slavery or for ransom. Calishite slavers and all the Sword Coast pirates soon discovered Lathtarl's existence, and made him a transfer point for slaves and contraband—their ships would stand well offshore on clear nights, and boats would cross the rocky bar from ship to shore and back.

The village supported itself by fishing and was also kept busy, small, and free from harassment by land-based neighbors due to frequent lizard man raids. The mouth of the Winding Water is shallow and marshy, without any harbor—and the miles upon miles of silt and marsh grasses are home to many lizard men.

These marshes carry an ill history of their own. Local rumors speak of at least two dead kings somewhere out in the fens. One was Ring Tredarath, a rebel lord of Tethyr long ago who fled with about a hundred armed retainers to found a new realm out of reach of his foes. His hard-riding band, heavily laden with all his regalia and treasury, blundered into the marshes in an evening fog and perished by drowning (some in quicksand) and as dinner for many marsh monsters. Gold pieces and a jeweled dagger have been found, and at least one lizard man has been seen during a raid wearing a golden crown, but cartloads of gold and gems are still lost in the marshes.

The other king was Bevedaur of Cortryn, a vanished realm that is now northeastern Amn. He camped in the marsh while pursuing his favored sport, serpent hunting, and was overwhelmed with all his court by a night attack from an army of lizard men. Ghostly knights are still said to drift over the marsh by night, spectral blades in hand.

Lathtarl is long dead of disease, and several times the Lords of Waterdeep and merchant houses of that

²⁰See the entry on Roaringshore later in this chapter for a map that shows its location.



city and of Amn have placed agents in the village to intercept and battle pirates and smugglers. Threats have been made that the entire village would be burned to the ground—and the villagers slaughtered—if the practice of light luring continued. These threats have been heeded, but there's still an occasional real shipwreck in the vicinity, and pirates have taken to running stolen ships ashore here that they can't use as pirate vessels (usually old, slow, leaky cogs).

Lathtarl's Lantern would not be mentioned in this guide (few today embrace the old nobles' sport of lizard man hunting, and adventurers looking for lost crowns always seem to hear guiding rumors without benefit of a guidebook) except that it is also

home to a temple to Umberlee, the Grotto of the Queen, and to an inn and tavern of note, the Wailing Wave.

Places of Interest in Latharl's Lantern Temples

The Grotto of the Queen

The village of Latharl's Lantern is sheltered on the north by a crescent-shaped, rocky ridge. At the seaward end of this ridge are some tidal caves, the innermost of which has been enlarged and connected by winding stone stair tunnels to a small-spired temple on the surface. This temple is decorated with relics of wrecked ships—notably a large collection of figureheads. Most of the figureheads are larger-than-life-size



humans, but there are also mermaids, hippocampi, and more fanciful creatures. Here a staff of at least 12 human clergy (most of them True Servants of the Wave ²¹) take offerings from local fishermen, visiting pirates, and other sailors to appease the goddess or to buy her favor for voyages ahead.

The sea cave under the temple, the Grotto itself, is said to be guarded by marine undead created by the priests (lacedons, undead sharks, and the like). The Grotto is also said to be visited from time to time by the Tribute Gatherers—powerful evil creatures of the deep who serve Umberlee and take riches gathered from the temple offerings into the watery deeps for the use of Umberlee's agents and followers all along the Sword Coast. On at least one occasion, a sunken ship crewed by skeletons has risen from the deeps to ram and then fight off a pirate vessel hoping to plunder the temple.

INNS/TAVERNS

The Wailing Wave



Named for a local legend that the waves rolling in on the village's pebble beach wail on certain moonlit nights with the mournful cries of all who've drowned in the wrecks off Latharl's Lantern, this is one of the wildest taverns—and busiest inns—on the Sword Coast. Unlike its rival pirate base, Roaringshore, Latharl's Lantern remains inaccessible and little-known, which makes it ideal for slavers and others who must deal in



illicit cargoes that are bulky, require special care, or are hard to hide. The Wave is a low-ceilinged, smoky, ramshackle roadhouse like a hundred others in the Realms. Former stables out back have been converted into two rickety floors of night rental rooms. It is not much of an inn, but the marshes and wandering trolls and brigands between the village and the Coast Way make it highly unlikely that any traveler would seek out the Wave just to stay there—and visitors to Latharl's Lantern don't have much choice where they stay.

Where the Wave really shines is as a bar. Pirates, adventurers, outlaws, humanoids, half-breed monsters, and monstrosities come ashore in small boats to crowd the taproom night after night, talking business and enjoying the best stock of beverages anywhere on the Sword Coast. Most of the shady business people — and merchants — on the Coast come here often.

²¹True Servants of the Wave are specialty priests of Umberlee. They command some still-mysterious powers.



Liam's Hold

This hamlet of about 50 folk stands on the eastern side of the Trade Way about a day's travel south of Daggerford.²² A flat-topped tor of bare rock, about two acres in area, overlooks the road. It is ringed by a low stone wall, and at the south end stands a crumbling keep tower. The settlement is crammed onto the top of the tor, with its grazing and tillage fields to the east and a pasture for passing caravans to camp in just to the south, overlooked by the tower.

The tower was the fortress-home of the powerful wizard and warrior Sunder Halyndliam, whose name's been shortened locally over the years to Liam. The hamlet is named in his memory—partially because his silent armored wraith, chilling blade in hand, is said to still defend the tower against intruders. It is certain that no fewer than six thieves have been found dead at the base of the tor, having fallen from the tower during the night.

Liam is buried in a spell-guarded crypt deep under the tower. Although he's said to lie in a casket with all his spellbooks, a magical staff, an enchanted blade, and magical rings on his fingers, no adventurers, thieves, or rival wizards have succeeded in plundering his remains. They have failed because of the other-planar creatures that guard his tomb and local folk who furiously deny access to the crypt. They do so thanks to a community legend that says the tower was raised with magic and

removal of Liam's magic will cause it to topple, crushing the hamlet under falling stone. This is why every possibly magical bauble Liam possessed was buried with him.

Today, the tower is part of the Holdfast Inn, which is good enough to deserve coverage in any guidebook to Sword Coast establishments.

Places of Interest in Liam's Hold

Inns

The Holdfast Inn



This inn consists of Liam's tower, full of ornately carved stone stairs and arched windows. The tower has three two-story-high wings stretching out from it. Two stand along the parapet walls of the Hold, and the third (the kitchen and pantries) joins the stables, enfolding the inn's entry courtyard. All of the inn is built of stone. The halls are carpeted against the chill with furs atop rushes, and the bedchambers sport floor furs, window hangings to keep out cold breezes, and curtained and canopied beds.

Service at the Holdfast is attentive, with warming pans placed in the beds on cold nights, a nightkiss drink at bedside without charge, plentiful wash water and towels, warming robes for guests, and generous, filling food. A stay at the Holdfast is an experience not to be missed. Many merchants specially arrange their travels so they can stop here and relax.

²²The location of Liam's Hold is shown on the map found in the entry for the Way Inn, later in this chapter.



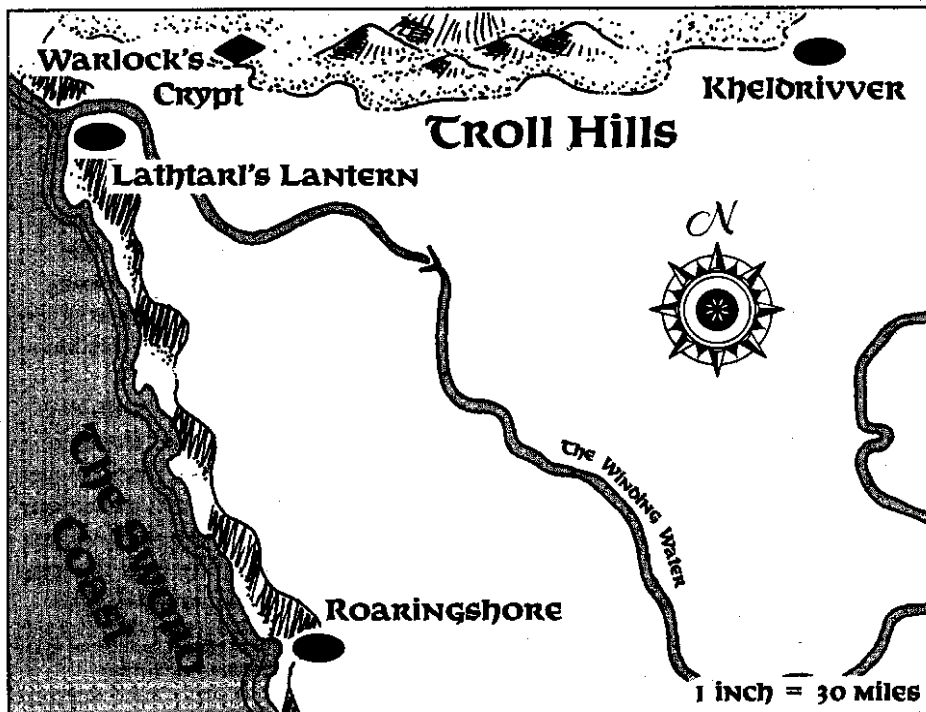
Roaringshore

This isolated village nestles in a small deepwater cove on the coast about a third of the way south from the mouth of the Winding Water toward the city of Baldur's Gate. Like Lathtarl's Lantern (see that entry), this is a pirate hold—but unlike the Lantern, the reputation of bold, lawless Roaringshore has spread far up and down the length of the Sword Coast.

Though such tales have grown in the telling, this is still a place raided at least once summer by mercenary armies of 70 or more lancers or horse archers, hired by Amn and Baldur's Gate. As a result, prominent

folk and businesses here tend to be (literally!) short-lived. Even so, two establishments of note have lasted long enough to garner well-deserved reputations: the Swordarm and the Broken Goblet.

The traveler should be aware that many pirates here are runaways, local thieves, and adventurers all out to make an impression, and perhaps attract some business as mercenary hirelings. A lot of posing goes on. This can make Roaringshore a very dangerous place for the visitor who isn't in a large, well-armed group, or obviously powerful. I had to flee it abruptly—but I did manage to learn the details about the two main attractions first.





The Broken Goblet

Tavern



When pirates and lawless folk come to brawl and carouse, their first thought is to roll into the Goblet' swords drawn, and swagger as they promenade along the raised entry dais and down toward the bar. It's the place to be seen—and the place to be killed in, if the body count of the last few years is any indication. Don't go here unless you're very good with a blade, alert, have a lot of well-armed friends with you, and are protected against poisons,

A spell such as *ironguard*²³ (which renders one immune to metal bladed weapons for a time) is an ideal protection here, but beware, this place is

strongly warded, and the defenses permit only existing defensive spells to continue. Newly cast spells are twisted and lost, without effect. The defenses also whisk all missiles (hurled glasses, daggers, darts, bolts, and arrows alike) up into gentle contact with the ceiling. This prevents broken glasses—for drink is served here in ornately carved and blown glasses, some of which are exquisitely beautiful, and rather more of which are simply rude.

The Place

The Goblet consists of a dark taproom with stone floors, massive wooden support pillars and furnishings (trestle tables, wall benches, and high-backed wooden chairs), and candle lamps. The latter can be raised and lowered on chains via ceiling pulleys and from hooks located behind the bar, and consist of wagon wheels that each support a circle of seven to nine fat candles, each set in a buckler to catch the melted wax. A favorite trick during a brawl is to leap behind the bar and undo the hooks, sending the heavy lamps plummeting down atop the tables. The danger of fire makes this tactic grounds for ejection—dead or alive.

The staff here go armed with daggers, boot knives, and steel knuckle spikes.²⁴ Overly amorous patrons are warned that the large men with many scars *are* large men with many scars, but the buxom wenches with the long lashes and ready smiles are *dopple-*



²³*Ironguard* is a 5th-level wizard spell found in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® *Adventures* hardbound.

²⁴Knuckle spikes do the same damage at a blow as a dagger, veteran users tell me.



gangers. They often respond to overly familiar touches with a dagger strike and a shift in the form of one hand into a loose curtain of flesh that can be slapped over a patron's face to smother or blind him!

The street door is guarded by two house guards with orders to keep it clear so that access is denied to none. Brawls are thus prevented from erupting on the way in and out the door and harming trade. This has the effect of allowing each patron to make a grand entrance on the raised entry dais, which overlooks the taproom from behind a safety rail. Atrophy of a long-ago brawl decorates this smoothed oak tree-trunk railing: A black-bladed battle axe split the rail in two and crashed down to bury itself haft-deep in the edge of the floor beneath. Its owner did not live long enough to get it free—so the proprietors of the tavern left it there as a warning.

From the taproom, many small, shadowy stairs lead down to jakes (a dangerous place known for stabbings and impromptu body disposals, with direct connections to the tidal sewers) and up to private drinking rooms, some of which have sliding panels offering egress to side alleys. Lighting is always scanty in the Goblet, and a *ghost pipes*²⁵ spell provides gentle background music to cover most conversations from casual eavesdropping.

The Prospect

There are constant rumors that the staff and ownership of the Goblet are

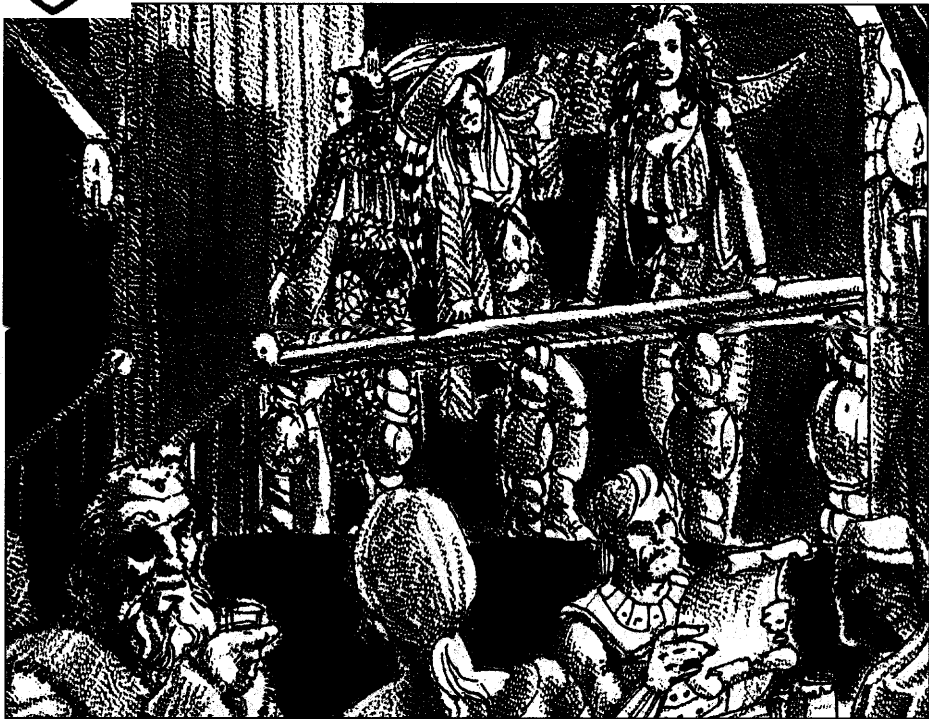


Ward Token of the Broken Goblet

not human—and consist of beings far more deadly than the doppelganger “wenches.” Most folk believe that some fell power runs the tavern. Its wardings are certainly strong, and spells have been deflected from them that hurled back or slew large mercenary attacking forces sent to cleanse or raid Roaringshore. (Those bearing a ward token can cast spells within the tavern.) The truth, according to one Harper I spoke with, is that illithids rule this tavern and use their powers to gather information about the illicit doings of the Sword Coast from the guests who come here.²⁶

²⁵*Ghost pipes* is a 2nd-level wizard spell found in the FORGOTTEN REALMS *Adventures* hardbound.

²⁶The Harper is right, Elminster confirms—after which he sarcastically thanked Volo for revealing only what is prudent about Roaringshore.



The Prices

Ale is 3 cp per tallglass, and all wine (from a vast cellar) is 4 cp per tallglass. Sherries, zzar, and Tashlutan rollrum are 1 sp per tallglass. Whiskeys and fine brandies are 2 sp per tallglass, and elverquisst is 1 gp per tallglass. A recent fad is to mix drinks with syrups and flavored waters. Such concoctions bear such names as Flaming Dragon, Drawn Dagger Down, and Moonlit Knight, and go for 1 gp each. Trying every one is the current diversion of the idly rich and danger-seekers.

The Goblet sells no food, but patrons can bring in all they like. One free glass per patron per evening is included in drink prices. If one wants to buy others, they're 1 sp

each. Many delighted merchants take away armfuls—and the prettier or more whimsical or salacious pieces fetch prices as high as 12 to 14 gp each in far-off, wealthy places such as Saerloon, Selgaunt, Suzail, Teflamm, and Westgate.

Travelers' Lore

The anonymous owners of the Goblet keep many treasure maps, wills, and written deals hidden in vaults for pirates, who pay 100 gp per page for long storage. The items are stored from when they are left until they are retrieved by the surrender of a symbolic key (usually a brass token). Rumor has it that the tokens look like brass sea shells, but no one has ever been able to definitively prove this.



The Swordarm

Inn



You'd expect the only inn in a pirate hold regularly rocked by brawls and open fighting in the streets—and often raided by mercenary armies, too—to be a crumbling, filthy, vermin-infested ruin of a place, on the verge of falling down. Well, the Swordarm was—until a powerful evil wizard decided to make it an investment. He devised a mysterious spell of great power²⁷ that entrapped his three apprentices, binding them in a mystic web of forces linked to the old stone-and-timber inn building. Their life forces hold the inn together and convert spells cast within it into raw power that binds together and repairs the place, and makes guests safe from hostile spells.

The unfortunate apprentices can be seen to this very day, two young men and a young woman clad in dusty, dangling tatters of robes, floating face-down near the ceiling of the lobby and staring down in frozen, endless horror at folk who pass below. After they were trapped, their captor and master, the mage Aulyn-tar Cowlsar, pierced the walls with many new windows, added an ornate balcony and hanging staircase, and cut a pool now full of hot tingling waters into the floor of the lobby. (This pool would be a delight to bathe in were it not for the contin-

uous feeling of being watched—due to the unfortunate apprentices, no doubt.) These changes probably mean that should anything befall the apprentices, the Swordarm will undoubtedly collapse. Until then, it's quite an impressive place.

The Place

The Swordarm is magnificent, akin to the luxurious Waterdhavian villas of richer nobles. It sports high ceilings, large windows, marble floors and window seats, and statues adorning the halls and rooms everywhere. (These statues were undoubtedly plundered by pirates from temples, grand houses, and sunken ruins up and down the Sea of Swords.) Local rumor swears Aulyn-tar spies on guests and goings-on through the carved eyes and ears of these stone figures.

Every floor of the inn has a central hall linked to a landing on the soaring hanging stairs, an audience chamber opening off the landing to the hall, a dining lounge, and guest chambers. The inn has no main dining room. Guests can elect to be served meals in their rooms, and most do. (A secret back passage is rumored to plunge down within the walls to a tunnel that runs far from Roaringshore. There it branches to open high on a cliff above the sea on one hand and in a swampy, overgrown ravine in the rolling wildernesses on the other.)

²⁷Elminster refused to give out any details of this spell *under any circumstances*. He also said that the names of the apprentices were not forgotten—but that they had done as many deeds of grasping evil as their master, and deserved their fate.



The Swordarm also offers guests a secure storage service, employing spell- and monster-guarded vaults under its imposing bulk. The roof has sliding panels in one gable that allow an agile aerial steed such as a griffon or a hippogriff, or a person employing flight magic, to arrive or leave without landing in the street below. This loft stables occupies the upper floor of the inn. The conventional stables are behind the inn, separated from it by a street. The inn is surrounded by streets and lacks any sort of yard. The stables open into a warehouse for the storage of wagons, coaches, and caravan goods.

The Prospect

The Swordarm has housed many powerful and dangerous pirates and adventurers over the years. They have come to expect—and depend on—a place that is clean, quiet, and safe. On the rare occasions when guests have offered violence to anyone, swift and sure spells (presumably those of Aulyntar, who prefers to remain unseen) have lashed out to end the matter—usually by destroying the belligerent guest, although there have been some reports of such individuals being teleported abruptly into the depths of far-off Skullport, beneath Waterdeep, or the heart of the jungles of Chult, or into the midst of Icewind Dale.

So this inn has become a neutral meeting place for deadly enemies, uneasy rivals, and swaggering folk-of-danger alike. If guests intend to do business together, however, they

tend to arrange to meet elsewhere—no one is free of the feeling that Aulyntar or his frozen apprentices are always watching and listening. Some folk are so sensitive to this feeling that they cannot stay in the inn for more than a few breaths. On the other hand, it is the safest haven in Roaringshore—unless one is a wizard. There are several tales of mage guests disappearing here over the years.

The Prices

Everything at the Swordarm is the best, and everything's included in the daily rate except drink. Unfortunately, that rate starts at 6 gp per night for a tiny bunkroom and soars to 25 gp per night for the six largest suites. Pirate crews usually grab these suites more or less year-round. Here they can post guards, strew their belongings around, and still sleep farther apart than they do on board. The nicest single bed-chambers, though, are often all vacant (22 gp per night).

Drinkables are 2 gp per bottle or 4 gp per hand cask, regardless of what's inside such containers. Some rare vintages can be obtained here, but the variety is small, and the supplies irregular. The inn does not want to appear to compete with local taverns.

Travelers' Lore

The Swordarm bills itself as a home for those who swing blades for a living. Most wizards don't care to stay the night within its walls, for mages



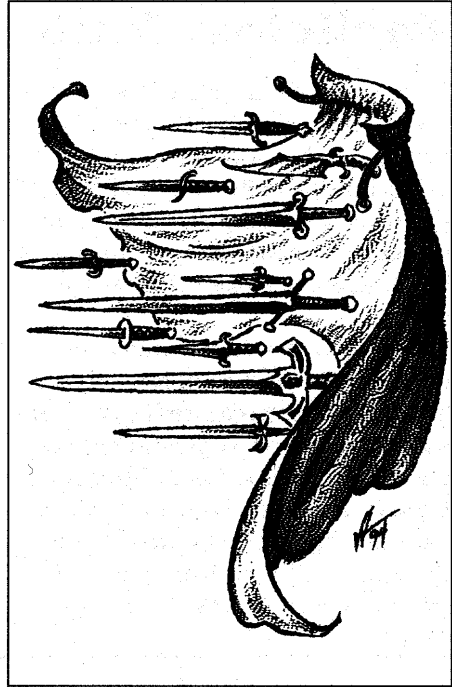
have a habit of vanishing from the even the most securely barred bed-chambers.

Most folk suspect these disappearing guests were wizards who tried to free the trapped apprentices or tamper with the protective spells of the inn. Most wizards suspect Aulyntar examines every mage under his roof, and destroys those who possess magic he covets. If this is true, he must be very powerful by now.

It is certain that one Haldanshyn Cloak of Swords, a wizard of both power and importance from southern Amn, lost his temper in the inn one evening six summers ago. All that night a furious spell battle raged above, around, and through the Swordarm, as Haldanshyn flew about, engaging a foe who appeared only as a swirling, sparkling cluster of luminous eyes.

Much of the inn was destroyed, or twisted and sagged about the terrified guests—many of whom dove or tumbled out windows and fled for their lives amid explosions, goutts of flame, and hair-raising crawling fingers of lightning. Near dawn, Haldanshyn was seen to snarl and then howl in pain as his magical staff suddenly caught fire and blazed with phosphorescent orange and bilious green light from end to end. The blaze was intense, and the wizard plunged from his hovering position in the air above the inn, leaving his skeletal hands still clinging to the ashes of the staff.

The grisly relic remained aloft for some days, but the wizard was torn



The Cloak of Swords

apart by unseen raking claws as he fell, leaving only his tattered, drifting cloak behind.

A shadowy form—presumably Aulyntar—emerged from the inn and caught the cloak, but it erupted in a rushing torrent of glittering steel, and the form hastily flew off, trailing a mist of blood. The cloak drifted away more slowly. What became of it, none in Roaringshore can agree. Some say another wizard mastered it, others that it blew out to sea or fell into Aulyntar's clutches—and still others whisper that it yet lurks around the village, pouncing on lone, drunken sailors and slashing them to ribbons in fits of insane vengeance.



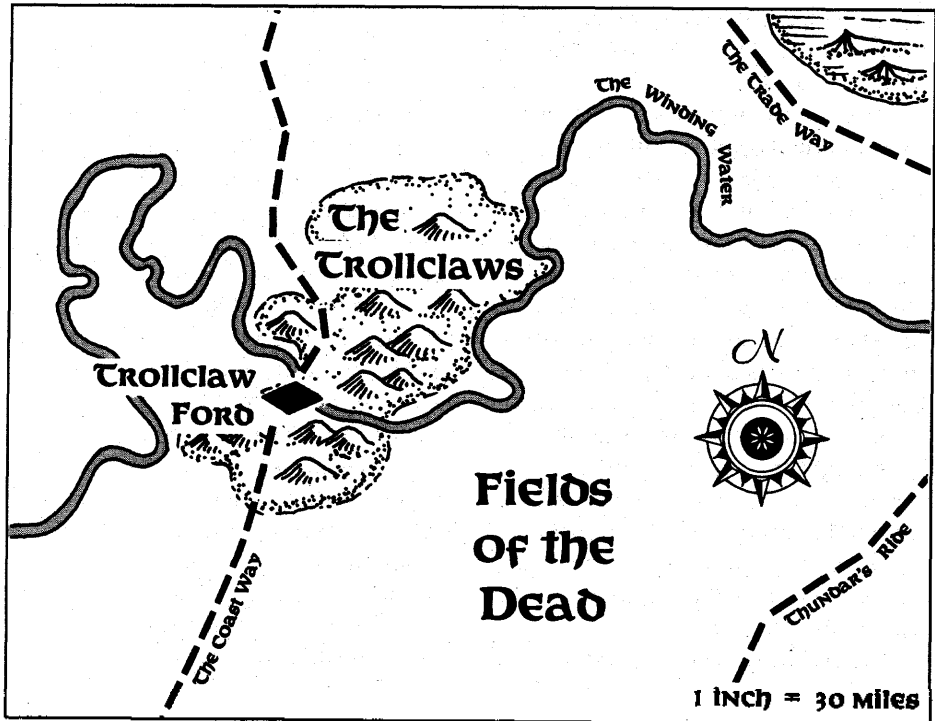
Trollclaw Ford

This ruined hamlet stands where the Coast Way fords the Winding Water amid mist-shrouded, grassy hills. Trolls lurking in the hills make the place perilous no matter how many mercenary armies or adventuring bands come to clean the monsters out.

Abandoned a dozen winters ago, the Ford has been rapidly overgrown. The trolls keep creatures larger than snakes and birds from lairing there and pull apart buildings digging out badgers and burrowing food. Most caravans camp heavily armed in bonfire rings well away from the Ford and make a run across the river at

highsun, flanked by horse archers whose arrows can be ignited at a trot from spear-slung braziers.

The most recent settlers at the Ford were the High Helms, a veteran adventuring band. A dozen strong, they rebuilt a villa into a fortified hold and held out against the trolls for three full seasons—until someone slew them and shattered their tower with an explosive spell blast seen from miles away. Their treasure still lies in their fallen tower, guarded by their undead bones and possibly by whoever—or whatever—slew them. (Folk speak of their slayer being a serpent-headed mage with faceted, amber-colored eyes and the slitted pupils of a snake.)





Ulgoth's Beard

This hamlet of about 70 folk is located on the north side of the mouth of the River Chionthar west of Baldur's Gate. Its stone houses nestle in a natural bowl in the cliff top overlooking the river, and a warning beacon is maintained on the cliff top to alert Baldur's Gate to attacking ships.

In fact, the name of the settlement comes out of its history of being attacked by sea. Of old, pirate raids on Baldur's Gate were numerous. Ulgoth was a stout, bristle-bearded pirate of great girth and greater reputation. The beacon was said to "singe Ulgoth's Beard" by robbing him of surprise so that the raiding force he led was met by ready resistance and hurled back with the loss of many pirate lives, including Ulgoth's own. (He tried to use a *ring of flying* to escape the fray and was last seen heading out to sea, his flying corpse bristling with twenty-odd arrows.)

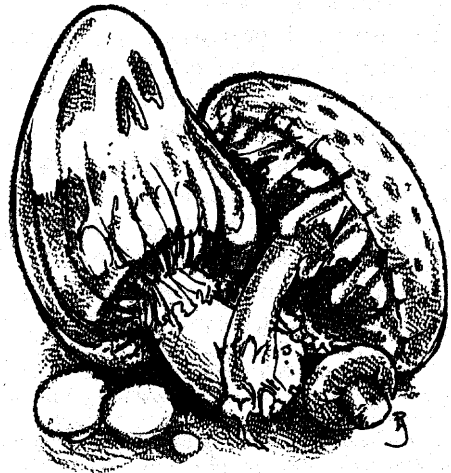
The hamlet consists of sheep-herding families, who keep their sheep on the rolling grasslands behind the cliff, and some fisherfolk, who transport their boats up and down the cliff by means of a cradle of massive cables. None of them are wealthy.

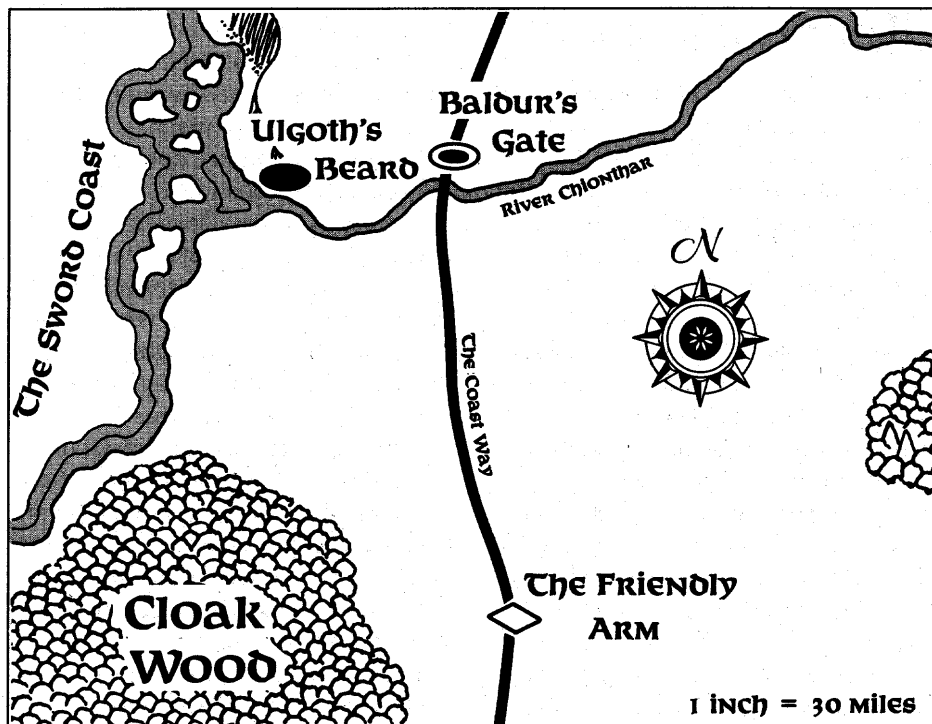
The Beard lacks a road link to the interior, though pack mules have an easy journey over the grassy hills to and from Baldur's Gate. There's no tavern in the Beard, though one resident brews his own dreadful ale and sells it at 1 cp per tankard. Ulgoth's Beard also has no inn, but travelers can camp out in a ruined keep just north of the hamlet, on the lip of the bowl. The keep was once home to a cruel pirate lord, Andarasz, and legends speak of undead

lurking in the storage caverns beneath the keep. All of the storage caverns have already been searched by many eager pirate crews over the years.

There's nothing else notable about the Beard except Shandalar, an eccentric mage who dwells in a floating house just east of the hamlet. It's actually a moored Halruaan skyship, its upper decks rebuilt into a series of balconies, hanging gardens, gabled rooms, and lightning rods. Shandalar harnesses the lightning strikes from the many storms that sweep over the Beard to energize strange magical constructs of his own devising—and is said locally to be immune to all harm from lightning, as he often strolls about amid the crackling bolts, garments lashed by the wind, laughing and singing in the driving storm.

Beneath the wizard's house is a small stone hut fitted with double doors. This is the entrance to his own extensive network of caverns, where several monsters loyal to Shandalar—living mushrooms, locals swear!—





shamble about in the darkness harvesting mushrooms. The mage makes a steady income growing his “shrooms” for the tables of Baldur’s Gate. Some apothecaries in that city dry them and sell them whole or powdered for use in cooking, healing, or the enchanting arts. Shandalar has a huge variety of mushrooms and sells them for as little as 1 cp per handbasket (for plain brown garnishcaps, used mainly in beef stews and pies) to as much as 5 gp each (for deadly poisonous gloomshrooms, favored in the making of poisons, flesh-numbing physicians’ unguents, and

blindness-healing ointments).

Most of Shandalar’s sales come from the garnishcaps and two other cooking mushrooms: small white rock buttons (2 cp per handbasket) and succulent frilled felarndon ’shrooms. Shandalar’s three beautiful daughters (and, it is rumored, apprentices²⁸) take a *floating disc* of these into Baldur’s Gate’s market daily.

Shandalar is known to have agreements with powerful pirates and outlaws. He keeps certain treasures safe for them in the hidden depths of his mushroom caverns in return for steep annual fees (1,000 gp per chest).

²⁸Elminster says the daughters are his apprentices, warns that Shandalar rivals Khelben “Blackstaff” Arunsun of Waterdeep in power, and that his daughters are no slouches as mages either, and further says that the mushroom caverns contain at least one gate to elsewhere in the Realms (just where, he’s not certain). The guardians of the caverns include myconids, as the locals say, but they are also home to mechanical spiders of the wizard’s own making and even more dangerous predators. Several bands of thieves have died failing to evade them.



Warlock's Crypt

Over the years, the name *Larloch's Crypt*, still found in many accounts and on older maps of the Realms, has become corrupted into *Warlock's Crypt*. The soaring towers of this isolated walled castle can be seen from afar, sweeping up like menacing black-nailed talons reaching into the sky.²⁹

The mighty lich Larloch dwells here in a city of the undead. Many adventurers have claimed to have destroyed him, but the Shadow Ring always rises again to rule over his city of wraiths, wights, liches, vampires, and hosts of lesser undead, from crawling claws to monster zombies. Larloch is said to be one of the last surviving sorcerer-kings of Netheril, although his mind is quite gone. He exists today as an ultra-lich of awesome powers, whimsical and crazed—at times snarling and hurling spells at random, and at other times a brilliantly calculating inventor of magical items, new spells, and magical strategies. No less than 16 Red Wizards of Thay are known to have gone to the Crypt to try to destroy him or steal some of his power. They all failed—and of them all, only Szass Tam has ever survived.

The Crypt is a series of wizards towers, each standing in its own circular walled garden. The towers stand on the banks of a small spring that rises in the cellars of the highest tower (Larloch's own) and is much befouled by the discharges of the Shadow Ring's experiments. Its luminous waters cast an

eerie, flickering glow over the towers by night. Their walled gardens are surrounded by a gloomy network of twisting streets and abandoned houses crowded along the stream banks. In these streets and houses, lesser undead shuffle about in accordance with the orders of the lich lords who serve Larloch. Over this dusty city leap many dark, railless bridge spans that link the garden walls and the lower levels of the towers. Skeletal giant bat steeds and stranger creatures sally forth from them to attack travelers who venture too near, since Larloch is interested in gaining living humans for use in his experiments in undeath and in seizing all magic he can find. This is not a place I recommend travelers even venture within sight of.

Most sages believe the Crypt, which is very old, was once a Netherese wizards' enclave—home to mages who now serve Larloch as liches. Larloch is said to command the spells of an archwizard, a small arsenal of magical



²⁹Warlock's Crypt can be seen on the map in the entry on Roaringshore, earlier in this chapter.



items—including Netherese power scepters of various sorts, rare or unknown elsewhere in the Realms of today—and the absolute loyalty gained by some fiendish magic, of the liches who serve him. He is said to enjoy conversing with ghosts and unfortunate adventurers who fall into his clutches, and has even been known to grant freedom to captives in return for a service.

The service is usually to gain for him some close-guarded and powerful magic from elsewhere in the Realms, such as a special spell or favorite magical item held by a Red Wizard of Thay or mighty archmage. Such freedom comes with magical strings. A person who ignores the mission once away from the Crypt is magically transformed into some horrific tanar’ri or other

monstrous form (that of a hook horror, for instance)&slowly one limb at a time. Larloch has his own code of conduct, however. Completing such a mission does mean return to proper form and complete freedom—for those who do not try to deceive or attack him.

Some minstrels have wrongly dubbed the ruler of the Crypt “the Warlock” or “the Warlock King,” but be warned that those who compose ballads using such terminology are likely to be kidnapped by night things and spirited away to face torment and undeath at Larloch’s hands. It’s not even a good idea to sing the ballad known as “The Warlock King” within three days’ ride of the Troll Hills, for fear Larloch should hear and take interest.





The Way Inn

This isolated stone inn has been a famous landmark for many years, starting from when it was the last inn along the way south from Waterdeep for many days of hard and dangerous riding (hence its name). In recent years, as evil grew in ruined Dragonspear Castle, the Way Inn became ever more important as a base for mercenary armies raised by the Lords' Alliance to keep the Trade Way clear and as a haven for merchants hurrying along that long and perilous overland road.

Recently, an ancient black dragon destroyed the inn while the armies based there were afield battling legions of baatezu. The dangers of the High Moor never sleep for long. Trolls and yuan-ti from the Serpent Hills have been seen in growing numbers, but the otherplanar evil centered in ruined Dragonspear seems to have been broken—for now.

Several Waterdhavian merchant families sponsored a rebuilding of the Way Inn on the same site (an elevated, defensible site with a deep well) as before its destruction, but larger and stronger than ever. On a recent visit, I found it most impressive.

The rebuilt Way Inn stands on the western side of the Trade Way two days' hard ride (about a hundred miles) south of Daggerford. It is a walled compound atop a flat, grassy plateau about three acres in extent that overlooks a loop of road that

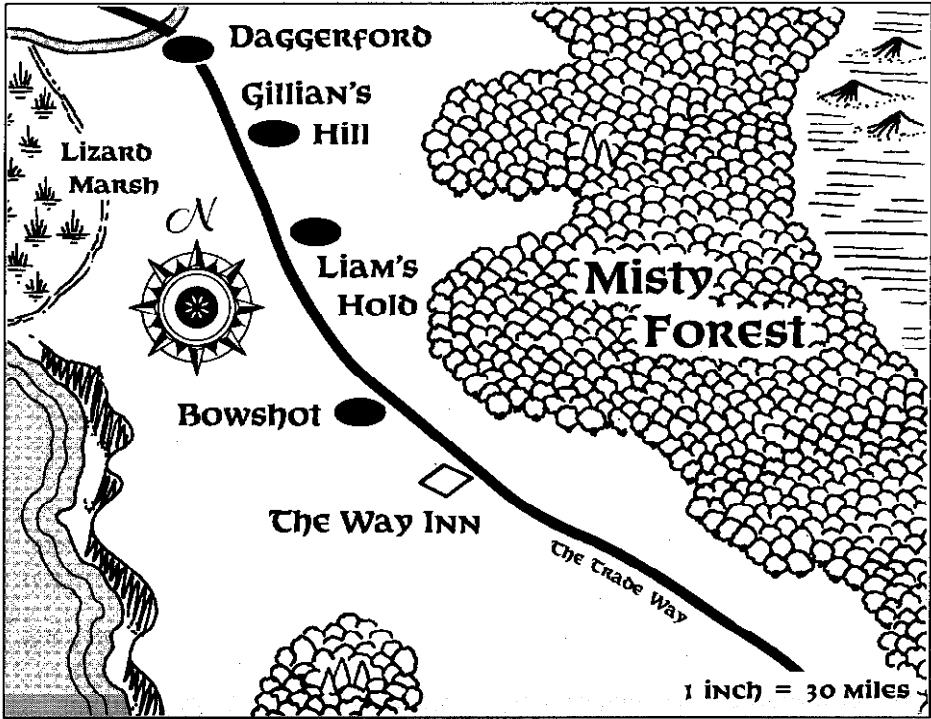
leaves and rejoins the main trade road, giving caravans plenty of room to camp.

From the loop of road, steep cartways lead up to three gates. All of these cross wooden bridges. The bridges slope on central pivots when support timbers are retracted from inside the compound to dump attackers into large spike-filled pits.

The gatehouses are small stone keeps. Each is topped with a catapult. All firewood for the inn is under cover in these gatehouses, so fiery missiles can be hurled at attackers or an overrun gatehouse can be torched to prevent attackers from pouring in until the flames die down.

The inn itself is of stone, with a tile roof. Its windows look out over the road, and it is topped by a lookout tower equipped with several multiple-crossbow guns called airhurlers. Each of these is equipped with firing cords and shields for a person firing the gun, so that the airhurlers can be fired directly or aimed and fired from the room below.

The stables for the inn are in one corner of the plateau. Three fenced paddocks open out of them, and more airhurlers are located on the stable roof. The village that once straggled around the slopes of the inn's height is gone. The inn staff and attendant businesses (a wagon repair shop, a smith, a trading post, an apothecary, and a trailwares shop selling rope, skillets, tarpaulins, tents, sledges, harness, and the like) are housed in a row of stout stone



cottages along the west wall of the plateau. A small orchard and hedged gardens are the only features that spoil the impression of being inside an army castle ready for war.

However, this elaborate fortress is still the same good, clean, friendly refuge it used to be, and it remains under the capable hands of Dauravyn Redbeard, once an adventurer of note. He's seen evil rise in Dragonspear Castle and be shattered—only to rise again, several times over. He is taking no chances. He lives today only by the magic of a priest of Tempus who restored him to life after the last confrontation. He has a hired standing guard of 21 warriors at the inn, 10 of whom are

always on patrol along the edges of the High Moor, looking for trouble. As Dauravyn often says, looking east, "If it isn't orcs, it's trolls, and if it isn't trolls, it's baatezu. If it isn't baatezu, it's dragons—and if it isn't dragons, it's something worse."

Places of Interest in The Way INN

Inns

The Way Inn



The stone rooms of this new and solidly built stone inn are lined with tapestries and have fur rugs underfoot. Heavy draperies are provided to



cut the chill and breezes from the eastward-facing windows, each of which opens onto a private balcony, when desired. The dimly lit halls are also carpeted with furs.

Beds are canopied for warmth, but remain simple. Each has a pull cord to summon service, which is efficient and attentive. Lighting is provided by brass-and-glass full-shuttered candle lamps. These can be unhooked easily and taken elsewhere in the event of battle.

The Way Inn does steady trade. Rooms are 2 gp per night, with meal and bath included. Drinks are extra. Stabling is an extra 1 sp per night, and wagon or cart storage an additional 1 gp per night. Wagon guards (sons and daughters of the inn's staff) can be hired to watch over goods by night for 1 sp more.

Folk who camp below the inn compound do so for free. They can enter for meals (1 sp per serving, drinks extra) or buy firewood (1 cp per armload) and water (1 cp per night to use the pump located in each gatehouse).

Wagon wheels and axles are kept in stock for quick repairs. They usually cost 25 gp each. The inn does a steady trade buying and selling horses, oxen, mules, and cattle. Animals are typically bought at 10 gp under the usual price and sold at 10 gp over, though a hard bargainer can reduce this spread to 6 gp either way. Goats provide the inn with milk and cheese, and wheels of a sharp, crumbly white cheese are made on the premises. Remounts too injured

to nurse back to health find their way into the inn stewpots.

The inn serves good, hearty fare, notably braised bustard on buns. This dish has a spreading reputation. It utilizes the stale leftovers of the large, oval loaves of hardbread baked at the inn, toasted and spread with a gravy based on onions, chicken livers, and offal from slaughtered livestock. Onto this are laid the cooked fragments of meat from bustard (plentiful on the moorlands, with a taste similar to grouse) brought back by the patrols. It's simple but good—and is usually served hot enough to burn the mouth of an incautious diner badly.

Meals are often enlivened by a minstrel. Redbeard hires traveling singers for a tenday at 5 sp per day. If other minstrels Redbeard likes arrives in the midst of another performer's stint, they'll be given free room and board to stay on until they can begin their own tenday stretch.

Although no priests are on staff at the inn, the Duke of Daggerford and his barons take turns sending a priest of Helm or Tempus to watch over the needs (and dedication) of the ducal militia and the hired defenders of the inn. Such clerics are always available to heal and pray for travelers.

In short, this place may lack charm and any gentle beauty, but it offers impressive services, is well run, and provides a roadside refuge where one is sorely needed. Its reputation and the benefits it provides continue to attract clientele even in the face of the overshadowing, but slumbering, threat of Dragonspear Castle.



Zundbridge

Named for its creator, the wizard Zund, this squat, massive stone bridge spans the River Dessarin, carrying the main caravan road south from Waterdeep down the Sword Coast. Zundbridge has held firm without repairs for over 80 winters, despite the worst of the roaring Dessarin spring floods—and occasional collisions with the masts of river barges whose captains were too stupid, drunken, or fog blind to avoid such disasters.

Waterdeep patrols the road as far as Zundbridge and maintains a guardpost there to stop the efforts of adventurers who come in search



Ward Token of Zundbridge

of a stone golem said to have been used by Zund in building the bridge. Legend says the golem was left at the bridge when Zund died, free to be taken away by any who can divine or stumble onto the secrets of commanding it.

Over the years, seekers of the golem have dug around the bridge on both banks, swum beneath it, and even tried to pry stones out of the bridge arches. Some say the golem is long gone, but others believe it serves as one of the bridge supports or is buried under the road at either end of the bridge.³⁰ Legend also says—correctly, most mages tell me, though none of them will say how they know this, or more importantly, how to do it³¹—that the holder of a special ward token can command the golem in the bridge to raise up arms to attack or hold beings on the bridge, or even to come out of the bridge and fight. This last action would destroy the bridge. The golem is said to obey the silently willed wishes of the token-wielder in detail, and can be com-

³⁰Elminster says the golem is part of the bridge and can rise up to fight when properly commanded—by Khelben, Laeral, Maskar Wands or himself, for instance. This will of course shatter the bridge. Those wishing to see evidence of the golem's presence need only cast any sort of spell that damages or tries to transform the bridge, he says—and stone arms will rise up out of the bridge to punch and grapple with the caster. The golem has thrice the normal strength of a stone golem, double the normal hit points, can move its arms around freely within the bridge, can sense the precise location of all living beings on the bridge, and is immune to many spells. Some spells even reflect back from the golem at the caster—just which ones, Elminster says with a grin, you'll have to learn for yourselves. He also advises leaving the golem alone.

³¹Elminster: "And we'll keep it that way, thank ye."



manded to return into the bridge—which, unless the golem is destroyed in the battle, will restore the bridge into a functioning span. Supposedly, if two ward token wielders both try to command the golem, it will break free of all control and attack every living being it sees until destroyed, preferring to slay ward token wielders over all others. The Lords of Waterdeep fear that if the bridge were left unguarded, it would soon be demolished by zealous would-be golem owners.

The Waterdhavian guardpost is equipped with a flight of three grifon steeds to give Waterdeep advance warning of the approach of any important visiting delegation or attacking force. The guardpost is a

small stone hut and stables with a lookout tower and encircling wall. It is equipped with heavy crossbows mounted on tripods and aimed along the roads, and is warded. Anyone trying to get into the armory or stables without bearing the proper ward token is subject to three rounds of *magic missile* attacks. Four missiles per round will leap from walls, floors, and ceilings to smite the intruder.

There's no settlement at Zundbridge, but there is a campground and water pump for the use of travelers. The Waterdhavian guards serving at the outpost are polite and helpful unless they are attacked or witness anyone disturbing the bridge in any manner.





The High Moor

Nowadays, most folk think of the Moors as a rocky wilderness, vast and uninhabited—except by fearsome monsters, notably trolls. Bounded on the west by the Misty Forest, whose dim blue glades and deep groves have always carried a fey and whimsical, but deadly, reputation, and on the east by the yuan-ti and ophidian-haunted Serpent Hills, these crag-studded, rolling grasslands are said to hide the ruins of lost, long-fallen kingdoms. Just *which* kingdoms, sages argue furiously over. Minstrels sing colorful but contradictory ballads on the topic, and legends are uniformly vague. “The bones and thrones of lost lands” is a favorite phrase; it is borrowed from a long-forgotten ballad.

A few wolves and leucrotta are the most numerous predators on the Moor thanks to trolls, bugbears, and hobgoblins, who have slain most other large beasts of prey. Their relative scarcity has allowed hooved grazing animals of all sorts to flourish, from small, sure-footed rock ponies to shaggy-coated sheep. Those who dare to venture onto the Moor can be assured of ready food—either they’ll catch it, or they’ll become it! Rope trip-traps, javelins, and arrows are the favored ways of bringing down the fleet grazing animals, although those with patience and a quick hand can dine on grouse, flunderwings,

rabbits, and ground-dwelling moor rats in plenty. Large, well-armed bands of rounders often venture up onto the Moor in warm months, seeking horses to round up for training and sale elsewhere or livestock that can be taken away—but the greedy are warned that hobgoblins and worse always seem to find and ambush such large-scale intrusions. Small bands invariably pay for such attempts with most of their lives.

Deer dwell in the Misty Forest, though travelers are warned that the elves who dwell there consider the forest their own private game preserve. The only deer outsiders can hunt without risking a few elven arrows are those that stray from the forest onto the moors or down into the coastal hill lands where the Trade Way runs.

Like the Evermoors to the north of the Dessarin, the High Moor is studded with lichen-festooned rocky outcrops, moss, breakneck gullies, and small rivulets of clear water that spring from rocks, wind among the rocks for a time, and then sink down again. It’s also shrouded by frequent mists. The prevailing winds are gentler breezes than the mist-clearing, chill winds of the North.

Except in winter, frequent forays up onto the High Moor are mounted by troll-hunting Daggerford militia bands, hired mercenaries, or adventurers looking for experience. One



can always count on meeting trolls, and usually orcs or goblins as well. Bugbears, hobgoblins, and stronger foes usually skulk out of sight, battling intruders only when cornered or when the intruders are foolish enough to camp for the night on the moors.

With the obvious exception of Dragonspear Castle, ruins are harder to find in the moorlands. Foundations, cellars, and underways are usually all that remains—and almost all such serve as the lairs of monsters. Many towers have toppled into rock piles and have later been hollowed out to serve as tombs—which have in turn been plundered and then turned into dwellings by beasts arriving still later. There are also legends of magi-

cally hidden castles and high houses that appear only in certain conditions, such as in full moonlight or deep mists, to those in the right spot.

The porous limestone of the High Moor plateau, worked on by water over eons, has caused the many canyons, pools, and appearing and disappearing streams visitors can readily see. There are miles upon miles of caverns—and underground rivers—beneath. Such terrain gives ample entrance to the Underdark, homes to lairing beasts, and makes for a penetrating damp that serves to harbor creatures of an amphibious inclination. Because of this, the Moor is often haunting and dismal of nights—light a fire and attract monsters, or huddle together, shuddering, for warmth!



Dragonspear Castle

Over the years, Dragonspear Castle has become a name equated with great evil—as dread a name as Hellgate Keep. Once the proud castle of Daeros Dragonspear, a famous adventurer of the North, Dragonspear has become a ruin inhabited by wave after wave of evil creatures. Many colorful but false legends have grown up around the Castle, but here I've set down, as best I can, the truth about Dragonspear—as revealed by several great archmages¹ and corroborated by several tomes of lore at Candlekeep. For most readers, this will be the first time the tale of Dragonspear has been truthfully told.

Daeros was a bearded half-dwarf, a magical and rare half-breed of human and dwarf as tall as a human, but with the burly physique and affinity to stone of a dwarf. He rescued and befriended a copper dragon early in his adventures, and after he seized a fabulous fortune in gems used by a beholder in an abandoned dwarf delve to lure prey, Daeros decided to retire. He chose the site of the dragon's lair: three low hillocks at the western edge of the High Moor, some 200 miles south of Daggerford. The dragon, Halatathlaer, had grown tired of constantly fighting off thieving orcs and goblins, but was loath to leave its home. Daeros gathered humans and dwarves loyal to him and built his castle around the dragon. It was a large and splendid structure, composed of a massive central keep surrounded by a strong ring of

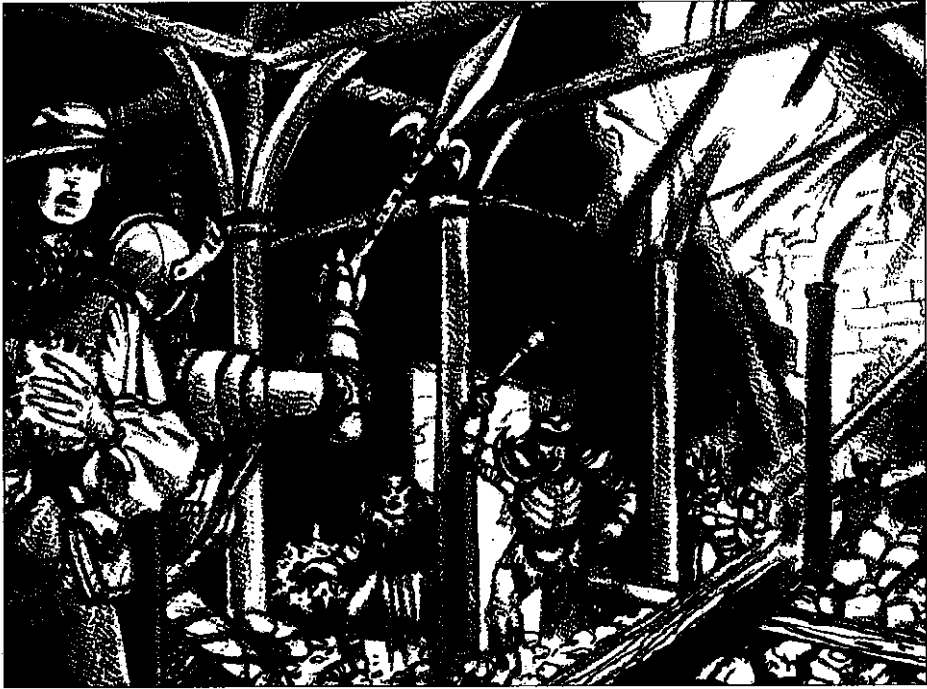
four towers (the inner ward). Around the keep was a spearhead-shaped outer wall of nine great towers. Dwarves were welcomed at the Castle, and a city of small stone cottages and delvings beneath them grew rapidly within the walls. Dwarven fighting prowess made Dragonspear a secure fortress and a place of growing influence.

Daeros was often seen flying over the High Moor on the dragon's back in those days. He wielded a long spear (some say 40 feet or longer) against foes on the ground and summoned his troops with a horn. His energetic raids hurled the orcs and trolls back, scouring the moor until it seemed clear of them.

Unfortunately, Halatathlaer was old, and grew weak. More than one wizard coveted the dragon's hoard and used shape-shifting magics to spy on what was there and how it was guarded. One Calishite mage, Ithtaerus, created a spell that allowed him to *teleport* the sleeping dragon away to the wastes. He then revealed what he'd done to Daeros by means of a magically sent vision that falsely showed the wizard creating a *gate* through which the dragon was taken. The gate was actually a portal to Avernus, uppermost of the nine layers of Baator²—a portal that would only be activated by the death-blood of a mortal. The enraged Daeros plunged through it, weapons ready—and was slain by the wizard's spells. The gate opened, and several baatezu came through it. While the alarmed dwarves of Dragonspear battled them, the wizard looted the dragon's hoard at will and then returned

¹Elminster: "Thank ye. Charmed, of course."

²Known also as the Nine Hells.



Halatathlaer to the inner ward, bound in magical slumber.

Then the evil mage called upon several dragons he knew, telling them that the copper dragon of Dragonspear slept, near death, and it and its hoard were easy prey. Three young and ambitious dragons heeded and took wing to Dragonspear. They met over the fortress and fought, destroying Halatathlaer and much of the castle before slaughtering each other. The last survivor, a black dragon named Sharndrel, was enraged to find the hoard it had fought so hard for looted so that only coins were left, and barely enough of them for the wyrm to bed down on. It went seeking the triumphant and overconfident Ithtaerus, found him gloating over the best wine of the castle in the upper chambers of the

central keep, and blasted him with its acid until his bones crumbled to powder.

The castle was left as a shattered ruin, eagerly raided by orcs, hobgoblins, bugbears, goblins, and trolls from the moor until all the dwarves were dead or had fled. The serpentmen even sent a large war party to search it for magic, and they bore away all they found.

Then hobgoblin chieftains seized the castle. They used it as a base from which to raid the caravan road and the lands around; gathering orcs and trolls into ever-larger bands until Waterdeep and Baldur's Gate raised armies and cleaned the castle out. The victors set an armed temple to Tempus (called the Hold of the Battle Lions) in the cellars to guard against creatures using the *gate*, for it seemed indestructible. Some spell laid



on it hurled back magics used against it and sent forth ghosts of creatures slain in the castle to attack those approaching it

Seasons passed, and more baatezu in Avernus discovered the other end of the planar link. Stealthily at first, and then in greater numbers, they came through into Toril, overwhelmed the temple, and took the castle as their own. It is this foul evil that was recently broken and driven back to Avernus. Though the gate was magically sealed, most folk believe that it will be reopened again and that the stain of evil will never leave the castle now.

Today, the outer wall of the castle is breached and broken in many places. Its great gate is a gaping hole, and from there a road leads straight to the inner gate, whose doors have also fallen. Though the inner ward is still a defensible—if crumbling—fortress, the former city between it and the outer wall has become scrub vegetation, pits (the former cellar delves of the dwarves), and heaps of stony rubble. The central keep is a blasted shell, the gigantic skeleton of a dragon draped over the broken walls, and the interior floors fallen in. Most of the surrounding inner ward towers stand relatively intact. Travelers fleeing from trolls, brigands, or worse in this area could take refuge in one of these and defend it.

Beneath the castle flows an underground river. It runs from an unknown source north into the Misty Forest, and there turns abruptly southeast. It can be entered from a certain cavern in the eastern reaches of the forest, and its main passage is large enough to be navigable by boats, although many lurking monsters, drownhole side passages, and whirlpools make this a dangerous route.

The river runs southeast along the edge of the moor, and then turns northeast and passes under the southwest tower of the castle's inner ward. There it connects with a trapdoor and shaft in the cellar once used for waste disposal. It flows swiftly on to a large and permanent whirlpool and thence drains down to unexplored depths in the Underdark. If one wins past the whirlpool, the river runs on to emerge as a waterfall in a ravine (one of many such clefts in the High Moor), where it flows out into a small pool. The pool drains away into the depths again,

Dragonspear Castle is still a popular destination for adventurers and thrillseekers. Many poke about in the half-revealed dwarven cellars—but anything that can be found easily has been carried away already, and trolls and orcs lurk in the ruins, awaiting prey. Brigands use the castle, and more than one misty night has seen a wild spell battle between rival adventuring bands caused by brigand trickery. The outlaws lie in wait after setting in motion their plan, and hope to seize gear, wealth, and magic from the weakened survivors—or dead victims—of the misunderstanding they've brought about.

Every season brings new plans for the rebuilding of Dragonspear Castle in the taverns of Daggerford, Waterdeep, Scornubel, and Baldur's Gate, but somehow such plans come to naught. Some say it is the castle's ill luck, caused by the great evil of the baatezu. Others blame covert work by brigand "lords," the Zhentarim, and the Cult of the Dragon, all of whom either want the castle for their own or want it to stay a ruin.



Hammer Hall

West of Mt. Hlim, near the shores of Highstar Lake, is a pit half full of loose rubble. An opening cut in its rock walls leads into the Halls of the Hammer, a long-abandoned dwarf hold.

Nearby stands Hammer Hall, a log house and stables encircled by a palisade. Hammer Hall was built by an adventuring group who called themselves the Men of Hammer Hall as a base to explore the dwarf hold from. On several occasions the adventurers, who hailed from Waterdeep, fought off trolls, orcs, and bugbears from this fortified home—but they went north several years ago, and have not been heard from since.

Hammer Hall has reportedly been broken into several times. I found it deserted, and with stones dug up in a corner to reveal a storage niche (empty, of course). It remains, however, a stout building offering shelter to travelers in this wilderness area. Stacked, dry firewood even waits beside its main chimney!

The humanoids that roam the High Moor know its location, of course, and can be expected to attack anyone seen traveling to it. Wood smoke will draw them, of course, but in a blizzard or blinding rainstorm, Hammer Hall may prove a refuge worth the harrying. The design of its entrance forces intruders to make a sharp turn down a wooden hall, or chute, fitted with

ports for archers or spearmen to attack from. A lone swordfighter can hold the narrow entryway beyond.

Inevitably, rumors have spread of treasure buried by the adventurers in Hammer Hall and not recovered. The dug-over state of the grounds suggests that many have come looking, but none have found.

Rich treasure may well lie in the dwarf hold. The Men of Hammer Hall told a bard of their adventures once, and the tale he recounts has been echoed by later adventuring groups. The dwarf hold (the Halls of the Hammer) is said to have a large central chamber wherein a hundred human corpses dangle from the ceiling in a forest of chains—an illusion that vanishes and reappears from time to time, for no known reason. At least five watchghosts (powerful wraithlike things)³ roam the halls beyond, guarding a glowing magical war hammer that floats by itself in a chamber guarded by helmed horrors⁴ and magical defenses. What powers the awesome-looking hammer possesses, who put it there and why, and how to win past its defenses are all mysteries as yet unsolved. Seeking the answers has killed at least 20 daring but unlucky women and men thus far.

Adventurers wishing to join in this deadly game are advised that the pit with the opening into the dwarf hold can be found by traveling south and east from Highstar Lake, following a line of three hills whose tops are all

³Encountered in Undermountain, beneath Waterdeep, as well as elsewhere in the Realms.

⁴These magical constructs are fully detailed in the FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting boxed set.



bare rock. The hill closest to the lake has a spring gushing from it that joins the waters of the lake, and it is the only crag on the eastern shore of the lake with a spring that does so.

Highstar is an eerily beautiful lake of clear water that the dwarves believe has magical properties. The lake has many other names, and so often appears without a name on many maps of the area. It is the large lake in the northern reaches of the High Moor and is usually the only lake shown anywhere near that locale. Called Dauerimlakh by the dwarves and Evendim by the elves, this body of crystal water has several names among humans, and some folk travel days just to see it, risking monster attacks.

One human legend of the lake speaks of it holding in its depths a drowned temple to an unknown or lost goddess, but the most popular tavern tale of the Coast lands says the lake holds magical treasure in its depths—a sunken Netherese airship crammed with gems and magic. The wreck is guarded by undead wizards, the tale goes, who seek to steal the bodies of the living for their own use. They jealously and persistently stalk adventurers who take something from the ship and then escape. They walk by night and leave trails of slimy water, following their prey clear across the known Realms to get their belongings back. Supposedly, if they kill a thief, they steal his or her body for their own twisted uses.





Orzogoth

In the heart of the High Moor stands a notorious ruin—a beacon for treasureseekers from all over the Sword Coast, especially Amn.⁵ Tales of heaps of gems caught the imagination of greedy Amnian merchants so strongly that Orogoth found its way into the lore learned by every wide-eyed child. No guidebook to the Coast is complete without mention of this lure for adventurers—a lure that brings swift death to almost all who seek it.

Orogoth was a gigantic, sprawling villa, the luxurious home of a Netherese family of cruelty, idle wealth, and magical might. They dabbled in strange magical experiments involving captured dragons—yes, their magic was that strong—with the aim of gaining dragon powers for themselves. Most accounts say the senior mages of the Orogoth family perfected not only means of acquiring dragon powers, but also of taking on dragon shape. The tales go on to say that they flew away in dragon form and never returned. Some tales swear they were trapped in dragon shape when their human bodies collapsed under the strain of changing, and a hasty retreat into dragon shape was all that saved their lives. Other accounts say they preferred dragon form, and still others that they were magically bound into dragon shape by treacherous young relatives.

The elders vanished, and Orogoth became the playground of the arro-

gant, spoiled, willful, cruel family members, who magically compelled dragons—perhaps their shape-changed elders, perhaps not—to wing about the Realms, seizing treasure, and bringing it back for the amusement of the young Orogoths. This treasure was usually acquired by slaying other dragons and seizing their hoards, but also by tearing open castles and plundering known treasuries within. A dragon-like hoard of heaped treasure accumulated.

Inevitably, there was strife among the proud younglings, resulting in some sort of titanic battle. Some say it was over some magically mighty plundered item, but it is clear that dragons were blasted from the sky. Orogoths died screaming as they burned like torches, towers were toppled—and when all was done, the villa was a ruin, the Orogoths were dead or fled away, and all that remained to guard the treasure was a dracolich (an undead dragon, the result of some horrible spell).

Ever since, adventurers and the Cult of the Dragon have come to the ruins to seize the treasure—and been killed, transformed into beast shape, or sent fleeing across the Moor. Some folk say other dragons aid the dracolich in defending the hoard, or that one or more deranged surviving Orogoths lurk, invisible, in the ruins, wielding strange and awesome spells and magical items. Whatever the truth, Orogoth remains a deadly fascination to all who have heard of it.

⁵Orogoth's location is shown on the map found in the entry on Xonthal's Tower, in the chapter on the Backlands.



Secomber

This village of 900 folk rests on the northwestern bank of the confluence of the Unicorn Run, the cool, clear river that runs down from the mysterious heart of the High Forest, and the Delimbjyr, the watery road to the eastern wildernesses of the High Frontier. Secomber stands on three hills, atop the western fringes of a once-mighty city that was, if legends are true, the proud capital of the long-ago human realm of Athalantar, Kingdom of the Stag. Folk digging cellars in Secomber usually turn up old cobbles and stone walls. Inadvertently freed gargoyles are a fearsome, recurring problem, but sometimes magical treasures are unearthed. The fallen city is said to have been ruled by mages.

Secomber is a peaceful, rather boring village of fisherfolk, farmers, stonemasons, and hired guides and guards for the frequent caravan traffic. The holdings of the farmers fan out northwest of the village, and the fisherfolk make a meager living spearing and drag-netting fish and freshwater crabs from small skiffs on the two rivers. The stonemasons manage a decent living quarrying slabs of pink granite from the cliffs that mark the northern edge of the High Moor.

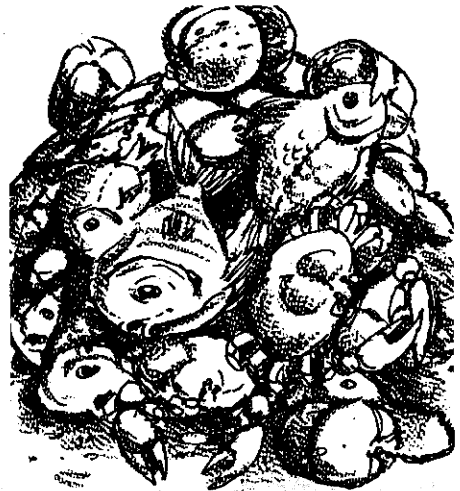
Roughly half of all Secomberites are human. Almost as many are halflings, whose low, garden-adorned homes make the hills of the village seem more a terraced estate than a settlement. The remainder of the citizenry are a few dwarves of the Ironeater clan and a scattering of gnomes and moon elves.

Secomber has a garrison of 30 sol-

diers provided by the Lords' Alliance. They dwell in a small palisaded fort atop one of the hills and train a hundred or so locals in swordwork and rudimentary tactics. Many of these swingswords hire out as caravan guards.

The garrison is led by the Lord of Secomber, Traskar Selarn, a ranger of some fame. The garrison patrols the farmland and vicinity diligently, capably dealing with the few orc and bugbear raids that get this far west. If it has to defend the village, pitched battles in the tree-girt, unfortified hills are likely but the defenders will be aided by an iron golem and two stone, beast-headed, winged golems provided by the mage Amelior Amanitas—and by the mage himself if he's at home. The winged golems look rather like giant gargoyles, but can't fly.

Lord Traskar has made sure that adventurers are welcome in Secomber, and many adventuring bands use the village as a supply base for treasurehunting forays. Secomber is also known for its gardens and eccentric architecture.





The Seven-Stringed Harp Tavern

Tavern



This tavern stands at the meeting of two winding lanes in the lowest spot in town, which is beside a horse pond in the center of the bowl between the three hills Secomber is built on. It is a ramshackle, sprawling building of many wings, varying roof sections, and little bay windows and cupolas. It's easy to get lost inside, what with all the alcoves, the general dimness, odd steps up and down, and the prevalence of odd pieces of furniture and old tapestries salvaged from half a hundred old

Waterdhavian villas. Locals come here to meet and chat. Merchants come here to do business and to hire guards. It's a hard spot to miss. It has a huge hitching rail outside, overlooked by a floating, glowing, faintly playing harp. The harp is not an item, but a permanent spell created by local mage Amelior Amanitas. It's not solid, and can't be disturbed.

The Place

Cramped and crammed with comfortable but mismatched furniture, this place sports low ceilings, lots of odd corners, and a servants' passage that branches out in all directions from the bar, its entrances hidden by tapestries. Beware when chatting,





lest you be overheard by someone standing behind the nearest tapestry. (Suddenly thrusting blades through a tapestry to discourage listeners is considered bad form.) The Harp is dimly lit by a few wandering, blue-hued *driftglobes*. Its layout consists of many passages and rooms opening off a central taproom.

The Prospect

This tavern is a place of pilgrimage for many minstrels and bards in western Faerûn. It's famous as the place where "The Ballad of the Dream Weaver" was first heard. There's rarely a night without three to seven bardish sorts in attendance, playing for free, as tradition demands. Their presence makes this a noisy—but

thankfully melodic—place. It's a fascinating place to watch people, too, with adventurers, pipe-smoking halflings, dancing gnomes, and gambling elves on all sides—but it's not a quiet place to relax or a place to conduct business best kept private.

The Provender

The staff of the Harp tends to be of the young, female, beautiful, long-haired, graceful, would-be-harpist sort. These lasses cheerfully serve out kefuls of drinkables, salted biscuits spread with snails or smallfish (if you order them so), and gurdats (pan-fried and pepper-spiced mushrooms rolled in melted cheese). These are served with a white, cool, minty wine, if requested.



*I cast my net in the sea of night
And bring back a catch of glittering dreams.
Which will you have, proud lady, laughing lady?⁶
This bright one, perhaps, or that?
Gleaming silver-blue, winking at you
With its own mysterious, inner light,
It is so beautiful.
Yet so is that one, and that, and this, too.
I cannot choose.
Take them all.
Take them all!*

—Talanthe Truesilver, Bard, "The Ballad of the Dream Weaver"

The Prices

Ale is 3 cp per tankard (large, battered pewter things, not meager cups), stout is 5 cp per tankard, and minty wine and local aszunder are 6 cp per tallglass. All other wines are 8 cp a glass or more.

All servings of provender are 1 sp a plate. Most patrons will find a plate makes a light meal. Two plates would serve as a nice, but unspectacular, eveningfeast. Ale can also be ordered by the hand keg, at 6 cp. Throwing hand kegs in the taproom is frowned upon.

Travelers' Lore

About 40 winters ago, this tavern was

just as ramshackle, but lacked its name and wide reputation. It was then called simply the Stag. Then a young, half-elven lady bard by the name of Talanthe Truesilver sat down in the taproom one night and performed a ballad that has become one of the most famous and widely performed songs in all the Realms.

Today, minstrels use "The Ballad of the Dream Weaver" as the long heart of a set of songs and as a sort of latest rumors compilation, adding favorite legends, strange sights they've seen, and the like as verses. Patrons of the Harp are proud that it was heard here first.

⁶A female singer changes the last half of the third line to "proud lord, laughing lord." All minstrels weave strange sights they've seen—hints of hidden treasure, lost legends, and intrigue—into this famous ballad. As a result, the verses of this song vary greatly from performer to performer, but the refrain given here, used to open and end the piece, is music famous all over Faerûn. Elminster admits he's only a rough hand at music—though he's a nice smoky baritone and has heard a *lot* of music over his long life—and can't write down tunes as we do. He says this ballad can be sung—slowly, drawing out the words—to the tune of the traditional Celtic song of our world, "Dawn of the Day." It's not the right tune, according to the Old Mage, but captures the right mood.



The Singing Sprite

Inn



This inn faces the Seven-Stringed Harp across a rather muddy meeting of lanes. The Sprite is a slate-shingled, many-gabled, solid-looking stone building that is cold and damp in winter, and warmer and damp in summer. Its pleasant staff sets the tone for your visit, and it offers meeting rooms for hire (that Secomberites use constantly) and a superior feasting board. The innkeeper on duty is Heverseer Windfeather or one of his three brothers—they take shifts.

The Place

The Singing Sprite is named for Lathiril Shrone, the long-dead wife of its builder, a human wizard by the name of Ganatharas. She *was* a sprite, and sang atop tables to the delight of patrons. The present owners, the gnome family of Windfeather, don't go in for such performances—not with the Harp right across the road.

The inn has stone walls slathered with cream-colored plaster and hung with tapestries that look as if they once did service on some colorblind Calishite's harem beds (and probably did, too). The floors are dark, polished duskwood—just the thing for sliding the length of a hall on one's behind if one isn't careful, and apt to creak when one is walking about late at night with a crack a loud as any arquebus. The furnishings are old, massive, and comfortable—and every room comes with its own portable

(portable by two strong people, that is) polished copper bathtub.

The centerpiece of any stay at the Sprite, however, is the common dining room: an airy, plant-hung chamber with large windows overlooking the intersection outside. Most guests get very used to it—and do so gladly.

The Provender

Food at the Sprite is a treat. The dining room never closes, and it serves some dishes that make my mouth water just remembering them. Foremost of these is a dish known as Three Crabs. This, naturally enough, is three soft-shelled green river crabs yielded up locally by the Delimbiyr. These are served whole, with only the eyes, mouth, and stomach removed. Cooked in fat until golden brown, they face each other on a round toasted loaf of flatbread that has been spread with chopped greens and a white sauce of cooked leeks and garlic, parsley vinegar, and beaten egg yolks.

The light side dish that usually accompanies everything else in this dining room is A Trio of Trumpets. This is a plate of three fried, crisp crackers, each as long as a human's hand. These trumpets are horn-shaped crackers stuffed with melted white cheese, chopped nuts, and fried mushrooms.

Roast lamb, venison, and beef make up most of the dishes at the Sprite, but there's another surprise not to be sneered at: a truly revolting-looking dish known as the Hungry Knight. The Hungry Knight is a plate of flatbread rolls stuffed with chicken



Fowl Stew

Take ye a wild bird or poultry bird, kill and pluck it. Else, if ye have no use for the feathers, spit it and hold it in flames. When the feathers catch, let it blaze. The skin will blacken and crack, and so can be drawn off. Roast the fowl almost brown. Then cleave it in four parts, and cast them into a pot half full of wine.

Let simmer over flames while ye mince onions and any soft or wrinkled fruit ye may have, and then cast these cuttings in. Then add to the pot handfuls of crushed dried sage, thyme, and a pinch of cinnamon or ground cloves. The strong-stomached often add crushed fresh garlic.

If ye have any cold chopped potatoes or leftover broth, add as well—but mind ye increase the dry spices at least two handfuls more.

Add other seasonings to taste.

livers fried in garlic butter, and garnished with diced pepper potatoes and dill. Its savor is wonderful!

I often rose from my table groaning, while the stout, beaming gnome servers urged still more food on me. I persuaded the cooks to let me set down the plainest of their recipes, for fowl stew, because they do this standard fare so well.

At the Sprite they use damaged birds and leftovers for this stew. After speaking with the cooks for the time it took them to empty three bottles of wine (not long, I assure you), I can add the following note to this recipe: The other seasonings referred to are most often parsley, pepper, garlic, and salt.

Whole fowl, however, are usually

spitted, crisped over an open fire, and then simmered in broth until needed for serving. Then they are drained, put over flames again briefly, and served on a platter drenched in warm cream and accompanied with steamed greens (bought for 1 cp per basket from citizens of Secomber, most of whom have lush gardens). Some of the cooks add snails, oysters, or chopped nuts to the cream as it is warmed.

This cooking method can also be applied to the heart, lungs, liver, and innards of venison and boar. Take care to chop them finely and cook long enough, stirring and adding wine as necessary, until the bits are all softened and much turned to gravy.

I've heard this same cooking



method can serve for giant eagle, though it dries out easily, and three or more eggs should be cracked and drained into the pot during the simmering. The dark flesh of the eagle emits a brown foam when cooking, which is the fat that keeps it warm aloft. Skim this off when it appears, and when no more is seen, it is done.

The Prices

Mead, milk, and wine are all 2 gp per tallglass, and ale is 6 cp per tankard. All platters and stew bowls are 7 gp, but this includes two tallglasses or tankards, hot rolls with butter, and biscuits. These side dishes are enough for a servant to dine on while the master polishes off the main dish.

Rooms are 10 gp to 17 gp per night (varying by size and location), which includes hot baths, clothes-mending services, and stabling.

Travelers' Lore

The Sprite has several secret rooms (actually storage closets), which the innkeeper allows guests to use for 1 gp per night. One of these rooms has mysterious chamber network maps (treasure maps?) scratched on its walls. The Windfeathers charge 5 gp to look at these, and they claim they show chambers in a lost dwarven hold somewhere nearby— just where, they're not sure. The hold, Firehammer Hold, is said to hide rich treasure. The dwarves all perished through disease.



A Partial View of the "Treasure Maps" (The Writings are in a Forgotten Tongue)





Fields of The Dead

Few merchants, rangers, shepherds, and guides claim to know every rolling hill or ravine in the vast grasslands

known as the Fields of the Dead and called wryly by some: “A tenday ride that starts halfway to anywhere, and ends up halfway to anywhere.” Fewer still really know their way around the seemingly endless open lands where every grassy slope looks just like the next and small rock outcrops, crags, and stands of trees serve as major landmarks. The bards sing that every second hill is built of the heaped bodies of the fallen—and they’re not very far wrong.

The Fields are named for their recurring use as a battleground: first between humans from warmer lands invading the territories of nomadic gnoll, goblin, and orc tribes; later between Calishite factions vying for access to the resource-rich North; and still later between proud and expansionist Calishite and human settlements struggling (successfully, thus far) to retain their independence. Thousands upon thousands of skirmishes have occurred in these largely trackless hills, from a few brigands or kobolds trying to raid the livestock of traveling drovers up to clashes between hosts of knights in full armor, each side filling several thousand saddles.

Rich treasure—the scattered coins of many soldiers, and magical armor, swords, and riding equipment in plenty—is said to lie buried all over the Fields. Although such tales have a tendency to be exaggerated, in this case they’re founded on solid truth. Expeditions of young Amnian or Waterdhavian women and men sent forth by their parents to make their own fortunes in the world often come here to dig in this or that promising knoll in search of lost riches and magic among the jumbled bones of the (often hastily buried) dead.

Sometimes they find more than they were looking for, inadvertently freeing undead or murderous magically animated creatures from long ago, or triggering ancient magical traps set to guard the remains of those troubled dead hastily buried after dying in battle. Often they must dodge the arrows or crossbow bolts of brigands or roving bugbear, gnoll, orc, or hobgoblin bands—or the trickeries of passing unscrupulous merchants or mercenaries. They make their ways back to cities with rich booty often enough, however, to keep new tales of riches making the rounds of the Sword Coast—and to keep such expeditions coming.

In addition to hills and grasslands, features of the Fields include many small shepherds’ cottages and small



walled holds' close to larger settlements or the roads. In fact, there are far too many to cover in a book a full three times the size of this one.

Stories tell of drow tunneling up to the surface world in many isolated locales in the Fields to begin raiding or to establish slave-trading connections. Both yuan-ti and ophidian settlements exist in caverns in the Serpent Hills nearby, settlements that constantly raid caravan traffic, patrol the grasslands for miles, and seek to expand their influence over ever-wider areas in the Fields below the High Moor. When winter weather drives these snakefolk underground, the trolls of

the Moor are usually driven down to forage in the Fields by hunger.

All these activities make the Fields a busy—and dangerous—place. Those who travel the Coast lands between Waterdeep and points north to Anm and the Empires of the Sands inevitably pass through the Fields of the Dead. Those who do so unprepared often join the ranks of the fallen who lie here so plentifully.

Priests can be hired in many places in and around the Fields to accompany caravans and deal with any restless spirits encountered along the way—but these good folk are reluctant to join bands too small to protect them or adventurers who'll deliberately take them into danger. Look for shields hung on shop walls that bear the hand of Helm, the bound hands of Ilmater, the clawed hand of Malar, the star-encircled eyes of Selûne, or the flaming sword of Tempus.

Lay worshipers, who are usually warriors trained by the clergy and often competent as guides to the area, may be hired for a temple donation of 25 gp plus 2 gp per day, plus food and water. At least half the fee is payable in advance to the temple or hiring shrine. Priests cost 4 gp per day, plus 1 gp per day per level—and priests of greater than 7th level simply can't be had unless your mission or trip is vital to furthering the aims of the particular deity or the ongoing activities of that priesthood. Get a guide of some sort!

¹These holds are home to a few farmers under the protection of a minor knight or successful warrior who rules as a self-styled lord as far as his blade will reach.



Boareskyr Bridge

This bridge over the Winding Water was first built by the famous adventurer Boareskyr. Over the centuries, several bridges have stood here, the most recent built after the Time of Troubles. For most of those years, a “temporary” tent trading city has stood hard by the river crossing.

Travelers in the Fields of the Dead are warned not to drink the waters of the Winding Water downstream of the Bridge or for about half a day’s travel upstream. They were poisoned during the Time of Troubles in a battle between Cyric and Bhaal.

The present Bridge commemorates this event. Statues to the two gods stand at either end of the stone span, which is wide enough for two large wagons to pass each other and has waist-high rampart walls as thick as three adult human males standing together. By tradition, no toll can be charged for crossing the bridge, and no buildings can be erected on it or so as to block a clear road on and off it.

Today, Boareskyr Bridge numbers about 70 tents and wagons in summer (plus those of visiting caravans), and about half that number in winter. The community exists to provide travelers with food, water, remounts, wagon repairs, and the like. It has evolved into a trading center where goods are exchanged between merchants, or wagons leave one caravan and stop over, awaiting another

bound for the same destination they’re heading for.

The community of Boareskyr Bridge lacks any permanent features except a rough stone fort (known as Bridgefort) surrounded by a now-poisoned moat. Inhabitants can retreat into this structure in the case of heavy winter attacks from trolls, goblin, or brigands—a frequent occurrence.

Like the similarly makeshift city of Scornubel, wheeling and dealing is the order of the day in Boareskyr Bridge. Law and order is maintained by one’s own sword or crossbow. Several enterprising local merchants do steady trade selling light crossbows and hand crossbows with regular or sleep-venommed crossbow bolts.

The law in the Bridge, such as it is, is the word of powerful adventurers—notably the warrior Barim Stagwinter and Theskul Mirroreye, priest of Tyr, and their companions and allies. Barim and Theskul seem to be working toward walling in the Bridge community to make a proper city of it.

Rich merchants come here seeking the sorceress Aluena Halacanter, who raises pegasi at her estate, Heartwing, upriver of the Bridge where the water still runs clear.² Trained steeds cost 5,000 gp each, but Aluena is reluctant to sell them to those who’ll mistreat them or who’ll simply resell them quickly to someone who will. Buyers must satisfy her under magically assisted questioning. Aluena is rumored to be a Harper.

²Aluena is a N hf W9.



Durlag's Tower

This massive, isolated keep stands atop a rock pinnacle south of the Wood of Sharp Teeth. Only adventurers should approach this seemingly deserted fortress—death awaits within.

The tower was built by Durlag Trollkiller, son of Bolhur “Thunderaxe” the Clanless. Durlag was a great hero of the dwarves, an adventurer who slew several dragons single-handedly and over a long and successful career amassed a great hoard of treasure. One dwarf who dwelt in the tower with Durlag for a time spoke of rooms full of gems and a great hall strewn with dusty heaps of gold coins. “We took what we needed, freely,” he said.

With the aid of hired dwarves, Durlag dug many chambers and passages in the tor and raised the lone tower above it, planning it as a seat where he could found a dwarven community and grow old in peace, surrounded by happy, prosperous kin.

Instead, doppelgangers, organized and aided by foul mind flayers, slew and impersonated Durlag's companions. After the shocked dwarf discovered the first impersonation, he was attacked by all the others and spent a terror-filled tenday frantically fighting his way around his own fortress, chased by monsters who wore dwarven forms but sought his death.

In the end, alone and victorious, he was powerless to stop the last fleeing pair of illithids. Fearful they'd return, Durlag hired the best craftfolk he could find in Waterdeep and Neverwinter and began to rebuild his tower

and the tor beneath as an elaborate succession of traps, magical wards, secret passages, sliding prison chambers, and triggered weapons—perhaps the most extensive assembly of such deadly devices in all Faerûn. A succession of spell wards were added, linked to at least three ward tokens. Unfortunately, no one alive today knows just which tokens control what areas. All three function as keys to pass magically held doors.

These traps are known to include *shield portals*, which are carved stone shields linked magically so that a dart, axe, or other missile weapon hurled into one would emerge from another, elsewhere in the tower. The shields themselves function as permanent *wizard eyes* or *crystal balls*, allowing an unseen watcher to observe from afar.

Other traps include massive stone swing-hammers set behind false doors. When the doors are opened, a massive stone ram bursts forward from behind them to smash intruders against a far wall. There are also climbing shafts inset with ladders of metal rungs. Touching certain rungs causes all of them to retract into the stone so that climbers fall, or triggers metal blades to shoot out from the seams between the stone wall blocks, transfixing climbers.

Deeply suspicious of all Faerûn—anyone could be a foe seeking to betray him for his gold!—Durlag retreated inside his tower, defending it against the adventurers he knew would come, lured by tales the trapbuilders would inevitably tell. They came—and fell or fled before the traps and the axe of



Durlag himself, who would creep up via secret passages to strike from the shadows.

For several centuries things went on like this, as the increasingly eccentric Durlag lived on fungi and mushrooms growing in the deepest caverns—and, it is cruelly whispered, the bodies of intruders (although this has never been substantiated). At length he died, and presumably his bones still lie in some inner room or passage, guarded—along with his riches—by the thousands of traps built to defend his home.

Every season adventurers mount new expeditions to Durlag's Tower from Baldur's Gate and Waterdeep, armed by the exhaustive maps and

notes of earlier bands. Every year, they get a room or two deeper into the deadly maze before giving up and bringing back the bodies of those victims they could get out.

Unfortunately, in recent years the tower has acquired new inhabitants: a dozen or more will o' wisps that seem to work in organized groups to battle those who win past the traps, and that feed on those who perish in them.

Some say the will o' wisps are led or directed by a gigantic wisp with fey spell-hurling powers, but others report seeing illithids accompanying the wisps. Some hold the view that the mind flayers are controlling the wisps, and others that the mind flayers are servants of the rumored Over-Wisp



Known Ward Tokens of Durlag's Tower



just as the lesser wisps are. The truth remains a mystery for now—and will be revealed, I suspect, only at a very high price in the lives of adventurers.

Still, there seems as yet no shortage of reckless seekers-after-adventure, and every season more journey to Durlag's Tower to try to win his gold—and the reputation that seizing it will bring. Certain shops in Baldur's Gate, Waterdeep, Athkatla, and on the isle of Mintarn do a brisk trade selling ward tokens to Durlag's Tower.

Some of these are undoubtedly false—how many such keys would a wary-minded veteran adventurer leave lying about, anyway?—but some are certainly real (they've worked in the tower). They can be rented from Baldurian concerns (ask at the Blushing Mermaid) for 1,000 gp per month or more each summer by adventurers dazzled by thoughts of gold and glory. A trio of these are depicted on the previous page.

Durlag's Tower has become a

tourist attraction. Enterprising merchants in Baldur's Gate, Berdusk, Beregost, and Nashkel mount expeditions to view it for 50 gp a head, round trip, all meals included. Such trips usually feature hunting along the way and always include a daytime foray into a few of the well-known tower chambers, their traps tastefully adorned with skeletons and warnings that the tower is haunted. (The water of the forecourt well is safe to drink, but lone travelers using it should beware lurking brigands and the occasional bugbear.)

From a nearby camp, sightseeing trips always return to the keep by moonlight, to see the haunted forecourt of the tower. Strange cries, hurled stone axes, and flitting, ghostly apparitions are provided by accomplices of the tour guides. Such sham horrors are sometimes taken advantage of by wandering will o' wisps or brigands, which is why such expeditions still carry a cachet of danger up and down the Sword Coast, and the legend of Durlag's Tower grows from year to year.

I have myself seen one apparition at the tower gates: the silent figure of a robed mage, standing in midair about as high off the ground as two tall men standing one on the other's shoulders. He faced the tower, raised his hands to cast some unknown spell, then acquired a look of fear, trembled, and his body was swept away as if torn by unseen winds or claws coming from the tower. This phantom is known to appear often, but no one knows who the mage is—or was—and what he was doing when he died so spectacularly.



Elturel

This city is the farming center of the Fields of the Dead, and its Hellriders guard and police not only Elturel, but much of the farmed and settled portions of the Fields along the Skuldask Road, the Dusk Road, and both banks of the River Chionthar. The long patrols of the Hellriders, 30 riders strong, pass along the roads every four hours, night and day. The upkeep of the patrols is aided by lodges (stockaded outposts) placed strategically within their patrol area, where food, water, flammables, weapons, and fresh mounts are kept for them. These lodges are protected against arson and casual theft by strong wards, one of the tokens for which is shown below.

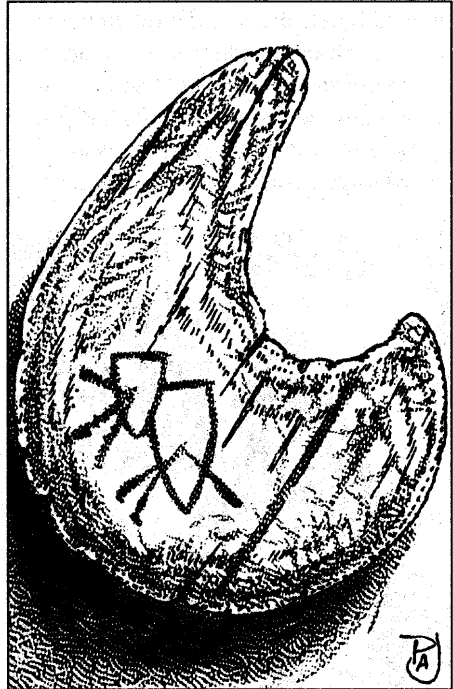
Elturel is ruled wisely and well by High Rider Lord Dhelt, a paladin of Helm who is ever-vigilant when it comes to the defense of his city—and to lawless elements who might skulk in to do business in it. A just, no-nonsense ruler who leads patrols on the road as often as any of his war captains, Dhelt keeps the city a clean, law-abiding place, a firm member of the Lords' Alliance. His 2,000 Hellriders are superbly equipped and trained—a fearsome fighting force equalled by few *realms* in Faerûn, Hellriders must be skilled at the use of horse bow, lance, and saber before they are allowed to ride the roads,

Travelers can rejoice in the safety of Elturel's reach, which extends as far as Triel along the Dusk Road, as far as the intersection with Thundar's Ride along the Skuldask Road to the north, as far as Scornubel along the Chionthar

upstream, as far south toward Berdusk as Windstream Lodge (one of the Hellrider lodges), and as far downstream along the Chionthar as Stone Eagle Lodge (another Hellrider lodge). It's easy to tell these boundaries. Sheep and cattle wander on all sides when you're inside them, and brush is cut back, with hedged and stone-walled farms here and there. Outside Elturel's sway, farms and livestock are gone, and scrub trees and shrubs are everywhere.

Landmarks

Elturel thrives on trade. It's a city of folk passing through. Barge trade on the Chionthar meets overland trade in the city where a six-wagon ferry crosses the river. The heart of the city is a cliff-sided



Ward Token of a Hellrider Lodge



tor, a natural stronghold that was held by trolls and then orcs before humans drove them out and first settled here. Its south or river end is capped by the soaring turrets of High Hall, the castle from which the High Rider rules. A long, wooded park runs along the ridgetop of the heights, watered by a spring that rises in the cellars of High Hall and runs down the Winter Garden to cascade off the tor at the northern end in a spectacular series of falls known as Maidens' Leap.

On the slopes around are the tall, narrow, many-balconied homes of the nobles. Below this High District are the flatlands of the city, known as the Dock District. The Dragoneye Dealing Coster has a major waybase hard by the docks, and the caster's organized presence and the watchful patrols of the Riders, assisted by a trained and loyal guild of handlers (goods loaders and unloaders on the docks and wagons), keep this one of the safest dockside areas in all Faerûn. To the east, warehouses and hovels crowd together around the docks and

the crammed stalls of Shiarra's Market. The more prosperous and orderly homes and shops west of the heights are still part of Dock District, but are increasingly referred to as Westerly, a separation used to imply cleanliness and prosperous success—or, to look at it from the other view, laziness, soft living, and pretentious arrogance. Whatever the sneers exchanged, no one denies that this city is wealthy

The traveler can wander about anywhere in Elturel in perfect safety. The chief danger is from pickpockets, not knife-wielding thugs. No thieves' guild is tolerated in this city—and the best way to attract some hard questioning from a lot of eager-looking Riders with drawn swords is to whisper that so-and-so is a member of or such-and-such an incident is the work of a thieves' band.

The inns and taverns of the city are all fairly good—the lone exception that comes to mind is the poor but cheap Oar and Wagon Wheel Inn, and even it is always crowded with noisy patrons. The establishments described in this guide are among the most interesting—that is, shady and rough—in the city.

Elturel is home to a shrine to Tempus and two important temples. Both of the temples give temporary shelter and aid to the devout. Helm's Shieldhall is a large holy fortress ruled over by High Watcher Berelduin Shondar, also known as Bereld the Just, a stern priest who leads as many Rider patrols as Lord Dhelt. The High Harvest Home, a temple to Chauntea, is presided over by High Harvestmaster Baulauvin Oregh—one of the most goddess-favored servants of Chauntea in all Faerûn.





The Bent Helm

Tavern



This dockside tavern is Elturel's rowdiest dive. It is a brawling pit visited by those who like to get thoroughly drunk and then have a good fight.

Its signboard is visible from afar: a brightly polished, gigantic war helm hanging from a spar on a stout chain. The helm was worn by a giant in a long-ago battle just north of Elturel. It is bent halfway up at a sharp angle to the right as a result of a leaping dwarf king's axe. The death of the giant was the other result.

The helm now serves as a beacon for brawlers from all over the city, as well as visiting adventurers and caravan guards. Don't come here if you want to relax, enjoy some minstrelry or quiet, or conduct a little business in peace. All the flying tankards make it hard to concentrate.

The Place

Imagine a large open barn without a loft, its hammerbeam ceiling exposed. Add a few *driftglobes* (which are fixed in place, well aloft, and serve to heat the tavern as well as light it), a flagstone floor, and rusty metal cladding—mainly made of old shields, hammered flat—on all walls and pillars, that continues as high up as possible. Put a bar at one end, staff it with burly, hairy-armed warriors who can throw hard and accurately, equip them a few hand crossbows and sleep-envenomed bolts to quell

major problems, and fit each roof pillar with elbow-height surround tables for holding drinks. Fill the place with thirsty patrons, serve potent ale, stout, and sherry in easily broken earthenware tankards to cut down on fatalities, and stand back and watch the fights.

The Prospect

The Helm has a no-weapons rule. Patrons are invited to check weapons at the door by a curvaceous lass who wears a different—but always wildly daring—costume each night. Two firm but friendly ettins armed with clubs turn away anyone who refuses to surrender obvious weapons. They're backed up by the doorclerk. She's a mage of minor power who keeps a *wand of paralyzation* handy.

Despite these precautions, stabblings at the Helm are frequent, and the local shrine to Tempus (the Hand That Swings the Sword) directs any visiting priests of the war god in need of funds to spend some time in this tavern's back room, healing the wounded. Typical fees are 1,000 gp per spell applied.

The Provender and The Prices

All drinks are 2 cp per tankard, and no food is available. Available drinks include undistinguished light and dark ales, a stout with a very robust character, and ample quantities of rough, strong sherry. Pouches of pipe tobacco are 6 cp each. Lights—from tapers reached across the bar—are free.



A Pair of Black Antlers

Tavern



This tavern stands on the west side of Maidensbridge Street, just south of where it swings westward to cross the bridge it is named for and run around the northern end of the central heights of the city to link up with Westerly. Outside the city, A Pair of Black Antlers is the best known of Elturel's taverns because it's the gathering place for those who seek adventure. Old, retired warriors, young and bright-eyed would-bes, and weary adventurers alike all come here.

The walls of A Pair of Black Antlers are decorated over the bar with a truly gigantic rack of antlers. I climbed up on the bar—as many others have done before—to measure them, marveling. They're fully 20 feet across! The walls are also dotted with the relics and trophies of many adventurers: old, notched and scarred weapons; split shields; the heads, tails, and claws of sundry shocked-looking, dusty, long-dead monsters; and fading maps, bloodstained and covered with angry error-correcting scribbles, of old castle dungeons, dwarven holds, tombs, and other subterranean complexes that presumably once held rich treasures. (Some of these maps may well be palpable forgeries.)

The Place

Wood-paneled, dimly lit, and apt to be smoky (the fireplace doesn't draw

properly), this cozy place is a maze of stone support pillars, low, massive overhead beams, and dark, massive furniture salvaged from old villas and castles. If things are too dark to see an interesting-looking map or missive, one of three blue-hued *driftglobes* can be called for—but this will draw the attentive eyes of many patrons in the labyrinthine, many-leveled taproom.

The Prospect

No adventurer's visit to Elturel is complete without a stop at the Antlers. Many adventures have begun in its taproom—and many more likely will. The Antlers is *the* place to hear gossip about adventuring, join a band, hire swordswingers for a plan of your own, or get hired to carry out another dreamer's plan. Need a curse lifted or some other spell cast? The patrons here will know who to call on and where they can be found, for the price of a tankard. Want to hear tales that chill the blood or splendid songs of daring deeds? This is the place. Want to impress a likely looking young blade of the other sex? Beware—some of them may be doppelgangers or shapeshifting mages—but then, you wanted adventure. . . .

The Provender

The heartily cheerful staff of the Antlers are all ex-adventurers of a great variety of ages, races, and appearances. They pour out drinks with generous hands—no one need feel slighted here. One can also purchase salted biscuits, slabs of sharp-tasting onion cheese, river clams, and gurdats (pan-fried,



pepper-spiced mushrooms in a melted cheese batter).

The Prices

Ale is 3 cp per tankard (large, battered pewter reservoirs) or 7 cp per hand keg, stout is 5 cp per tankard, and wine starts at 6 cp per tallglass and rises to 9 cp a glass for the best vintages. Sherries, zzar, and brandies are all 1 sp per tallglass. Elverquisst, the most expensive drink in the house, is 4 gp per tallglass. All servings of provender are 6 cp a plate, which provides a light meal. Two plates would serve as a nice repast.

Travelers' Lore

The Antlers has about as many hidden treasure legends as any drinking house associated with adventurers.

Some of them may even be true. The staff would like me to mention that the one about the sacks of gold being hidden under the boards of the taproom is false. They're tired of patrons trying to pry up boards when they think no one's looking, and every single board's been up several times by now.

The patrons have adopted one bardic ballad (given following) as their favorite drinking song. This song is a nightly favorite at the Antlers. Woe befall any minstrel who shows up to play without a sensitive mastery of it—the ability to sing and play it with mournful, macabre skill. It's a bardic standard, but here it has the revered status of an anthem to fallen comrades, proud adventurers still living—and the dark humors of gods who must be appeased.



The Knights of Dragon Down

*Riding, riding across the plain,
See them riding home again.
Bright their shields, bright their chain—
The Knights of Dragon Down.*

*They have gone where shadows creep.
Their blades a bloody harvest reap.
Another dragon put fore'er asleep
By the Knights of Dragon Down.*

*On their fingers gem rings gleam.
Of such baubles, the very cream
Falls into the hands, in a steady stream,
Of the Knights of Dragon Down.*

In a dark hall a lady sits alone,

*Her bright eyes gleam as white as bone.
Her dark spells a-hunting roam
For the Knights of Dragon Down.*

*With cruel smile, a web she weaves.
From each night, his soul she cleaves.
Armored bones are all she leaves
Of the Knights of Dragon Down.*

*Riding, riding, their skulls a-grin—
Past the gates, the Knights ride in.
Sorcery now their souls doth spin
Of the Knights of Dragon Down.*

*Ladies scream at the touch of bone,
As skeletal Knights come riding home.
Undead now, fore'er to roam,
Are the Knights of Dragon Down.*

Minstrels used to add a verse to the end of this, late at night:

*Hear them riding, nearer outside.
Never sleeping, doomed to ride.
There's no place where you can hide
From the Knights of Dragon Down.*

This verse has been outlawed in Elturel, because some fiendishly evil archmage of the city wove a summoning spell into the words that swiftly brought undead to whoever sang them. They're still whispered across many a dying campfire in the Realms by those brave (or foolish) enough to risk the coming of seven skeletal warriors riding as many skeletal horses—or whatever lesser undead show up instead.³

³Elminster can sing, but can't write down tunes as we do. He says this ballad is usually chanted to a dark, intricate harp melody in Faerûn—but it can be sung to a quite different melody: the tune of the traditional Celtic song of our world, "Down by the Sally Gardens."



Gallowgar's INN

Inn



This ramshackle, well-worn inn sprawls in all directions in the midst of Elturel's dockside stockyards, looking just like the spider web of clumsily linked buildings that it is. Well known for its affable host, Guldin Gallowgar, it's also known as the Manure Pile to folk of delicate noses who've had to stay there in hot summer weather.

The Place

Gallowgar's Inn is an aromatic assembly of mismatched warehouses. It's warm and dimly lit inside, even cozy—but the furnishings are simple, the fare even more so, and the stench of well-rotted cow dung permeates everything.

The Prospect

Gallowgar's Inn is famous because of its host, a retired adventurer of mature years who seems to know everyone and everything in the Coast lands and to have a finger, or at least an investment, in almost every trading or shipping company mentioned in this guide! Guldin Gallowgar dishes out advice on where to locate almost anyone or anything, and is known to sponsor caravans and adventuring bands.

The Provender

Food doesn't have to be spectacular when everything smells of manure—but Gallowgar himself thrives on what

he feeds guests: slabs of salty bread, wedges of sharp-spiced local cheese, plates of river minnows fried in eggs and seasoned with a hint of tansy and a scant handful of crushed wayflow-ers, and portions of stew ladled from three salt stew pots. One pot contains hare, one trout, and one shrimps and clams brought up the River Chionthar by barge.

The Prices

Mead is 1 sp per flagon, and ale is 6 cp per tankard. All platters and stew bowls are 5 gp, but this includes two tallglasses or tankards. Rooms are 4 to 10 gp per night, varying by size and location. Most are 6 gp. They include hot baths and stabling.

Travelers' Lore

Gallowgar's is a favored destination by those whose coins are few—especially if they're involved with caravans or are adventurers. His sponsorship of an adventuring group is said to cost a percentage of what treasure it might find. Rumor reports his wealth as staggering, but there's no sigh of it about his inn at least. There are whispers he's married to the haughtiest of Elturel's nobility, an apparently unattached lady of decadent tastes and endless parties whose tall-turreted home overlooks the city's gardens.

It is certain that Guldin can get from place to, place swiftly and often unseen, and that he does know an astonishing number of folk—in many cities, and from all walks of life. Many guests come to stay just to question him or to chat.



Phontyr's Unicorn

Inn



This famous inn is named for the ally, lifelong friend, and possible love of the long-dead mage Phontyr Wonder-spell—a glowing unicorn whose hooves never touch the ground. Some say the seldom-seen unicorn is a manifestation of the goddess Mielikki. Others swear she is a polymorphed sorceress that Phontyr loved who is trapped forever in unicorn form—Phontyr could not free her from magic greater than his own. Still others say it is Lurue or Silverymoon, the Divine Beast. Cult of the Unicorn members bought the inn to be near the unicorn. They typically fall on their knees and chant with adoration when it is seen.

The Place

Phontyr's Unicorn is a splendid establishment of deep green carpets, ferns in hanging baskets, dim lighting from strategically placed *glowing globes*, and curtained, canopied beds. The inn's adornments celebrate the famous unicorn in many carvings, painted shields, and tapestries. Quite a few of these images are enchanted so as to glow blue-white, just as the real unicorn does.

The inn has a wine cellar as good as any to be found in Waterdeep (for comparable prices, too), several lounges and meeting rooms for the use of guests, and a fine dining room. Dry white house wine, sliced cheese, and salted biscuits are always at hand

on trays everywhere about, free for the taking. Rooms are spacious, draft-free, and quiet thanks to the tapestries that hang everywhere. These are deep green like the carpets, and each is adorned with the glowing blue-white head of a watchful unicorn.

Eager, soft-spoken, thoughtful human staff members of both sexes dressed in green unicorn-adorned livery move quietly about the inn, seeing to every need of the guests. They even play board games or cards with bored or lonely patrons, though not for money.

The Prospect

Whatever the unicorn's true nature may be, the recently improved inn stands on the site of Phontyr's house, which burned down under mysterious circumstances after the archmage's death. The unicorn is seen on misty nights in or near the inn, prancing about and then galloping away in eerie silence. Legend says that those who follow it and can keep it in sight will be led to rich treasure. Not surprisingly, the inn has become a favorite haunt of novice adventurers, who hang about each night with ready-saddled horses or magical means of flight, hoping the unicorn will appear.

The Provender

Food at the Unicorn consists of all the usual gravy-drenched roasts and fried root vegetables, plus a few notable dishes, soups prominent among them. For conservative tastes, there's boar hock soup. Those who look



upon their stomachs as trusted friends will enjoy the cold potato-and-leek soup and the hot pheasant tail soup. This last soup is an Elturian favorite, and is named for the three pheasant feathers stood up as decoration beside each bowl. It's actually a thick simmered stock of what small game fowl that can be had and, in establishments less honest than this one, small rodents.

The soups are served before heavenly main dishes. The cooks at the Unicorn excel at shark steaks fried in seed oil, and at roast boar with all the trimmings. The delicious shade of brown that they manage to cook the outside of the well-seasoned roasts to is enough to set one's mouth to watering.

The Prices

Rooms are 16 gp a head per night. Stabling is 2 gp extra. Eveningfeast costs another 1 gp. This includes a delightful bottle of the house wine. More wine costs 6 gp or more per bottle.

Travelers' Lore

The Unicorn has at least 20 unicorn sightings a year, and a few adventurers fast and lucky enough to follow the ethereally beautiful creature have become very rich. Two bands were led to hitherto unknown, abandoned dwarven holds near the city and found stockpiles of gold, silver, and fine ores, and another group literally fell into an ancient mage's tomb in the woods!



Gullykin

This halfling village lacks an inn or tavern, but it is the nearest settlement to the adventurers' lure of Durlag's Tower, and so it often serves as a supply base for intrepid explorers of the tower. This situation pleases the local halfling priests, who are often called upon to heal for hire, which enriches the community. It's otherwise a sleepy, unremarkable place of shepherds, wool weavers, and other farmers.

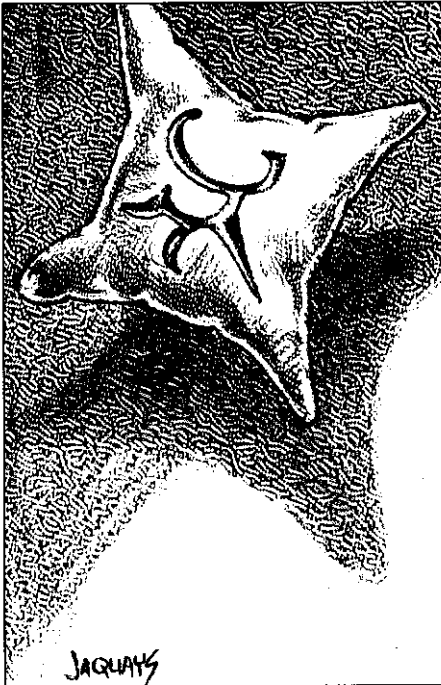
Gullykin's own claim to fame is less well known than Durlag's Tower, but is as valuable to adventurers whose luck is with them. Gullykin stands hard by the site of Firewine Bridge, an

elven trading town destroyed in a sorcerous duel so mighty that it changed the course of a stream so that there's no reason for a bridge of any sort these days. The duel leveled the town and left a large wild magic area that persists today, some 200 winters later, just east of the wood lot and fishpond that marks the eastern edge of the halfling village. It stretches north as far as the honey renderers' shack in the north wood lot and as far south as the brewery (a building shared by all the halflings, who gather on its steps for a smoke and a chat in good weather).

Firewine Bridge today is simply a stretch of overgrown rubble—a fallow field used by no one. The local halflings warn visitors not to camp there or dig in the field, but don't do anything against those who do—except to watch in case some buried danger is unleashed.

Local legend says some of the folk of Firewine didn't perish in the spell battle, but were transformed into frogs, slugs, flatworms, lizards, turtles, and the like—and trapped in those forms. Some may still survive. For this reason, locals don't kill small crawling things. Some lass once inadvertently freed a wizard, one local tale goes, and ended up marrying him.

Firewine Bridge has yielded up magical treasure, mostly small trading items such as magnetic, nonrusting nails and spikes, small crystal spheres that glow with continuous inner light (hue and intensity never varying), triple-spiked *lightning wards* (belt-worn devices that force lightning



Gullykin Ward Token



bolts away from the wearer), *spark-stones* that can be commanded to produce fire-igniting sparks whenever desired, and glass *guardeyes* (single eye cusps that once a day can be made to reveal all weapons on the body of any being—that is, the location and outlines of all items the target creature thinks are weapons). More rarely, items of greater power turn up, such as half-masks that confer infravision and the ability to see invisible beings and items on the wearer; belt buckles that magically take away the effects of a good deal of weight (about that of a burly person), allowing the belt wearer to carry heavy loads, such as the body of a wounded or sleeping friend, as if they were nothing; or rings that can call up a specific minor spell once a day, when commanded to do so. (The spell is always the same spell, usually *mending* or *Tenser's floating disc*.)

The folk of Gullykin don't go looking for such things themselves—to do so, they believe, invites misfortune due to the malice of “those who died and do not sleep.” A few residents have bought some items from those who did find them, and will sell them for several hundred gold coins each.

The high field that was once Firewine Bridge is covered in chest-high grass and studded with piles of rubble and small, often hidden, holes dug by treasure-seekers. Somewhere at the bottom of one hole is the way into an underground complex of linked chambers—once the cellars of a trading company—said to hold riches heavily guarded by golems and

other magically animated creatures. The only way to pass these in safety is to use a ward token, which the locals all say they lack. However, such tokens often turn up elsewhere in the Coast lands, for sale at an asking price of several thousand gold pieces. One is pictured in this guide on the previous page—but I must warn travelers that it may not be the true pass token!

The cellars of Firewine Bridge shouldn't be confused with the vaults under Gullykin's brewery, which are used for growing mushrooms as well as for storing casks of brew. Rumors of an underground connection—which may or may not exist—between the brewery cellars and the buried trading company cellars have caused the halflings years of trouble with heavily armed intruders.

The visitor can be assured of being able to buy a tent or two, half a dozen ponies, some wool, as many woolen garments or sheep as desired, and all the foodstuffs a traveler might need. There are no shops in the village, but every villager's in business for himself. The locals like to haggle over prices, but rarely try to outbid each other for a visitor's wants—when one is talking with a visitor, others stay clear.

In general, the halflings of Gullykin seem to like their privacy more than most of the small folk—they like to stroll by themselves, singing or humming or just sitting and thinking, a lot. They seem to avoid loud festivities and roistering and to avoid visitors who try to draw them into such things. Except for the ruins, Gullykin is a pleasantly boring village.



Qheldin's Mask

This small river hamlet is located on the east bank of the Chionthar halfway between Scornubel and Berdusk.⁴ A small fishing, hunting, and farming community, Qheldin's Mask was recently the site of a fine inn, Six Spanglestars, but it burned down some winters ago and hasn't been rebuilt. There's no local accommodation available to travelers now. Qheldin's Mask is known today for the fine riding horses reared on local farms.

The hamlet was founded by Qheldin, the Masked Mage, some 300 winters ago. In his honor, by long-standing custom, women of the hamlet—descendants of the wizard's servants—wear masks at weddings, feasts, and other important occasions. These are usually full-faced masks of black velvet or cotton with eyeholes shaped and decorated like the long-lashed, limpid eyes of a courtesan. The mask edges are adorned as the maker pleases. They are often strung with tassels, tiny brass bells, dangle gems, or nets of sparkling cloth.

Qheldin is long dead. His tower has fallen into rubble, its stones tested once too often by the spells of journeyman wizards seeking hidden magical treasure. Qheldin's tower is haunted by the wizard's ghost, who keeps watch over the overgrown rubble that was once his home. A golem was once found here, and a hollow pillar yielded up some spellbooks quite recently, but the only things regularly dug up are hands-



both dangerous crawling claws that attack their finders, and two sorts of magical items made by the wizard.⁵ The site is called the Grove of Hands because of them. Crawling claws lurk and scuttle here amid the trees.

Rumors say the inn⁶ also held hidden magic, and since the inn burned down, bands of brigands and adventurers have several times dug up both tower and inn. (As the locals dryly put it, it's often hard to tell the brigands and the adventurers apart.) The inn has yielded up nothing more interesting than a few blackened coins and a snake that had taken up residence in the half-buried cellar.

⁴For the location of Qheldin's Mask, see the map in the entry on Asbravn in the chapter on Sunset Vale.

⁵For magical details, see Appendix III of this guide.

⁶The inn was briefly home to an adventuring band, the grandly named Blue Sword Legion, which never had more than 12 members.



Scornubel

Scornubel is the Caravan City a sprawling place of warehouses, paddocks, and stockyards. It is a city of traveling merchants with a population that can increase eightfold in a good summer, sixfold during most traveling seasons. It has no walls and is a place of ready swords and watchful residents. There have been more than a few raids on it by bugbears, hobgoblins, and the like, particularly in harsh winter weather, when game is scarce. Thieves and doppelgangers are a constant problem.

This rough-and-tumble place is the closest thing some caravan merchants have to a home. It sprawls along the northern bank of the River Chionthar where the Trade Way meets the waters. From Scornubel's docks a ferry crosses the river. Many skiffs, narrowboats, and barges make runs along the Chionthar as far upstream as Berdusk (where rapids prevent travel onward), as far downstream as Baldur's Gate, and as far up the River Reaching as Hills Edge and a few rancher's docks upstream of it.

Old, sharp-tongued Lady Rhessajan Ambermantle rules the city, assisted by three Lord High Advisors (retired merchants) in consultation with a council of merchants. Her tongue and worldlywise stratagems have earned her the title "the Old Vixen," but she's generally loved—or at least respected—among Scornubians. She can whelm a mounted militia and scouts headed and equipped by the Red Shields mercenary company and has a watch of well-trained and well-

equipped soldiers assisted by both priests and mages. The city has many shrines and visiting clergy., but only one temple, the Healing House of Lathander, which is much called upon to heal injured travelers of all faiths.

It's been said the goods and riches of half of Faerûn pass through Scornubel, but the city itself is known as the source of much mutton and wool, medicines concocted by local artisans, merchant services (wagon repairs, moneylending and a barter fair), and the trading, training, and doctoring of mounts and beasts of burden. Businesses and the buildings that house them change from season to season or even more rapidly, and Scornubel has few permanent landmarks. One never need pay for a night's rest unless one wants a bed, bath, or stables—even in cold winter weather you'll see folk burrowing into hay piles to hollow out warm beds, and on hot summer nights many folk lie down amid their stock in the paddocks, surrounded by saddles and saddlebags to keep the beasts from stepping on them.

Landmarks

Scornubel has a few interesting spots⁷ the first-time traveler should be aware of buried amid all its many warehouse complexes, all of which bear large badges of the costers or companies they belong to, and so are easily identified. Most of these are clustered around the small, muddy harbor. The rotting, aromatic stalls of the fish market stand beside the ferry dock on the west arm of the harbor. The smithy of Kaerus

⁷A map of Scornubel can be found in *A Grand Tour of the Realms*, the largest booklet in the revised edition of the FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting box, or in the FORGOTTEN REALMS Adventures hardbound book.



Thambadar and the crowded yards of Arkaras the Shipwright occupy the east arm. Kaerus works mainly on wheel rims and useful ironmongery such as hooks, hinges, hasps, and nails, but can turn out simple armor and weapons. Arkaras is a huge, bearded giant with a perpetual fierce expression who keeps all the river boats running and owns the ferry.

From the harbor roads radiate out in all directions. On the back road of the largest and most prosperous block of shops on the east side of the Trade Way stands Scornubel Hall, seat of the local government. It's the place you can hear all the arguing coming from. It is found three blocks up from the docks, just north of the intersection that borders the Walk, which is an open-air public meeting place and market. Eljan, door warden of the Hall, can give directions to most things and folk.

Some visitors to Scornubel make straight for Mother Minx's, a festhall of some repute, or seek out Angah Lalla, a dealer in curios from far lands who's known all across the Coast lands as a fence for stolen goods, but fewer folk know of the useful and interesting local mages: Buldath Andryn, Chansrin Alum, and Nethmoun Aln. The best way to find any of these three is to leave word at any of the inns or taverns. Their agents will find you and guide you to a meeting. Like many other people in this ambitious, dangerous city the three like secrecy. The traveler may be initially bewildered by all the nicknames, aliases, catch phrases, and passwords in use in Scornubel.

Buldath buys monster remains from

adventurers, packages and preserves them, and sells them as magical components all over the Coast lands through a few very loyal agents. He's a taciturn gentleman, and difficult to get to know well because of it.

Chansrin is a sharp-tongued sorceress who loves adventure. She loves to hurl spells into the midst of any fray in the city, often accompanying the watch on nights when she's bored. She'll leave Scornubel to rescue someone, but wandering the Realms is not her idea of adventure. As she told me, if she stays right where she is in Scornubel, "All the adventure in Faerûn will come to *me!*"

Nethmoun is a reclusive mage, a soft-spoken, small-headed and unprepossessing man who keeps to his small, ramshackle hut on the eastern edge of town. The hut is warded, and is guarded by six margoyles, a small forest of magically animated flying daggers, and other, more mysterious magical defenses, including several modified *Evard's black tentacles* spells.

Nethmoun collects rare and unusual spells. If someone uses a magical item or spell he hasn't heard of in the city, one of his agents will contact that person and offer to trade some magical training or magical items for the new item or spell. He usually sends his strikingly beautiful female cook—or a *projected image* of her.

There are other magical features of interest to the visitor in bustling Scornubel. The wizard and sage Phiraz of the Naturalists is interested in purchasing live monsters or unusual beasts or their relatively intact carcasses. He's an expert on otyughs,



and is engaged in a long-term study of all life on the High Moor.

Scornubel's best lost treasure legend also has to do with magic. Somewhere under the Nightshade nightclub—reached by secret passages from that dim, crowded den of passion, music, and shady dealings—is the crypt of the Wondermen, sometimes called the Wondermakers.

The Wondermen were mages who dared much. They tested the limits of magic, traveled many planes and strange worlds, and in the end they chose to be consumed by magic. Their crypt is said to be guarded by several of them who have become liches, who await the coming of wizards mighty enough to withstand their spell attacks—wizards who will truly deserve to wield the awesome magics they did. If someone flees the crypt with a magical item, the legends whisper, these liches will hunt that person down, not resting until the thief is destroyed and the item has been regained.

The crypt of the Wondermen is said to be crammed with magical rings, wands, rods, gloves, dancing *ioun stones*, and, ringed by the grand catafalques of the Wondermen, a huge crystal sphere that imprisons an eater-of-magic.⁸ The sphere can be moved about by means of a hand-sized control sphere resting on a pedestal nearby. If it's released, legend holds, it will roam the Realms devouring all magic until there's not a spell or magical item left. The brute rule of barbarians, goblinkin, and monsters will then overwhelm all civilized folk.

Few have seen the crypt of the Wondermen and lived to tell the tale, though many come to the Nightshade seeking the way to it. The staff claim to honestly not know the way, some swearing that the sliding panel that leads to the right secret passage moves around from time to time by itself.

Many more visitors have seen the most famous magical inhabitant of Scornubel: the Oebelar. This mighty mage perished—or perhaps was merely magically transformed—some thirty-odd years ago. Great tongues of blue-white cold fire consumed his tower one night, and on the next one the silent, floating remnants of the Oebelar first appeared a single shining eyeball, its gaze cold and level, and a blackened hand and forearm. Sometimes these two remnants wander independently but they usually appear together—and can write and gesture, demonstrating that they retain the Oebelar's intelligence.

The eye and the hand have roamed Scornubel every night from then on, gliding silently into the midst of the most private meetings and trysts, the bloodiest brawls, and the coldest of confrontations alike. Word of the silent remains of the Oebelar has spread across Faerûn, inspiring ballads and more than one adventuring band to name themselves the Eye and the Hand.

The Oebelar has become a familiar haunting to Scornubians. Most of them hate his (or its) coldly curious gaze and prying ways—but most of them can't do anything about it, and try to ignore him. Magic seems unable to detect him, keep him out, or harm him. Even the mighty

⁸A nishruu, detailed in the revised FORGOTTEN REALMS *Campaign Setting* boxed set.



spells of archmages and the undead-blasting powers of senior priests are ineffective, though weapons of steel can hit and hurt the eye and the hand. The Oebelar goes everywhere and takes an interest in everything, and has quite dampened the ardor of many who've eloped to Scornubel.

The traveler is warned that Scornubel remains a dangerous place. Many dark deeds are done in the shadows, and everywhere are intrigues that a visitor can all too easily get caught up in—only to meet with several feet of cold steel in an alley or nightclub doorway.

Traditional entertainments in the nightclubs of the city include mock battles (or not-so-mock battles) between well-oiled human acrobats and monsters, monsters that are trained to

dance or do tricks, and monsters that participate in comedy or spell-hurling acts. Tales of various of these performers breaking free and slaughtering some members of the audience who were trying to escape are true!

Doppelgangers, lamias, and other monsters able to assume human form or magical disguises have always dwelt in the Caravan City—and to some extent have been tolerated, if not welcomed, because of their special powers or knowledge. If you're trying to contact a mind flayer, a yuan-ti, or even a beholder and would rather not do it in the trackless wilderness at a grave disadvantage, this is the place to come—if you can't safely go below into the Underdark, where secure meeting places exist, such as Skullport under the great city of Waterdeep.

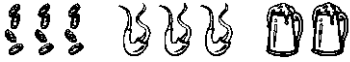
This is also the place outlaws, heirs on the run from assassins, misfits of all sorts, adventurers down on their luck or lacking ideas as to where to go looking for treasure (as well as danger, which seems far more easily found) all come. It's not a place for the faint-hearted or the fastidious.

Unfortunately, its ever-changing nature makes the work of a guide hard. Permanent features are few. Some follow in these pages—but the visitor is advised to keep a weapon ready travel in a group and by day only until the city's byways and current intrigues have been scouted, and guard well all open display of wealth. Remember that in Scornubel, information always has a price, and moneychangers are everywhere. Be sure the money they're changing isn't unwittingly yours.



The Dusty Hoof

Inn/Tavern



This middling establishment stands on the east side of Northstorm Street in the block above the six-way intersection of the Walk. It's unexciting, but relatively safe and comfortable. As the name indicates, it caters to drovers and caravan wagonfolk.

The Place

The Hoof is long, narrow, and high-ceilinged, with the upper reaches of every room always lost in the gloom. (There was a rumor some years back that a stirge got in and lurked aloft for most of a season, flitting down to drink from sleeping guests and then hiding up in the darkness again—until a guest who slept with a hand crossbow handy took care of the menace.) The street level is given over to the taproom, with the kitchen and gaming rooms in the cellar, and the dining room on the floor above. The dining room is closed off at night, and shields the guests trying to sleep on the three floors above somewhat from the noise of late night drinkers. Garderobes, a serving lift,⁹ and stairs are all at the back, linking each floor. All rooms lack windows except the front suite on each floor.

The Prospect

The clientele of the Hoof leads to it being neither a very sociable nor very

unpleasant place to visit. Most of the drovers and caravan folk are tired and hungry of nights, leading more to the sounds of contented munching and murmurs of “More ale” than scintillating dinner conversation. On the other hand, few fights ever break out, as most visitors here fall over into bed almost as soon as they're done eating.

The Provender

Food at the Hoof consists of the usual roasts, stews, steamed greens, and—in keeping with the name of the place—something called hoof soup, which tastes rather like broth of old meat cuts with diced old vegetables in it and is supposedly made by boiling the hooves of locally slaughtered livestock.¹⁰ Drinks are the usual ale, wine, sherry, mead, and winter wine. Nothing exotic or outstanding is served.

The Prices

Ale is 3 cp per tankard, and everything else is 1 sp per flagon. All food is 2 gp per serving. A serving is a generously heaped oval platter suitable for a large, hungry soldier or field worker. I saw two elves share one. They left food—and they started out hungry, not disdainful of the fare.

Travelers' Lore

The cellars of the Hoof are said to connect with old, dry sewers now used for smuggling—passages that lead to warehouses far away across the city.

⁹A serving lift is a box in a shaft, operated by pulling on a pulley rope by a servant standing in the box. This one is often used for quick escapes by those willing to burn their hands of the rope or take a hard landing at the bottom.

¹⁰Elminster says that hoof soup is indeed made from boiled hooves—with the other ingredients Volo detected thrown in. Dogs bother livestock, the Old Mage notes, so they're not welcome in Scornubel—and so they're too few to devour all such offal. “So,” Elminster noted dryly, “for once we have to do it ourselves—eat up, now!”



Far Anchor

Inn



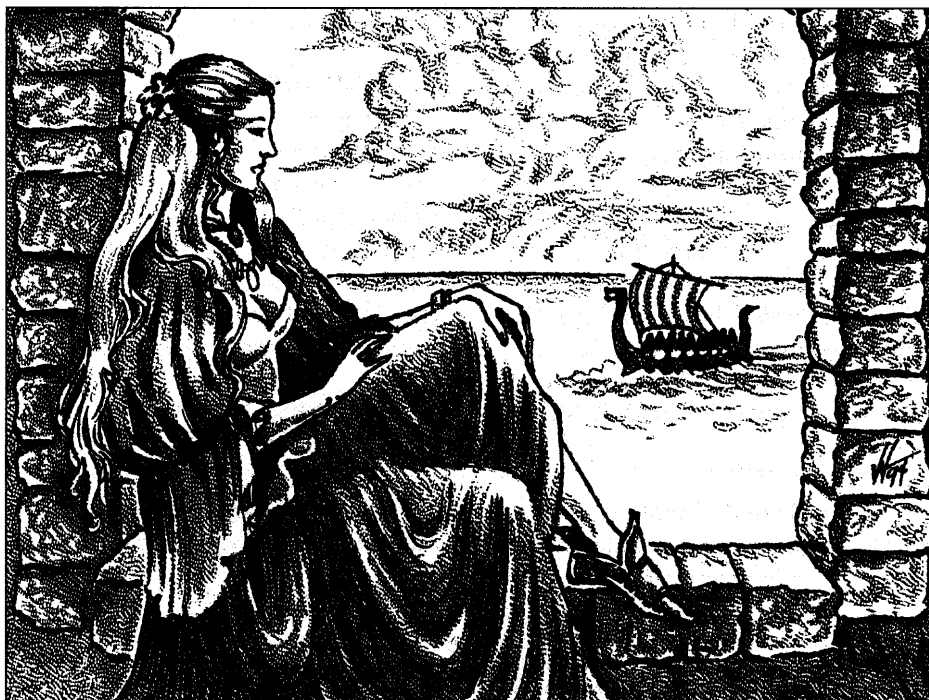
This large inn sits on the north side of Far Rider Street between Stumblepost Trail and Red Shields Road. It's probably the best accommodation to be had year in and year out in Scornubel. Built by a retired sea captain only 12 or so seasons back, its name refers to its distance by river barge from the Sword Coast.

The Place

Large, bright rooms, simply furnished but kept clean, are things to be treasured in rough-and-tumble Scornubel—so this inn tends to be full most of the time. Its rooms have stout

shutters and lack balconies, but this cuts down on thievery and the frequency with which empty bottles are hurled inside of evenings—unless one's foolish enough to sleep with the shutters open.

The communal dining room (the largest in Scornubel) has two watchful guards to keep things peaceful. Folk who aren't staying at the inn can come in and dine for 2 sp per serving. Some folk stay here regularly just for the chance to relax over a meal. Others come because the inn has fewer bugs than elsewhere and is too new and clean to have much room for secret passages and the like. Its indoor garderobes (jakes) were new to the city when the place was built, but their like are found everywhere now.





The Prospect

Folk rich enough to have something worth stealing, but not so rich as to have spare coin enough to rent an entire house to stay in or to travel with bodyguards in strength, come here. (Many Scornubians live in one house and rent out their second one to visitors.) Most guests come back a second time if they visit Scornubel again. The cleanliness is one reason—and the baths are another.

At the Far Anchor one can bathe in the privacy of one's own room or in a large and steamy—but warm!—bathing chamber in the cellar. Many wives will stay nowhere else for the latter reason, though one must beware the rather strong and dubious-scented perfumes sold around the city for adding to bath water. They're created to mask the aroma of an unwashed body, and thus even when diluted they're apt to leave the owners of refined noses reeling.

The watchful staff of Far Anchor are all ex-adventurers of many races. All tend to carry hidden weapons and are ready to use them. Ask them if you need anything; they're happy to help.

The Provender

No drink is served at the Anchor to keep breakages and brawling to a minimum. The fare is simple, of the roasts, stews, fried potatoes, and steamed greens sort. For the more adventurous palate, river clams, eels, and frogs can all be had fresh and pan-fried in butter.

Cheeses and sausages from all over Faerûn come to Scornubel, and this inn



sells a selection. Of the cheeses, Etlurian gray is very popular—though, strangely, I saw little of it in Etlurel itself. Halfling-made sausage from Corm Orp is also a local favorite. It's made from squirrel meat, ground nuts, and hogs, and has a distinctive fatty taste.

The Prices

A platter (any main dish) is 3 sp. A bowl (any soup or stew) is 2 sp. A plate (river fare or bread) is 1 cp. Cheeses and sausages vary with the going market prices, but are usually 4 sp per wheel for cheese and 1 gp per pound for sausage.

Travelers' Lore

The Anchor is too new to have acquired many tales yet. It is said to be haunted, though, by the unseen spirit of a guest stabbed for his money. Guests hear his moans and the noise of clinking coins. His behavior would indicate his hidden coins haven't been found yet.



The Jaded Unicorn

Inn/Tavern



This ramshackle complex of former warehouses occupies the center of the first block east of the one that has Scornubel Hall at its heart—but aside from position and size, the two places couldn't be more different. This dump is proudly presided over by a life-sized purple unicorn sculpture that some wag—on a dare or a bet, no doubt, and with the aid of a *levitation* spell—has painted the face of with rouge, lip scarlet, and eye shadow to make it look like a cheap courtesan. Somehow it looks fitting.

The Place

This place is used rightmindedly only by the desperate and the poor. The small sleeping rooms smell bad and form a warren of mismatched corners and sloping floors, a result of combining warehouses that once had nothing at all to do with each other. "Rat holes," one patron called them, very aptly.

The Prospect

The Jaded Unicorn is notorious, even in Scornubel. It's the place where rough sorts go to get killed in brawls—on some nights, the stabbed bodies pile up outside like so much kitchen refuse, hurled out by the cooks with the same careless ease. It's certainly the only place in town that welcomes (well, tolerates) orcs and half-orcs among its clientele—and a lot of elves, dwarves, and humans who come react

with drawn blades. There's a brief flurry, yet another body, and then the drinking goes on. Thankfully, this place has adopted the earthenware tankards used in some other rough houses to keep the fatalities caused by hurled drinks to a minimum.

All of the wild partying that goes on in the taproom, which is usually packed, with patrons standing crowded together elbow-to-elbow, makes it a lousy place to try to catch some slumber. If the din from downstairs doesn't keep you awake, the mutterings of plotters gathered in adjacent rooms will.

The Provender

Food in the Unicorn means slabs of salty bread, wedges of cheese, bowls of hare stew, pattens of pan-fried trout (not bad), and cuts from a roast cooked in stale beer—and tasting of it. Drinks are the order of the day here—and the stronger and rougher, the better. I advise guests to dine elsewhere, if they must sleep here.

The Prices

Thankfully, all of this splendor comes cheap. All drink is 1 cp per tankard, all meals are 2 cp per serving, and all rooms are 2 sp a head per night, with another 1 sp per mount for stabling.

Travelers' Lore

Smugglers and snatch bands of local thieves often meet here. Tales abound of thick-skulled, but healthy, youths being taken from here to unwillingly pursue sailing careers elsewhere. Beware!



The Raging Lion

Inn/Tavern



This large, but rather poorly run, establishment stands on the east side of the Trade Way on the north edge of the city. It has the advantage of a large, well-guarded compound to hold off orc and brigand raids and a location that allows timid guests to avoid entering the city proper—or to leave hastily, riding hard into the night, if need be. It offers the convenience of secure stables handy to the main building, but not much else.

The Place

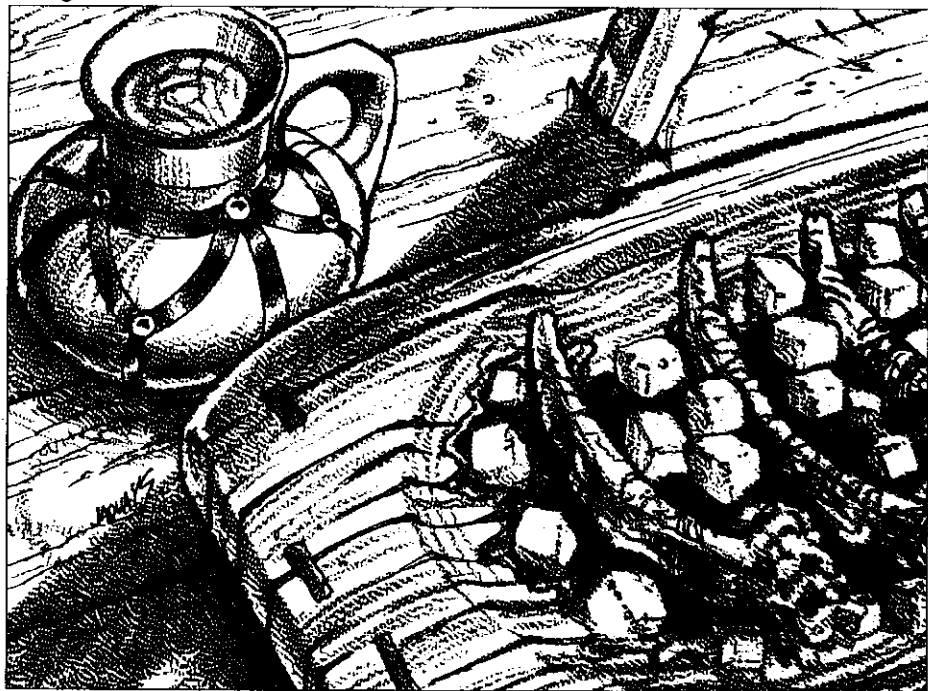
The Lion is dirty and dingy. The life-sized gilded stone lion out front, a

reminder of former greatness, is now sadly shabby. A frequent local prank is to place the severed head of a slaughtered hog or the like in the lion's open, snarling jaws. Sometimes such a grisly trophy hides a message for one cabal or another. Once or twice, folk have been murdered in Scornubel and their heads displayed in the lion's jaws as a warning. (A grisly and brutish gesture.) Inside, the inn isn't quite as bad as that—but it's not very exciting, either. The gilded lion's head chamberpots were quaint when I first used them—and they're much older now. . . .

The Prospect

The staff members at the Lion pursue a rather unhurried pace, as if the worn-





down look of the establishment had invaded their very being. They are not exactly rude, but they are not on their toes either. They seem perpetually distracted, and a guest may have to repeat a request several times to get action.

The Provender

Food at the Lion consists of the usual roasts, stews, and steamed greens fare, with one note of interest: The cook has a personal liking for fried and stuffed snake and will happily prepare a platter of this delicacy for anyone requesting it. He does the snakes in a gravy of poultry stock and almonds, and the result is surprisingly tasty, if a bit rubbery. The kitchen also produces Elturian pheasant tail soup, but small rodents and other found meat may

well find their way into the stock. You have been warned, travelers.

The Prices

Rooms are 15 gp a head per night, and stabling is 3 gp extra. Meals cost 2 gp per person for all one cares to eat, including a mug of cheap spiced wine. Other wines cost 10 gp or more per bottle. There's no ale.

Travelers' Lore

For years the Lion was home to three rival adventuring bands, who outdid each other in boasting if not in success. One finally found a Netherese ruin and brought back great wealth—but its members were promptly slaughtered by the rest. The gold, hidden here, was never found.



Serpent's Cowl

This small village sits on the east (or south) bank of the Winding Water upstream of Boareskyr Bridge, near the estate of Heartwing, which is owned by the sorceress Aluena Halacanter, who's famous for the pegasi she rears. Named for the yuan-ti city and temple that once stood here, Serpent's Cowl stands hard by the Forest of Wyrms. It is important today as a ferry crossing at the limits of clear water on the river. Below it, the Winding Water is black and poisonous because of godly battles during the Time of Troubles. The Cowl has always been home to farmers, a few woodcutters who timidly cut along the verges of the Forest of Wyrms in armed parties (parties that keep watch for who-knows-what monsters approaching from the forest depths), and a handful of fisherfolk and bold (local folk use the word *strange*) hunters.

The Forest of Wyrms is named for the great numbers of snakes that slither and coil in its trees. They are thought to be a legacy of the serpent folk who once dwelt where the village stands. Local legend whispers that some day they will return from the depths of the forest. Adventurers report finding no trace of yuan-ti in the forest, but admit their searches have been a little tentative because the forest holds at least half a dozen green dragons—young, smallish dragons that are probably a single brood, but dragons nonetheless—and the dark, overgrown stone tower

known as Lyran's Hold. Lyran was once a mage of note, master of the necromantic arts, and his tower has been a lodestone drawing adventurers from the far corners of Faerûn—adventurers who've perished or, worse still, been seen again as his undead servants, patrolling the wood against intruders, wielding their old magic and weapons as they did in life.

Some villagers say a small, brave band of adventurers recently won through these defenders to destroy the lich—but other adventurers have vanished trying to plunder the Hold since then, and most locals believe undead still rule there. Hunters say serpents, zombies, and skeletons are still numerous in the forest.

Lyran warded his Hold. Many ward tokens can be had in the village for 100 gp, and one is shown on the following page. The wards ignore the undead, visiting harmful spells only on the living. (Some spells manifest as traps that are unleashed by *spell triggers*.)

Local legend forbids digging cellars or pits in the village for fear of opening a way into the lost cellars of the yuan-ti temple and unleashing the weird monsters said to lurk there. The temple was blasted to rubble by the spells of victorious mages when the serpent folk settlement fell. The yuan-ti wielded magical items of awesome strength seized from Netherese ruins (scepters that blasted or hurled rings of lightning, rings that gave forth rays that burned or fired showers of stinging darts, and staves



whose segments could turn into multiple fighting golems when detached and thrown), and used these to savagely guard the cellars of their temple, where unholy experiments were conducted in breeding and magically altering monsters to produce worse monsters. Records of the battle speak of pale things that resembled bulettes, other pale things like behir, and creatures that resembled giant winged flying snakes and beholders with snake-like, dangling rear bodies.

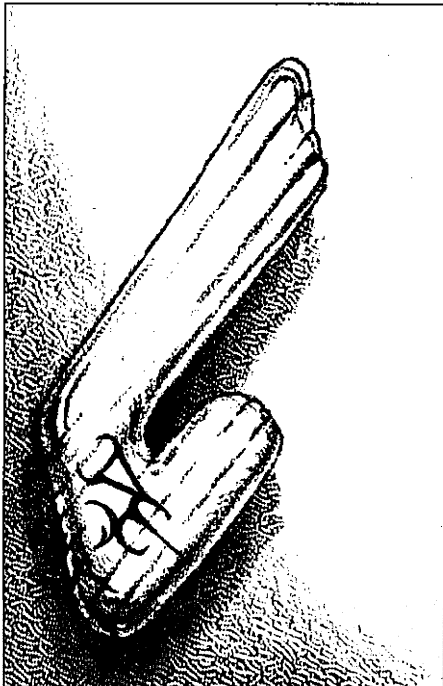
In the end, the attacking mages brought down the temple atop the yuan-ti, burying them alive. Most believe they survived, though, tunneling down into the Underdark to

escape to the Serpent Hills or tunneling to the surface somewhere in the Forest of Wyrms, which has at its heart many as-yet-unexplored ravines tangled with thickly grown trees and shrubs.

The traveler who's not interested in trudging around a forest known to be endangered by snakes and green dragons will find the village itself small and rather pleasant. The farms around it lack any buildings for the same reason the village is small: Raiding green dragons destroy homes and devour people that are outside the ward that envelops the entire village.

This ward, created after the battle to keep evil dragon-riding mages from directing their mounts to dig up the temple cellars in any attempt to gain the Netherese magic there, keeps all dragons out. Any dragon who comes into contact with the ward is torn simultaneously by *repulsion*, *lightning*, and some form of life-draining curse.¹¹ This spell is known to affect weredragons and dragons who've used magic to adopt another form.

The ward keeps the stone, turf-roofed, and florally decorated cottages of the Cowl crowded together around a small square. Their gardens and the tracks that lead to the nearby farms radiate out from them. There's but one small guesthouse in the Cowl, the Dusty Dragon, whose owner sells food to visitors.



Serpent's Cowl Ward Token

¹¹The effects are *repulsion* (as per the spell, affecting one dragon without saving throw or exception), *lightning bolt* 18d6 damage except to dragons immune to such attacks), and *energy drain* (which reduces the dragon by one "age" if a saving throw vs. spell fails).



Soubar

This small trail town is located on the Trade Way south of Boareskyr Bridge. Often raided by goblinkin and bugbears, it's a summer tent town that shrinks to an armed outpost in winter. At its heart is the old stone ruin of a temple or abbey of Bane, known as the Black Abbey. Some folk believe it was once sacred to another god and was only seized by worshipers of Bane briefly. The ruins have yielded stones to build the rest of Soubar.

What remains of the ruins are home to a mysterious woman known only as Mag, who runs a tavern called the Winding Way in them. The word around the Coast is that Mag was once a priestess. Some say she abandoned her calling, others that she embraced another faith and others say she's a mind flayer or other horrible creature (a beholder, perhaps, or even a neogi) who's mastered magic enough to take human form for years at a time.

All that's certain is that Mag answers no questions, has healed folk from time to time, wears a *ring of misdirection* that conceals her true allegiances and powers, and stores broken instruments of torture in the old abbey loft where she sometimes lets travelers sleep. Whether she used spells or potions for healing is a point of contention. Reports on this are confused. All of this makes many merchants uneasy. They camp west of Soubar, or press on past if the weather's fair and the

night apt to be moonlit, rather than stopping here.

Soubar is a lawless town. Visitors should bring their own swords—and be prepared to swing them. There are several Coast lands fire-side tales about brigands who buried loot here and were slain before they came back for it. Not all such tales are fanciful. The merchant Janthool of Athkatla, a far-traveled trader in sundries, dug a latrine pit just west of Soubar a spring or two ago and unearthed an ivory coffer crammed full of matched black pearls—each as large as the pommel nut of a stout broad sword! Be warned, however. Digging in certain spots in Soubar summons helmed horrors¹² to the digger, due to an ancient guardian spell of unknown origin!

Folk not wanted in Triel or Boareskyr Bridge find their way here. This has made Soubar something of a hiring fair for brigands, evil mages, doppelgangers, wererats and other werewolf, mercenaries down on their luck, mind flayers, those bearing curses, and others not tolerated in most communities.

Fences for stolen goods are plentiful here. Scurrilous “bounty hunters” who kill, maim, or capture specific beings to order are also plentiful, as are dealers in slaves, information, poisons, chains and cages, sleep venoms, and exotic pets. Kill-trained pets cost twice the usual prices. I'm not (ahem) familiar with any names or details, of course.

¹²Detailed in the revised FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting boxed set.



Tempus's Tears

This small, little-known village rests quietly where the Skuldask Road meets Thundar's Ride in the heart of the Fields. Most folk think it's just a huge, abandoned, ancient stone city, fields upon fields of once-proud towers fallen into rubble and ruin. Its name comes from a standing stone set up at the intersection that bears the words:

*Here was peace this day made.
Let Tempus cry bitter tears.
No more our dead we'll parade
And live cloaked in waiting fear.*

This stone is believed to mark the spot of one of the parleys that ended a long war—and with it, any hope of creating a northern realm ruled by those Calishite satraps greedy for ever more land to bring under their rule. The date of the struggle, who exactly was fighting (beyond Calishites on one side, and humans already here who wanted to remain free on the other), how long the peace lasted, and who wrote the words on the stone are all lost in the mists of the passing years.

Today, Tempus's Tears is a village of dwarves and gnomes, who live under the ruins in burrow homes. They craft coffers, latches, and satchels, and sell them to certain trusted merchants passing through. Most others don't even know they exist.

A few merchants take a wagonload of stones from the ruins

from time to time. If they take too many, dwarves appear from below-ground and politely ask them to put some back. Those who refuse are warned that the ruin's under the protection of Amaerasantha. If they ignore this, the dwarves summon her.

Amaerasantha is an amethyst dragon of great size and age who lairs in the collapsed circle of an old temple. The circle is located on an island in a small, stagnant lake at the heart of the ruined city, generally northeast of the meeting of the overland trails. She will respond to a dwarven summons and attack plunderers of the ancient, nameless city. Dwarves can summon her either directly or by use of a vast, buried horn, actually a carved, spiraling tunnel, blown into from below. It issues a low, droning call.

In truth, there's little to find here. One of the reasons a ruin so large is so little known are the failing wards that still affect it, shrouding much of it in mist at all times and causing a few of the shattered buildings to vanish for a time and then silently reappear. They disappear onto other planes or worlds, some sages say. A diligent searcher in the ruins will find it empty of all but rubble, dust, and a few nasty predators that have taken up residence or wandered into the city just as human adventurers do.

Somewhere in these vast ruins, the Great Seer Alaundo said, is the *Stone that Speaks*. This treasure is eagerly sought by Candlekeep. The



sages of that monastic community have sponsored many expeditions in search of the *Stone*. It is said to be a hand-sized, nondescript lump of gray rock that contains the imprisoned spirit of a wizard—an archmage who clings to sanity only by a thread, and is apt to be irritable and sarcastic. It yearns to possess a living body again and is shrewd enough to bargain with any information it yields to move it toward its goal, step by tiny step.

The archmage, once of Netheril, knows more of magic than living wizards do. It has some way of hearing what befalls around it, and so has learned many things down through the years since its imprisonment.

It was briefly possessed by the long-ago ruler of Rashemen, Angorl Steelhorn. It was stolen, and later traveled about the Coast lands in the possession of a band of adventurers. In the end they fell here, slaughtered by an argos, and the *Stone*, flung away in desperation by a dying thief, who vainly hoped it would somehow unleash magic to save the band—lay

for many years alone in the stony loneliness of the ruins. Word of it has come to us from three separate travelers, two of whom were too fearful of it to get close to it. A rival blasted the third by magic, trapping him in an endless, rapid, helpless shapeshifting from one form into another until his heart finally failed under the strain, and he perished.¹³

The spirit trapped in the *Stone* strives for freedom at all costs, caring nothing about what it promises or brings about in order to get into a living body again.¹⁴ It is treacherous and self-serving in the extreme

The dwarves and gnomes, who dare not approach it, told me the *Stone* calls out to those who come near, trying to get itself taken away from its current resting place. That transportation is something they don't want. They'll summon Amaerasantha to prevent it. She also doesn't want the *Stone* out in the wider world, nor does she desire the flood of treasure-seeking adventurers news of its finding will undoubtedly bring to 'Tempus' Tears.

¹³This now-forgotten 9th-level wizard spell (Elminster tells us) was an involuntary shapechange that could help or slay a foe: The target being had to fail a saving throw vs. spell for the spell to work at all. If the save failed, a cycle of 12 preselected forms began (typically slug, snail, toad, and the like). No form could be assumed that would perish in the surrounding atmosphere (no "fish out of water"), but damage could be suffered if a particular form fell due to its nature (a slug being unable to stay on a branch, for instance) or was struck by another attack. The target had to make a system shock survival roll for each change; any failure brought instant death (and an involuntary return to one's true form). If the saving throw succeeded, the target being gained immunity to that spell, plus an additional 12 permanently gained hit points, and was instantly healed of all injuries and afflictions. The magic shifted all garments and carried gear into the ethereal plane until the transformations were complete or death occurred; items and equipment were not present to crush or drag down tiny forms the target may have been forced into.

¹⁴Elminster says the steps toward freeing the wizard's spirit that the *Stone* will try to cause by bargaining are as follows: Take the *Stone* to a large city; get it into the spell chamber of a male archmage; render that mage unconscious, placing the *Stone* upon his breast; cut his hand so that it bleeds, and place the hand on the *Stone*; this will force a possession, freeing the ancient wizard from the *Stone*. The original mind in the body will war continually against the intruding wizard, causing the body to babble, act erratically, and change its mind from time to time—but mostly, the evil wizard will be in control!



Triel

This small, stockaded way-village is located on the Trade Way north of Scornubel, where that road meets the Dusk Road that swings across country from Elturel to Hill's Edge. To the northeast are the Trielta Hills, quiet, rolling grasslands rumored to contain gold, and home to many small, peaceful gnome and halfling communities.

Triel is ruled by Elvar the Grainlord, so-called because he's obsessed with having enough food to safely survive the winters, when trade virtually ceases along the inland roads. The gates of Triel's log-and-boulder village stockade are locked at night—and visitors are expected to be outside, camping in the fields around so they can do their part to keep thieving bugbears and worse away from Elvar's precious grain. The stockade itself is crammed, stacked high, and dug deep¹⁵ with crates, barrels, bins and jugs of preserved vegetables and grain, all sealed, numbered, and meticulously labeled as to their contents. I happened upon a rarity: "1357—2136: Sword Coast Snails, pickled in Firewine/Gift of Baltovar of Neverwinter/Turn every three months/Seals renewed [and then a string of several dates]." Note that the first four numerals denote the year Elvar took possession of this container.

At least Elvar's lucid enough to hunger after news of the wider world outside his well-stocked, fanatically defended pantry. Traders who bring

food, firewood, barrels, or sea salt for food preservation or the like will be honored with a feast at Elvar's table—and the villagers are good cooks (and well fed, to boot—but then, how could they not be?).

Be warned. Triel not only lacks anything much useful to the traveler, like an inn, tavern, or decent shop—though the villagers seem to have no shortage of money with which to buy anything a merchant might want to sell—but Elvar's also a little, er, unusual about religions. The Grainlord changes faiths almost by the ten-day, complete with vestments, hired priests, if he can get them, and rituals. Messengers sent out to Scornubel or Boareskyr Bridge who take too long to return with a hired priest may find the clergy they bring back is already passe, professing a faith now fallen out of favor. Altar building and dismantling at the Cup of Plenty, the shrine Elvar maintains, keeps two carpenters busy day in and day out as the seasons pass.

This whole-hearted leaping from deity to deity makes things very difficult for visitors. It also makes life none too easy on the local priestess of Chauntea—a stubborn little wisp of a thing by the name of Antriera, who quietly sees to the healing needs of the garrison, farmers, and forage patrols Triel sends out. She'll also see to the needs of travelers for very reasonable fees.

More than one adroit visiting thief seeking disguises for later has relieved Elvar of a dozen or more sets

¹⁵It's so underdug that the doors covering cellar stairs are everywhere.



of priestly garb. (Antriera always burns the whip-and-chain vestments of Loviatar before the Grainlord realizes he looks ridiculous in them and gets any funny ideas about creative secondhand uses for them.) Elvar always seems puzzled as to where they go and how he could have misplaced them when everything's so neat. This, of course, goads him into further acts of organization, cleaning, and rearranging—activities he never seems to tire of.

For all his faults, Elvar, a simple soul at heart, is a genius at finding water, creating proper irrigation and drainage, and anticipating weather and crop problems. Folk from troubled Temyr have several times tried to entice him away from Triel with much

gold to run their own farms. They are always puzzled as to why he refuses, but Elvar always does so, firmly.

He does give advice and is well paid for it—but he won't travel, so the rest of Faerûn is free of his ability to smell where buried water lies and to dig a well just deep and large enough to draw with little pumping. Triel has two deep, clear wells that have never been known to get low on water due to his skill.

His folk love him, for all his eccentricity. I learned all that I tell here by talking to several of them. If you can stomach all this, or are a dealer in clerical regalia or a creator of new cults, perhaps, Triel may be the place for you—or it may not. Most will pass it by.





The Backlands

For explorers and adventurers who favor warmer climes than the far, frigid reaches of the Savage North, the Backlands of the Sword Coast are the largest lawless, monster-haunted frontier in western Faerûn—unless one goes as far south as the trackless jungles of Chult. Many adventurers and nobles (or other crazed-wits) who hunt monsters for sport come here to wet their blades and gather trophy heads for their walls.

The Backlands are named for their location as seen by coast-dwelling humans. They consist of the sparsely settled (by humankind) lands east of Serpent's Tail Stream, the Forest of Wyrms, and the Trielta Hills; north of the River Reaching; west of the desert Anauroch; and south of the Greypeak Mountains. Once this area was covered by fertile farms that fed Netheril, a proud and mighty realm ruled by human sorcerers. Netheril's ruins—said to be crammed with gems, gold, and magic—still lure opportunists to remote, perilous corners of the Backlands every summer season.

Today, the Backlands hold the most powerful elven realms left in Faerûn: Evereska and the Greycloak Hills. They also hold the most fearsome monsters known to walk, slither, trot and crawl openly in the Realms. The beasts in the heart of the Marsh of Chelimber are fierce enough to prevent cruel and haughty cities of yuan-ti and ophidians

in the Serpent Hills from spreading east, and feuding tribes of giants dwell in the Hill of Lost Souls and the Battle of Bones (two craggy areas named for past human struggles). The giants battle endlessly over the rolling grasslands between the two areas.

Tales of lost treasure abound in the Backlands. It is said to lie both in the ruins and tombs of Netheril, and in more recent hoards such as the one said to be dug into the walls of Skull Gorge. *Gates* also abound. These permanent teleportational areas are often invisible and may even be stranded in midair by the collapse of the buildings in which they were located. At least one such portal links Toril with outer planes where fiends, such as tanar'ri, dwell. Rumor whispers that the elven realms hold an entire network of *gates* which the Fair Folk use to travel the Realms. Most sages explain the presence of the many monsters in the region and the flourishing game they live on (which would seem far too little to support such a huge number of roving teeth and claws, but far too plentiful for those monsters to be eating much) through the existence of many *gates* that bring continual supplies of fresh beasts into the Backlands from somewhere else.

The traveler is advised to come well armed in a strong party of battle veterans whose ranks include both mages and priests of power. Reliable guides to the Backlands are few, especially now that the Zhentarim have begun to run



caravans through the area from Yellow Snake Pass to bases along the Delimbiyr. These caravans have hired away or killed off many of the hunters who formerly roamed the area. Elven guides, once happy to permit small human expeditions into certain areas, have responded by preventing all human entry into Evereska and ceasing all aid, including guide services. The monsters seem as plentiful as ever, and fresh bones of hired guards trying to get caravans safely past the beasts are so numerous as to litter the ground in some places.

As so often happens, humans have responded to increased danger by charging into the area in ever-growing numbers. Monster hunters based in Hill's Edge and Boareskyr Bridge do a

thriving trade in preserved monster parts and caged live specimens, which they collect on wide-ranging expeditions into the Backlands. The Marsh of Chelimber holds the largest known concentration of catoblepas in the Realms, for instance, and the northeastern end of the Sunset Mountains is home to a realm of leucrotta—a collection of rival packs of this notoriously unpleasant beast.

Every year, new rumors of treasure found sweep the Sword Coast. Sometimes the treasure is simply uncovered by the fierce storms that often lash the area, causing flash floods in normally dry basins and ravines. Sometimes a group of adventurers uncovers a small ruin or a scrub farmer turns up a chest or jug when plowing. Each year's crop of



treasure rumors goads wealthy interests in Amn and Waterdeep to sponsor fresh expeditions in search of the latest chance to gain some part of the magical might of Netheril. A single find of a new type of magical item or even a useful spell can make someone a lifelong fortune.

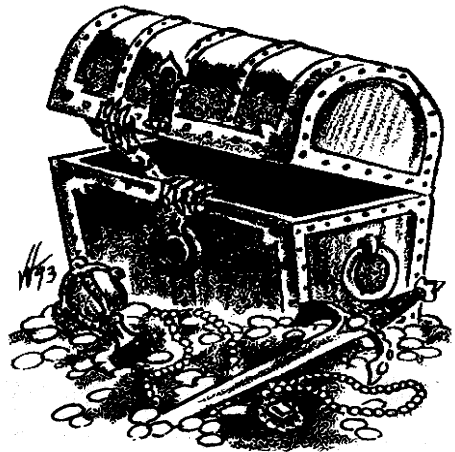
Settlements in the Backlands are few. It's not a place for the casual traveler. Those who enter the depths of this largely unexplored, trackless region must be prepared to forage for their own food and fight, more or less continuously, to keep from becoming someone else's food. The safest area of the Backlands, if there can be said to be such a thing is along the borders of the elven holdings. Although hopeful predatory monsters gather there, the elves mount strong patrols, employing magical flight, spells, and enchanted weapons as well as battle skill, and keep the area fairly clear. They don't always come to the aid of nonelves whom they observe beset by orcs or other monsters, but I've noticed that they usually respond to those who make the old elven hand signs for Greeting and Call for Assistance.

To sign for Greeting, extend both arms—hands empty—straight up over one's head, thumbs together, and then bring the arms forward in an encircling motion. Repeat this at least three times before letting one's arms fall. The motion can be repeated several times.

The Call for Assistance can be preceded by an attention-getting ululation—a high-pitched chattering scream or swooping two-note warbling something like a continuous repetition of the sound small boys make while beating their chests and pretending to be a bull ape

from the jungles of Chult (the most common caged animal seen in the cities of the Sword Coast). This could be described as setting one's voice as high as it will go, and then dropping one note, and then back up, as fast as possible: "Uhh-ohh-uhh-ohh-uhh-ohh" and so on. At night, some elven patrols will respond to this sound alone. Those planning treacherous use of this cry should remember that elves don't need light to see the positions and deeds of humans.

The Call is signaled by raising one arm, holding it upright as far as the elbow, and waving the forearm in one direction only (not from side to side, as most humans do), from where one's hand is just above one's face, down to where the hand covers the chest, and then back up, repeating rapidly. As with the Greeting, the hand must be empty. Only one arm should be used, although repetition is understood as an added indication of urgency. Remember that wise travelers never have to rely on anyone else for assistance.





Drawn Swords

This small village occupies a solitary crag. The crag is located just east of Northdark Wood and halfway between the Hill of Lost souls and Hill's Edge. Northdark Wood is called by some the Dusk Wood and by others Reluvethel's Wood, after a famous elven ranger who once hunted in it. This forest is east of the Trielta Hills, and is the most northerly arm of the Reaching Woods, separated from the others by the Dusk Road.

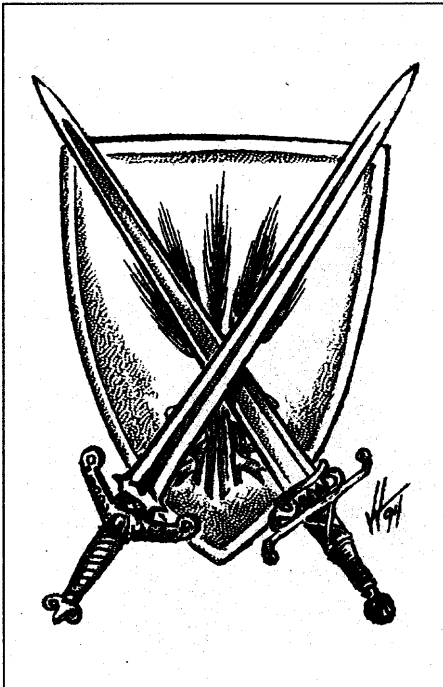
Drawn Swords is named for several hard-fought battles here in the past, plus the vigilance that all who dwell there must maintain if they're to live long enough to see another morn. In the past, a combined human and elven

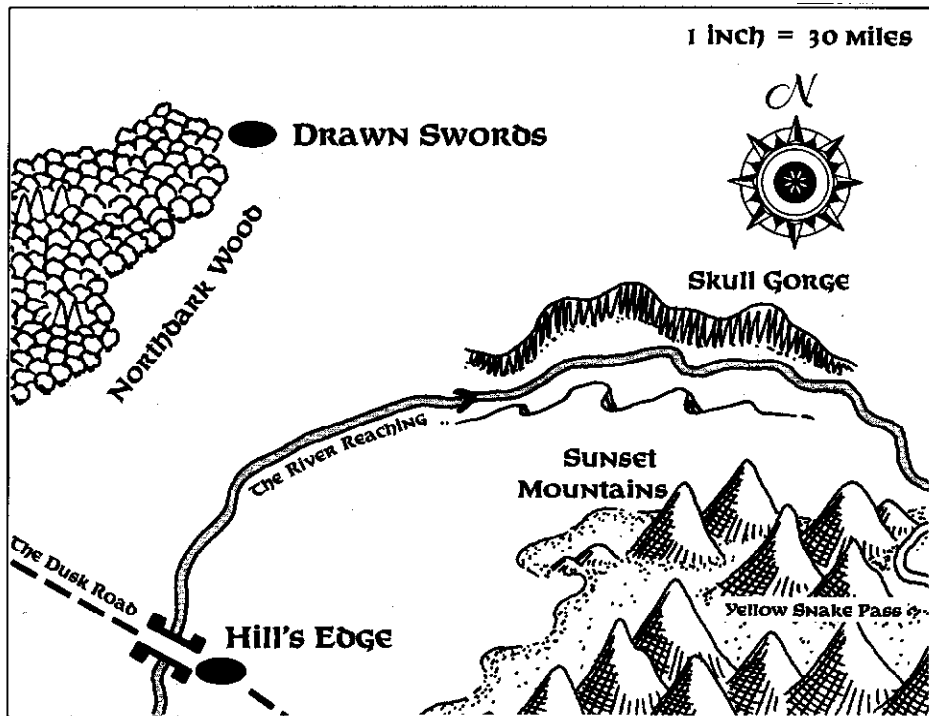
force smashed an orc realm at this location. In another past battle, elves put humans planning to found a realm of their own to flight.

From the distance, the traveler will see a broken stone tower atop a steep crag. The tower is surrounded by a ring of trees and a few unfenced cultivated plots. The tower is an old robber-knight's keep, now partly in ruins. The keep at the crest of the crag (called Swordskeep) provides a lookout, a shelter for food stores, and an armory. The local farmers and hunters, who dwell in stone-and-sod cottages on the steep slopes of the crag, retreat here when beset by large orc tribes, raiding trolls, and the like.

The village numbers perhaps 80 folk, about 20 of whom are usually off hunting. The village keeps a constant watch for approaching creatures of all sorts, and can muster over 40 expert archers. The usual defense of this often-attacked village is to fire volleys of arrows, retreat up the slopes to the next ring of cottages, fire all the arrows there, retreat again, and so on. Each home has at least eight quivers of 20 shafts each hung up just inside the door for easy access in a hurry. At least two quivers will be fire arrows, their shafts wrapped in cloth that has been soaked in pitch and is ready for lighting with a firebrand.

A giant triple crossbow set up on the top surviving floor of the tower can hurl its bolts far enough to surprise many an enemy and hard enough to pierce three trolls standing one behind the other. Shafts are often set aflame just before firing in order to





illuminate enemies attacking by night or to slay trolls.

It's surprising that such a small, isolated village has an inn, but the place serves as a base for many adventuring bands and a group of guides and swords-for-hire. This last group is known as Saern's Sharp Swords. Their founder and original leader, the warrior Saern, was killed over 20 winters ago in a winter skirmish with hobgoblins north of the village.

The importance of the village, the existence of the inn, and the inn's Harper defenses and probable ownership are due to an ancient *gate* located in a room of its own on the ground floor of the old keep. The gate appears as a shimmering blue upright oval of

silent, dancing, cold fire. This two-way portal operates continuously. It allows regular supply shipments to reach the village. The gate also permits the constant passing back and forth of adventurers and hunters wanting to quickly reach the heart of the Backlands or Northdark Wood, which offers splendid bear and stag hunting. The operation of the portal also permits a constant flow of captured monsters or the trophies of slaughtered monsters from the frontier to Berdusk. Everything from heads and antlers to exotic innards destined for sale by apothecaries and purveyors of magical ingredients passes through. Berdusk then offers both overland and riverborne connections for travel and trade.



Landmarks

There are two tourist attractions within easy reach of Drawn Swords. Remember, however, that orcs and the like watch the village, waiting for prey to come to them, so “easy” refers to distance, not safety or a leisurely trip.

One is sacred to worshipers of Sune Firehair, the Lady of Love. Her worshipers often make pilgrimages to it. Known as the Flame Stone, it is a huge upright stone as tall as two adult human males that stands in a grassy glade on the eastern edge of Northdark Wood, within sight of Drawn Swords crag.

On Midsummer Nights, or when Sune wills, the stone glows with a vivid, orange-red, flickering radiance, resembling a leaping tongue of flame from a distance. Touching it then—if one is a worshiper of Sune—is said to heal all diseases, curses, illnesses, wounds, and wastings. Good fortune is said to come from feasting and kissing in its presence at all times, so the Flame Grove is the site of many uninhibited revels by Sune-worshipers. Most come in summer, when dancing and frolicking in scanty dress all night is relatively comfortable—but some brave souls come here in winter.

Whenever the grove is in use, Stag Warriors guard the revelers from predators. These Stag Warriors are hired warriors commanded by priests of Sune. They wear helms adorned with antlers—apt to be awkward when plunging through trees, I’m told. There are at least six Stag Warriors on duty every night that worshipers have made offerings to the priests of Sune in Drawn Swords, and usually twice that number

are present. Sometimes there may be as many as 20 Stag Warriors on duty.

These defenders normally ring the grove, facing outward at least 10 paces into the forest. Young worshipers and bridal couples often use the grove alone, without warning anyone. Their gnawed bones and gore tell their foolish fate to the next folk to venture into the grove without the protection of the Stag Warriors.

Stag Warriors earn 4 gp each per night. As can be expected, there are often several penniless hireswords staying in the village and awaiting a chance for this duty, foraging for food in the meantime.

The other nearby landmark lies halfway between Drawn Swords and Skull Gorge. Used as an occasional encampment by travelers ignorant of its legendary defenders or confident of being able to handle them, it’s called Fallen Giant Tomb.

In ancient times, a great chieftain of the mountain giants, whose name has been lost, perished. His grieving followers carved a stone ridge into a semblance of his sleeping form. Much cracked and crumbled by the years, it remains an impressive, serene form over 200 feet long. There are the inevitable legends that it rises up to slay folk nearby on certain nights, but adventurers who’ve camped there tell me that the sculpted stone never moved. They warn, however, that if any blood—even from already-existing wounds or uncooked meat—is spilled on the slopes of the ridge or upon the stone form itself, four or more undead skeletons of mountain giants armed



with spiked clubs erupt from the earth and seek to slay any living creatures who don't flee the ridge immediately.

These guardians also appear whenever anyone digs on the ridge. There seems to be an endless supply of them. One old ranger claimed to have personally destroyed over 30 of them over the years. No one can excavate without continuous interruptions from erupting undead.

The giant chieftain is buried somewhere under the stone that bears his likeness. The way down to his tomb, which was presumably covered over by the giants who buried him, has been since totally obscured by time or deliberate working of the ground and is completely lost. The dwarves, giants, and elves all have tales of this tomb, tales that are surprisingly detailed—and in agreement about all of these details. The giant lies buried beneath a bodyplate of solid, *everbright* silver, resting on a bed of stacked golden ingots, with his magical war hammer on his chest

Each ingot must be worth over 100 gp if the descriptions of their size are true. There must be at least 2,000 of them in the tomb, and probably two or three times as many. Thrice war parties have found the buried giant and borne away his enchanted weapon, retreating from taking all the gold because of the undead guardians.

The war hammer is as large as a siege ram, but flies by itself, so people who can't lift it can wield it by touching it and willing it to accompany them. They tow along the floating hammer rather as a mage can direct a *Tenser's*

floating disc. The war hammer can be directed to fly at an opponent,¹ but it does this only six times before flying away to return to the tomb, which reseals itself.

PLACES OF INTEREST IN DRAWN SWORDS

INNS

The Sword and Dragon



This inn is built of stone and is apt to be drafty and icy-cold in winter. Any stay here is interesting, however—the place always holds armed adventurers drinking and spinning wild yarns, and caged monsters usually sit in storage cellars under the inn, awaiting transport to Berdusk. From time to time, one of these captured beasts escapes, and the village has an anxious time until it's slaughtered or caged again.

The inn is connected to a stable that is set below it down the steep cragside, and here the inn staff members swap and sell a good variety of mounts. The staff members also sell food and travelers' gear.

The inn is owned by anonymous Berduskan interests, and the staff is rotated back to Berdusk every month. This means that a particular acting innkeeper will be in Drawn Swords every third month. The owners are thought by most around the Coast lands to be Harpers—chiefly because of who appears to defend the inn whenever Zhentarim seek to take control of the village.

¹At THACO 4 and 4d4 points of damage—6d4 points to large (or bigger) size foes.



Evereska

This verdant valley and walled city of the elves is the greatest known concentration of moon elven Fair Folk remaining in Faerûn—beautiful, cultured place of beauty where few are welcome.

Evereska vale is encircled by supposedly unbreathable mountains and can only be entered via *gate*, through a narrow, well-guarded cleft east of the Halfway Inn, or from aloft.² There are rumors of *gate* linkages with Waterdeep, the island elven realm of Evermeet, and ruined Spellgard.³ Elven archers patrol the skies on giant eagles to prevent unwanted intrusions, and wards of the strongest sort prevent teleportation into or out of the vale. If there are any pass tokens to these wards, they are kept very secret.

Some sages believe the vale is defended by the magics of the elven deity Corellon Larethian himself. Its defenses certainly do include bolts of hurled magic that strike from the sky to smash hostile armies. Few beings venture within 10 miles of the foothills of the Evereskan mountains without being seen by the elves of one of the many ever-vigilant watchposts and mobile patrols.

Don't expect to get into Evereska unless you have legitimate business and are an elf—or can persuade an elf to escort you in. Harper pins are usually known to grant passage unless there's evidence they're carried by a non-Harper. Dwarves, half-orcs, and the like are usually not admitted, whatever their aims.

Most trade between Evereska and the

nonelven world is carried on at the trading compound of the Halfway Inn, constructed for that very purpose. Elves do not welcome strangers into their city or their homes, and won't grant a tourist or merchant passage into the vale just because she or he wants to see its glories.

And those glories *are* considerable. I've seen them briefly and can report a gardenlike series of lawns and wooded terraces interlaced with crystal-clear streams that link spill pools and fountains. Birds, cats, and small forest creatures are numerous, and music is heard here and there. Splendid tall houses with many spires and balconies rise up through the many huge, old trees. These trees are mainly duskwood and bluetop, but almost all varieties can be seen in the vale.

Even the poorest, most crowded streets are clean, beautiful, and luxurious by human standards. It is on these streets that artisans live and work close together, sharing the use of a public park rather than enjoying their own private grounds. Imagine an entire city about as splendid as the royal palace and gardens of Suzail—or the best areas of Silvermoon, without any of the cobblestones or crowding—and you'll begin to see what it must be like.

Amid all of this splendor are temples to all of the elven deities, the Evereska College of Magic and Arms, and palatial noble estates. The Evereska College is a training academy of the highest standards. The training it provides is one of the reasons that Evereska is so well

²The general location of Evereska can be seen on the map in the entry on the Halfway Inn, later in this chapter.

³See FR13 *Anauroch* and FOR4 *Code of the Harpers*.



defended. Harpers are the only nonelves who can normally get training at arms or magic in Evereska, although the occasional half-elf, if of sufficiently exalted parentage on the elven side, may be taught.

The palatial estates are home to powerful and ancient noble families. The cold, sneering pride of these elven families is the greatest weakness of Evereska, and the prime reason most nonelves wouldn't want to enter the vale. The haughtiest of the elves even look down on elves of their own race whose lineages aren't as exalted as their own. Their contempt for elves of other races is usually open, and their abhorrence of nonelves loud and ostentatious.

Some haughty elves have gone so far as to move their estates as far away as possible from places most often visited by humans. These places include Moondark Hill, where human worshippers of Solonor Thelandira come, and the Unicorn & Crescent, an inn that welcomes Harpers, the Heralds, and the Chosen of Mystra on the rare occasions when such visitors are in the city. (Incidentally, these are places I couldn't visit, and therefore can't rate.)

Elves of Evereska need little from the outside world. Most of what they want comes under the heading of pursuing hobbies, from collecting coins or weapons from places as far afield as Zakhara, to breeding experiments, to collecting magic.⁴ (Sometimes Evereskan noble elves are thought to manipulate humans into marriage and watch the results from afar by magic.)

In exchange for items or equipment



needed for the pursuit of their hobbies, they usually sell baubles: the tinkling blown glass and metal wind sculptures that hang in trees making soft music in the breezes from one end of the vale to the other; tiny ornamented, sapphire-adorned, silver-bladed throwing daggers and belt knives that are much favored as hidden defenders among noble ladies all over Faerûn; vintages considered too poor for Evereskan tables; and small poems set down in exquisite calligraphy on slabs of ivory or the like in delicate hanging frames. The occasional spell scroll or *glowing globe* is the most magic they'll willingly sell. Sages, thieves, and artisans from all over Faerûn would give much to see more of the glories of Evereska.

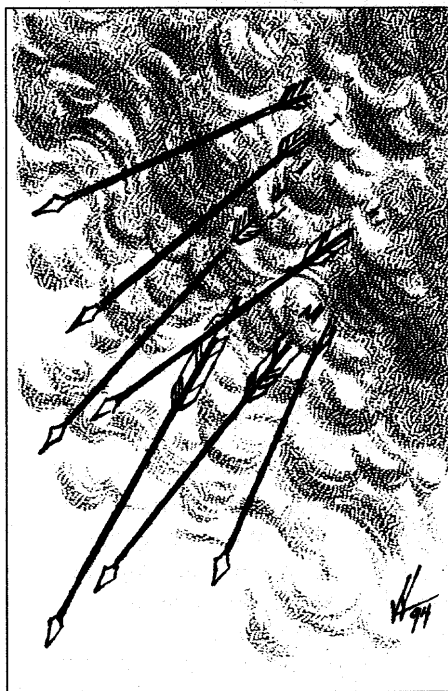
⁴"All crass and misleading oversimplifications, of course," says Elminster.



The Greycloak Hills

Once known as the Tomb Hills, these high, grass-girt hills were settled by the elves of Evereska a few decades ago, ostensibly to deal with the many ban-shees there. Now they're always cloaked in mist—part of a powerful ward that warns the elves of intruders and negates certain magics. The name *Greycloak Hills* comes from these mists and the gray cloaks worn by the elves dwelling there, who call their land *Greyhome*.

There's little for a traveler to visit Greyhome for, now that strong elven patrols block all access to the magic-rich tombs of the Fallen Kingdom. These patrols are sometimes bolstered



by the Walker in the Mists, a golem formed, those who've fought it swear, from solid mist!

In the Fallen Kingdom, adventurers in earlier years found tomb after tomb of long-dead warrior-kings, both human and elven. Most folk in Amn, Baldur's Gate, and Waterdeep, where many such forays were sponsored, believe the elves wanted to seize the riches and magic for themselves. Maskar Wands, head of the noble Wands family of Waterdeep that is famous for its mastery of magic, has said publicly he believes powerful Netherese magic was found in the Greycloaks—perhaps an entire fortress or city—and the elves felt they must possess it to strengthen Evereska, prevent a stampede of greedy and well-armed humans into the hills, and keep the magic out of the hands of the Zhentarim, whose forces and caravans probe ever more often at the defenses of both Evereska and the Greycloaks.

Rumors in the Halfway Inn speak of elven warriors training extensively in the high meadows of Greyhome and of magically aided digging going on there. The digging is rumored to be the construction of cavern homes for the elves to retreat to should they be driven out of Evereska, since Zhentarim and orc attempts to tunnel into the rich vale grow more numerous every year. The elves could also be excavating Netherese treasures, of course.

Travelers and adventurers beware: The elves aid visitors they favor by offering an empty barrow tomb as a camping place, but deal harshly—that is, fatally—with those they deem tomb robbers.



Halfway Inn

Despite its name, this establishment is far more than an inn. It is more a community to which the name of the inn is applied. Why it's called "Halfway" I'm not sure, but the general consensus is that it's "halfway to anywhere"—except Evereska.⁵ Halfway Inn functions as a tavern, stables, and storehouse, and as the center of a caravan camping area and trading compound used by all who want to trade with the elves of Evereska

Most humans are never allowed to even see that fabled valley and city. This prohibition accounts for the popularity of the latest in Evereskan exports: exquisitely painted views of gardens, mansions, and temples of the city of Evereska. These paintings are truly beautiful, with vibrant colors, charming scenes, and magics that preserve them and make them glow so that they can be seen even in darkrooms. Small cantrips on the most expensive of these pictures make small birds, squirrels, and the like appear and wander through the scene augmented, very rarely by an armored elf or gowned lady gliding along in the background shadows or appearing from time to time in the windows of a castle turret or on a balcony. Such pictures sell for 400 to 6,000 gp, depending on size, subject, and enchantments.

Trade at the Halfway Inn is a two-way process. For their part, the elves of Evereska, preoccupied with defending their vale and the nearby Greycloak Hills against an increasing Zhentarim presence, have begun buying the finest horses they can get.

This sort of trade keeps the Halfway Inn busy. Adventurers use it as a base to explore the lands around (though they're no longer welcome in the elven-held Greycloak Hills), merchants and mercenaries gather here, and the few elven-led caravans assemble here for trips to Secomber, Waterdeep, Berdusk, Neverwinter, Silverymoon, or Baldur's Gate (rarely elsewhere). Humans, elves, half-elves, dwarves, and halflings are all seen here often. The presence of the compound has encouraged halflings to settle in the woods around, and the smell of rumored gold finds on the Lonely Moor has drawn the dwarves.

The Halfway Inn stands in a small forest, just west of a narrow, heavily guarded cleft that offers the only way into Evereska for those who can't fly. (Other paths lead out of Evereska to the north and south.) The visitor will find a wide wagon trail leads from the west into a large open area divided into camping areas, each with two paddocks and a spring-fed horse pond, by a radial array of warehouses. An open assembly ground spreads out to the south; a trash dump and a wagon repair works lie beside it. The easternmost building, at the back of this bustle, is the Halfway Inn.

Places of Interest in The Halfway Inn

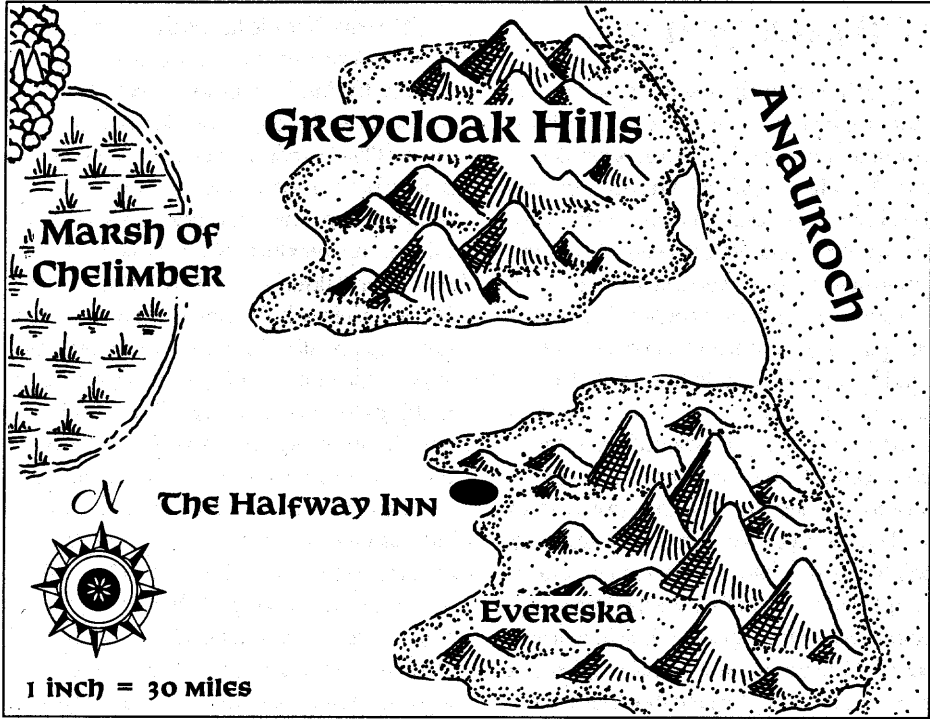
Inn/Tavern

The Halfway Inn



Stoutly built of wood and stone, the inn has a dark appearance from the front. It almost seems to blend into the trees

⁵Elminster says some of the elves of Evereska have traveled widely and might well have heard our expression "I'll meet you halfway"—and named the inn for that as a quiet elven joke.



around it. Long candle lamps light the entrance brilliantly

The visitor can readily see the attached stables on the north end of the building. They're "self-service"-style stables, but warded to chime a tiny hostler's bell if entered from outside. The bell doesn't sound if they're entered from the inn.

Stepping inside the inn, the visitor finds a dark lobby with a doorwatcher and a cloak room. The doorwatcher is usually one of the pretty elven barmaids, glad to be off her feet for a time. Behind the raised front of her desk she has a foot gong to summon armed aid, and a hand cross bow that fires sleep-envenomed darts.

Beyond the desk, a broad archway opens into the tavern room, the heart of activity in the Halfway Inn. This dimly lit,

many-pillared room fills the entire ground floor of the inn except for the stables to the north and the kitchens to the south. The ground floor room has over a dozen round tables by the bar, but most patrons prefer the heavily curtained booths that open off the main room all along the north wall, the east (or back) wall except at the exit, and the south wall once one is past the bar. At least one booth is known to have a secret passage connecting it to the cellars below, the back hall, and a linen closet on the floor above.

The booths have tables, built-in seating, and curtains that completely conceal those inside when drawn together. The back or east end of the room is deliberately kept dark for privacy, and the rest of



the room is “cozily lit for reasons of discretion,” as one of the staff put it. All this is because most elves don’t like strong light and the other patrons are busy *not* being seen. The inn is always abuzz with deal-making covert meetings, and whispered intrigues.

A broad wooden stair with several shield-hung landings rises up from the main tavern room to the two floors of sleeping rooms above. The inn’s third floor consists of a single suite of rooms right up among the trees, and the suite is almost always occupied by visiting elves.

The rear exit to the tavern room opens into a back hall with a stair to the sleeping floors, the entrance to the stables, and a back door. All three are much used by guests who don’t want to be seen leaving or going to their rooms—and by local professional escorts. The Halfway Ladies (not part of the inn staff, but known to them and allowed free run of the place) are notorious for their high-class dress and manners. They’re mostly moon elves who pretend to high rank, though a doppelganger once slipped into the roster for a tenday.

The inn serves good food, has a surprisingly wide selection of cheeses from all over Faerûn, and offers a broad, well-stocked cellar of good wines. The beer is robust, even nutty in flavor, and the *zzar* will catch most Waterdhavians by surprise. It’s been strengthened to elven tastes, ending up as an almond-flavored strong sherry.

The inn is run by the discreet and trustworthy Myrin Silverspear, though I suspect it’s owned and run by the rulers of Evereska, not Silverspear himself. The inn staff consists of old veterans, who see

to the stables, furniture, and brawls, and a selection of pert, pretty fast-moving elven barmaids. The moody, haughty or brooding sorts of elves don’t apply for this position. The Halfway specializes in getting the cheery, bouncy sort, all tinkling laughter and deft dancing around patrons while carrying flagons balanced to the ceiling. They keep the drinkers well supplied downstairs and keep the rooms upstairs clean and comfortable, if unspectacular.

The inn’s decor and appointments are definitely rustic, with chamberpots instead of garderobes. An ewer of water, some fruit, and a jar of biscuits are placed in every room. Cats pad everywhere within and about the inn, keeping the mice down.

The Halfway Inn is a welcome haven to many travelers. Long may it remain so.





The Marsh of Chelimber

The tale of this vast wetland's creation is known to every youngling in western Faerûn.⁶ The elementals who ran amok, spreading the Winding Water to flood all the lands of Prince Chelimber, and the warring wizards whose spell battle released them are all long gone, but there are fresh tales about just where Chelimber's flooded halls lie every spring, as a new lot of hopeful adventurers brave the bogs and lakes of the waiting, mist-shrouded Marsh. Most of the tales say Chelimber and his courtiers are now aquatic undead who guard the prince's huge hoard of gold and silver, dragging intruders who get too close to their flooded hall down to a watery grave. The existence of this hoard is said to be proven by the silver goblet brought to Waterdeep in triumph by the adventuress Andlazara 70 winters ago. Its handle is the snarling boar of Chelimber.

Sensible travelers don't need fearsome tales of undead to keep well clear of the marsh. It's a long trek off the trade roads, and it offers stinking mud, quicksand, and clouds of stinging flies, to say nothing of catoblepas, water spiders, water snakes, lizard men, gulguthra, and similar dangers to the traveler. No known trails safely cross the vast, mist-shrouded, dank maze of water and little islets. There's little to go there for, either, unless one is a mer-

chant trying to capture a marsh monster for a wealthy collector or kill one for the yield of its carcass in magical components.

Some people enter the marsh in search of plants, as some marsh plants have medicinal uses, though few bring high prices. One can also live on marsh fish, though they tend to taste unpleasant at best. A few hunters make a living by throwing weighted nets over groups of marsh fowl from the relative safety of the marsh verges or use poles, safety ropes, and shoe pads⁷ to gather marsh bird eggs for food or sale. Some eggs are the size of a large human's head!

Yet there's a lot of marsh to yield such things. It's as large as nearby Evereska and the Greycloak Hills combined, and of a size with the Serpent Hills. Its spreading waters flooded a large realm and may hold many riches, plus treasure known to have been hidden in the bog in recent years by brigands and by desperate dwarves fleeing orcs.

Several travelers who blundered into the heart of the marsh have reported a wondrous sight: a castle floating in the air, hidden by the mists until one is near. Obviously damaged in the spell battle that created the marsh, it hangs upside down, close to the ground—but is now home to a huge swarm of stirges that pours forth to overwhelm creatures who come too close.

⁶See the "Western Heartlands" chapter in *A Grand Tour of the Realms* in the revised *FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting* box for this tale.

⁷Shoe pads are shoes that are attached to curved plates like miniature coracles for the feet. They allow a skilled poler to walk atop the bog or water.



The Well of Dragons

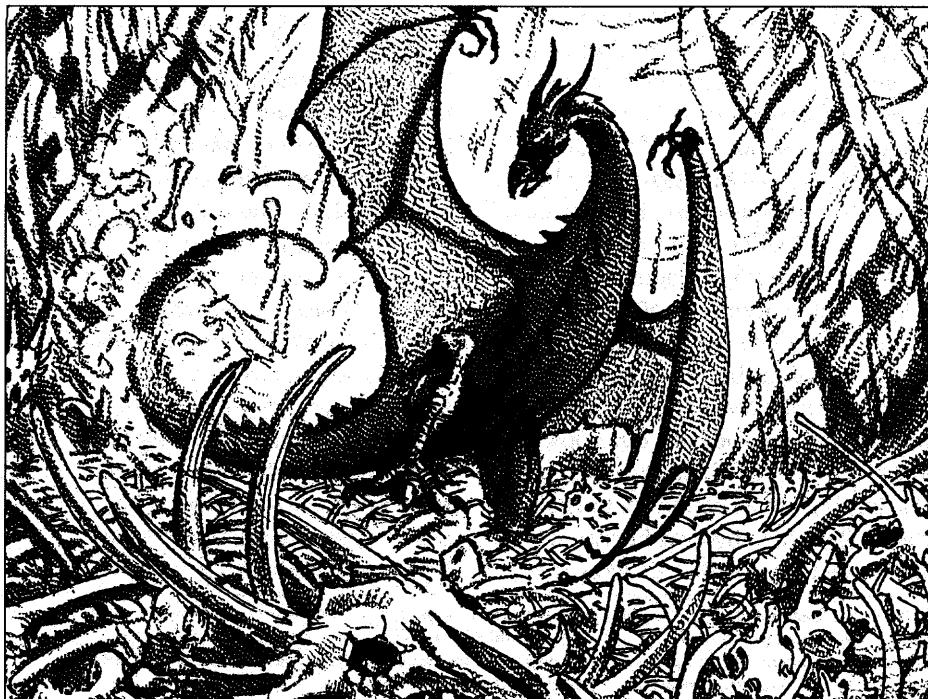
Many folk have heard fireside tales about this place—but most folk in the Realms think it's purely a bard's fancy, a mythical place designed to add color to a ballad or tale. A few starry-eyed adventurers have gone seeking the Well, notably some well-heeled young noble sons of Water-deep. Those who returned say they found nothing like it in all the Backlands. Yet I have seen it, and can set down here for the first time details of this wondrous sight.

The Well is a deep pit concealed by illusory terrain except during moon-

light, due to powerful shadow magic⁸. It's a vast natural cauldron, probably once a volcano. Its circular opening is as big across as the length of many respectable villages. There's a little meltwater- and spring-fed lake at the bottom—and bones, heaps and heaps of bones.

Here many dragons have gone to die. Amid their huge, tumbled bones adorned with treasure they wore or bore here lies the guardian of the place—the Dire Dragon. (I saw gems as large as human fists, magical amulets and rings, and more!) The Dire Dragon is a shadow dragon that by misfortune of spell or exposure to magical items achieved undeath. If its words can be

⁸The locations of the Well of Dragons and the nearby ruined village of Ladydove are shown on the map in the entry on Hill's Edge in the chapter on the Sunset Vale, later in this guide.





believed, it did not achieve this status through any deliberate process.

The Dire Dragon is unusually large, and its shadow magic is mighty indeed. Not only does it keep the Well hidden, it has slain no fewer than eight arch-mages who came seeking its treasure. It showed me their bones proudly. “Spread the word, manling,” it said with a cynical gleam in its eyes, “and there’ll be more, as sure as night follows day. Dragons think, but humans charge in—and for all of us, greed kills.”

I saw a cavern mouth in the side of the bone-strewn pit, probably used by the Dire Dragon as a sleeping lair—but I’ve no idea if it continues to other caverns or is a dead-end hole. The Dire Dragon keeps the most useful and powerful magic brought by dying dragons there, leaving only the bables out in the pit. Most dying dragons who reach the pit simply dive down to shatter themselves against the rocks and bones. Some like to talk away their last hours, and the Dire Dragon talks to them, learning what it can of hoarded treasure, battle tricks, spells, and the like. Others never reach the Well. If the Dire Dragon’s scrying magics detect them—it often keeps watch around the Well—it goes out and brings their bodies to the Well.

About a mile east of the pit, amid wooded ravines and rock outcrops, there’s an inn called the Dire Dragon. The inn is all that remains of the half-elven village of Ladydove, burned and laid waste to by the Dire Dragon. It’s

guarded against its namesake, all other dragonkind, and most brigands by a powerful ward. This invisible magical barrier teleports two gargoyles whenever the innkeeper commands. These guardians fight for the innkeeper with absolute loyalty.

The ward also reflects back all breath weapons, and drains life force from all dragons (even if they’ve adopted another form) and all who bear metal weapons.⁹ There must be a ward token to prevent harm when using metal tools, but I’ve not seen it.

Places of Interest Near The Well of Dragons

Inns

The Dire Dragon



This small, rustic stone inn is apt to be chilly and damp. It sees few guests, but has a certain charm, and is run by the greatest living sage on matters of dragonkind, the Calishite lady Yajandra Dlathaero.¹⁰ What brought her to this desolate spot was the chance to study the dragons, using her very powerful scrying magic.

The rooms here are tidy and insect free, and each features a lofty comforter of a different quilting pattern to stave off the chill. Yajandra sets a good table of hearty food. She always appreciates a gift of good wine, beer, or liquor. Try her spicy frog stew.

⁹Draining dragonkind of 6+1d12 hit points per round (no saving throw). All other creatures take 6+1d4 points of damage per round (saving throw for half damage), and their damage can be healed, whereas dragonkind hit point losses are permanent. Throwing away a metal weapon or tool ends damage at the end of the round of release.

¹⁰If the DM desires, Yajandra knows everything in the FOR1 *Draconicon* sourcebook.



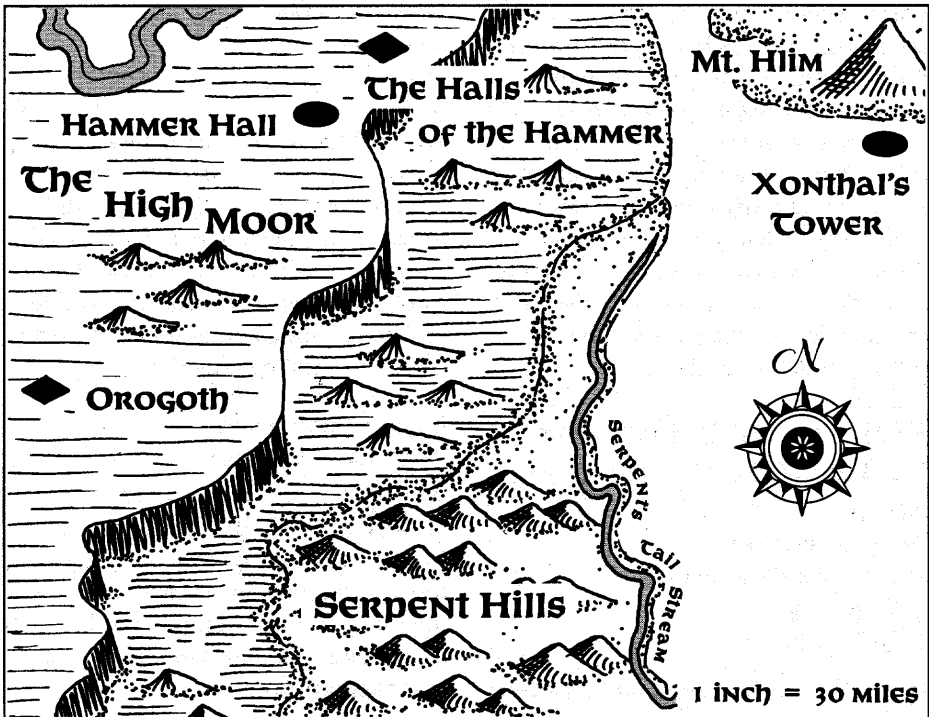
Xonthal's Tower

This small, remote village is nestled on the southern slopes of Mt. Hlim. Here about 40 folk eke out a living by hunting, fishing along the northern verges of the perilous Marsh of Chelimber, and raising sheep and goats on the high mountain meadows. They keep to themselves, hoping to escape attacks from the yuan-ti and ophidians of the Serpent Hills, but do offer beds to travelers seeking Evereska or a way through the Greypeak Mountains.

The village has little to offer the traveler, but because the village serves as a waystop for overland traders, the Zhentarim recently established an agent here, one Hansibal Droun, who runs a hardware shop and a swap-mount stables. He

brought with him a roving guard of a dozen Zhentilar to "defend" the village. All of them veterans of the Moonsea Wars, and most of them are expert archers. They take their duties seriously because, one old man told me, the Zhents often send wizards about in disguise to make sure their local agents do well. Travelers who aren't friendly to the Zhentarim should keep quiet about it. Most of the villagers are now in the pay of the organization.

Xonthal's Tower began as a cluster of servants' and apprentices' homes built around the solitary black stone tower of the wizard Xonthal. Xonthal is believed to be the first Faerûnian to have mastered the feather magic of Maztica, the Land Across the Sea, becoming a plumaweaver





(if I have the term correctly). He also rose to archmage status wielding the more familiar spells blessed by Mystra.

Unfortunately, his studies seem to have affected his wits. He threw out all of his apprentices about 60 years ago and laid enchantments on the hedge around his tower gardens. The hedge attacks intruders and has all the powers of the horrible monsters known as living walls. Xonthal himself is said to have become a lich—but as no one has seen him for a long' long time, that may be mere speculation.

Locals recall three separate Zhentarim attempts to breach the tower' the last involving nine black-robed mages rumored to have come from Darkhold who stood on empty air a hundred feet or more aloft and hurled spells at Xonthal's stronghold thick and fast. As one local put it, "They lit up the night. I've never seen so many spells before, not even in the big battles in Tethyr with all the mages hurling lightning at both armies!"

In the end, somehow, Xonthal prevailed. Two of the mages were blown apart, and another mage flew away screaming' blazing like a torch. The others fled. Word of this spread rapidly in the Coast lands, and fewer adventurers have come calling on Xonthal's hungry hedge since then.

Places of Interest in Xonthal's Tower

Shops

Droun Trading

Mounts and General Gear



Hansibal Droun is a sleek, portly, well-fed

and satisfied-looking man who always wears the latest fashions from Water-deep, is inordinately fond of his drooping mustache, and drives hard bargains. He's never without at least three hard-eyed, alert ex-Zhentilar warrior bodyguards, and so he can afford to strut.

If the locals don't like him, they keep it hidden, and he does deal in goods of the finest quality. He usually has about four riding mounts, another six ponies, and 10 or so mules available—though the mules are usually rented to local farmers, so a buyer will have to wait a day to get them. His shop stock is as good as a large sundries shop in Water-deep, with particular attention to ropes, lanterns, tents, cages, spikes, and other adventuring gear.

Andher's Mill

Wool Mill



This mill turns out bales of local wool for sale to passing traders. It is of good, though not exceptional, quality, with a pleasing off-white color that takes well to dye or bleach. The mill sells only wool, and does not process it into cloth or thread, though preliminary cleaning and some carding is performed.

Inns/Taverns

The Black Flagon



This is your average backwoods rustic inn and tavern—overpriced and serving heavy, gravy-swamped food. Don't look forward to it too much, it is sure to disappoint you.



Yarthrain

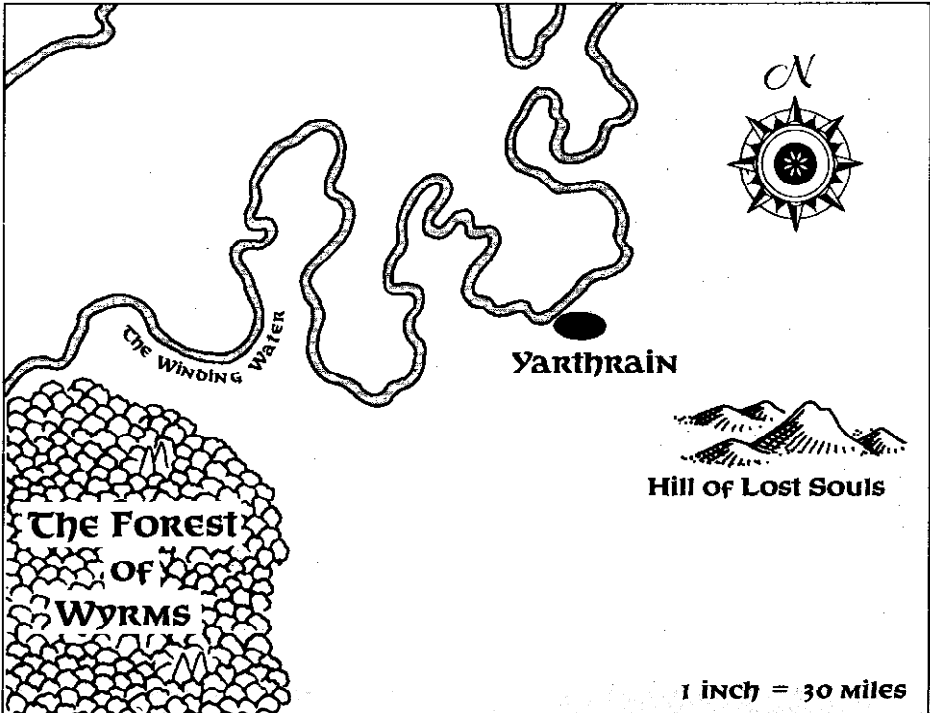
This half-ruined farming village on the banks of the Winding Water has been the traditional northern explorer's route into the Backlands. Here small skiffs from Boareskyr Bridge (although, since that place's poisoning, fearful crews have left from Serpent's Cowl instead) put in to unload seekers-after-glory-usually adventurers hoping to recover some of the lost magics of Netheril.

Here on the south bank of the Winding Water due northwest of the Hill of Lost Souls about 60 folk herd sheep and cattle, fish in the Water, and grow root crops to scratch out a living. Most travelers wonder why

they're there at all—and why the heart of the village consists of half a dozen grand stone houses, now roofless and fallen into ruin.

The answer is the Baron of the Backlands, that butt of a hundred country simpleton jokes, such as: "How did the Baron find out if the water was boiling? Stuck his hand in the pot until he could say, 'Yes, it's boiling now.'" Over 80 summers ago, the warrior Zelarravyan Fangshield, a successful mercenary from Amn, settled here and proclaimed himself Baron of the Backlands.

Zelarravyan was a battle-hungry soul. His enthusiasm for burning and hacking when carrying out a commission began to make him too





expensive for any of the merchants of Amn to use, but they feared what he might do if they exiled him or left him penniless, unhired, within their boundaries. So they all contributed gold pieces to give him a treasury, gave him the title “baron” and the money, and told him to go forth and settle the Backlands of the Sword Coast to guarantee Amn access to the timber and ores there forever.

Delighted, Zelarravyan took his armed followers, plus all the volunteers who hoped to become just as rich as he dreamed of being, and set forth. He came here to the closest river access to the Hill of Lost Souls (the landmark he headed for) and built himself a castle (referred to as Backlands Castle), surrounding it with grand homes for his captains, the new lord knights of his barony.

Then things started to go wrong. Orcs, hobgoblins, and worse swept down on the new settlement, a hard winter followed, and a wizard who’d been sent out from Amn to keep an eye on Zelarravyan decided that the baron had made too many mistakes and rash decisions. This man, Orlornin, came to court one evening and bluntly told Zelarravyan he was taking over.

The baron responded by hurling a chair at the mage, felling him, and then challenging the groaning man to a fight. Furious, the wizard hurled a swarm of fireballs, incinerating most of the courtiers around the baron, who was in turn hurled out through a high window into the branches of a tree, unconscious.



The surviving courtiers thought he'd been blown apart by the fireball. That set a battle going in earnest, with fighters converging on the wizard from all sides.

The wizard Orlornin gave them death. Warrior after warrior fell—but there were always more, shouting and charging at him. Fleeing, the wizard was cornered by the entrance of one of the lord knight's homes. He hurled lightnings into it, slaying the gathered household, and followed the bolts in, climbing to an upper floor from whence he could see and hurl spells at will. Summoning his wizard's staff to him, he made a last stand. When archers began firing at him from the other grand homes, he sent fire and lightning into them, one after another, until most of the barony lay dead around him, the houses burnt-out shells.

By this time, the baron recovered his senses. Finding a hunting bow and several quivers of shafts, he climbed a tree he thought close enough and slew the wizard, emptying both quivers into the slumped form until he'd torn it apart. (He'd heard of wizards walking after death.)

He then found himself alone except for the badly wounded. The survivors had fled down the river on boats. Grimly, Zelarravyan salvaged what he could from the ruins—including the wizard's staff—and set about building himself a secure, hidden place in which he could survive the winter.

The castle collapsed that first winter. In the spring, some Amnians

found the baron leading a small, desperate band of warriors. The band was raiding orcs for food as orcs usually raided the settlements of humankind. Most of the Amnians fled. A few stayed, and named the village Yarthrain, after a treacherous wizard in an old Amnian ballad who was given the death he richly deserved—but at a terrible cost.

Yarthrain the village has remained to this day, but the baron is long dead. A bitter, battle-wild man, he began to raid all the caravans and adventuring bands he came across, always brutally slaughtering any wizards among them. For some 10 years, the Robber Baron of Yarthrain was a feared man from end to end of the Coast lands. No attack was too bold for him, no revenge too difficult. He followed victims who'd given him the slip to as far away as the rooftops of Baldur's Gate, using the arsenal of magical weapons and devices he'd amassed to keep himself safe from most sorcerous attacks.

Finally he overreached himself. A young Waterdhavian noble eloped with his love, a noble of a rival house, because the head of neither house looked with favor on their union. They eloped in style, with a large baggage train and over 40 mounted servants. The baron fell on the party like a starving wolf as it approached Hill's Edge, headed for the distant glories of Cormyr. The cowardly young noble escaped the slaughter, abandoning his lady love and all their servants. The baron kept the survivors as hostages, returning in triumph to



Yarthrain, but the furious young noble, supported by merchants of that city who'd become increasingly fearful of their bandit neighbor, hired all the mercenaries he could find in Hill's Edge and came to Yarthrain at the head of an army of over 1,000 soldiers.

The baron's twenty-odd warriors saw the army approaching and fled. The furious baron took his lady hostage to the hill where the tumbled stones of his castle lay and buried all his stolen gold, vowing to return for it later. He planned to bargain his way to freedom with the lady, but she saw her love at the head of the approaching army and fought for her own freedom, stabbing and slashing the baron with his own silver-bladed long sword.

Furious, the baron knocked her cold and threw her atop the gold. Then in a fit of cold cruelty he buried her alive and fled. He used one of his stolen magical items to whirl the stones of the castle around the army in a deadly rain, and in the confusion he slipped away.

The young Waterdhavian survived the battle. He spent another decade hunting the baron down. His blade finally claimed Zelarravyan's life, but his lady love was still dead, and he returned to Waterdeep to rejoin his family a sadder man. The rift between the two noble houses remains to this day.

In Yarthrain, despite decades of hopeful digging and the use of most of the castle's stones to build cottages,



no trace of the baron's buried hoard of gold and any magic he couldn't use or carry has ever been found.

The baron still affects villagers every day, even if no adventurers are in town digging up Castle Hill. The grand stone houses of the lord knights stand empty because the ghosts of laughing lords and ladies still glide through them, glasses in hand, every night, and lamps and torches shine where there's only empty darkness. Curious folk who go to investigate are sometimes found dead in the morning—slain by some sort of monster that eats their brains. An illithid, adventurers say—but by day, they can never find it. Some say a band of mind flayers must be digging into the hill in a treasure search of their own, somewhere under the villagers' feet—but no adventurers have ever met with them, no matter how deep they dig.

The tale of the gold is no fancy, though. Any adventurer who comes to Yarthrain is likely to see the phantom of the slain lady noble. She appears in darkness, a silver sword drawn in her hand, her long hair flowing about her shoulders, her gown torn away from one shoulder, and her eyes sad. She seems to reappear to those who've seen her before as a warning of approaching foes or danger. If they're asleep, they awaken abruptly, terrified by a nightmare in which the maiden's form, her eyes locked on theirs, melts away into

brown bones, sprawled atop gold coins under the earth somewhere. This haunting¹¹ is commemorated in the name of the local inn and tavern, the Silver Blade.

Places of Interest in Yarthrain

Inns/Taverns

The Silver Blade

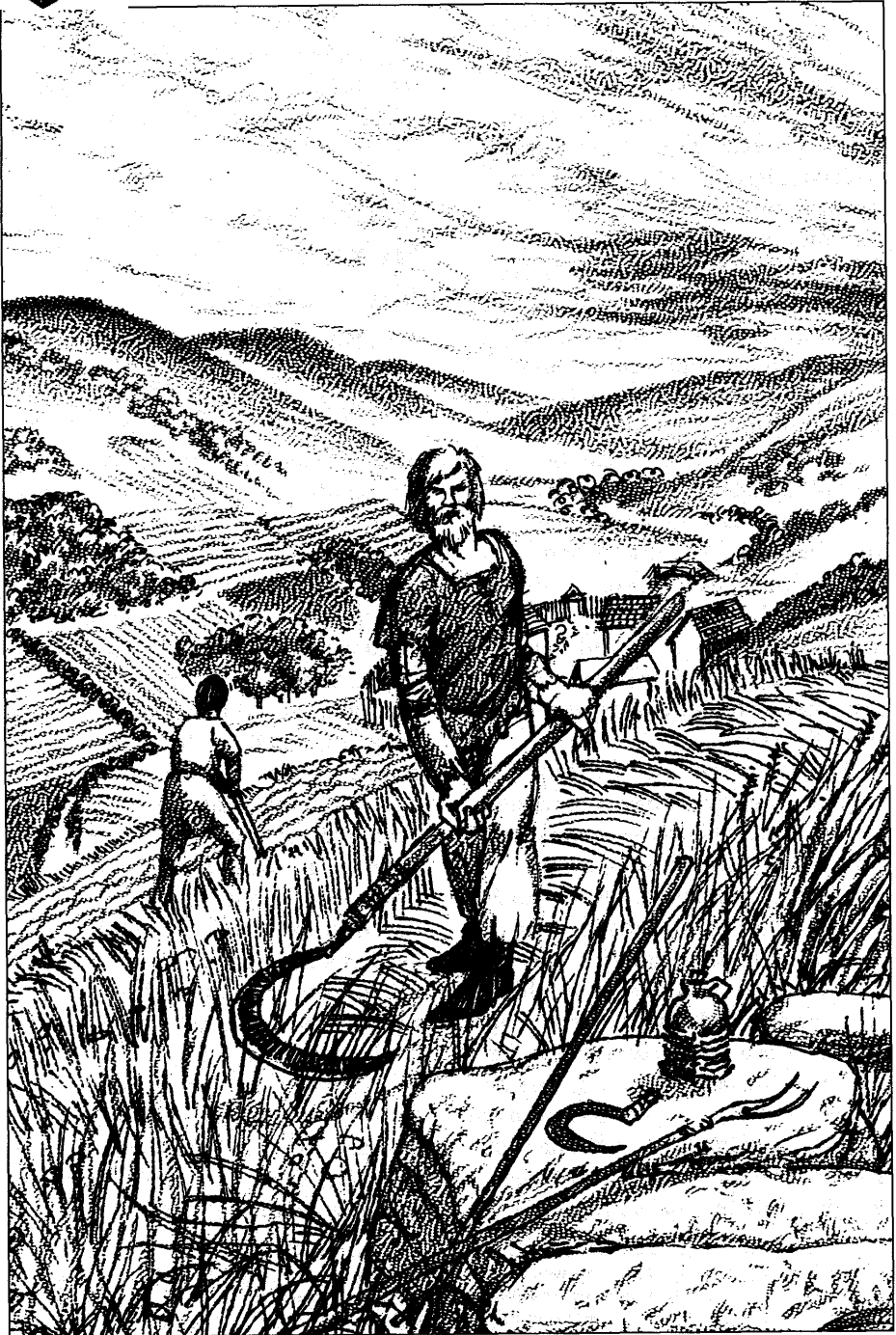


Built of stones from the Baron of the Backlands's castle, the Blade has three wings that sprawl through thick pine trees that separate it from the ruined, haunted houses of the lord knights. One is a stable, one a kitchen and pantry, and one is the sleeping wing.

The central part of the Blade at ground level is the dance floor and taproom. The Blade has gaming rooms and private meeting rooms upstairs in this central area. A huge, silver-painted, two-handed "boarkiller" sword hangs on chains from the overhanging cedar-shake roof over the front doors of the inn here as a signboard.

The sleeping wing of the Blade is surrounded by a small but pleasant garden where in summer a fishpond and scattered birdseed provide pleasant watching for guests. Furnishings are rustic, but both food and staff are good, and these distant bedchambers are cozy, clean, and quiet.

¹¹Elminster says that any adventurers who find the hoard will end the haunting as far as the villagers are concerned—but that the grateful maiden will reappear to them alone as a warning of danger for the rest of their lives. If they want to greet her, he advises, her name is Cyndril Hawkwinter. (Her suitor was Dervil Manthar.)





SUNSET VALE

Except for “isolated” Bal-dur’s Gate, when someone speaks of settlements in the Coast Lands to most folk in Amn, Mirabar, Waterdeep, or even Cormyr, Sunset Vale is all they think of. To most people these communities seem islands of civilization and prosperity in a landscape of rolling wilderness inhabited only by legions of monsters and desperate brigands that, thankfully, only rough-and-ready caravan merchants need visit. Though travelers know this is false—or at least exaggerated—it does indicate the long-standing importance of the Vale.

The Vale is easily found on a good map. It encompasses all the lands between the arcing arms of the River Reaching and the upper Chionthar and the natural wall formed by the Sunset Mountains and the Far Hills. Berdusk (a base of the mysterious and powerful Harpers) and Iriaebor are the two largest cities of the Vale. The third, often overlooked city, is Hill’s Edge, gateway to the Backlands. Between these centers of power lie verdant, prosperous farms that have always exported food in plenty to all the lands around. The Dusk Road runs through the heart of the Vale, carrying the traffic of this vital region back and forth. The food the Sunset Vale produces is also shipped out by the rivers and along the Uldoon Trail toward Amn.

The dangers Tunland presents with its nomadic humans and wemics and smaller marauding bands of goblinkin and other predatory monsters have kept the Vale safe from any sustained effort at conquest from coastal powers around the Sea of Fallen Stars. However, Amn and Westgate have both tried several times to take over the Vale by weight of coins, not swords.

Most recently, the Zhentarim are still trying their hand at either dominating the Vale or shattering it. From their continually strengthened fortress of Darkhold, they are mounting ever-bolder forays throughout the Vale. They are trying to scare farmers and small folk into leaving, and discourage poor folk from all over Faerûn from thinking the Vale is a good place to come and settle. They need to accomplish their ends before their aggressive sword-swinging provokes the cities of the Vale—or, for that matter, anyone else—from assembling an army and going to war.

The Harpers are already openly at war with the Zhentarim in Sunset Vale. Many nights are lit by the sudden flare of hurled fireballs and split by screams of those struck down by the sword. Dawn the next day finds sprawled corpses or dark pools of blood where all had been peaceful the day before. Travelers, you’ve been warned.



Asbravn

This small town is the market center of the farmers of the southern Vale. They trade with each other and with traveling merchants in the central market rather than taking their trade to the cities where someone else will make a profit from their food, not them. Buyers out of Berdusk and Iriaebor come to the market each day. It's understood that the market of Asbravn fills bellies all along the Chionthar.

Asbravn lies in a shallow valley where the Dusk Road and the Uldoon Trail meet. A dilapidated temple to Ilmater faces the market, which is ringed by swap shops, a cooper and cratemaker, a wagonworks, shrines to



Lliira (A House of Joy), Lathander (Morningstone House), and Waukeen (formerly Goldcoin House, and now an abandoned, burnt-out shell where local children play), a tavern called the Tankard and Sheaf, and an inn, the Board Laid Bare.

Asbravn is famous for the Riders in Red Cloaks, its police and defenders. They're local volunteers led by a few experienced warriors and occasionally bolstered by mages and priests who are sponsored by Iriaebor to keep the roads and the market safe. The Red Cloaks patrol in mounted dozens and often have to battle bandits, trolls, bugbears, orcs, and predatory monsters in the foothills of the southern Sunset Mountains, east of town.

Since Zhentarim activity has increased, the Cloaks have run up against poisonings several times, and against ambushes by mercenaries who were very well paid by someone. Local feeling—and fear—is running high against the Zhentarim. Almost every family has at least one Rider. The post of reinforcement Rider was once offered to any able warrior when needed, with archers being particularly sought after. At a pay rate of tens of gold pieces per week, such positions were eagerly sought. Now, however, the town's chief priest of Ilmater, Abject Supplicant Asgar Teldendar, is insisting on questioning applicants with the aid of the Harpers, or so local rumor runs.

Asgar's temple, the House of the Suffering God, is in danger of closing down. Asgar heads a clerical staff of only six priests, three novices, and

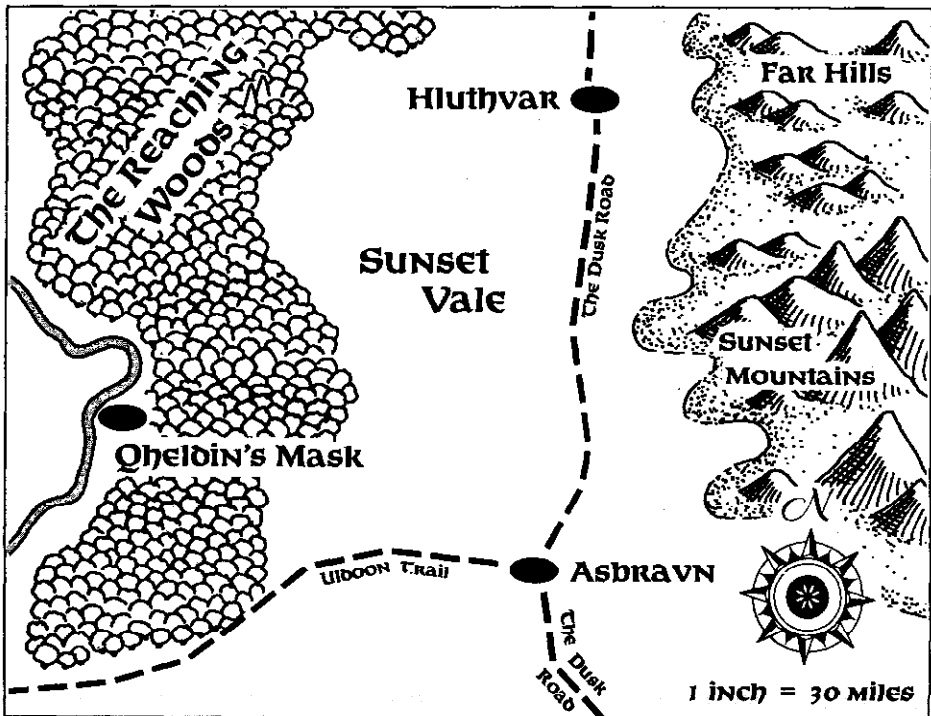


four lay worshipers. The temple itself is a crumbling ruin, its tithes too meager to pay for repairs. Sinister visions have begun to appear in Asgar's dreams, showing the God on the Rack turning his back on the temple of Asbravn, but as these dreams were always followed closely by visits from mysterious smooth-tongued people trying to buy the House, he's not put too much credence in them. ("Zhents, or I'm a toad," Asgar has told his worshipers angrily.)

Other current local concerns are centered around a plan by one new landowner to breed long-horned horses for sale as battle mounts. Many farmers are afraid they'll get out and trample crops or need too

much hay to keep the surplus crops shipping as good-as-gold exports.

The traveler through Asbravn will see only lush farms with wood lots, drainage ditches and ponds, well-kept barns and stump-and-boulder fences, and general tranquility. At corners where tracks and trails meet in the town stand old, cracked, stout stone pillars surmounted by crumbling horse heads. These are the only visible relics of an ancient city, Urdrath of the Horsemen, that stood on this site. The Horsemen were nomads who moved to Tunland or the Savage North long ago. Urdrath was where they came to worship and bury their dead in catacombs beneath the streets.





Today, false cellar walls and sliding stones in the foundations of many of the town's fifty-odd buildings lead into a vast maze of underground passages and galleries, their extent unknown. Tomb chambers and coffin niches in the passage walls are everywhere, and the deeper levels are roamed by undead. Some of the fallen warriors of the Horsemen, legend says, were buried with rich treasures.

Many a curious visitor has paid 10 gold pieces or more to a local to be let into the catacombs—and more than one has fled out again in terror after coming upon a recently slain thief, face black with strangulation, throat caught forever in the bony, chilling grip of a skeletal arm that reached out of one of the horizontal coffin niches as the culprit passed. Still, the occasional person comes to the surface with a gem-adorned dagger or the remnants of an ivory or amber necklace, and brave (foolish, locals say) young people still come from Berdusk and Iriaebor on dares to enter the catacombs to impress their friends.

Most visitors don't look for such excitement in Asbravn. They marvel at the well-kept farms while passing through, perhaps buying some fresh eggs, cheese, or a joint of meat at the market. Or, they come here to buy *wagonloads* of provender in the market, knowing they'll get good fresh fare at fair prices. This is the sort of town folk remember fondly after one visit, feel at home in after a second, and make sure they stop by when possible thereafter.

Places of Interest in Asbravn

Shops

Samborl's Sundries-in-Trade

Swap Shop



Largest and most successful of the town's swap shops, the establishment of Samborl Deiryn is a crowded warehouse full of overstocked, used, no-longer-needed and useless items, from brass Calishite veil dancers' fingerbells to three-elk winter sledges. Some of Samborl's stock is broken, more is undoubtedly stolen, and he knows that some items are left with him as covert signals or message drops by various merchant cabals and other secret groups he pretends to know nothing about.

Both collectors and adventurers find his shop a fascinating place to browse—after all, where else in the entire Vale can you find a lifelike bull's head made of wood and painted felt, designed to be worn during fertility parades? Or a knockdown-archpole brass changing stall for ladies of delicate breeding, complete with cloth-of-gold dancing unicorn curtains (only slightly moth-eaten)? A triple-jointed blown glass back-scratcher from far Kara-Tur, perhaps? Or a whistle that summons dogs, leucrotta, and certain carrion birds—but is guaranteed to drive away carrion crawlers, thri-kreen, ankhegs, and other giant insects with hard outer chitin? Perhaps a veil of feathers, once worn by a bird maiden of far Zakhara? Or six



smooth-polished wooden casks from Thay, designed to fit inside each other? Samborl sells them all, grinning and rubbing his hands or belly all the while. Most people think he's an oily slug, but Samborl just smiles—and makes sure he goes to bed each night a slightly *richer* oily slug.

Tantain's Barrels and Crates

Cooper/Packer



Tantain the Tall is perhaps the most important man in Asbravn. It's his flying fingers and tireless work that get goods ready to leave the market and travel long distances well protected. Some merchants even bring their wares up for packing from Berdusk and Iriaebor before shipping them elsewhere just to get Tantain to do the packing for them.

The tall, gaunt, sharp-jawed Tantain is never still except when he finds a packing table and lies down on it to snatch a few hours of sleep. He supervises a skilled crew of 10 strong young women and men, and casually throws all payments over his shoulder into a huge brass spittoon unearthed by some enterprising merchant from the old giant kingdom of Darchar (roughly, eastern Amn). Surprisingly, no matter where he is or what he's doing, the coins end up in the spittoon.

As one might expect, Tantain is deadly with throwing knives—the result, he says darkly, of a pirate and then a carnival career when he was too young to know better. Tantain lives

for his current work, though. He goes at it so hard that he'll probably die because of it after a shorter span of years than he might otherwise enjoy.

Rolling Wheel Wagons

Wagonmaker

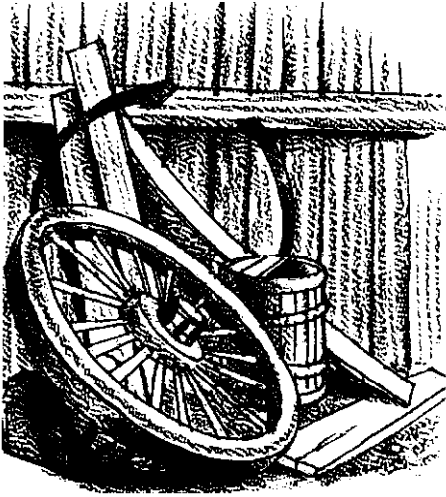
and Wheelwright/Carpenter



A wheel large enough for a titan's wagon adorns the front of the huge barn that houses this wagonworks. It's fully 20 feet tall and a favorite climbing tower for local youths, until they're chased off.

The six skilled carpenters and wheelwrights who own this shop together (employing a dozen apprentices and two families of woodcutters) pride themselves on fast repair work. They also sell new wagons made in this shop, but their output is slow because so many urgent repair jobs interrupt them. Their wagons are sleek, but sturdy, in their account. Some caravan merchants have been known to mutter that they're "more looks than hard wearing."

The Wagonmasters of the Rolling Wheel charge stiff fees for their work—175 gp for a major repair job isn't unknown—but one is paying for their unmatched speed and sure skill. They've been known to replace an entire wagon undercarriage, wheels and all, in the time it takes to snatch a quick trail meal. One of the shop's co-owners and wheelwrights, Thalibul Orn, is an archery tutor for the Red Cloaks. He has been known to shoot parchments out of the hands



of fleeing people hundreds of paces distant.¹

Taverns

The Tankard and Sheaf



This tavern is always busy and crowded with loud and thirsty visitors. Locals often take their tankards out the back door to sit on sawed-off logs and old stumps in the yard to get some peace. They won't appreciate outlanders barging into the yard to disturb their quiet smoking and gossip. Someone who's hired on as a Rider won't be considered an outlander.

Inside, the place is well lit and high-ceilinged, and is prone to echoing when patrons are sparse. Locals like to get to the Tankard with the mists of dawn, and they enjoy a tankard of hot broth before going to their fields. Their talk at such times is how word of

doings gets around Asbravn so quickly.

The walls of the old Tankard are adorned with scythes, sickles, rakes, and other farm implements. These are securely pegged in place with bent wooden hoops to prevent them being snatched down and used in the often heated arguments that erupt here between merchants of rival costers, cities, or realms.

INNS

The Board Laid Bare



Despite its dubious-sounding name, this large house serves excellent meals. The dining room—resplendent in cross-laid deep blue carpets brought all the way from Chessenta—is at the back of the ground floor in its own wing, separated from the three floors of guest rooms by a facing pair of meeting rooms. The kitchens and pantries are behind it, at the end of the wing. This keeps noise to a minimum, as light sleepers will deeply appreciate.

I was served simple fare for highsun-fest: a platter of whole spit-cooked wild-fowl, a club of horseradish root to gnaw on, and a tankard of dark, nutty beer. Everything was prepared just so, and at the end of even this light meal I was brought a small plate of sugared dark-bread and a slice of lemon rolled in linen to clean my hands on. Evening-feast was a delightful roast turkey in a gravy studded with shavings of roast boar, all of it garnished with parsley. A highly recommended house.

¹From Elminster's notes, Thalibul can be considered a LN hm F8 with specialization in short bow (fired from horseback or afoot): THACO 13 with +1 attack bonus (+2 if within 30 feet), +2 on damage, ROF of 2 arrows per round, and the benefits of the point blank range category. Thalibul trains only Riders, not outsiders.



Berdusk

Berdusk is sometimes called the Jewel of the Vale. This is not a term that pleases residents of the rival neighboring city of Iriaebor, though the two cities are firm allies in matters of trade and defense. The Uldoon Trail crosses the upper Chionthar at Berdusk. Three bridges actually span the river here, two making use of a fortified island to shorten their leaping spans. This spot's usefulness as a landmark and parley place plus the rising of a spring (the River Sulduskoon) to join the Chionthar here and the presence of rapids (the Breaking Steps) in the Chionthar just upstream of this spot have combined to ensure that there's been some sort of settlement at this site since the dawn days: first the elven moot of Clearspring; then a human fishing village, Sulduskoon; and finally the city known today. The current city is named for Berdusk Orcslayer, a local human warrior whose energetic patrols drove orcs from the area, making it safe to farm and opening the Vale for human settlement.

Today, Berdusk is an important trading center, much involved in the shipment of goods. High-sided local waybarges are winched carefully through the rapids, which have been known to smash normal rafts and barges, sending crew and cargo to the freshwater kelpies below. Businesses in the city also make many wagons (considered fair to poor by most merchants) and excellent barges, and do extensive wagon repairs. Their wheels are very fine.

Woolen mills in the city serve farmers from all over the southern Vale, many of whom go to Asbravn for its large shearing market, selling the wool there to Berduskan millers. Dozens of caravans entirely of baled wool leave Berdusk for elsewhere in Faerûn at the height of shearing season.

Berdusk also produces a highly favored sweet wine, Berduskan dark, which is like very dark amber sherry, heavy and burning to the tongue. It fetches 6 gp per bottle or more and travels well. Folk are apt to find it in taverns and eateries all over Faerûn.

All of this prosperity is guarded by a city guard of 600 well-trained and equipped warriors of both sexes and all races, assisted by seven roving gauntlets (who raid Zhent and brigand holds, and escort caravans and travelers on the roads around the city) and by the famous Harpers. Not all Harpers look like merry minstrel rogues, but many do, and some can always be seen on the city streets.

The ruler of Berdusk, High Lady Cylyria Dragonbreast, is one of the leaders of Those Who Harp. Their most powerful base, Twilight Hall, stands in Berdusk, and many of the shieldmasters (officers) in the city guard are Harpers.²

High Lady Cylyria keeps Berdusk firmly in the Lords' Alliance, and the city welcomes all demihuman races. The Silent Lady loves music and poetry, and the city attracts the best traveling minstrels and musicians, increasingly joined by noted bookbinders, limners, and sculptors.

²More about the Harpers and Twilight Hall can be found in the sourcebook *FOR4 Code of the Harpers*.



This thriving, growing community of artisans has begun to rival Water-deep in hauteur if not in numbers or quality, and has begun to attract patrons, thieves, and wild romantic tales about its doings. Most tales center around one of two things: sculpted ladies so lifelike that they came to life or artists who've decided to expand their studios or rebuild the interiors of their abodes to please their aesthetic sensibilities. The statue stories are often based on real-life wizards' pranks. The remodeling tales usually go on to say how the artists uncovered pirate treasure brought up the river and hidden here long ago that has made them rich.

Certain sages who've not led me wrong before say there is a lot of pirate

treasure in the city, both hoarded and invested. Discreet inquiries in many inns, taverns, and shops can lead the needy to a dinner meeting with agents representing high-coin moneylenders (sponsors dealing in large amounts). Adventurers are warned that such folk like to see tangible assets before laying out coins. Such assets include keeps in strategic locations, city land holding—for a caravan company, warehouses within the walls of a city will do—and large fleets of cogs, caravels, or other seaworthy cargo ships. The lenders are unlikely to sponsor forays underground or into ruins in search of legendary treasure. On the other hand, if adventurers make such trips on their own and return with heaps of gems they don't know what to do with, these



professionals can invest such wealth wisely. Some respected names among them: Thoront of the Gilded Hand, Than Tassalar, Orn “Manycoins” Bel-darm, and Aulimann the Patient.

My explorations of fair Berdusk were hampered by my unfortunate reputation. Many Harpers seem convinced I’m some sort of Zhentarim agent, just as members of that organization believe I’m a Harper. Their surveillance and other tactics prevented me spending much time in the Jewel of the Vale. As a result, I can give the traveler only an overview of the city’s features and establishments.

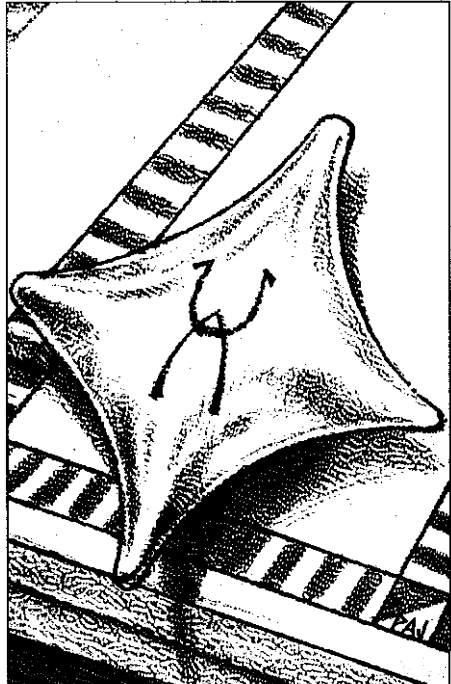
Some areas in Berdusk are rumored to be Harper warded. Look for tokens like the one shown at lower right.

Landmarks

Berdusk, I should mention, is a city of tall, steep-roofed stone houses that crowd close together, overhanging the cobbled streets that run between. Sewer gratings are everywhere, feeding into a river-flushed system that is intended to keep ice and snow from burying Berdusk in the winter, but serves to keep the city clean and stench free in warmer months. The city guard has regular (and surprise) street patrols, and this, plus the presence of Harpers, keeps street crime to a minimum. Visitors who need a place to camp outside the city walls should report to the city guard—this ensures you of a pleasant welcome, patrol visits from the guard throughout the night, and the prevention of rude awakenings caused by the city guard wanting to know who you are or trying to settle

a newly arrived caravan on top of you in *their* night encampment. Moon-down Isle is held by the guard as a practice area and patrol stableyard. Don’t expect to camp there.

Berdusk stands within a rough oval of high-girt stone walls that are pierced by six gates. Three of the gates welcome roads carried by bridges across the Chionthar. The most downstream, or westerly of these three gates is Bellowbar’s Gate, named for the city’s first innkeeper, He perished with his inn in a fiery explosion caused by an angry wizard called Shalgar the Masked. The next two are Shortarrow Gate (so named because it’s a short arrow’s flight from it to the island to the south) and Riverroad Gate. East of



A Ward Token of Berdusk



these is Drovers' Gate. A road from it runs along the banks of the river, leading to many paddocks, stockyards, and caravan compounds.

The next gate, to the northeast, is Vale Gate, and the road running from it is also lined with inns, paddocks, and stockyards. This road is the Uldoon Trail, and runs to Asbravn in the heart of Sunset Vale.

The last city gate, on the northern face of the walls, is Woods Gate. It gives access to the east bank of the Chionthar downstream of the city, and is used mostly by hunters and woodcutters active in the Reaching Woods.

Within the walls, the city is nearly bisected by the Clearspring, also known as the River Sulduskoon—though it's a river you can see from one end of to the other. It rises on one face of a tree-girt, rocky height, Clearspring Tor, and runs southwest to meet the Chionthar.

West of the Tor is the Inner Chamber, the local temple of Deneir. This is actually a sanctum within Twilight Hall, but the Harper stronghold doesn't officially exist. Those Who Harp pretend that the entire complex of buildings is only the temple of the Lord of All Glyphs and Images, and they use the wards of the temple as additional defenses of their own. I've found a few ward tokens associated with the Hall, but warn travelers that these must be used in particular ways with passwords at particular places to avoid attracting the attention of helmed horrors, spectral Harpists, dread, and other guardians. I have heard tales of Zhentarim-hired thieves and brigands raiding Twilight Hall



when some ruse had drawn powerful resident Harpers away. They charged in force, only to be cut apart within a few strides.

Southwest and south of the temple of Deneir are shrines to Lathander and Azuth, respectively. The temple to Helm stands also to the southwest of the Inner Chamber, but it is sited farther south than Roseportal House, Lathander's shrine. A shrine to Leira lies south and slightly east of the Inner Chamber of Deneir. The shrine of Leira is a troubled place these days. Its worshipers are unsure of anything and prone to see danger over every shoulder. Travelers should beware.

Shrines to Lliira and Tempus are situated northwest of Clearspring Tor. A shrine to Waukeen right off the Tor to its northwest has become the House of the Hungry Merchant, where down-on-their-luck traders can get a warm bed and a meal thanks to donations by Berduskan merchants.

Clearspring Tor has been left as a park where folk often stroll, meet, eat meals bought from street vendors, or listen to minstrels. A favorite Berduskan snack, typically sold for 1 cp, is the goldenstar: a triangular egg-bread loaf stuffed with sausage, chopped tubers, and chicken sauce.

Northwest of the temple to Deneir stands a larger rocky knoll, known as Castle Hill. Its tree-clad slopes are crowned by the High Lady's Castle, seat of city government and a working fortress, home to most of the city guard. Other guards dwell in the gates' guardtowers. The boundaries of Castle Hill are adorned by rows of small but



A Lady of Berdusk

very exclusive high-towered homes. These are the most desirable addresses in Berdusk, and are all claimed by citizens so rich that they can leave open commerce behind and pretend to be fun-loving nobility while they really keep cold, sharp eyes on the careful investments that support them.

Among the most prominent family names in the self-styled nobles—or “first folk,” as they call themselves—are Athalankeir, Bellanbram, Caunter, Charthoon, Danallbur, Felannlilt, Gort, Halabart, Jalarghar, Lothkarr, Mreen, Oyindle, Parstin, and Uthgolabar. These folk throw parties, play elaborate games of capping each other's boasts, deeds, and displays of wealth,



and pursue faddish hobbies—sponsoring falconers one season, dragon tamers the next, all-female adventurer bands the third, and so on. No one else in Berdusk except these folk considers that the city *has* a nobility. Most sneer at the first folk for being lazy play-pretties.

Facing the high houses of the first folk across the cobbled streets around Castle Hill are the houses of the wealthiest merchants, known as tall houses for their third- and fourth-story apartments. Among these tall houses stand the Running Stag (a good inn and tavern), the Flourished Flagon (a good tavern), the Herald's Rest (a superior festhall), and the Ruby Shawl (a bad festhall). All of these can readily be found by their signboards, enchanted with *continual faerie fire* spells so as to glow every night. The Herald's Rest is denoted by a ring of shields with a trumpet in the center, and all the other signs resemble the names they bear.

Also nestled amid the tall houses of the wealthier merchants are temples to Milil and Oghma (and the previously mentioned temple to Helm) and the Dawn of Any Day, a shop specializing in musical instruments and other items that bear minor enchantments. There's a persistent rumor that the various *feather tokens* and other minor magics this shop deals in have sly spells woven into them that allow the Harpers to know where they are at all times, and so readily track their bearers.

One important street in Berdusk is Steelsword Street. It enters the city by

Bellowbar's Gate and runs north to sweep past Castle Hill, bounding it on the north, then passes north of Clearspring Tor and ends in Amberside, the large open market of Berdusk that stands just within the Vale Gate along the Uldoon Trail. On the other side of the market Steelsword Street continues as Steelspur Way south to the Claw, a five-way intersection just inside Drovers' Gate.

Another important street of the city is Shondaleir Street, which runs west from the Claw to the Crossways at the western city wall, where it turns north to curl to an end. Along its run, it crosses the Clearspring by the more northerly of the two bridges to span that short water: Leaping Lynx Bridge.

The Gollahaer is the shorter street that crosses the Clearspring by the more southerly bridge (the Handspan). It is important because of the many small, crammed sundry and hardware shops that line it, selling odd and rare wares that can't be found anywhere else between Waterdeep and the rich cities of Sembia. Here's where knights who simply must have left-handed gauntlets with silver dagger blades affixed to the fingers (25 gp each at Alamather's by the Water) jostle for room among clerks seeking chapbooks of gilt-edged parchment that are bound with gold wire in calfskin covers with brass corners, and sold in fitted calfskin travel covers to keep the damp away (50 to 75 gp each, depending on size and number of pages, at Ondraer's Fine Pages).

The Gollahaer's western end is at its meeting with the Minstrelride. The



“Tuneride” comes into the city at Shortarrow Gate and curves northward to run between the Inner Chamber and Castle Hill, and then crosses Steelsword Street before it ends. On it the visitor will find more temples, high houses, splendid shops, quality inns, and fine abodes of merchants than anywhere else in Berdusk.

The only other feature of the city immediately noticeable to a visitor is the walled Thousandheads Trading Coster base just inside Riverroad Gate, east off the Uldoon Trail. Well-guarded wagons of valuable goods are constantly entering and leaving this base, brought to or from caravans assembled east or south of the city. The goods are normally kept in the warehouses within this compound.

Day and night, Berdusk is a city of travelers. “Through trade” (as in, “We don’t want to discourage the through trade”) is a phrase often used as an overriding principle or concern when matters of gate guarding, taxation (currently 2 cp per wagon to leave the city, and nothing to enter), or city laws are being discussed.

Many folk too poor to have a wagon call Berdusk home. It is from here that many of the peddlers who rove the Vale and the Coast lands westward come, carrying their packs on their backs or by mule. (Every traveler can take one mule out of the gates for free. Additional mules are 1 cp each.) These peddlers may buy the wares they sell anywhere, and most have a specialty, be it pipes, lamps, scents, or something more



Berdusk

1. The High Lady's Castle (Castle Hill)
2. Clearspring Tor
3. The River Sulduskoon (Clearspring)
4. The Inner Chamber (temple of Deneir; also Twilight Hall)
5. Costerheadshouse (Thousandheads Trading Coster base)
6. Amberside (market)
7. Moondown Isle (a.k.a. Harpstars Isle)
8. Bellowbar's Gate
9. Shortarrow Gate
10. Riverroad Gate
11. Drovers' Gate
12. Vale Gate
13. Woods Gate
14. Uldoon Trail
15. Steelsword Street
16. Steelspur Way (street)
17. The Claw
18. Shondaleir Street
19. The Crossways
20. The Gollahaer (street)
21. The Minstrelride (street)
22. Leaping Lynx Bridge
23. The Handspan (bridge)
24. Alamather's by the Water (shop)
25. Ondraer's Fine Pages (shop)
26. The House of the Hungry Merchant
27. The Ready House of the Right Strong Hand (temple consecrated to Helm)
28. Evensong Tower (temple of Milil)
29. The Seat of Lore (temple of Oghma)
30. House of the High Hand (shrine to Azuth)
31. Roseportal House (shrine to Lathander)
32. The Misthall (shrine to Leira)
33. Starrevel Hall (shrine to Lliira)
34. Swordpoint Hall (shrine to Tempus)
35. The Running Stag (inn and tavern)
36. The Sign of the Silver Sword (inn)
37. The Flourished Flagon (tavern)
38. The Herald's Rest (festhall)
39. The Ruby Shawl (festhall)
40. The Dawn of Any Day (music shop)
41. Tlindar's Own (tankard house)
42. The Bellblade Throne (tankard house)
43. Memblar's Minstrely (tankard house)
44. Olyndin's Folly (tankard house)
45. The Hurlled Harp (tankard house)
46. Blackpost's Bench (tankard house)
47. The Happy Hearth (tankard house)
48. The Bright Moon (tankard house)
49. Soondar's Sixth (tankard house)
50. Athalankeir House (first folk dwelling)
51. Bellanbram House (first folk dwelling)
52. Caunter Castle (first folk dwelling)
53. Charthoon Towers (first folk dwelling)
54. Danallbur Towers (first folk dwelling)
55. Felannliit Towers (first folk dwelling)
56. Gort Castle (first folk dwelling)
57. Halabart House (first folk dwelling)
58. The Jalargharspires (first folk dwelling)
56. Lothkarr House (first folk dwelling)
60. Highall Mreen (first folk dwelling)
61. House Oyindle (first folk dwelling)
62. Parstin Towers (first folk dwelling)
63. Uthgolabar Hall (first folk dwelling)
64. Hullybuck's Gamble (inn, fence, and rental stables; halflings preferred)
65. Thunderwood Forays (adventurer sponsor and outfitter)
66. The Riverbarge (tankard house)
67. Three Brave Harpists (tankard house)
68. Lonelycoins House (tankard house)

exotic, that they buy wares for in one of the city's shops. The rest of their packs are filled with sundries from Amberside.

Amberside is a maze of tiny tent stalls where one can buy almost anything—including fine brass screws from Unther and Thay, exotic oils from Mulhorand, and other rarities in the Coast lands. Most peddlers come here because of the carry tubes made from cleaned-out horn, the ready sup-

plies of cheap textiles from the southern and eastern reaches of the Sea of Fallen Stars that they can put into the tubes for sale elsewhere, and the plentiful amounts of small household ironmongery available here, such as hinges, hasps, pots with cover flaps, replacement handles, candle lamps, hooks, coffers, and the like.

Amberside is named for a long-dead blacksmith, Ilm Amberal, whose

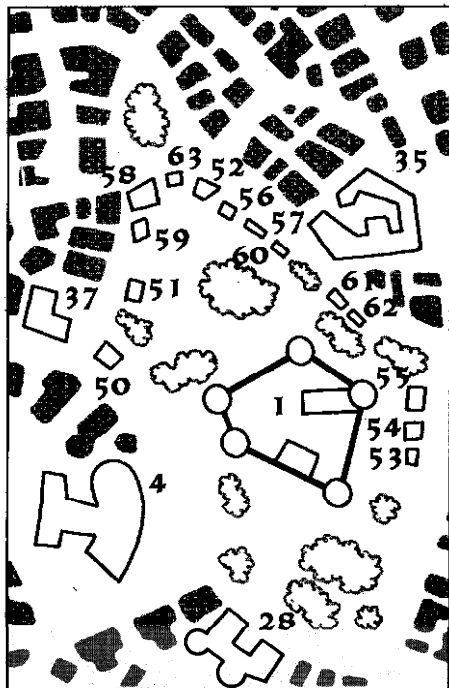


BERDUSK



See detail page 162





Berdusk's Castle Hill Area

shop once stood on the edge of the market. He was famous for working both fast and well, turning out scores of items and repairing almost all metal goods brought to him. His work made this market the preferred provisioning center for peddlers and others dealing in small, useful, non-perishable wares.

Small and useful are watchwords that still describe most of the wares sold in Amberside. For furniture and other large goods, seek in the city's shops. Berduskans love to shop—buying or selling. Unbroken goods one is tired of can often be readily sold for half price or less to a shopkeeper who can resell them. Most paid workers in Berdusk do quarter shifts. The open

time of a shop is divided into four, and a worker gets two of these periods off to shop and to eat. Shopping is in the blood of a Berduskan. Eating is often done while one is walking in the street from shop to shop or in, a favorite tankard house.

Tankard houses were once unique to Berdusk, but are beginning to appear in Waterdeep, Suzail, the cities of Sembia, and other cities where trade and bustle prevail. They're converted shops where one can get a light meal with a tankard of ale or mead and listen to a house singer or minstrel at any hour. There are dozens in Berdusk, and they are favorite meeting places for citizens, who usually avoid taverns unless they're planning to get properly drunk or revel and jest a night away. Locals who want to meet without being seen by those who know them tend to try to arrange a chance encounter at a particular spot in the maze of stalls in Amberside.

A typical meal at a tankard house is a mug of hot broth or stew; a tankard of minted water, ale, or mead; and a plate of goldenstars and seared meat scraps (bacon, chicken, or chopped sausage) in gravy. On rare occasions, small whole birds (quail, alafluster, wild duck, or grouse), spitted and cooked over the open hearth, are served instead. Three coppers is the price of a meal when there's music or song to be had. Two coppers is the fare when the house is silent. Good performers get extra coins thrown to the stage. Bad ones may get coppers thrown hard and directly at them.



All in all, I find this one of the most pleasant, cultured, clean, and welcoming cities in all the Coast lands—like a little slice of upper-crust Waterdeep without all the crowding, airs, and cut-and-thrust intrigue. As I've said, my explorations of the city were hampered by Harper suspicion, but I did manage to poke my nose into many of the prominent establishments of Berdusk and ask citizens for their opinions. Information that I gained follows directly.

PLACES OF INTEREST IN BERDUSK

Temples

The Inner Chamber

This center of worship is notorious for its concealment of Twilight Hall. The entire place is a Harper base, its approaches always guarded by watchful, concealed Harpers who command powerful magic. The clergy of the temple thankfully attend to their studies and services, leaving the security and upkeep of their holy house to Those Who Harp.

The temple is only one of a complex of interconnected, low stone buildings, all of which are plain but carved to form a series of beautiful sweeping curves. Most visitors need a guide to point out to them which structure is the temple. Many of the buildings of Twilight Hall have turrets adorned with royal blue, star-shot banners. The temple is *not* one of those.

Courtyards of trees, grass, moss, and rock garden plantings girdle the buildings, and the whole complex is

enclosed by its own low (2 to 4 feet high), undulating stone wall. In times of attack, magical *walls of force* augment this ornamental barrier. At night, the gates of Twilight Hall can readily be seen. They're flanked by two pillars topped with stone eyes that hold magical everburning candles.

The Inner Chamber is a complex of library rooms and dorters (monastery dormitories) opening off a central sanctum wherein dances a floating, glowing light image: an ever-shifting display of various runes, symbols, and images. The High Scrivener of the temple can halt this display at a particular image, cause it to display a symbol on demand, and even defend herself or the temple by causing it to display magical *glyphs* or *symbols* whose discharges she can direct and control.

This prosperous temple is visited by many nonworshippers of Deneir. Some doubtless are spies sent to get as close as possible to the Harper doings in the surrounding Hall, but most are folk with money enough to consult the widely respected High Scrivener, Althune Dembrar, about the meaning, origin, and effects of images they've found or seen. Consultations with her require a donation to the temple coffers of 50 gold pieces per audience. If magic is involved, the fee doubles.

The Ready House of the Right Strong Hand

This holy house of Helm is a large academy of arms, wherein many of the warriors who serve in Berdusk's gauntlets (patrol units) are trained, as well as



warrior-knights who serve Helm throughout Faerûn. The stern reputation of this god is borne out by the vigilant guard surrounding the temple at all times, and by the energetic clangor of arms heard from its inner courtyards constantly

Wounded caravan guards and warriors of all faiths can receive healing here at any time. Training, shelter, and tending to the hurts of those not faithful to Helm must be paid for by donating at least 25 gp to the temple for every night each guest stays. Clergy of Helm will firmly insist that injured folk rest at the temple until they are completely healed. Folk unable to offer up such moneys must remain at the Ready

House until they have performed some service—usually participation as part of the escort-guardianship of a temple wagon or messenger along the roads to another city, but sometimes as witnesses sent to openly watch and report back to an agent of Helm on a meeting, event, or state of affairs elsewhere.

Predictably, this temple resembles a ready-armed keep. I've never seen so many grim, alert people in full armor gathered in one place at a time (I try to avoid battlefields), and a guest is always watched, *all* the time. On more than one occasion the Zhen-tarim have sent in a female agent who tried to work magic while in the privacy of a garderobe (jakes) stall, only to be pounced upon by a watching knight of Helm who leaped out from behind a nearby panel so swiftly that her spells were ruined!

The leader of the faith in the Ready House, Tathlosar Brimmerbold, is a famous war leader of Sunset Vale, known for his successes against trolls, orc hordes, and the forces of Darkhold. His formal title is Vigilant Godseye, but he's more widely known as "Sleepless Teeth," a name his followers gave him after he told them they must sweep down on foes by night, "like wolves with sleepless teeth."

Evensong Tower

This many-spired temple to Milil is the site of many a dignified revel attended by the haughtiest of the first folk, the wealthiest merchant families ambitious to rise in social circles, and visitors to the city who can seem rich or important enough to impress the clergy at the



*The Falcon, Skyherald,
and Evensong Tower*



temple gates. Revels are evening parties, gatherings to dance, drink, murmur insults or boasts to the nearest fellow revelers, and to listen. About two of them are held per tenday. Social climbers in Berdusk view these revels as battles of wit, demeanor, and sneering but to the visitor they provide some of the best entertainment anywhere.

A fast-paced, varied program of ballads, recitations of poetry, and orations goes on in various antechambers opening into the main chancel of the temple. This main chancel serves as a dance-and-chat floor during revels. Most of the poetry recitations are long, rolling, and incomprehensible to all save scholars—in short, bad. Many orations are performances of famous speeches of the past, the texts recreated with the aid of *stone tell* or *legend lore* magics. Most of them are stirring and entertaining in the extreme. Revelers wander freely from venue to venue, taking in what they want.

From the outside, the temple resembles the fancy-tale view of a castle. It's a cluster of very tall, very slender stone towers studded with brattices (wooden parapets), linked aloft by flying bridges—which must be perilous indeed in icy winter weather or even mere high winds—and topped by high-pointed conical roofs bristling with masts that sport many-hued banners and attract many-hued lightning strikes in stormy weather.

Admission to one of these revels requires a donation of 14 gp to the temple coffers, a noble manner, and expensive clothes—so the entertainment isn't free, but it is splendid.



The young Chantmistress of the Tower, Uluene Maertalar, whose face is as smoothly controlled as those of the best veteran card and dice gamers in Waterdeep, disapproves of serving food in the temple, but the clergy make and serve excellent mead and Halurskan wine (thick, black, nutty-tasting mushroom wine devised long ago in Berdusk by the baker Halurska the Fat). Drinks are an extra 1 gp per glass, payable on the spot—so beware pickpockets on the dance floor.

The Seat of Lore

The temple of Oghma in Berdusk is a dusty, dignified old stone house crammed with books, scrolls, maps, and reading tables and lit by a swarm of obedient magical glowing *globes*. It



is a center of study that specializes in the tales of yesteryear and in news and tales of the here-and-now rather than the more usual focus on genealogy, treaties, laws, and records.

The current news and tales are gathered by the energetic High Lore-master of the temple, the gnome Bransuldyn Mirrortor, a former adventurer who delights in donning one of his many disguises and shambling forth into Berdusk or into the Vale beyond to wander and listen. He's devised several spells that allow him to record what he hears, edit it in his mind, and then transcribe—from afar—what he wishes into books laid out ready in the temple. Often, awestruck young novices can be seen gathered around a tome that is busily writing itself by those few able to gain access to the inner chambers of the temple.

The Seat does not pay for verbal information or lore, although faithful who bring such information as part of an offering will be warmly received. It does pay for books—moreover, the clergy here value diaries, fancy-tale chapbooks, and other fancies of rumor and lore that other scholars belittle or sneer at. Such tomes typically fetch the seller at least 100 gold pieces from the temple. In a typical tenday, the Seat may acquire three or four such volumes. Magical tomes or any writings from long-lost Netheril command prices in the range of tens of thousands of gold pieces.

Lesser clergy of the Seat copy out passages from temple writings (75 gp per page or part thereof), something the faithful and guests alike are forbid-

den to do. Copying magic requires many more coins and senior priestly permission.

Homes

The House of the Hungry Merchant



This former shrine to Waukeen offers poor visitors and beggars of the city a warm bed and a meal. The meal is usually thick beef-and-carrot stew, enlivened by anonymous lumps of chopped meat and vegetables.

The House is a big, drafty barn of a place run by merchant donations. Traders of either sex and most races are allowed to stay here. The House is staffed by the city guard, who keep a close and constant watch on guests to prevent brawls, thefts, muggings, and the like. All weapons must be surrendered to the staff during a visitor's stay.

By city law, six nights at a stretch is the longest a person can stay in the House. Guests who are found to have more than 4 gold pieces' worth of coins on their persons are ejected from the House because it is considered that they can afford their own meals and accommodations.

Shops

Alamather's by the Water

Unusual and Unique Weapons



This crammed shop on the Gollahaer is a favorite stop for caravan merchants trying to fill special orders. It specializes in one-of-a-kind, rare, or



unusual weaponry, often gadgets that conceal weapons or devices that seem more suited to the worship of Loviatar or decadent arena battle than real war. Telescoping sword canes are steady sellers at 125 gp each, with a choice of reach, appearance, and blade-plating. Also popular are the aforementioned gauntlets whose fingers are fitted with silver dagger blades. They cost 25 gp each. Barbed-wire whips are another favorite item at 35 gp each. Such whips are not allowed by drovers in Berdusk. No one talks about the fact that they're a symbol and tool of the underground slave trade.

Professional killers can select from among a varied line of trapped goblets. Unless the goblets' handles are

gripped in a certain manner, spring-propelled blades thrust out from the goblets' bases to slash the throats of drinkers when the goblets are raised and tipped. Other trapped items for sale run from coffers to snuff boxes. Most drive poison needles into those handling them in any but a particular safe way. Buyers must supply their own poison. By law, no shop or concern in Berdusk can sell venoms or refined or magically created toxins.

Ondraer's Fine Pages

Bookseller



This shop on the Gollahaer sells books—a small selection of useful books (such as, ahem, my own guide-





books to the Realms), and a large selection of new, blank books, scrolls, frames of vellum, and reams of parchment. These new materials come in a variety of sizes, bindings, and formats, from simple unadorned paper-covered chapbooks to dragonskin-bound tomes half as tall as an adult human male with locks, travel cases, gilt-edged pages, and sewn-in silk bookmarks. All of them are expensive. The cheapest bound volume in the shop is 12 gp, and the most expensive is priced at a thousand times that.

Mages, priests, limners, scribes, cartographers, and apprentices to all of these professions come or are sent here to purchase just the right volume for their needs. Powerful fireproofing enchantments leak out of this shop. Don't be surprised if your lantern, torch, or pipe goes out as you approach.

The proprietor, fat old Ondraeas Ondraer, spends most of his days dozing in a tankard house, leaving his shop in the hands of three sons and two apprentices—all thankfully as able as Ondraeas himself. They can advise you on the right paper to be used with specific bindings, or in a particular clime, or for a particular purpose.

The Dawn of Any Day

Minor Magical Items



This small, shuttered shop seems to front on several streets, including

Lute Street, the Minstrelride, Danathar's Street, and Amble Lane—all in an area south of Castle Hill and west of Twilight Hall. The distinctive sigil of the shop—the rays of the sun rising over a harp, which stands atop a lute—appears on otherwise plain wooden doors when they offer access to the shop. At other times, these same doors seem to lead into houses that have been divided into private apartments. I've been told this is part of the ward that protects the shop—a ward linked to a guardian ghost (probably a spectral Harpist, but possibly a watchghost), a series of *Evard's black tentacles* spells triggered by thieving activities, and more mysterious guardian beasts. Dweomers of all sorts glow with a faint light when in this shop—even the skins of those who've received a healing spell recently!

This shop is run by a mysterious veiled lady known only as Dartheleene.³ She sells items that bear minor enchantments—in particular, musical instruments. A persistent rumor in Berdusk insists that these minor magics—such as daggers that glow with *faerie fire* upon command, stones that change hue when immersed in poison or tainted liquids or that alter their color when their surroundings reach a certain temperature, scabbards and sheaths that banish rust, *feather tokens*, and healing potions—have spells laid on them that let certain Harpers know where they are at all times.

³Elminster was unwilling to give details of this shop's wards, wares, or proprietress. He did confirm that the rumor about magical Harper tracing of many items is true—and he also let slip that Dartheleene is an archlich!



The shop is small and dim, and many of the wares are used and partially broken. They are usually displayed in small glowing spheres of air that float in a slow, aimless dance in the center of the room while the proprietress stands watching them from the background. If she's asked for an item, she will step forward and take it out of the sphere, ignoring the other spheres, which shift out of her way. I've seen bold buyers try to grasp items and have the globes simply float through them, item and all, as if the people were themselves phantoms. Only Darthleene seems able to free items from this magic. She will give some information about the past of some items if pressed—many seem to have seen service with adventuring bands who are no more—but doesn't volunteer details, in hopes of making a sale.

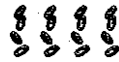
Adventurers can usually count on getting some healing potions and glow-on-command items whenever they visit (400 to 500 gp each), but all other items are only available from time to time. The shop's stock seems small. More than one buyer has remarked that these rarer items are not only much dearer—4,000 to about 12,000 gp—they all seem linked to various curses, conditions, or spells that plunge their buyers into unintended adventures.

The shop never seems to close. Whenever a door into it can be found, Darthleene's waiting within. One man I met in Berdusk even said that the shop must be a ploy of the goddess Tymora (present as the veiled Darthleene) in order to plunge prudent

adventurers into daring and danger—but he was very drunk at the time. The veiled proprietress herself told me the shop's name is another way of saying that adventure can begin any time in your life if you only look for it. Perhaps she serves some as-yet-unrevealed god or goddess of adventure.

Thunderwood Forays

Adventuring Gear



This unassuming shop looks like a very narrow, tall, old stone house with dark green trim and crumbling stonework. Inside, it's all one huge, high room, with catwalks, balconies, and stairs leading to side galleries where the upper floors used to be. In this cavernous space hang rows of complete suits of armor, ropes dangling like a giant beaded curtain, chains, sledges, wagons and spare wheels, weapons of all sorts, and so on—a huge assortment of adventuring gear, from winches to metal belt flasks. It's all warded, of course, to prevent theft of the weapons, and not only does breaking the ward alert nearby Harpers and city guard posts, it also frees the helmed horror guardians to act. The helmed horrors are also assisted by something worse, a monster that Olbrimsur Thunderwood, the proprietor, refused to make known to me.

Olbrimsur is a ranger who spends his spare time scouting the Vale area, particularly the Far Hills. When he identifies the lairs of giants, goblin, and other perils, he plans an expedi-



tion to deal with them—and puts out word around the tankard houses, inns, and taverns so visiting adventurers in town will hear.

Olbrimsur sponsors adventuring bands by giving them discounted prices on gear. He sometimes throws in a *potion of healing* for the group—or on especially dangerous forays, one for each member of the group. He furnishes directions, tips on what to do or watch for in various locales, and can put his finger on several known caverns, ways down into the Underdark, hidden valleys often used by brigands or monsters for shelter, and so on. A firm friend of the Harpers, Olbrimsur is viewed as an ally and inspiration by many adventuring bands in the Coast lands.

Taverns

The Flourished Flagon



This tavern is a favorite of adventurers—in particular dwarves, gnomes, and halflings. On most nights, their rowdy carousing can be heard up and down the street as they dance, sing, and hurl flasks at each other (hence the tavern's name), and generally have a good time. The walls are adorned with paintings—often inept and amateurish—done by patrons, proudly depicting heroic highlights of their adventuring careers. It looks like a child's drawn-on nursery wall full of slaughtered orcs, drow, dragons, liches, beholders, and mind flayers, with a lot of short, plump, bearded folk posing dramatically, chests



swollen, in between or on top of all the dying monsters.

This tavern is a good place to join up with adventuring bands, though humans and elves aren't made all that welcome. The 10 or so gnomes who own the place—all of whom answer to the name of Marklo—are rumored to hide or invest coins brought in by adventurers, and perhaps even fence stolen goods—but I was unable to learn if this was true. If you're a dwarf, gnome, or halfling, try asking.

The Running Stag



This establishment is mainly a drinking spot, but has a few rooms to let upstairs. Guests in these rooms can eat in the kitchens, but there's no dining room, and little escape from the good-natured noise and bustle of the taproom.

The decor in the Stag's taproom mimics a forest, with pillars done up to look like trees, vines, and living tree limbs sprouting leaves overhead. Illumination is provided by several *drift-globes* kept above the leaves by netting. A timed spell shifts their light from sunlight to moonlight in accordance with the passage of time outside.

There's an endlessly tinkling spring in the center of the taproom that cascades out of a rock pile to flow into a little pond studded with lily pads. The spring is real, not magically animated, and yields the soft water used in the brewing of the Old Dark (ale) and Elder Root (stout) served here. These beers are brewed in the cellar, which makes the place reek of hops and

barley from time to time.

The Stag also serves a full list of wines, zzar, sheries, mead, and liqueurs from the far corners of the Realms. The only food to be had, though, is cheese and hot buttered biscuits.

Foresters, rangers, woodcutters, wood elves, and other forest folk feel at home here. Even korred and satyrs have been seen in the Stag from time to time, slipping in for a tankard on wet or icy nights. I'm told this is *the* place in town to hire guides, and it is famous as the site of a duel some 10 years ago between two druids. A druid of Silvanus disputed a matter of forest management with a nonlocal druid—a hierophant, it turned out, dedicated to Eldath. Before they were done, the tavern had experienced a full-blown storm, an earthquake, wild plant growth and trees wrestling with each other, a snarling, snapping, goring and charging stampede of woodland beings locked in combat with each other, and fungi growing on and out of everything with bewildering speed. At the end the devotee of Silvanus was in serpent form, helplessly entangled in a ball of roots, and gasping in the full torrent of the spring. All traces of the mess were cleaned up long ago, and there's now a sign on the door: "No druidic duels today/The Management." (Underneath, someone has scrawled: "Not even a little one?")

I felt relaxed and at home here, even given the exotic decor. This is a good place to drink, and not a bad one to stay in—if you're a sound sleeper.



Tankard Houses



The attractiveness of these drinking parlors varies with whoever's performing while you're in them, of course, but from what locals tell me, the better tankard houses include the following establishments: Blackpost's Bench on Steelsword Street, Lonelycoins House on the Minstrelride, the Riverbarge on Steelspur Way, Three Brave Harpists on the Gollahaer, and the Bellblade Throne on the Uldoon Trail. (For lack of room, I was unable to show the locations of all the city's tankard houses on the map I rendered of the city.)

There's also the Curious Kelpie, a tankard house that only opens when

its owners, the Dragon Daggers half-elven adventuring band, are in town. Caravan merchants flock there then to see what treasure the Daggers have brought back from ongoing explorations of ruins somewhere in the Coast lands. Spies say the Daggers pass through a *gate* somewhere west of Berdusk—and then close the way behind them, so that none can follow where they go.

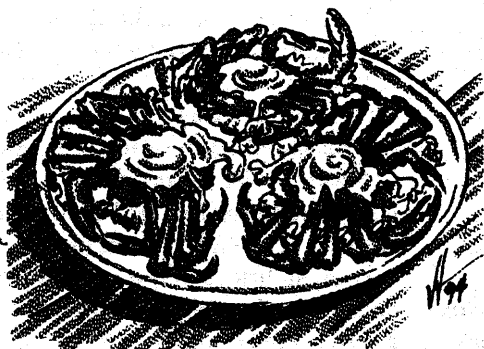
Inns

The Sign of the Silver Sword



Whiz large, well-built inn features lush, deep, sound-deadening carpeting throughout. *Glowing globes* pro-

Hot River Crabs



Take the crabs as soon as possible after removal from the river and wash them clean, plucking off any scraps of shell or debris. Roll them in flour, sprinkle with salt and pepper, and then fry in oil.

While crabs are frying, lay out a large leaf of lettuce for each one, and spread it with sour cream. We use only the biggest, toughest outer leaves, normally discarded

for the hog buckets. Squeeze a lemon over the cream, drain the fried crabs when done, and lay each one in the cream on its own leaf.

Drizzle more lemon juice over the crabs, and if a customer prefers, add mustard or hot sauces at this point. Some prefer melted butter, but be warned that eating the crabs thus garnished is very messy. Fold each leaf to trap drips, and eat while hot.



vide soft, continuous lighting in the large guest rooms, each of which has a bath, a water-flush garderobe, a canopied bed, a writing table, and a big, soft easy chair. Even more wondrous than that—the rooms are quiet!

The only drawback? Service is almost nonexistent, and there are no bell pulls, so you trudge down to the front desk, ask for something, are given a polite reply, and then nothing happens until the following evening, it seems. Ah, well—this is a great place for the self-sufficient traveler or one just wanting to rest undisturbed.

All guest rooms have privacy bars that can be emplaced from within to block door and windows. However, I suspect that secret passages allow staff to enter barred rooms through sliding panels in the backs of the walk-in cloak closets.

The food is good. The accent is on roast boar and venison cleanly cooked in wine, and I managed to prevail upon the chef, a one-eyed dwarf lass by the name of Shundasza Broadaxe, to pass on details of the one dish that I found a real standout: hot river crabs. To make this recipe, one needs fresh soft-shelled crabs—crabs who've shed their shells for larger ones, but not yet grown hard chitin again. They're best eaten within half a day of taking from the water or half the taste is gone.

These crabs cost 1 cp each and are worth thrice that and more. They are a mouth-watering delight, I assure you. They go well with white wine or Saerloonian glowfire. Try a platter with hot soup.

Hullybuck's Gamble



This sprawling, labyrinthine place is an untidy linkage of former warehouses and tall houses, and now functions as a combination inn, safe storage house, and rental stables. The part serving as a safe storage house actually is a fencing area for stolen goods, as everyone in Berdusk seems to know, though the Harpers and city guard turn a blind eye to most things short of magical items and slaves. Horses and mules can be traded, rented for use in the Vale only, or bought outright. I'll say only this about them: Beware spavined old nags enspelled to seem pain-free and frisky for a day or so.

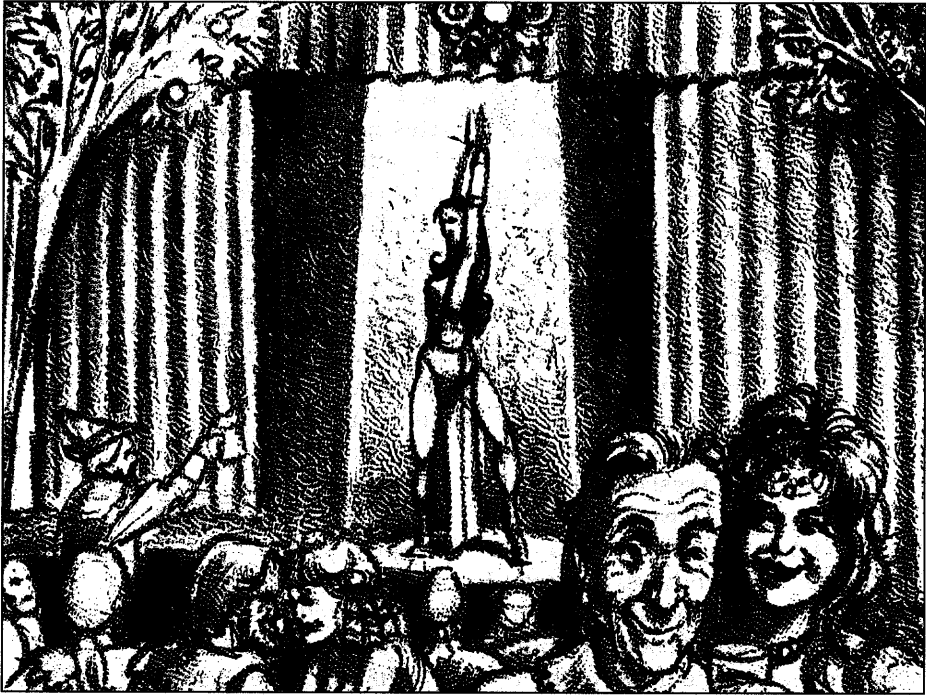
The proprietor, Raphtosz "Hurl" Hullybuck, prefers halflings as guests, although all folk short of orcs will be accommodated. (Nonhalflings just get the worst rooms, that's all.) Hullybuck's nickname, it must be said, comes from his ability to pick up belligerent guests and toss them out into the street—*through* whatever closed doors or other folk happen to be in the way. I strongly suspect a *girdle of giant strength* or similar magical aid.

Festhalls

The Herald's Rest



This exclusive, luxurious private home looks like a small castle. Inside it's a haven of tapestries, carpeting' discreet veils, and polite, skilled lady and gentleman escorts. Reputed to be run by a



former princess from a city-state of the eastern Sea of Fallen Stars who grew weary of the dictates of protocol and class, the Rest takes its name from a long-ago visit by three High Heralds, predecessors of the present-day holders of the offices, who were so delighted that one took his escort as wife, and all three offered to buy the place.

The offer was refused, but the Heralds were allowed to sponsor the Rest through some lean times, and they now share in its profits. There are rumors of documents, treasure, and even Harpers on the run being hidden in the dimly lit chambers and passages of the Rest—and some folk say magical *gates* link it with Silvermoon, Ardeepforest near Waterdeep, and with nearby Twilight Hall. High fees

are rumored to be paid for discreet use of these portals to courier valuable folk or items about in a hurry.

The Ruby Shawl



Every city has “another” festhall—a coarse, sleazy hole. This is Berdusk’s. The Shawl is for the drunk and the desperate only. Recurrent rumors of an invisible magical brooch lost by a tipsy patron occasionally lead adventurers to try to search the escorts’ quarters. Though the Shawl denies that any such brooch ever existed, certain escorts have been known to pay down-on-their-luck mages and clerics to come up to their rooms to cast magical detection spells.



Corm Orp

This small road-hamlet lies west of the Sunset Mountains on the Dusk Road southeast of Hill's Edge.⁴ Here, in the lengthening shadow of Darkhold, halflings and a few humans produce the bulk of the food consumed in the nearby city of Hill's Edge. The traveler won't find much more to Corm Orp than its horse pond, caravan camping ground with paddocks, wood lot, public pump, a few houses, and the Hungry Halfling inn and tavern. The pump is covered by a pavilion to shelter it in wet or winter weather.

Under the hills east of Corm Orp, however, are hundreds of halfling burrows. In fact, here lies the fastest-growing halfling community north of the land of Luiren. Every Shieldmeet, more halflings gather in Corm Orp, like what they see, and decide to move there.

Corm Orp is ruled by a human lord, a good and just man by the name of Dundast Hultel, who trains and leads the village militia of 30 human riders. In recent days, faced with increasing Zhentarim-sponsored beast and brigand raids, Dundast has turned to both Hill's Edge and the Harpers of Berdusk for aid. Several fierce battles have been fought in the hills east of the hamlet—and in most of these the halflings, boiling up out of their underhill homes with fierce determination and ready daggers, have decided the day.

The halflings of Corm Orp are rightfully proud of the food they produce, especially their mushrooms



and free-range hogs. Another product of pride is mass-produced red clay pottery—simple, sturdy items widely used throughout Faerûn. Dealers can be contacted at the Hungry Halfling.

Places of Interest in Corm Orp

Temples

The Ladyhouse

Nestled in a hollow among the green, pig-roamed hills east of Corm Orp is this large, prosperous center of worship to Sheela Peryroyl, the halfling goddess of nature, growing things, and agriculture. The Ladyhouse is filled with flowers and climbing vines inside and surrounded by gardens

⁴The location of Corm Orp is shown on the map found in the entry on Hill's Edge, later in this chapter.



outside, including “wild” gardens, which are preserved plots of tangled weeds, shrubs, and scrub trees. Travelers should take note that these and the roadside wood lot in Corm Orp itself are sacred to the goddess and should not be burned, cut into for firewood, or otherwise despoiled.

Halfling worshipers bring their best flowers and plants to the temple for use in breeding and in rituals, and the clergy spend their days working with the halfling farmers, keeping watch over the hills for Zhentarim raids, thieves, and wandering beasts who might harm the crops, and chanting the praises of Sheila the Watchful Mother. (The hogs are a constant lure to wolves. One expert archer among the priests has even developed a recipe for wolf stew!)

The clergy are led by the widely respected matriarch Alliya Macanester, the Old Lady of Corm Orp. Her wisdom and foresight have prevented weather spoiling the crops on two important occasions: the Great Frost of early 1346 DR and the drought of 1322 DR, which brought down desperate attacks on Corm Orp, as on so many other places in Faerûn, from starving monsters.

INNS/Taverns

The Hungry Halfling



This wayside house was originally a local human lord’s manor and still sports an elegant stone entry arch

and gatehouse. Within is a courtyard, muddy in all weather because of the spring that wells up in it to run through the wood lot and then sink down into the underways again. Also inside is a low, timber-built taproom, and behind it—down a long corridor that adds privacy—the old stone manor, which now forms a very comfortable inn.

The Halfling is a favorite of traders who travel the Dusk Road. They like its quiet, slightly shabby rooms because they’re peaceful and feel like home. The staff see that the rooms are always fully furnished with writing paper, spare boot thongs in the walk-in cloak closets, old slippers in a variety of sizes for wear around the inn, a few bottles of fruit liqueur and mintwater for late-night thirst quenching; sharpening stones for weapons, spare candles and wicks—and all the other useful clutter found in one’s own home. Much of this stuff does get “borrowed” by the needy—but then, that’s what it’s there for.

As much as possible, regular guests are given rooms they prefer to better make them feel at home. The inn has rugged food boxes insulated with wool sacks in which hot food is brought from the kitchens to the room of any guest who likes to eat alone—or at least avoid the cozy dining room.

Most *don’t* avoid the dining room, though. The food served there is as good and hearty as popular lore credits its halflings for. (The chicken dumplings are *superb*.) This inn is definitely recommended.



Darkhold

Today, this black stone fortress is feared and hated by folk all over the Coast lands—and much farther afield in Faerûn—who've never seen it and hope never to.⁵ I am one of them. For obvious reasons, I dared not approach this grim stronghold—even in disguise—and can only tell you what I know of this place of death from questioning others, some of them long-lived and mighty in lore.⁶

From this fortalice (small fort) in Darkhold Vale (a cleft high up on a rock shoulder of the huge mountain known as the Gray Watcher of the Morning), the Zhentarim now raid down into Sunset Vale more or less at will, using hippogriffs, hendar, foulwings, and even more fearsome aerial steeds⁷ as spies to seek out caravans, holds whose militias are elsewhere or weakened, and other easy prey. Travelers are advised to avoid Darkhold's reach as much as possible—and to be aware at all times that Darkhold's reach includes almost *all* of Sunset Vale by night or whenever the defenders of Vale settlements are busy elsewhere.

Once a castle of the Giant-Emperors, Darkhold was built for folk of giant stature. (Some sages say the Giant-Emperors were but slaves of the decadent archwizards of Netheril who had the castle built by an elemental. The giants styled themselves Emperors only after Netheril fell and they were left to their own devices.) To human senses, its

halls, stairs, and chambers are vast—and icy cold in winter.

Most tales of lore agree that whatever the castle's origin, it came to be inhabited by giants, proud and willful robber-folk who raided the lands around the castle (verdant Tunland, then grasslands inhabited by countless herds of wild beasts—not the swamp so much of it is today—and the halfling-held lands of Sunset Vale) at will. The giants repelled halfling attacks and bold dwarven and human probings with ease, but in the end slew each other. Two rival princes slaughtered their sire and all the other giants by poison, spells, traps, and hireswords in their mad struggle to eliminate each other. Some tales say they ended up fighting each other in the otherwise-deserted castle, stabbed each other' and crawled off to separate hidden chambers to die. Their ghosts haunt the castle, striving for supremacy one over the other still, whispering so as to set one Zhent against another in an unending spectral struggle to rule the castle.

With all the giants dead, the Keep of the Far Hills stood empty. It was soon plundered by bold human and elven adventurers, and one of them, Othlong Blackhelm—he whom the ballads call the Robber Lord—made it his home. He soon fell to treachery and his successor, Angarn Surfyst, used the castle as a base for brigandage in his turn. He, too, was slain by one of his followers, who set himself up as the Wolf Knight.

⁵The location of Darkhold is shown on the map in the entry on Hill's Edge, later in this chapter.

⁶Elminster snorted when he read this, and said: "And what ye couldn't worm out of Alliya and Cylyria and me, ye just went ahead and made up."

⁷The latest rumors speak of dragon-breeding experiments and hitherto-unknown draconic horrors that have resulted from them. When abroad in the Vale, watch the sky, and be wary.



The Lich-Queen Varalla

History doesn't even recall his name—his throat was cut by a lady captive in his bedchamber one night. She turned out to be a sorceress, and a colder, more cruel brigand than the rest, ruling Farkeep as Sarunn Thoon (the ballad "The Witch of the Far Cold Hill" tells her tale). She fell in her turn to a cabal of masked wizards who turned out to be mind flayers, and held the bandit-warriors of the castle in mind-thrall until they died in service and only zombies were left.

Then a dragon struck—a white wyrm, most say though accounts vary. It laired in the keep until slain by a dwarf hero, Harristor Thunderswing, who later went under land to form his own clan in the Lightless Lands and was

never seen again. The empty castle was roamed by monsters—histories record both a beholder and a leucrotta using it as a lair at various times—and then was taken by brigands. They were slain by an adventuring company, the Wildmen of the North, led by Brundar Tigerbane. He renamed the castle the Wild Hold and refortified it, but he fell in battle, along with most of his followers. The castle changed hands again.

A succession of petty rulers—some of whom styled themselves Lord Knight of the Far Hills, and at least one of whom called himself the Duke of Sunset Vale—held the castle for 200 years, holding sway over varying parts of Sunset Vale. Sunset Keep became a hold well known (if not respected) among merchants traveling between the Sword Coast and the Sea of Fallen Stars. The rulers of the Keep raided passing trade, fought with those who sought to drive them out, and either prevailed or were cut down and supplanted in their turn by a new petty lordling who grew into another proud robber baron—only to fall in his turn. At length one was left so weak by an attack that he and his few retainers perished under the claws and fangs of wolves and other monsters made bold by hard winter weather, and Sunset Keep became a monster hold again.

It gained the name of Darkhold when a lich-queen rose to rule it, extending her skeletal hand out over the Vale to raid and to rule much as her human predecessors had done. She used skeletal warriors, zombies, more sinister undead, and the monsters of the Keep who had submitted to her to enforce



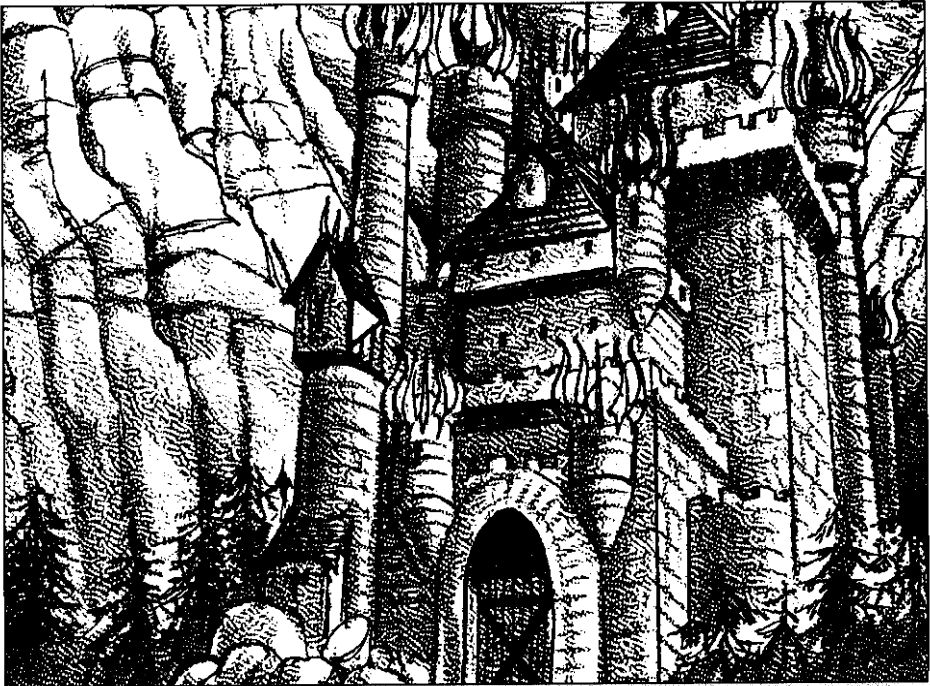
her rule. Those monsters of the Keep who did not submit, she destroyed.

Some say this lich-sorceress, Varalla, fought at the Battle of Bones. Others say she was an archsorceress of lost Netheril, freed from ages-long slumber by a monster smashing an inner wall of the Keep. Whatever the truth, Darkhold became a name of horror as word spread of the dark spells worked by Varalla to aid her undead minions as they raided far afield over the Coast lands and as far east as the outposts of Cormyr.

Tales of Varalla's new spells lured the Zhentarim into attacking her. Using goblins who were promised easy treasure and mercenaries who weren't told what they'd have to fight, the Zhentarim used their magic and Zhentilar troops to smash Darkhold's defenders and inter-

rupted the lich-queen at her studies deep in the castle. While she traded spells with Manshoon of the Zhentarim and his magelings (many of whom perished in the fray), the dark priest Fzoul Chembryl used magic to reach her and felled her with a special mace that worked similarly to a *mace of disruption*.

From that moment in 1312 DR on, Darkhold has been a Zhentarim base. It has grown into a fortress rivaling the Citadel of the Raven in importance if not in size. Now home to a thousand Zhentilar under the wizard Sememmon, magelings, and priests of Cyric, Darkhold is a waystop for Zhent caravans. Its patrols roam from Asbravn to Skull Gorge. Beware them! Don't be lured by tales of mighty spells and secret ways by which to reach them!





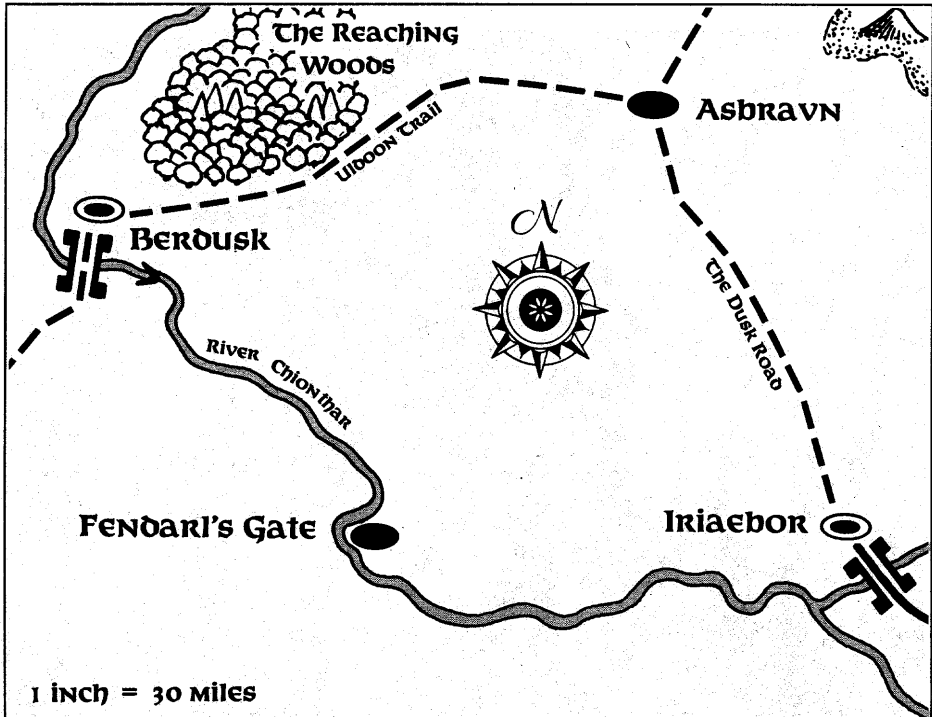
Fendarl's Gate

This riverbank shepherds' village stands on the north shore of the upper Chionthar between Berdusk and Iriaebor in a bight where the river bends sharply. It's named for its long-ago founder, a warrior grown weary of wetting swords, who settled down here to farm and spent the rest of his days fighting off trolls. His great-great-great-great-grandson now rules the Gate from a tiny castle perched on a rocky knob at the river's edge, which is known as the Imperial Palace.

This is fitting, because the ruler of Fendarl's Gate styles himself the High Knight-Emperor of the Vale.

The real name of this fat, pompous little man is Eldebuck Thorm Fendarl. He leads an army of 14 splendid knights. The knights defend the Palace, which serves as the Gate's mediocre inn. (It's cold, dank, drafty, and lacking in privacy and proper lighting of evenings.) Expect to pay 10 gp for yourself and 4 gp for stabling each animal you bring for the honor of spending a night under the same roof as the High Knight-Emperor.

There's little reason to visit the Gate unless you're a wool or mutton merchant—or really enjoy eating. They do it in style here. But if you're a visitor, it's a tent outside the Palace for you. Only the High Knight-





Emperor and his “personal guests” (those who’ve paid his price or been invited) dine in the cavernous great hall. You’ll be sharing the tent with locals, who mutter often about their good ruler’s prohibition on building a proper inn or tavern in the Gate.

A day of feasting in the Gate starts with a morningfeast of thick-sliced roast boar (imagine a strip of bacon 2 inches thick) garnished with fruit (often—ugh!—quince) and encircled by mounds of cooked eggs whipped into a golden frothy lather and combined with milk and fine-chopped shoot onions or leeks. This is all washed down with twin tankards of cold ale and mulled, spiced cider to get the digestion going.

One has time for a quick stroll to the jakes (to continue the process begun by the ale and cider) before midmorningfest begins: a hot and cold meal of hot, thick soup or stew (usually a poultry and creamed-mushroom concoction, though it can be beef or venison with carrots in winter) and the cold leftovers of last night’s feast (known to locals as *the gnawbones*). This is washed down with clear wine of any vintage you desire. (By the way, the Palace has the best wine cellar I’ve seen outside the City of Splendors itself.)

Take another stroll to settle your fare because highsunfest is not long in coming. Many locals miss this meal, being “too busy in the fields.” Even the knights, who contrive to miss one other meal a day by being at practice of arms (when they’re standing guard, platters are brought

to them by order of the High Knight-Emperor), usually escape this feast by riding far out over the fields to work the imperial falcons. Beware: The rodents and birds they bring back are promptly made into a stew with onions, parsnips, and lots of pepper for late evening snacks.

Those fortunate enough to linger for highsunfest will enjoy spiced melted cheese on buns (not bad at all) and the High Knight-Emperor’s latest craze: cold cucumber soup. One is served a bowl of it as large as a soldier’s helm, and at this meal his Imperial Altitude (by which title he must always be addressed, on pain of a tenday imprisonment and confiscation of all goods) makes the rounds of his subjects and guests, seeing that they eat their platters bare, pressing them to praise his cooks and the boundless bounty of the Gate, and telling the same stories of his ancestor Fendarl’s heroism every day. Watch the locals smile and answer enthusiastically—and do likewise.

Eveningfest is the main meal of every day, featuring a variety of whole roast beasts. It used to boast stuffed stag’s heads, until a sly mage used an *audible glamer* to make a head on a platter complain to the High Knight-Emperor about its slaying and grisly indignities heaped upon it in the kitchen. These roast delicacies taste better than they sound. They are stuffed with quail flesh, woodchuck, pheasant, and other small game cooked with spices and chopped onions.



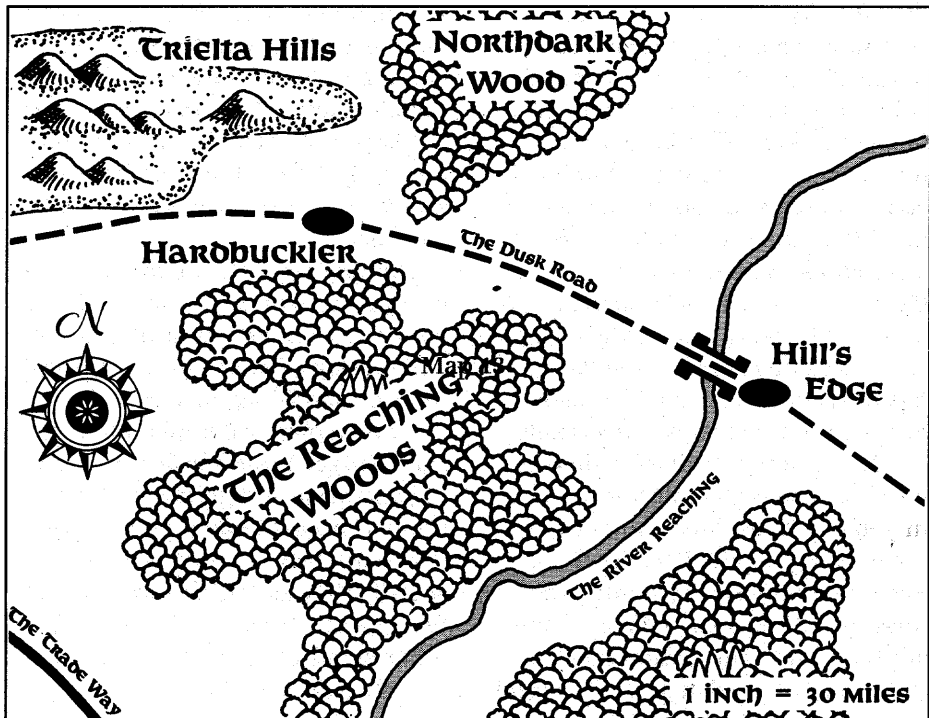
Hardbuckler

This small but important fortified village stands midway between Triel and Hill's Edge on the Dusk Road. Hardbuckler is named for a long-fallen dwarf adventurer who made his home here after he won a spectacular battle on this spot leading his small axe-throwing band, Hardbuckler's Hurlers, against a bugbear host. Hardbuckler has grown today into a village of over 2,000 folk—almost all of them gnomes.

Many humans think of gnomes as industrious, ridiculous little puttering fuss-budgets, who squeak excitedly as they run about doing crazed things with rope, pulleys, odd bits of

metal, and the like, building one dangerous contraption after another. Tales of gnome-built wonders that destroyed themselves explosively are legion. Most folk all over Faerûn think of gnomes as charming little incompetents, believing there's some inherent shortcoming in the race that will deny them ever building anything that truly functional, durable, and useful.

Like most world views, it seems this one is seriously flawed. Hardbuckler is a living example of efficient gnome industriousness at work. Among merchants traveling the Dusk Road, this small village is a favored stopover. Some folk love it so much they even winter here, helping





to defend the village against raiding wolves, orcs, bugbears, trolls, hobgoblins, and other hungry roving predators. Large, clanking contraptions, the supposed trademark of gnomes, are absent from the scene, except for rows of large, wheel-cranked triple ballistae along the walls, used to decimate orc and brigand raiding bands.⁸ Hardbuckler is a model of cleanliness, organization, and happy prosperity.

Merchants love it. Aside from the occasional visiting thief, crime is unknown, the streets are safe, and the water for mounts and thirsty travelers alike is free.

Hardbuckler consists of small stone cottages with slate roofs. The cottages are set at random within its walled enclosure, each having a little garden patch somewhere near it. These gardens are fenced to prevent visiting livestock from grazing them bare. Streets are missing, except for a ring-shaped way running all around just inside the wall and two broad avenues that bisect the village in a cross shape. As one puffing thief once put it, "This place is all one big alley!"

Every home in Hardbuckler has a cellar—a *big* cellar. These cellars each typically include a junk room and a root cellar on the uppermost level, and a large ramp or shaft with cranked elevator leading down to a

mushroom- and lichen-growing cavern beneath, with warehouse caverns below that. (Ever eaten fried lichen from Hardbuckler? Delicious! They boil it soft, then fry it in gravy and serve it with garden-grown radishes. Try it!)

The major industry in Hardbuckler is storage—no questions asked, secure storage. Half a hundred merchant concerns—and even more adventuring bands—keep loot and other valuables here, hidden away and secure behind wards laid down by Hardbuckler's resident wizard, whose vigilance is an additional guard against theft.

The gnomes of Hardbuckler make and export elaborate locks, sturdy wooden crates, and a distinctive green seam-sealing wax sold in cloth rolls. Locks range in price from 3 gp for a small, simple thing to 100 gp for a massive quadruple lock, or 75 gp for a tiny, gold-plated locket lock used in many pieces of jewelry or on purses.

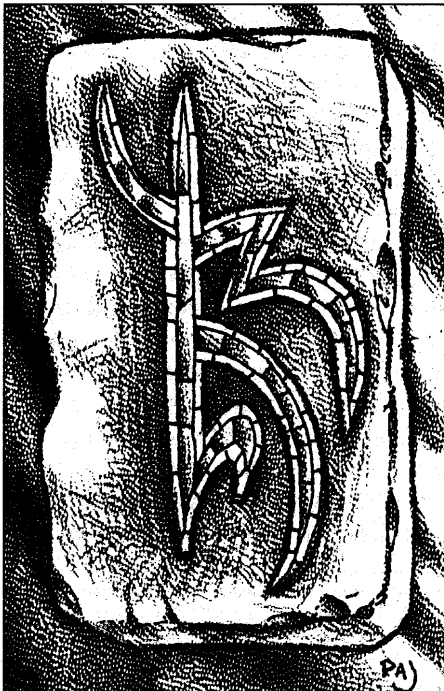
Crates range in price from 1 sp to 25 gp, depending on size and construction. Exterior bracing and copper-sheathed corners are always 5 gp extra. Most small coffer are 1 to 3 sp, and most larger boxes go for 2 gp, with a removable lid and one tube of seam-sealing wax included in their price. One person can carry a larger box alone for short distances, but

⁸There are 26 in place, so sited that at least six can fire at any given point of the cleared terrain surrounding the city. A ballista fires once per round if the crew of 3 is augmented by a "cranking crew" of 6 (gnomes; cut all crew figures in half if humans are involved). Without a full cranking crew, the rate of fire drops to once every 2 rounds. Range is 10 feet to 600 feet (due to the elevation of the ballistae, which boosts their range). Every firing of a ballista results in eight attacks being rolled against a group of foes (half that if the group is widely spaced, or in "skirmish formation"). Bolts that hit are giant heavy crossbow bolts, and do 1d12+1 points of damage to a creature.



these boxes also have rope handles thoughtfully included in their design to make them easy for two people to carry over a long haul.

Seam-sealing wax is 1 sp a tube. To use the wax, unroll one end of the cloth, squeeze the other, and force the wax out in a smooth cylinder along the edge of a box to seal a seam. A recent improved version is 1 gp a tube and is guaranteed to be reusable if oil is hand-worked into it every spring. It turns purple if any enchantment is laid on it—and if the magic is disturbed by an attempt to break the wax, alter the spell on it, or lay another spell atop the first, the wax turns green again, giving positive indication of tampering.



Ward Token of Hardbuckler

Every family in Hardbuckler operates its own storage facility and need not tell others (except the resident wizard) what it's minding—even if the stored goods consist of explosives, powerful and unstable magic, or such. There have only been three underground blasts in the history of the village, so storage is fairly secure.

The resident wizard of Hardbuckler is a kindly, elderly man with very poor sight. He wears three thick pairs of eyeglasses attached to each other on a common frame so that three lenses are fixed in front of each of his eyes. He is given to humming and wandering about the secret passages that encircle all the storage caverns beneath Hardbuckler, preventing tunneling up from below.

His name is Aldiber Inchtarwurn, and he is known to wear bracers at all times, one of which has all the powers of a *staff of power*, and the other which duplicates the effects of a *ring of spell turning*. He also possesses many magical rings, potions, and belt-ready items such as *beads of force* and *iron bands of Bilarro*.

Aldiber has created powerful wards protecting the walls of Hardbuckler and every storage cavern beneath it. Aldiber's wards block all passage of moisture through the cavern walls, preventing flooding and mildew from spoiling items in storage. The wards also give a visual—and to those bearing ward tokens, audible—alarm when they are breached.⁹ They are said to pre-

⁹That is, penetrated by force or hostile spells, not passed by possession of a ward token.



vent many spells from functioning, and to summon crawling claws and more powerful guardian creatures when certain conditions are met. I was able to obtain a ward token (shown on the right-hand page), but was unable to learn more specifics of the powers of these wards—certain locals denounced me as a Zhentarim spy or thief, and offered me swift violence.

I was forced to leave Hardbuckler hastily, but you can read here what I did learn—and also some curious things I overheard: talk of the coming of a gnome king, and of the Openers, some sort of secretive band dedicated to finding, mapping, and unlocking the secrets of ancient magical *gates* under the village and nearby. “The wealth of Netheril shall be ours!” has become a whispered catch phrase of sorts among the young and idle of the village.

I also noticed a number of would-be adventurers from Amn, Waterdeep, and the Coast—mostly romantic younger sons and daughters of nobles or wealthy folk—who’d taken up residence in rental cottages in a copse a few hills west of the village. This seems a place from whence news of adventure may soon come.

If that befalls, the mage Aldiber may be a bit put out. He likes peace and quiet and retired here to be far from the intrigues of cities. I heard he takes no apprentices, but devotes his time to helping the gnomes and studying magic, devising new spells

and items, and altering well-known spells. Folk believe he’s created so many new spells that he could give Elminster himself a run for his staff and pointed hat.¹⁰

Hardbuckler is ruled by a council of gnome elders. They take advice and direction from the Hidden—not this mysterious incipient gnome king, I believe, but gnome priests who tend temples somewhere near the village—perhaps beneath its storage caverns, surrounding them with a band of vigilance. The only councilors’ names I learned were Hammas Isynd and Orival Bundefeather. I’ve no idea if they were leaders, senior members, or just those most comfortable dealing with human visitors.

A stay in Hardbuckler costs 1 gp per person to pass in through the gates, plus 1 sp per beast brought in. This entitles you to free fodder and water.

There are no inns or taverns in the village. Each gnome family runs its own guesthouse, which serves good, though simple, meals, running to lots of spiced potatoes, onion bread, and strong cheese. (The prominent gnome families in Hardbuckler are Althryn, Boldnose, Bundefeather, Eyindul, Felndar, Felold, Gornsh, Isynd, Khobbar, and Wyn-dass.) Ale is about 10 gp per hand keg, and wine 5 gp per bottle—priced so to discourage overindulgence, I suppose. There is also a gaming pavilion, the Pipe and Ivories, where drinkers can gather.

¹⁰When he read this, Elminster snorted—and then sighed.



Hill's Edge

This city is sometimes called the Forgotten City of Sunset Vale. Many folk on the Sword Coast and in the Inner Sea lands alike simply forget it exists. Many guides and histories omit it or gloss over it as if it were a minor village or waystop well. Even recent accounts call it a town and refer to it as small but prosperous.

Yet Hill's Edge is, and always has been, an interesting place. Its location at the western end of Yellow Snake Pass has brought it both monster raids and caravan trade down the years—and with the advent of the Zhentarim, the former have declined but the latter have increased, making the Dark Network a force to be reckoned with in this city. Here Zhents are tolerated, if not liked, but the independent-minded citizens—many of whom are powerful and experienced adventurers—have made it clear to more than one emissary of Darkhold that any attempt to conquer Hill's Edge or even harass its citizenry by magic, poison, unfair trade practices, or threats will bring Waterdhavian armies assisted by senior Harpers into the city for an all-out battle.

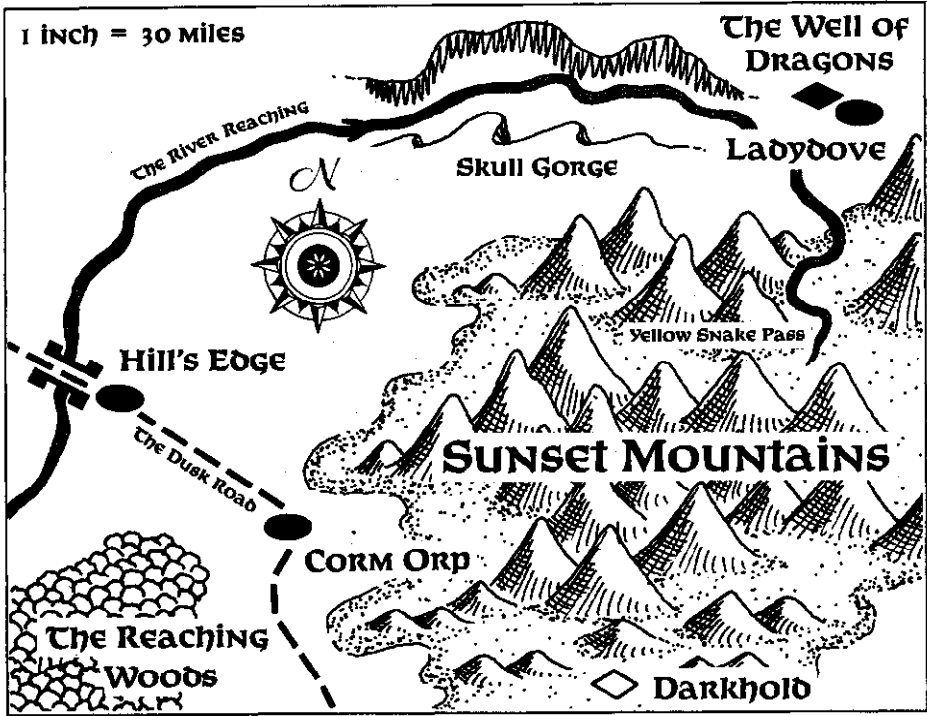
The High Mayor of Hill's Edge who last made this declaration was Asimel Elendarryl, a sorceress who hailed from Neverwinter, and was openly an agent of the Lords' Alliance. She claimed that over 40 citizens knew the locations of and ways to open over a score of magical *gates* hidden all over

the city that could bring these forces swiftly into the city. Asimel vanished some months after her term of office ended. Cynics in the city mutter that Zhentarim torturers got her, but it is known that Zhentarim agents in the city have been actively searching for the alleged *gates* since her disappearance.

On more than one occasion known Harpers *have* suddenly appeared in the city, though some citizens believe they came by means of spells, deliberately attempting to fool the Zhentarim into thinking the *gates* do exist. Control of any center containing so many instant transportation routes would be the greatest prize in Faerûn short of conquering Myth Drannor.

This tense situation, with agents of the Red Wizards, the Cult of the Dragon, the Zhentarim, and probably a dozen or more wizards' cabals and merchant companies sniffing around Hill's Edge looking for *gates*, is made worse by the character of the citizenry. Inhabitants of Hill's Edge are a wary, self-sufficient lot. Many are seasoned adventurers and guides. Monster hunting, combined with a little exploring and prospecting, is the traditional local sport. Most everyone is skilled with a weapon,¹¹ and the smithies of Hill's Edge turn out hundreds of armors and thousands of blades each year—in fact, this city is the source of much of the average-to-poor, but serviceable, weaponry and battle harness used all over western Faerûn.

¹¹After discussions with Elminster, we judge that this can fairly be expressed in AD&D game terms by saying that most everyone on the streets is at least a 4th- or 5th-level fighter.



The city's name comes not from any hill, but from a long-dead adventurer, the halfling warrior Uldobris Downhill. He found rich iron in the red eastern bank of the River Reaching here and took on gnome partners to build and maintain pumps to keep the river waters from flooding his mine, which was dubbed the Edge because it was always on the brink of flooding. Miners dug feverishly to the din of the constantly hammering pumps, tossing ore onto skids that mules dragged up to the surface. In six short years the consortium Uldobris had founded, the Clasped Hands, brought up more iron than had ever been taken out of one mine before. In the seventh year, the waters came in.

The flooded, unstable tunnels of the Edge still lie beneath the city, sloping sharply down and southeast. Local rumors as to just what inhabits them now vary widely—from freshwater morkoth to aquatic lichens—but seem to agree that something sinister dwells in the lightless waters now. Five separate gnome-led pump-out attempts of the Edge over the years have ended in the sudden disappearance of all the delvers.

Hill's Edge began as a fort built to protect the minehead and smelter and grew into a walled town of smithies and outfitters, serving as a base for hunters and prospectors venturing north and east into the Sunset Mountains and the Reaching



uplands. It has grown steadily, becoming a waybase for merchant concerns.

Warehouses now occupy a lot of the space inside the city walls. Their owners dwell above the storage areas. Hill's Edge exports steady streams of oiled and crated armor, crated finished weapons and oiled bundles of sword blades, and caged exotic beasts of all sorts. If one wants a monster or a few of its body parts anywhere in western Faerûn, the source, sometimes via several middlemen, is usually the hunters of Hill's Edge.

If life in Hill's Edge seems a perilous, exciting existence to the reader—it is. A steady stream of would-be prospectors and adventurers come to the Old Edge. Many dwarven delvings and the cellars or burial areas of both Netheril and vanished giant kingdoms are known to lie in the Reaching uplands and farther north. Hill's Edge has always been the base for those eager to explore them. Talk in the taverns of the Edge is always of the latest finds and forays—of old, fey magic found and monsters fought. It's no wonder that the Zhentarim hunger to rule here, or that the Harpers and the Lords will do all they can to prevent that. It seems a splendid home for those who thirst for adventure—and perhaps death that may come to them swift and soon.

There's another important feature of the Edge that the visitor should know about if he wants to understand the tavern talk: the silent runs. Hill's Edge has always funded the rebuilding, lengthening, and strengthening

of its walls with a gate tithe of 1 gp per wagon traveling in either direction. Folk on foot are free, but a mule train is counted as one wagon for every two mules. The Zhentarim and the Free Traders of Westgate have always used many hideouts and subterfuges to smuggle goods into and out of the city tax free. The most famous of these are the silent runs: networks of storage caverns and long tunnels under the city wall from far away linked to warehouses in the center of the city. Battles for control of the silent runs over the last decade have been furious, claiming many victims. Hungry monsters were unleashed into the passages, and traps were set up in profusion all over them until the runs became too dangerous to use and were abandoned to the marauding beasts and the desperate. If locals find these outer entrances nowadays, they usually hire a mage to permanently, suddenly, and violently close the tunnels.

Landmarks

Hill's Edge is a city of cobbled streets and sturdy stone buildings with slate and tile roofs. Large warehouses hulk everywhere, and all the (nameless) streets are broad enough to allow a team of six horses or oxen to turn a wagon around. In an open plaza at the center of the city rises the Mayor's Tower. The mayor has a bodyguard of 12 warriors, and another 20 soldiers collect the gate tax and keep watch from the walls and on all who enter or leave the city, but there is no militia, civil guard, or army. The Traders' Council,



which advises the mayor, wants to keep it that way (The Traders' Council meets in the Tower once a tenday, and more frequently in emergencies.)

As a result, this is a city of private bodyguards and lookouts hired by well-armed merchants who guard themselves and their wares at all times. The merchants' homes tend to be atop their warehouses or near the city walls, where the smithies, paddocks, most of the rooming houses and failed businesses can be found, too. I saw at least two score boarded-up, abandoned buildings during my visit.

The inns, taverns, and prosperous shops of the city tend to be clustered along the streets radiating out from the central Tower. There's no open marketplace in the Edge—instead, stalls can be found all around the city wall on its inside. (They are icy-cold quarters in winter, I'm told.)

Hill's Edge has a high stone wall surrounding it studded with many watchtowers and pierced by four gates: the Reaching Gate on the northeast, Rivergate on the northwest, Vale Gate on the southeast, and Clasped Hands Gate on the southwest. Perhaps 6,000 folk call Hill's Edge home in winter, and 10,000 can be found inside its walls in summer. It's fairly small, and the wide streets make for quick travel. It has a reputation for winter cold harsh enough to kill many folk every year.

The visitor to Hill's Edge shouldn't miss the Tarnished Trumpet tavern, the fabled Six Soft Furs festhall—located a stone's throw from the Mayor's Tower—or the Happy Hippocampus inn. (Local lore insists a mayor built the

Six Soft Furs so close for quick and easy visits.) Other drinking spots I saw were the Scarlet Stag and the Dancing Bear. Both were rustic, smoky, crowded, dim, and of little account.

Other inns include the Worried Wyvern, the Storm Griffin, and the Stone Saddle. Rooming houses can be found by the score. You'll recognize them for the three amber lamps hanging over their doors. Most are cold, dirty, dingy places where you can share a room with several rats who feel just as chilly as you do. For a tenday, the room is usually 1 sp per day, or for a month, it runs a copper a day plus an extra 1 sp "for the doorstep." Cooking is extra. "For the hearth" costs are generally 3 cp per day.

Hill's Edge boasts two temples: the Cry of Joy, dedicated to Lliira, and the Fist of the Future, sacred to Cyric. There are also shrines to Tempus and Tymora: the Old Sharp Sword, perched within sight of the Mayor's Tower; and the Kiss of the Lady, located hard by the Reaching Gate.

Notable shops in the Old Edge include A Handful of Eyes, Lionstar Services, the Knight in the Morn, Belkin's Black Blade, and Bent Bows. A Handful of Eyes is perhaps the most reliable of the monster shops, and Lionstar Services is the discreet small goods handling outlet of Lionstar Warehouses. The Knight in the Morn is an armorer and blazoner, Belkin's sells superior weapons, and Bent Bows, as its name implies, is an archery shop.

The visitor to Hill's Edge should note that although the Zhentarim presence grows ever stronger in Hill's Edge, the



Dark Network has received several sharp rebukes (that is, sharp as in sword points) from citizens whom they tried to cheat, threaten, or bribe at too low a price. The Zhentarim pressure has made fewer folk than ever want the thankless task of being High Mayor for a year—but every candidate in anyway supported or influenced by the Zhentarim has been decisively refused by the electors. The Traders' Council is running the city at present while they seek a new High Mayor from among the returning prospectors and adventurers.

Overshadowing all the political tensions in town is the ongoing conflict between the Rose-Red Lady and the Black Lady, the high priestesses who lead the two rival temples in town. They wage an endless duel for supremacy in what passes for high society in the Edge—as well as in its alleyways, cellars, and spell chambers. When one temple gathers for an important ritual, the other does too, just in case the “villains” in the other temple plan any magical assault. Like the Zhentarim, the two priesthoods have eyes everywhere in the city. Unless you have power enough to withstand and hurl back the magics of an aroused temple, it is best not to openly support one side or another. You have been warned.

Places of Interest in Hill's Edge Temples

The Cry of Joy

The star-mantled, orange-, red-, and yellow-robed priestesses of Lliira tend to be beautiful, acrobatic, and silver-

throated. They pass on jokes, make merry, and generally provide much of the gaiety and color in Hill's Edge. The Harpers always provide music at their festivals—wild parties to which all folk in the city are invited. Harpers also covertly provide security during these events, foiling hostile magic and deliberate disruptions.

The only enemies these Joymaidens have are the followers of the Dark Sun, Cyric, and the local professional escorts, who view the festivals as very bad for trade. In the escorts' opinion, revelers get free what the escorts expect folk to pay for. This is the only reason, aside from the free drink, many say cattily and spitefully, that anyone goes to one of these revels at all.

The Cry of Joy resembles a miniature castle. Little larger than a prosperous manor, it sports high stone walls, a portcullis, and turrets adorned with Lliira's yellow, orange, and red star-girt banners. Its coffers bulge from two sources of income: superb blackbitter ale brewed in the temple cellars and exported all over Faerûn, and best-selling chapbooks of amorous adventure penned anonymously by the clergy—and also sold all over Faerûn.

The Lliirans are led by a young, enthusiastic reveler, Joybringer Caseldown. She works in secret with Harpers (well, her plans are secret, though most folk know meetings go on) to see to the security and cultural growth of Hill's Edge, so that it continues to be a pleasant place to live. There's a rumor around the city these days that the Joybringer has strange magical powers.



The Fist of the Future

The black banners on the walls of this frowning war fortress of a temple are all adorned with the skull and starburst of Cyric. They stare coldly at all who walk the streets, and like pirate flags, they make citizens and visitors alike reach for weapons and watch warily.

The Cyricists in Hill's Edge are a fast-growing group, sponsored by Zhentarim gold and the energy of the ambitious High Dark Priestess Emana Gortho. She seems bent on turning the city into a huge robber-baron's hold and is fast attracting all the down-on-their-luck rogues, thugs, and crazed-wits in the Vale with promises of good gold, and good beer and brotherhood to go with it, with regular opportunities for bullying and bloodletting. She now has hundreds of dark hands to do her bidding, but they are ill-trained, undisciplined, and essentially selfish hands, and have several times defied the orders of priests leading them to pursue ready loot and foes.

Mysterious spell attacks have twice ruined armories and engines of war smuggled into the temple, smashing plans for an uprising, destruction of the temple to Lliira, and the establishment of martial rule over the city. Emana suspects Harper spies of causing the assaults, though she has no idea which powerful wizards they hired or cajoled into making the actual attacks. On both occasions, word was all over the city in hours, accompanied by the general opinion that such doings were to be expected, because: "We don't like folk bringing armies

into this town or whelming for war."

The High Dark Priestess has accordingly turned to ever darker and wilder spells, accompanied by risky attempts at spellcasting in groups, sacrifices, and summonings of powerful evil beings from other planes. She speaks openly of such things, trying to awe citizens into obedience or flight, but has so far misread the folk of Hill's Edge, who've merely turned to planning how best to bring about her downfall.

Shops A Handful of Eyes

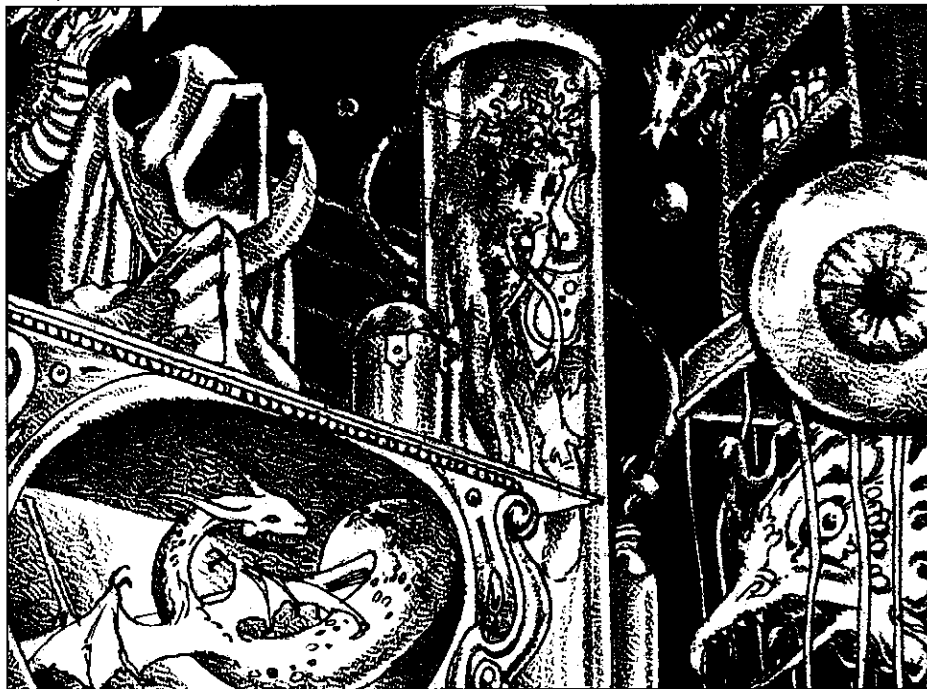
Monster Parts and Live Monsters



This dark, cavernous converted old warehouse is a labyrinth of creaking pillars, rusting cross braces, sagging floors, and little flights of steps linking levels that don't *quite* meet. Cages of all sizes are everywhere. Citizens whisper that folk who argue prices too strenuously sometimes disappear into them.

This shop is lit by a dozen or so glowing white eyeballs that float about like curious insects, hovering to inspect or accompany shoppers with an unblinking gaze that most folk find eerie: The proprietor is a masked, hooded male who seems able to see whatever the eyes can, however distant, and who is thought to be a mind flayer by at least one regular supplier of the shop.

For all this eccentricity, A Handful of Eyes is probably the most reliable of the monster shops in Hill's Edge—



that is, it can most quickly supply a particular beast, dead or alive, to a purchaser, and it carries a larger stock than competitors, some of whom deal only in a few species (such as Eldritch Ebony, a shop that discreetly deals in drow to very rich and totally unscrupulous buyers). Most buyers are merchants acting for wealthy, decadent thrillseekers or mages in Calimshan, Waterdeep, Sembia, Amn, and the city-states around the Sea of Fallen Stars.

A live monster can cost from 25 gp for a particular type of nonpoisonous rat, spider, or snake to 350,000 or more for a ki-rin or other rare or powerful creature. The Eyes does not deal in slaves, nor does it kidnap humans for a fee—not since a captive

wizard blew apart the southern end of the shop with an unexpected spell and escaped.

Lionstar Services

Packers



This shop is a ramshackle wing of the vast Lionstar Warehouses complex out by the wall in the northeast quadrant of the city. For modest fees, the experienced packers here will securely pack and seal all sorts of small shipments (precious or fragile items, for instance) for caravan travel all over Toril. Their specialty is disguising an item by its packaging to make it appear to be something else. This generally costs double. False



documentation can cost 100 gp on top of that—more if it involves forging the signature or seal of a mage, ruler, merchant company, noble family head, or other important personage.

Lionstar Services has several wizards on retainer to magically examine, shield, or protect parcels. Their services cost extra—a lot extra! Exactly how much depends, of course, on just what they have to do.

The Knight in the Morn

Armorer and Blazoner



This proud, colorful shop sells suits of armor, some of which look very grand. They vary from mediocre (the source of the old wisecrack: “Ah, Sir Rustbucket. Knighted in Hill’s Edge, I presume?”) to not bad. They also sell lances and shields, but some shields have been known to crumple under a single blow. To top the lances, they sell pennants and full-sized banners.

The need to adorn these banners has expanded over the years from two old women skilled with the needle to a staff of six seamstresses and four master limners. You can order your shield, breastplate, helm, or anything else adorned with your badge, coat-of-arms, or favorite color.

Such adornments typically cost 60 gp each for painted work and 100 gp for sewn. This shop is usually at odds with Hillhorn, the local Herald, for allowing patrons to walk out wearing arms and badges that properly belong to others. In the past, much of the shop’s trade came from brigands

intending to impersonate others to effect swindles, kidnappings, and the darkening of certain reputations.

This is still the place to come if you want a blazon of your own design painted—a blazon, that is, that’s not lawfully registered with, or recognized by, the Heralds. The shop gets away with this practice by claiming they were told the work was a first flower (the painting of arms made by a supplicant to show to a Herald in hopes of getting the design approved). The close watch now kept on the shop by Harpers makes criminal use of the arms of others less likely to be profitable, but as a place to get fanciful arms painted up, or those intended forever to be fictitious, the shop continues to do a roaring trade.

Note that all blazonwork that comes to the shop without written certification from a Herald will cost double. Regular patrons of the shop tell me its lances are of excellent quality.

Belkin’s Black Blade

Weapons Shop



In contrast to the haughty splendor of the Knight in the Morn, this place is a “down-to-earth, hard-core weapons shop: a large, dimly lit house that smells of oil and cold steel and is crammed with racks of swords, daggers, maces, morning stars, war hammers, spears, arrows, bolts, and battle axes.

Belkin Orgul is a fat, puffing, shrewd old warrior who stumps and wheezes around the shop, forever pushing unruly gray-white hair out of his eyes to



glare at customers. He sells helms, gorgets, and gauntlets as well as weapons. Spike-knuckled gauntlets are a perennial favorite at 25 gp for the pair.

Bent Bows

Archery Shop



This is one of the best archery shops I've seen anywhere: a bright, breezy place where one can buy any size of bow or crossbow. One can also purchase, of course, all sizes of shafts and bolts and a variety of arrowheads, including bulbous fireheads guaranteed not to go out before striking their target. These heads are cast spheres containing felt that are doused in alcohol and lit before firing.

Adventurers and merchants alike come here to buy wagonloads of shafts and bolts. If one buys 10 guaranteed-waterproof leather quivers of 21 missiles each or more, it's at a discount price of 6 sp each, instead of the usual 1 gp.

The proprietor, Master Fletcher Sumbarl Ardusk, is expert at detecting out-of-true shafts, and at soaking, stretching, and spot heating to make them straight.

Taverns

The Scarlet Stag



This drinking hall is of the smoke-filled, rowdy, rustic sort. I found the tables and booths cramped and crowded, and the servers both surly and harried; moreover, some clever guest seems to enjoy hurling chestnuts

at random around the darkened tap-room. One plopped into my tankard, but a woman nearby was struck on the temple and dazed. Go to get drunk if you must, but don't expect to relax or chat in any sort of quiet.

The Dancing Bear



This dive is like the Stag but noisier, dirtier, and more dangerous. Here patrons play with hurled daggers, and there's a steady stream of supplicants shuffling to trade scraps of information for the few coppers needed for another drink or two to the tables where Zhentarim spies and their bodyguards sit.

The Bear is not a place one dare relax in. I saw two purse cuttings while I was there, and when the second victim noticed and rounded on the thief, he got a blade in his throat and another in his ribs. The thief was out one of the three side doors before the body slumped to the floor.

Others share my opinion. The tavern does a brisk trade in carry-out skins of (watered-down) wine at 4 sp each.

There's no bear dancing about in accordance with the tavern's name. Its stuffed head snarls down from over the bar, eyes red and glittering thanks to a little glass and a cantrip. I was not impressed.

Inns

The Worried Wyrvern

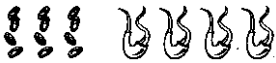


This is the closest Hill's Edge comes to an average inn of quality—a clean,



three-level, fairly new establishment boasting interconnected suites of rooms on the uppermost floor, messenger pigeon service to an errand-running service in Iriaebor, and a good dining room. The chef has mastered a spiced river fish and asparagus omelet to accompany the usual bacon, toast and drippings, and sausages for morn-ingfest and highsunfest. Evening meals are a nice variety of roasts, accompanied by pleasant surprises like chicken livers in mushroom sauce and green peppers stuffed with rice, tomatoes, and ground meat. A rather bad, bored harpist plays away the evenings, making background music to drown out conversations at adjacent tables. A safe and pleasant, if unexciting waystop.

The Storm Griffin



Travelers can easily find this downtown inn thanks to the rampant stone griffon statue out front. It's as tall as the three-story inn behind it and from time to time spectacular but harmless illusory lightnings flash and crawl over its surface. It was once the figurehead of the favorite ship of the inn's builder, who was a rich textiles merchant.

The inn beyond it is surprisingly good. Rooms are cozily and sometimes luxuriously furnished, and the services of in-house barbers/coiffeurs, tailors, and custom shoemakers are available for extra fees. Bath servants carry hot water to the tubs in each room and assist in bathing if desired. Their services are free. For a copper one of six hall boys will carry messages or small

items anywhere in the city. (By all accounts, they're trustworthy.)

The dining room is excellent, specializing in delicious hot and cold soups, fried breads, and fish stuffed with egg, leek, and river crab mixtures. At its best, the kitchen of the Griffin matches anything to be had in proud, distant Waterdeep.

The Stone Saddle



This cheap, chilly old barn prides itself on good stables and hostlers. I dare say mounts get better care than their owners. Still, doors bolt securely, and the beds are comfortable, but sag somewhat in the middle. If you don't mind indifferent food, such as meatballs of mysterious origin in onion-dominated tomato broth, this is a cheap, tolerable place to sleep.

FestHalls

Six Soft Furs



This house of pleasure is famous Vale-wide for its luxuries, wanton escorts, and flavored syrup baths that are rarely enjoyed alone. Rumored to have been built by a mayor (to attract tourists, of course), it boasts very high prices indeed—an evening's pleasure can easily cost 300 gp. Some escorts here specialize in a combination of pleasant (and surprisingly learned) conversation and kneading out the pain from long journeys and old battle injuries with their hands and feet, for those who don't want to indulge in the exotic.



The Tarnished Trumpet

Tavern



This tavern faces the Mayor's Tower across the open cobbles and is the largest and best drinking spot in Hill's Edge. On most evenings, even in the bitterest winter weather, it's crowded with jovial adventurers swapping stories of their bravery, close escapes, and latest finds in the Netherese ruins north and east of the city.

A blackened, battered trumpet hangs behind the bar. More than a few folk in town say it's an iron *horn of Valhalla* the bartender can blow to defend the tavern against attack. This rumor is supported by the fact that all of the six folk—four men and two women—who tend bar around the clock (a water-drip model from far Chessenta, that chimes tiny bells to mark the hours) always wear swords at their hips and daggers in various spots.

Many of the prospectors who work out of Hill's Edge view the Trumpet as their home, even though they sleep somewhere else. The staff encourages them to think so, keeping messages for prospectors out in the mountains, and providing comfy old armchairs and a fireplace to warm wet feet and dry wet stockings and hose at around the side of the bar.

The Place

Wood-paneled, many-pillared, and decorated with tapestries of hunting

scenes and the battered weapons of now-deceased patrons, the tavern is almost all one vast taproom. The tops of the drinking tables are inset with little windows. Old treasure maps have been set between panes of glass in them, and beneath each is a small cage enclosing a *glowing globe*, so light comes up through the map to illuminate the tabletop. Patrons who try to take a map out will be expelled violently and permanently. Copies of all the maps are available at the bar for 50 gp each. Most of the maps are 20 to 30 winters old and are of mines and subterranean cellars and ways in the wildernesses north of Skull Gorge or in western Yellow Snake Pass.

Be warned that the Zhentarim purchased copies of all these maps long ago, as have many other adventuring bands. Few easily found treasures can be left in any of the places the maps show. On the other hand, tales make the rounds every three seasons or so of adventurers poking around old, cleaned-out dungeons who found a secret way others had missed and broke through into treasure-laden, hitherto hidden, areas.

The Prospect

This tavern is the place to hear news of adventurers and their deeds, join a band or hire adventurers to aid you in deeds of daring and danger, or just to reflect on past glories, stare at the fading maps and tapestries, and dream a little. Some minstrels make a point of doing this, claiming they get their best song ideas in the convivial Trumpet. This is one of the



most relaxed, friendly, chatty bars in all the Vale.

The Provender

Hot buttered rolls and sausage rolls are the only food the Trumpet serves. Its wine cellar has an awesome breadth, however, and the flagons and tankards in use on the premises are of a generous size.

The Prices

Ale is 4 cp per talltankard or 8 cp per hand keg, and wine is either anonymous house wine at 5 cp per flagon or a recognized vintage sold by the bottle (7 sp to 22 gp). Zzar, sherries, and all exotics (such as elverquisst) are sold by the bottle at 4 gp to 125 gp (most are 6 to 8 gp).

Travelers' Lore

The Trumpet houses several legends of hidden treasure. One speaks of a secret door in a pillar. It hides a turn handle that flips up a large floor section, table and all, to reach a gold cellar guarded by mysterious monsters.

Another speaks of a cordial glass formed of one enormous carved diamond the size of a petite elf's fist. It was said to be able to render any liquid placed in it nonpoisonous and pleasant to the palate. A visitor to the bar, a dusky noblewoman, turned it invisible as a prank, and a clumsy-fingered thief knocked it to the taproom floor. No one has ever found the glass, and incidences of patrons tripping over nothing (perhaps from excess drink or a loose floorboard) are often blamed on kicking it.



The Happy Hippocampus

Inn



This inn deserves to be much better known. It's one of the best in western Faerûn, complete with an attentive liveried staff who pamper guests personally, a hot communal tub with scented water (clouded with lavender to preserve the modesty of bathers), and food among the best anywhere.

The Place

The Happy Hippocampus is a low-ceilinged, carpeted place of many lamps and plants. Lounges (including the baths) surround the circular dining room. From the curving hallways that encircle the dining room ascend broad stairs to large rooms that feature curtained, canopied beds.

Guest chambers are suites, each having a bathing chamber (garderobes therein magically flush themselves clean with water!), a dressing room with a full-length glass, and a writing desk with parchment, ink, and quills. Oysters, pickled falcon eggs, and garlic-buttered biscuits—all accompanied by white wine—are available in every room.

Thick walls keep rooms quiet. Windows are sealed and have multiple panes of glass to banish all drafts and minimize winter chill.

The Prospect

The skilled, thoughtful human staff anticipates most guests' needs (warmed

towels and robes are set ready for patrons who bathe, for example), but can always be summoned by pulling one of the purple cords that hang on the walls of every room and passage in the inn. A rooftop garden provides fresh tomatoes and greens for salads, and gives guests a private place to sit amid greenery and relax. Far below, extensive cellars give safe storage to guests' valuables, an impressive wine cellar, and large, defensible pantries.

The Provender

The dining room at the Hippocampus serves the usual roasts and fowl dishes with flair, along with marvelous gravies and sauces. The soups are delightful, and I especially liked the appetizers known as hot bites. I managed to get the recipe for these open-faced sandwiches from one of the chefs (thank you, Alayss), and here it is:

Hot Bites

Take slices of crust bread (stale will do), soak in white wine, and allow to dry. Spread with hot mustard, sliced cheese and onion (or better, leeks), then sprinkle with the fingertips with basil, pepper, and white wine, and put on skillet over hearth until the cheese melts. Eat hot.



The Prices

Rooms are 16 gp a head per night, and stabling is 2 gp extra. Eveningfeast (including all drinks) costs 2 gp. All other meals are free with a room, but drinks cost extra. Liqueurs run 4 or more gp per bottle. Ales are 1 sp per tankard, and wines are 3 gp to 75 gp per bottle (most are 4 gp to 7 gp).

Travelers' Lore

The Hippocampus was briefly home to the Proud Pegasi adventuring band. Led by a female mage of spirit, beauty, and quick wits (Bellara "Starcloak" Arune, a merchant's daughter from Amn), the Pegasi went from success to success, finding a string of fallen mage towers and Netherese ruins. Some say tanar'ri aided their searches, others that Bellara

devised a spell that let her read the brains of Netherese lich-mages, holding them in thrall from afar. Whatever the truth, the Pegasi found a *lot* of treasure.

When agents of the Zhentarim stole from them, Bellara mounted a return raid on Darkhold. Gathered Zhentarim mages destroyed the band with mighty spells. Through a *contingency*, the spirit of Bellara fled into a life-size gemmed statue supposedly hidden in the Hippocampus.

Some say that the statue was formed in Bellara's image, and others contend that it was of a rearing pegasi. Since no one has ever found a statue of either kind here, adventurers who stay at the inn still hope to find the statue, resurrect Bellara, and claim as their reward a portion of the treasure that the Zhents didn't get



HLUTHVAR

This walled town on the Dusk Road lies in the shadow of Darkhold and is less a trading town than a fortress against the Zhentarim.¹² The town's mayor, magistrate, and military ruler is Maurandyr High Ward (priest) of the House of the Guardian, the local temple of Helm.

Hluthvar was a local warrior-hero. The town that preserves his name now stands as the front-line wall against armies that would otherwise sweep down from Darkhold unchecked to raid at will up and down the Vale. In this vigilant stance, Maurandyr is financially supported by the Harpers, the Lords' Alliance, and other rulers and places in the Vale.

This does not make Hluthvar a welcoming place to visit. Built of stone and slate to retard fires, it can muster a militia of over 70 well-trained and equipped warriors—one from nearly every family in town. Groups of them clad in plate mail can be seen practicing with swords and crossbows every day under the watchful eyes of priests.

The temple also hires adventurers by the month at 100 gp per each to ride wide patrols around the town to keep watch on patrol groups and raiders out of Darkhold. "Put the dark ones to the sword whenever you can" is their standing order.

Hluthvar is built like a giant wheel, with its streets as the spokes and the rim and a large open market as the central hub. The north-south "spoke" of the wheel is missing. On the north

side of the market stands the House of the Guardian (with a large buy/sell/trade livery stable and the militia armory north of it), and on the south side stands a wagonwain's shop and the sole inn in town, the Watchful Eye. The temple maintains a stable of milk cows and a chicken house (both easily located by the smell). The priests—who always go armed—stride about like sword captains, giving orders as if the town were at war.

Rental space warehouses ring and flank these important buildings. The rest of the town consists of seven covered wells, a few shops, and homes. The wells are set up as small, defensible keeps topped by onagers that can hurl stones at attackers outside the city walls. Every roof and every cellar is planted for growing mushrooms or root crops. To discourage drunkenness, there's no tavern, and visitors to town who stray from the inn or local market are viewed as little better than spies.

Most folk in Hluthvar work deep in their cellars, delving ever deeper in search of gold, which is plentiful in the rock hereabouts, and perhaps Netherese or other ruins below. Some 30 winters ago, someone did break through into an old dwarven hold, and it's now provisioned as a safehold for the townsfolk to retreat to if Hluthvar is overrun.

The folk of Hluthvar have lived with fear of the Zhentarim for a long time, but right now they're wrestling with a new fear. Their revered leader, Maurandyr, may be going mad. Several

¹²Hluthvar's location can be seen on the map in the entry on Asbravn, earlier in this chapter.



times recently he's fainted or spoken and acted strangely. Some say these incidents are the result of the strain of command. Others whisper they are signs of the displeasure of Helm or—and this is the dark opinion of most—caused by some sort of magical assault from the evil Zhentarim wizards.

I recommend travelers avoid Hluthvar except as a secure place to stay a single night on the road before moving on. The temple rents stark and simply furnished rooms at 10 gp a head to those who don't want to stay at the inn. Sights are few, joy even rarer, and prospects for trade slim. Hluthvar needs more of everything, and has little to give in return. Life here is as good an argument for destroying the Zhentarim as anything I've seen or heard anywhere in the Coast lands.

Places of Interest in Hluthvar

Temples

The House of the Guardian

This temple to Helm resembles a keep. It has its own moat and spiked iron fence—which can be electrified by spells in the event of attack, I'm told—along with ballistae and armories inside. The uppermost chamber is a stark chancel, the altar being an upright sword, the unblinking eye of Helm glowing on its pommel.

Over 20 warrior-priests dwell here, working ceaselessly by spell and training in arms to strengthen Hluthvar as “the wall against the darkness.” They are grim folk, always alert for spies, weak-

nesses, and ways in which they can deal harm to the forces of Darkhold.

Shops

Trist's Saddles and Stables

Mounts and Tack



Irythimm Trist is a sharp-nosed, watchful man who drives a hard bargain but avoids all deceit. If you buy a mount or pack animal from him, you'll get exactly as good a beast as he says you will—all-in-all, a rare and precious thing.

Veloth's Fine Wagons and Repairs

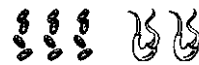
Wagons, Wheels, and Repairs



Uln Veloth is a man of exaggeration, histrionics, and hand-wringing. He can *never* do what you want in the scant time you give him—but always does. His skilled craftspeople grin at his wailing a lot and calmly turn out top-quality wagons, wheels, axles, and overnight repairs. Fees are stiff, and payable up front, but the work is sturdy.

INN

The Watchful Eye



The Watchful Eye is a cheerless place that serves stolid food and watered-down beer. It has shutters and a roof and not much else. Its one virtue is that it's quiet—almost too quiet, like the calm before a vicious storm. Still, you can definitely fall asleep easily here if the hard beds don't keep you awake.



Iriaebor

This city is sometimes called the Overland City because it's the easternmost outpost of the Vale and carries caravan trade on the Dusk Road over the rapids and cataracts of the upper Chionthar, linking up with the Trader's Road that runs east to the Sea of Fallen Stars. Barges cannot get any farther upriver than the lower docks of Iriaebor.

Built atop a defensible ridge long ago, Iriaebor today is a cramped city of many tall, crumbling towers leaning on each other or standing close together, joined by bridges and bristling with balconies, so that most of the narrow, winding streets are left permanently in shadow.¹³ This has earned Iriaebor the name of City of a Thousand Spires. The stables, stockyards, caravan paddocks, warehouses, and the like sprawl across the farmland around the ridge. Aside from an open market where the Dusk Road enters the city, there are no open spaces left within the walls.

Travelers are advised to beware the constant, many-layered, often violent intrigues between the many merchant houses, families, and cabals of the city. Iriaebor is like Waterdeep gone mad when it comes to merchant manipulations, chicanery, and maneuvering.

Zhentarim machinations achieved the brief but iron-hard rule of the Zhentarim sorceress Lord Ravendas over the city. She attempted to unearth some sort of dangerous

Shadowking and his shadow magic from beneath the city. Since that time, the Harpers of Berdusk have kept a close watch on Iriaebor.

The city is presently ruled by Bron. He was the peoples' choice for his principles of fairness above all. He serves as the city's judge, and he appoints and dismisses members of a 40-person advisory council. Aided behind the scenes in one way by the Harpers—and in another by the head of the current local thieves' guild, Cormik—the Lord of Iriaebor manages to keep this city of bitter merchant rivals from erupting in bloodshed from one wall to another.

Visitors are advised to beware all the rivalries. Even experienced traders are regularly fleeced, though the dark days of throat-slitting and all-your-goods Zhentarim confiscations are gone—at least for now. Bron sacrificed his own position and most of the money of the temple to Eldath he headed at the time to buy mercenaries enough to slaughter the private armies that rival merchants were hurling at each other. The hatreds that fueled the open warfare then still simmer behind closed faces today, awaiting any chance to come boiling bloodily out.

Iriaebor's location and strong army make it a base or destination sought by many. (The army, the Shield, is 8,000 warriors strong.) For those who must deal in this den of commerce, I can provide only an overview of prominent places. Shops, companies, and fashion-favored places change with every tenday.

¹³A map of Iriaebor can be found in *FORGOTTEN REALMS Adventures* hardbound.



Landmarks

The ridge on which old Iriaebor was built runs parallel to the river and divides the city into three parts. The most southerly of these is the narrow strip of land between the river and the ridge, crowded with warehouses, docks, boatbuilding slips, muddy wagon trails, and heaps of garbage, which is called the Docks. Next is the ridge itself, called the Old City, its rocky slopes crowned with the forest of stone towers inhabited by the most successful (most ruthless, many folk would say) merchants. Most of the important buildings in Iriaebor can be found here. The northernmost and largest district of Iriaebor is composed of the flatlands that have been enclosed by the city wall. They are known as the Lower City. Here can be found the shops and houses of the common folk and laborers, the open market, stables, tanneries, slaughterhouses and other noisome industries, and two fenced merchant coster waybases: a major base of the Thousandheads Trading Coster and a smaller center of the Dragoneye Dealing Coster. The city exports many fine horses from the surrounding farmlands of the Vale, kegs and barges, and a lot of fairly bad beer.

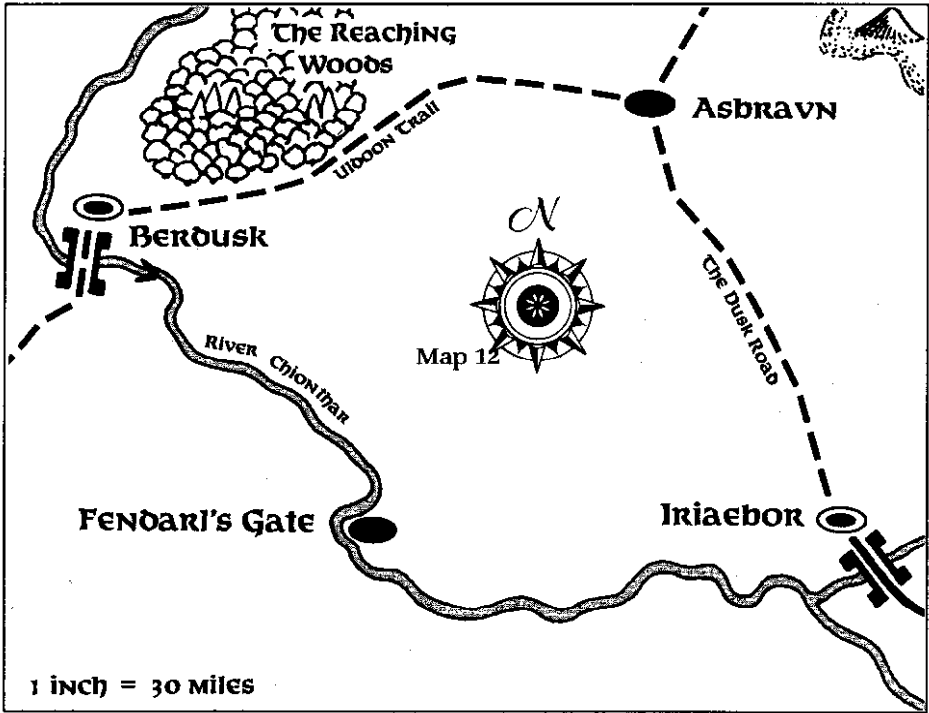
Iriaebor is home to three important temples: Silent Hall, dedicated to Eldath (once Bron's charge); the Golden Bowl of the Goddess, a temple of Chauntea; and the High Altar of the Moon (called simply the Moontower by citizens), a center of worship to Selûne. A fourth temple, the Tower of Gold, venerated Waukeen until the Time of Troubles, but now stands empty and looted.

Priests of Lliira have petitioned the city for permission to found a temple within the walls of the former Tower of Gold, but many powerful merchants covet the site, which commands the road south across the bridge and out of the city. The matter is presently before the council, halted by wrangling that promises to go on for years.

As I mentioned, the shops of Iriaebor change with bewildering rapidity. Two deserve mention for their unusual wares: Give Me Wings to Fly, which deals in aerial mounts of various sorts, and the Well-Dressed Wizard, where mages can buy the latest, greatest cloaks, robes, hats, and staves.

Like the city's shops, its inns and taverns change with each passing month. This is especially true for taverns, as one needs no special tavern license to run one. The city taxes are paid on the original purchase of beer and spirits. The council doesn't care who sells the alcoholic drink to thirsty throats after that.

The few fixtures among inns are all in the old city atop the ridge (or Tor, as locals call the ridge): the Wandering Wyvern, a homelike place that welcomes a regular clientele and doesn't turn away adventurers; the Black Boar, a luxurious but poorly run place that relies on its exalted reputation; and the Sign of the Dreaming Dragon, a three-story inn with its own walled garden that is run by halflings. The Dreaming Dragon is rumored to have been home to a powerful adventurers' band in the past. Many adventurers don't like the expense or the tense atmosphere of the city, and stay an hour's ride north of the city at the Old Talking Ox on the Dusk Road.



Places of Interest in Iriaebor

Temples

Silent Hall

Perched in splendid isolation at the eastern end of the ridge on which the Old City stands, this walled citadel to Eldath takes the shape of a hollow hexagon with a side wing. It encloses a nicely maturing wooded grove dedicated to the goddess. The entry hall of the temple is a moss-and-fern bower built around a pool.

Peacewoman Luaqqa Absalrassin (Bran's successor) deliberately keeps the clergy few in number and the temple a serene retreat for solitary worship. Visitors are welcome, and

given a place to rest, but are then left entirely to themselves.

The Golden Bowl of the Goddess

The Garden Temple of Iriaebor stands atop the highest point of the Tor, overtopped only by the taller spires of the High Tower of Iriaebor (Bran's abode and home of the council). Here almost 50 priests are based. They spend much of their time out in the surrounding farms, working the farms of the faithful. High Worshipmistress Nalva Imthree, a tiny woman dedicated to growing things, has turned her back on the world almost entirely. All she does for folk in the city is give out flowers in the depths of winter—blooms grown



despite the winter storms in the unroofed, magically heated uppermost floor of the temple.

The High Altar of the Moon

Just east of the High Tower of Iriaebor stands the round Moontower, a silver-and-black structure where High Moonmaiden Astyaryl Hulemene leads faithful in eerie moonlit rituals. A friend to Harpers, Astyaryl adds the only touch of romance and mystery to the lives of most Iriaebens. For that reason alone, services here are always attended.

Shops

Give Me Wings to Fly

Flying Mounts



This shop stands at the westernmost end of the Tor, and looks like a tiny keep bristling with domes of metal mesh. The domes are actually pens keeping the various aerial mounts for sale in the shop. Run by a mysterious group of wizards that is thought by some to be a semiretired adventuring band, this shop typically has—chained and well separated to keep them from fighting—a pair of griffons, four hippogriffs, a Pegasus, and perhaps an aerial steed or more exotic beast or two for sale at any given time. Be prepared to spend 35,000 gp and up. Hard bargainers can get mounts for as little as 20,000 gp in winter, when feed costs are high. This shop carries very powerful wards.

The Well-Dressed Wizard

Splendid Mage Robes and Staves



This shop stands just east of the Moontower—a tall, crumbling, once-grand old house that gives no hint of what's within except for the floating, glowing illusion of a wizard's staff and cloak that hovers endlessly above the double entry doors. Inside is a black-carpeted, mightily warded (against *meteor swarms*, I'm told!¹⁴) and exclusive shop where discerning mages with thousands of gold pieces to waste can buy grandly styled cloaks, robes, soft boots or long, pointed shoes, hats of all descriptions, and knobbed, gem-adorned, carved staves of fantastic appearance but no magical powers at all. Some visiting nobles come here to buy clothes grander than they can get anywhere else.

Tailoring is done while you wait. It typically costs 1,000 gp on top of the price of the garment, but runs a mere 900 gp for hats and pairs of shoes to over 40,000 gp for the largest, gaudiest staves.

Be warned that the proprietor seems to be a powerful mage himself,¹⁵ and he's assisted by some unseen but quite strong flying creatures. Some garments (the "used ones," as the proprietor puts it delicately) may bear enchantments, but most await your own spells. They are of the finest handiwork, with doubled and even trebled seams. You can buy

¹⁴Elminster said merely, "Tis the truth."

¹⁵Elminster said: "He's a lich, actually. The flying help? Don't ask."



here quite confident that you'll be the only one in your town to have such fine magisterial mage robes—at least, until the nearest thief sees you.

INNS

The Black Boar



This large, twin-towered inn stands southwest of the High Tower where the road up from the Docks splits into two roads to encircle the Tower. It's a location many haughty merchants would kill for—and several have tried.

As a result, the owner, who keeps his name from the general public, spends all his time in plotting and dealing. His inn is furnished in exquisite luxury, but both the rooms

and the meals are tiny, and the service is slow because the inn is understaffed. Thanks to snobbery, however, the Boar is full by the time every night falls.

The Sign of the Dreaming Dragon



This delightful inn has its own walled garden, a high-ceilinged taproom with balconies, and great food. It's run by the halfling couple Jolle and Estel, and it is one of Iriaebor's hidden treasures. Estel is a healing priestess of Eldath and retired adventuress, and was once a member of the Fellowship of the Dreaming Dragon. The establishment is very highly recommended.



The Old Talking Ox

Inn/Tavern



In the days when merchant-hired armies clashed openly in the streets of Iriaebor night and day and armed people were attacked by anyone who didn't know them as an ally, adventurers felt hardly welcome in the City of a Thousand Spires. Many chose to keep their weapons, which had to be surrendered at the city gates—often to be returned only upon payment of stiff bribes—and sleep outside the city walls at a small wood lot and spring known as Northing.

Predictably, a greedy merchant cut down the trees and put up a rickety inn on the spot so as to charge these escaped customers. Outraged arriving warriors slew him—and one of them, an old, grotesquely fat mercenary captain, Olliber of Athkatla, known as the Old Ox to his followers, announced his intention to retire and run the inn as a welcome haven for veteran fighters.

This met with general approval, and a surprising number of his company retired with him. Under their care, the inn was rebuilt into a rustic, but complete, stable and inn complex. Two axe-wielding half-orc sisters from the mountains north of Sundabar took over the kitchens—and disgruntled diners learned not to complain unless they were good at dodging hurled axes! A visiting sorceress took pity on the two and taught them some tricks of seasoning. On her next trip, she showed them how to make some

sauces, and so on. The three became firm friends, and the quality of the inn's fare became known to mercenaries and traveling merchants throughout the Coast lands. The sorceress, Helmeera of Secomber, disappeared some years ago, and the half-orc sisters went looking for her—but the grizzled old servers (fighters who'd lost hands, arms, eyes, and the like during their fighting careers) had learned enough through watching and tasting by then to take over.

Olliber died some years back. The inn is now run by a council of 12 warriors, half of whom run it (hiring another dozen helphands) and half of whom are absent sponsors. It has become a favorite stop for travelers of all sorts on the road to Iriaebor. Some folk even go to the city to do business and then leave each night to sleep here.

The Place

Newly planted trees encircle a fenced horse paddock and barnlike stables located west off the Dusk Road about an hour's ride north of Iriaebor's Lower City Gate. In front of the stables is a muddy saddling yard and in front of that, facing the road, a long, zigzag two-story log building with a central taproom and rows of guest rooms. The taproom's door is the one with the lantern over it. The kitchen is behind the taproom—and both places are usually roaring with noise and activity at all hours.

Guest rooms are simple but warm thanks to canopies around the beds, thick tapestries, and stone tables in each room on which bricks heated by the huge hearth are placed. The guest



rooms have doors that bolt and can be barred securely.

The Prospect

The Old Talking Ox is a rough, rowdy place where warriors roar out oaths, jests, and songs as they merrily play pranks and tell tales on each other. It's their safehold to relax in. No steel is to be drawn inside the walls upon pain of being barred from the inn forever, or, if your victim has friends present, upon pain of swift death after they've hurled you out into the mud outside.

Guests who need a good sleep often leave their rooms in despair to seek the stable hayloft when the partying ranges up and down the corridors on running, heavy-booted feet. The staff members are vigilant night and day to prevent robbery and violence.

The Provender

The food is simple but marvelous—all the fat-fried, filling dishes warriors like but so often can't get, smothered

in sauces and gravies. Berry jellies and jams are on every table, along with hardbiscuits and dark molasses nutbread. You won't leave thinner.

The Prices

Rooms are 8 gp per night. A room sleeps two, with no extra cots available. You don't have to share unless you want to. This price includes all stabling, food, and drink—though only simple ales, wines, and zzar are available. "Nothing too good passes our gullets," as one regular patron put it.

Travelers' Lore

The man for whom the Old Ox is named is buried out back among the trees. It's said that his voice can be heard coming up from under the stone on certain moonless nights, confessing all his sins—and telling those who ask where all his treasure is hidden. One half-elven woman is said to have tirelessly followed up on Olliber's instructions and returned home very rich.

One not-yet-found treasure is said to be hidden in the inn: a finger ring that contains a captive faerie dragon. It can only be freed if it is "slain" six times in service to a wearer of the ring. Three lives have been spent already, so it is eager to die serving someone in a tight spot. The ring emits a body animated by its spirit, not the dragon itself—its true body, the tale goes, is the ring. The council has requested that guests stop tearing the inn apart trying to find the ring, which eludes magic-detecting spells. They'd also like all readers to know it's not inside the helmed horror that guards the wine cellar!





The Wandering Wyvern

Inn/Tavern



This inexpensive home away from home is beloved by its many regulars. It stands four doors down from the haughty and expensive Black Boar, and like that high-class inn, it is full by the time most nights fall. However, the Wyvern looks like an old tumble-down house—and has been joined to three others, so it's now more than twice as large as the more exclusive Boar.

The two inns could not be more different. Unlike the luxurious decor and pomp of the Boar, the Wyvern is shabby and comfortable, furnished

with mismatched furniture, and adorned with assorted paintings and knickknacks (some might well use the term “junk”) donated by guests. The kitchens turn out good, home-cooked food (lots of stews, soups, and onion-and-egg omelets)—and guests help themselves. Most wander about the inn while dining, stopping at window seats or in the lounge or taking the food to their rooms. All drinks are served at the bar by the proprietor, Shalangu Adept (2 sp per talltankard for ale and 1 sp per large goblet for wine). Shalangu would like readers to know that he's not any sort of adept. It's just his name.

This is one of the few inns in Iriaebor that welcomes adventurers and travelers without questions, suspicion, sneering behavior, and





increased pricing. As a result, value-loving merchants, pilgrims, wandering folk, and adventurers both young and bold and old and retired gladly come here. Some of these graybeards are skilled warriors indeed, and their presence keeps thefts and rowdiness to a minimum.

The Place

Wood-paneled, dimly lit, and crowded with randomly laid old, stained rugs, the Wyvern looks like a down-at-heel home. No two rooms share matching furniture. To keep chances of fire to a minimum, no smoking is allowed, and the place is lit (badly) by a score of wandering *driftglobes*.

The Prospect

This inn is the best place to relax I've yet found as a traveler, because you can treat it like your own home. The easygoing atmosphere makes it possible to keep to yourself or to sit and talk for hours, so it's a great place to

hear tales of adventure without an inebriated storyteller or drunken hecklers. Many young adventurers come here deliberately to get tips or leads to unfound treasures from elder colleagues.

The Provender

The few but cheerful staff members of the Wyvern spend most of their time baking bread, growing mushrooms in the cellar, and cooking. They make nicely spiced soups and stews, adequate roasts, nice leek-flavored and chive-flavored biscuits in a melted cheese batter, and onion-dominated omelets in which leftover meat scraps always appear. Some guests hack at the roast meat when it's still red-raw, so those who like things well done are apt to find themselves with what butchers call chop scraps. Meals are serve-yourself informal—but can be had at any time.

The Prices

Rooms cost a flat 5 gp a head per night, all meals included, along with stabling, if needed. As I said, drinks are extra.

Travelers' Lore

The Wyvern has its share of hidden treasure tales. Coffers of black pearls and brass buckets full of gems were found above false ceilings in closets off the pantry, and one hall has a secret passage branching off it that leads down into a disused Beast Cult temple. Monster skeletons still shamble about in its dusty depths, but inn guests think they've found all the treasure.





Appendix 1:

Folk of The Sword Coast



With Elminster's aid, we present a best-guesses list of probable classes, levels, and alignments of some folk Volo mentions in this guide. Adventurers be warned: Much herein may be wrong!

This list is alphabetical by first name because many folk in Faerûn lack surnames. Dukes, nobles, powerful mages, and other folk not likely to be met by the average traveler aren't here—unless they are a special threat or are of great daily importance to the side of a community a visitor sees. Only ability scores of 16 or greater are listed, and standard character statistic abbreviations for the FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign setting are used.

HONORED MOTHER ALLIYA MACANESTER (LG half-f P12 of Sheela Peryroyl; INT 17, Wis 20, CHA 16). Matriarch of the temple of Sheela in Corm Orp, Alliya is revered by halflings and widely respected by others in the Sunset Vale. She knows the local weather and ways of nature better than almost any other living thing and can tell exactly where, when, and how to plant or nurture for best results. Her touch is said to give life to withered plants, and she's rumored to be able to tell by looking at it if a seed will germinate.

A wise, diligent leader of the farmers of Corm Orp as well as the local halflings and her temple, she is the true ruler of Corm Orp. Its

human lord obeys her in all things. Alliya is a fierce foe of the Zhentarim and will even deal with poisons, adventurers, and other violent things not in keeping with nature in order to eradicate the threat from Darkhold, which she calls the Devouring Shadow.

HIGH SCRIVENER ALTHUNE DEMBRAR, Loyal Eye of Deneir (NG hf P14 of Deneir; INT 17, Wis 18, CHA 17). This elderly, dignified lady is still serenely beautiful despite her many years. She is a renowned expert on symbols of all sorts, widely consulted by those who need to identify runes or writings in old, forgotten tongues. She runs the Inner Chamber temple in Berdusk and is a firm ally of the Harpers, who often act as her eyes and hands outside Twilight Hall (which she never leaves), reporting on or bringing back runes or other symbols seen all across Faerûn.

Althune often has an owl perched on her shoulder. She loves to dance, and appears at most Harper revels in the Hall.

"LADY" ALYTH ELENDARA (CG hef R7; INT 17, Wis 17, CHA 16). Lady Alyth is graceful and courtly. Most folk think she is nobility of some sort. She owns and operates the Elfsong Tavern in Baldur's Gate, where she makes a widely praised stew and keeps a bank for sailors who patronize her tavern. No one knows just where the moneys are hidden. She is able to call on sorcerous aid in a hurry, and most patrons of the Elfsong, who go armed, will leap to aid or defend her.

AMAERASZANTHA (N amethyst she-dragon of great wyrm age). This wise, reclusive dragon may be the eldest of her race in Faerûn. She spends much of her time swimming or bask-



ing in a stagnant lake at the heart of ruined Haumoritas, an ancient human city now known as Tempus' Tears.

If she is in the water when groups of intruders approach, Amaerasantha often remains motionless, playing dead. If she has time to do so unobserved, she rolls over on her back and extends her claws in crooked, stiff immobility to enhance the image.

If a situation calls for it, she often shape-changes into a beautiful human female and dons a set of manacles she has magically arranged and altered so that she appears to be set out as a sacrifice "for the terrible dragon that lairs near here," she will sobbingly explain. She can free herself instantly, however. In this way, she often learns a lot about the true natures and intent of intruders before any hostilities begin.

Amaerasantha has little use for treasure except gems, which she devours. She is wary and experienced in battle, and her purple scales have darkened almost to black. She is

sometimes mistaken for a black dragon. Acquiring knowledge and finding amusement in the thoughts, words, and deeds of the little creatures of Faerûn are her pursuit and her delight. She will defend the dwarves and gnomes who dwell in the ruins around her, and the ruins themselves, fearlessly if need be. She will never hesitate to join battle if it seems best.

The Great Wyrm of the Tears, as a bard bent on flattery once called her (she regards him—Mintiper Moonsilver, the Lonely Harpist—fondly), sees the fish in her lake as a precious food resource, to be harvested only sparingly. She also regards them as hers alone, and she will drive off, slay, or devour people who fish in her lake and don't cease the moment she confronts them.

When she's hungry, Amaerasantha waits for dark and then flies west to the Sword Coast to plunge into the waves and feed. In cold winter months, she'll turn south and fly to the Shining Sea or wherever the water's warm enough to her liking before diving down to plunge, jaws wide, through a school of fish—or even pluck a single whale out of the water to devour aloft.

Beings who would slay, entrap, or rob dragons irritate her. She delights in slaughtering Dragon Cultists whenever they find her. Amaerasantha values the Harpers and the Zhentarim alike as sources of amusement for her. Over the years, she has befriended some of the more conservative and kindly of the powerful spellcasters of Faerûn, such as Alustriel of Silvermoon, the Simbul, and the Witches of Rashemen. She has a soft spot for loners like herself, but despises the arrogance of many spellcasters, deeming them willful children not fit to so misuse such power.

AMELIOR AMANITAS (CG hm W17; INT 17, CHA 16). The Sage of Secomber is a wandering master alchemist and busybody. Tall, chunky, gray-bearded and bespectacled, Amelior is a bumbling, notoriously absent-minded eccentric. He has only one good eye and wears a variety of handsome patches over the socket of the other—some silk, some tasseled, some vividly patterned, and one bearing his sigil. He



Amelior Amanitas



dresses as a common craftsperson and is a wench and a poker-about-after-secrets. These character traits have made him unwelcome in many places, though not in Silvermoon, where he's become a close friend of High Lady Alustriel.

Amelior is straight in his dealings—though he may actually forget he's hired someone—and rarely fights with spells, relying on his irritable, sharp-tongued bodyguard Erek and the contents of the two flasks he always carries. Erek is a lawful neutral 4th-level fighter of mixed northern blood and sharp, ready swords.

Amelior wears *bracers of defense AC 3*, and carries a gold flask and a copper one. When the gold one is opened, a nonnoble djinni named Hasan, utterly loyal to Amelior, emerges. Opening the copper flask lets out two ogres fanatically devoted to the sage. If slain, they rise as monster zombies to fight on. Amelior also owns several magical robes, a enchanted staff or two, and a large collection of potions.

He dwells in a cavelike home that is rather like an extremely cluttered halfling delve-home. It is connected to a tiny, leaning stone tower and is located high up amid gardens on one of the hills in Secomber. His residence is home to several golems and a dozen brightly colored (red, green, fuchsia, flame orange, mint blue, sun yellow, and so on) cats. Amelior constantly hires adventurers to carry out odd tasks for him, sometimes overpaying them absent-mindedly.

ABJECT SUPPLICANT ASGAR TELLENDAR (N hm P5 of Ilmater; Wis 17). Chief priest of the House of the Suffering God, the temple to Ilmater in the town of Asbravn, Asgar is a devout servant of the God on the Rack, but realizes his temple is in danger of closing for lack of local support—if the Zhentarim don't sweep over the town with spell and sword first, slaying all before them. Asgar has called on the Harpers of Berdusk to keep Asbravn free of Zhentarim agents and—he hates even to ask this—keep his own clergy pure. He called on them very reluctantly for he has always seen the Harpers as dangerous meddlers.

Asgar has always relied on visions sent to him in dreams by Ilmater, but the Zhents seem to know this and to be meddling magically with what he “sees.” This defilement of his mind and the gods work has made the normally serene Asgar so angry he'd take up arms against any Zhentarim who offered him violence. As it is, he's entrusted the Harpers with his secrets, and he will heal or otherwise aid any Harper who comes to him in need.

AUNDEGUL SHAWN (LN hm F5; Wis 16). Proprietor of the Blade and Stars inn in Baldur's Gate, Aundegul is a close-mouthed, unassuming man whose one delight is making ruby cordial. A retired adventurer, Aundegul knows of many shady deals and doings, but seldom speaks. He abandoned his career as an adventurer in terror after seeing the results of a magical duel between two wizards who were master shapechangers—a duel that cost him most of his comrades. He has admitted a yuan-ti is imprisoned in the inn, and that his establishment also holds other, darker secrets.

BARIM STAGWINTER (NG hm F7; STR 17, DEX 17, CON 16, INT 16, CHA 16). This respected adventurer uses Boareskyr Bridge as his base of operations, and his word is recognized there as law. Involved in several adventuring companies over the years, he's currently sponsoring several small bands of younger adventurers, directing them (separately) toward destroying or driving out the serpentfolk of the Serpent Hills.

Barim is a good friend of Theskul Mirror-eye. Together, they keep Boareskyr Bridge safe for the law-abiding during the summer and battle back trolls, brigands, wolves, and worse during the long, hard winters. Theskul wants to establish a fortified abbey to Tyr at the Bridge. Barim is prepared to support him in this if the abbey will support him in becoming Baron of Boareskyr and raising a castle, so that a walled city can be built between castle and abbey to enclose the clutter of tents and wagons that is present-day Boareskyr Bridge. The main impediment to this grand plan is the poisoned Winding Water. The two friends are working on this.



Barim is known to own magical weapons and armor, but just what powers his gear has, he keeps mysterious.

BELKIN ORGUL (LN hm FI; STR 16, DEX 16, CON 17, Wis 16). This fat, puffing old man is a shrewd judge of folk and a cynic who is always armed against attack, expecting the world to turn on him at any moment. He always wears a *ring of the ram* and a self-regenerating Netherese *ring of spell storing* containing the spells *magic missile*, *ironguard*, and *chain lightning*. He has silver-plated daggers hidden in his boots and a *short sword of quickness* at his belt.

Belkin owns and runs his own weapons shop in Hill's Edge, and has more than a few other enchanted weapons at hand when he's inside it. He's going bald, but wears what's left of his hair long, defiantly retaining the manners and pride of his warrior days.

BENTLEY MIRRORSHADE (CG gm W(l)10/T10; DEX 17, INT 17). This industrious gnome illu-

sionist abandoned life as an adventurer to run the Friendly Arm inn in a keep he and adventurer comrades seized and cleared of monsters some 20 seasons ago. A clever, pleasant, always alert, curly-haired innkeeper who has a habit of humming when deep in thought and of scratching his rather large nose when concerned, Bentley's always a step ahead of troublemakers and misfortune. A veteran traveling Coast merchant called him "a master anticipator." Aided by his wife Gellana, he has made the Arm a safe, friendly, clean, well-defended spot, a "must" stop for overland travelers.

There are persistent rumors that Bentley sponsors adventuring bands and is involved in half a dozen covert schemes or shady merchant cabals. He certainly never seems short of money. On several occasions he's unhesitatingly hired mercenaries to bolster his defenses in the dead of winter or hired wizards to teleport needed items from far-off cities in a hurry.

HIGH LOREMASTER BRANSULDYN MIRRORTOR (N gm P9). This party-loving former adventurer is now master of the temple to Oghma in Berdusk. A gleeful master of disguises (of which he has a vast collection), Bransuldyn often goes out into the city or roams the Vale while disguised, gathering lore by listening. Some unkind folk have called what he does "shamelessly and energetically eavesdropping." He often uses several spells he's created that allow him to record what he hears and then transcribe from afar just what he wishes of the words into books laid out ready in his temple.

Even if this jolly priest falls prey to a Zhen-tarim agent tomorrow, his recording spells will win him lasting fame across Faerûn. There are persistent rumors that he's still involved in adventuring and has discovered several ways down into the Underdark, where he keeps a sizable hoard of gems and valuable metal items hidden in a trapped spot that regularly claims the lives of overinquisitive drow and illithids.

BULDATH ANDRYN (LN hm W15; DEX 17, INT 18, Wis 16). This taciturn mage dwells in Scornubel, protected by a guardian wraith that is bound to an item he wears somewhere on



High Loremaster Bransuldyn Mirrorator



his person. He has a pseudodragon as a companion and uses his spells to earn himself a living and to probe the minds of those who serve him, anticipating their wants and treacheries so that he wins the firm loyalty of most, and eliminates others. He casts spells for hire, typically at 1,000 gp per spell level, never leaving his abode to do so.

Buldath uses his trusted, discreet agents to sell preserved monster components all over the Coast lands. He buys the remains of beasts from adventurers to gain his raw materials. He seems interested in the rare, strange, and dangerous living things of Faerûn, but the rest of his aims remain mysterious.

CHANSRIN ALUAR (CG hf W9; DEX 17, INT 18, CHA 16). A quick, sharp-tongued sorceress who's always eager for adventure, Chansrin loves battle and often assists the watch in her home city of Scornubel, battling rogue mages and adventurers who've gotten out of hand. She's slim, short, flame-haired, and has very large, dark eyes. She likes to bite people when angry or excited, giggles often in delight, and is given to impulsive action—such as leaping out of windows into nearby trees, swinging dangerously from balconies, or charging barehanded into affrays of armed men. She wears some sort of teleportational magical item that can whisk her to safety, but having to use it makes her angry—she'll often snatch up some magical items and wade right back into whatever danger she just escaped.

Chansrin's a generous friend, but she is easily bored or distracted. She's always happiest when she's rushing off somewhere else, so long as the somewhere else is within Scornubel.

DARTHLEENE (CG hf W19; DEX 17, INT 18, WIS 18, CON 16; now an archlich). Proprietress of the Dawn of Any Day shop in Berdusk, Darthleene is an ally of the Harpers who aids adventurers by selling them magical odds and ends. She was an adventurer herself, long ago, and still mourns the loss in battle of her true love, a handsome bard by the name of Tanalith Sorn-darr. She likes to hear tales of daring and to see the vigor and sport of young folk.

Darthleene wears a *robe of stars* and a veil

to conceal her decaying skin, though she isn't as skeletal as most liches. She has the following powers: She can use spells as a 19th-level mage, including nine regenerating spells: *chain lightning*, *delayed blast fireball*, *dispel magic*, *fly*, *identify*, *invisibility*, *teleport without error*, *tongues*, and *wall of force*. These regenerating spells return without study 1 day after use. Like all archliches, Darthleene is immune to poison, disease, and all turning and disruption; all polymorph, energy draining, ability training, petrification, cold, electricity, enchantment/charm, insanity-related, death, and illusion magic; psionics; and spell-like natural powers. She can't be harmed by any physical attacks launched by beings of less than 6 Hit Dice or levels.

Darthleene has a *chill touch* that deals 1d10 points of damage plus causing paralysis lasting 1d4+1 turns to all touched victims who fail to save vs. paralyzation. She can also exude an *aura of power* at will that forces all beings of less than 5th level or 5 Hit Dice to flee in terror for 4d4 rounds. She can *repel undead* and *animate dead* by touch and will, and seems to never forget anything—shoppers are often startled when she addresses them by name or continues a conversation begun with them at their last visit to the shop, years earlier.

Darthleene suffers 1 hp of damage per level of the caster whenever she's struck by *raise dead* or similar healing spells. She can employ any of the magical items in the shop to aid herself in battle, triggering them by will from a distance. They include a concealed *wand of magic missiles* and a hidden *staff of power*.

DAURAVYN REDBEARD (LG hm F5; STR 16, INT 16, WIS 16). A stout, middle-aged former adventurer, Dauravyn is now the keeper of the Way Inn. He is proud of his establishment and of the vigilance and training of his hired troops. He is a friend and ally of the Lords of Water-deep, and possesses some form of instantaneous magical communication with Lord Piergeiron, whom he can call on for swift aid if evil forces show up from Dragonspear Castle or the High Moor.

Dauravyn wears *bracers of defense AC 2* and wields a two-handed *broad sword +2* said



Dauravyn Redbeard

to have some special magical properties, including conferring infravision on the wearer and some sort of flying or teleportational ability. Dauravyn also wears a vampiric *ring of regeneration* attuned to him. No matter who wears it, he receives hit points equal to the damage it does. This was a gift to him by Velaethaunyl Shaethe, a grateful elven sorceress of the Misty Forest whom Dauravyn rescued—and, some say, loves deeply.

The innkeeper is a pleasant man, a shrewd judge of folk, and a discreet keeper of many secrets. There is a rumor that he's involved in some great, lifelong plan to recover the Unicorn Blade for or with Velaethaunyl. It's an ancient and very powerful elven artifact and could become the rallying point for a new elven realm centered on the Misty Forest, if Velaethaunyl's dreams come to pass.

DELLEN "YELLOWKNIFE" ONDABARL (CN hm W8; INT 18, CHA 16). An affable mage who is bearded, short, and increasingly stout, Delfen is an ex-

adventurer and onetime resident of Iriaebor retired to Daggerford to pursue a life of tutoring would-be mages. He is that rare thing: a willing, patient, unambitious teacher of magic who's always taking on new apprentices and is easy about payment. (If times get tough, he can always cast a spell or two for hire.) As such, he is important in the Coast lands, and word of him has spread from far Icewind Dale to the northern border towns of Calimshan,

Delfen is well liked by his apprentices and former students. They tend to think of him as more powerful than he really is because, wisely, Delfen doesn't reveal much of his powers or past. He is known to possess an extensive library of spellbooks, a *dagger +2*, a *staff of power*, a *ring of regeneration*, a *ring of spell turning*, *bracers of defense AC 4*, and a *wand of fear*. Many of the spellbooks were purchased from passing adventurers. He has devised some sort of spell that alerts his apprentices and the soldiers of Daggerford Castle if he is wounded or one of his magical items is taken from his person by force.

Delfen enjoys a life of training and ease. He's not at all interested in the dangers of resuming an adventuring career. He does love to listen to tales of the exploits of others, and will take from them hints about treasures not yet plundered to dispense as sage advice to others.

DERVAL IRONEATER (LN dm F6; CON 18, WIS 16). Highly regarded in Daggerford as a smith of high skill and a guildmaster, Derval Iron eater heads a large family smithing business, and his position on the Daggerford Council has earned him the affectionate nickname "Short Mask." Part of the Iron eater clan is interested in reviving the subterranean dwarven hold of Illefern, which lies beneath a crag north of the Laughing Hollow. To fund their continuing efforts, the Iron eater forges turn out an endless stream of high-quality hooks, clasps, hasps, hinges, buckles, shields, gauntlets, spikes, and tools. Derval is the close-mouthed, level-headed and tireless forge-hammer of the Iron eater clan. He did some adventuring in his youth, and owns a suit of *plate mail +1*, a *battle axe +3*, a *hammer +3*, *dwarven thrower*, and a *ring of telekinesis*. He can probably get his



hands on many more items of practical magic if necessary.

HIGH DARK PRIESTESS EMANA GORTHO (NE hf P6 of Cyric; Wis 17, CHA 16). The coldly beautiful leader of the Fist of the Future temple in Hill's Edge, Emana is a careful plotter who seeks to turn her city into a stronghold of evil. She's building an army of rogues, fanatical worshippers of Cyric, and street thugs to this end, but is careful not to overextend herself with so many Harpers about and the rival local clergy of Lliira set against her.

The citizens call her the Black Lady for the color of her robes—and, they say, her heart—and fear her. This fear is rightfully placed because her increasingly wild spell rituals now involve dark sacrifices. She is consumed by the desire to attract the notice and favor of Cyric, perhaps one day becoming his consort, and is eager to acquire new and more powerful spells to bring this about. The nearby Netherese ruins may hold what she seeks, so she tries to rob, capture, or slay all who return from exploring them.

FELGYR SONSHAL (CN hm F6; STR 16, INT 16, CHA 16). The jovial, burly owner of Felgyr's Fireworks is everyone's friend. Behind the rollicking facade of constant jokes and roaring gusts of laughter is a shrewd businessperson who's been slowly shifting his trade from candles and lanterns to smoke powder and the like, as firearms and other glories of Gond become more common in Faerûn.

A trusted reseller for the realm of Lantan, Felgyr is the quiet source of many of the firearms available up and down the Sword Coast, and as such has grown very rich. His famous shop is located on Bindle Street in Baldur's Gate. There one can buy three-hour torches whose flames will be of a certain hue (6 sp each), slowfuses (5 gp each; you cut them to the desired time), flares (10 gp each), signal beacon pots (20 gp each), enchanted festival fireworks that produce spectacular displays of aerial light (25 gp to 75 gp), and smoke powder (45 gp and upward, depending on supply and demand, per charge).

Felgyr is prudent. He wants to avoid any large-scale strife that involves firearms and

possible retaliation from mages or others angry at his making such things available. He carefully controls his stocks of arms, and if word reaches him of thieves' guilds or merchant families (particularly the less scrupulous Calishite concerns) amassing large amounts by using go-betweens posing as separate interests, smoke powder and additional weapons simply become unavailable to that group for a time.

Felgyr uses his wealth to buy up property in Baldur's Gate and in other ports along the Sword Coast. He also lends money, both to shipbuilders and to adventurers, thieves' guilds, and other shady or risky interests, using his control of firearms to curb the illicit deeds of these debtors.

FULBAR HARDCHEESE (CN half-m T11; DEX 18, CON 18). Tavernmaster of the Happy Cow in Daggerford, Fulbar is an ex-adventurer who seems to want to forget his adventuring career. The owner of *rings of chameleon power* and *feather falling*, Fulbar also cherishes his magical blade, Quietstrike, a *short sword* +3 of neutral alignment, Intelligence 13, and Ego 15, and the abilities of detecting shifting walls and rooms and detecting secret doors.

One of the reasons Fulbar wants to keep so quiet about his deeds of daring is to avoid Zhentarim and Cult of the Dragon attention: He has most of a dragon's hoard that he gained somewhere in the Backlands of the Sword Coast buried deep under his tavern, and so he never runs short of funds. When he needs some cash, he simply goes and digs up some. In this way, he's been able to keep the Cow cheap and cheerful and to buy out most of the poorer farmers, letting them work their former land as tenants. His son Dickon runs Fulbar's own prosperous dairy farm, which produces a lot of good cheese.

Fulbar is also becoming a landlord of considerable holdings in both Neverwinter and Baldur's Gate, though he's at some pains to keep this as quiet as possible. He's always good for a loan to his friends, and so can call on a lot of stalwart farmers and folk of Daggerford for swift aid if need be. Fulbar sees himself as a quiet power in the Coast lands, working behind the scenes. He would be shocked to



Gellana Mirrorshade

learn just how close a watch the Lords' Alliance, the Harpers, and, more recently, the Zhentarim, keep on him.

GELLANA MIRRORSHADE (NG gf P10; Wis 18). This quiet, observant priestess of Garl Glittergold runs the Temple of Wisdom in the walled inn community known as the Friendly Arm and helps her husband Bentley run the inn as a safe, secure place. Where Bentley is an expert at sniffing out the schemes of living folk and seeing ahead what they'll need, try, and want, Gellana takes a longer view and is always looking ahead at the larger picture. She ordered and oversaw the digging of deeper wells for the inn's water supply and the rigging of secondary pumps in case the main ones fail or are wrecked by orcs. She also planned, and continually expands, the inn gardens, adding windowboxes and rooftop beds to the ground plots, and making all garden locations produce food or herbs for the inn kitchens.

Gellana welcomes humans to her worship

services, and has made not a few converts. She has also become something of a folk hero among gnomes in western Faerûn as "the quiet and true power behind a gnome who made it." Gnome mothers often speak of her to their daughters as someone they should emulate if they'd like to share as large a slice of success as Gellana's managed to carve out for herself.

GULDIN GALLOWGAR (NG hm F14; STR17, DEX 17, CON 17, Wis 16, CHA 16). Proprietor of the inn that bears his name in Elturel, this jovial, always-alert retired adventurer strides through life like some sort of patient and amused hawk, sponsoring adventurers and watching how they do. His advice as to where to find just about anyone or anything in the Realms is free. His sponsorship costs 10% of all treasure won, but allows adventurers *potions of healing* when necessary. Guldin eventually expects the value of the potion back in additional treasure.

Guldin is a very wealthy man, but almost everything is invested in Amn, Cormyr, the Sunset Vale, and various caravan companies that link the three areas. He also has a lot of magical items, but the only ones that have been definitely identified are those he always wears: a *ring of protection +3*, a *ring of spell turning*, and a pair of *winged boots* (speed 15, MC A).

HALBAZZER DRIN (LN hm W18; INT 18, Wis 18). Halbazzer is a balding, white-haired, gruff old man, now frail of health and stooped. He dwells in a modest, shuttered stone tower on Stormshore Street in Baldur's Gate, guarded by golems and ornamental wall displays of weapons that can animate to fight for him. The tower has a tiny shopfront that bears the signboard *Sorcerous Sundries*. Inside you'll find a waiting room with a comfortable chair, a table, and a bell. It summons Halbazzer, who sells *potions of healing* and casts spells for fees—if he's in the mood.

Halbazzer is very rich, and he invests behind the scenes in many Baldurian ventures. His usefulness has led the ruling Grand Dukes to place a discreet watch over his premises to aid him against thieves and unscrupulous interests from Amn, Calimshan, and elsewhere



who want to divest him of the secrets that have made his fortune: the spells of Halbazzar's devising that banish mildew and moisture. He refuses to sell these spells as scrolls or tutor others in their casting.

Halbazzar is also an expert in the use of the *mending* spell and is a familiar fixer of household items in Baldur's Gate. He has been known, when attacked, to hurl a mean *meteor swarm*, too!

ITHTYL CALANTRYN (CN hf W12; DEX 17, CON 17, INT 18). One of three serving wenches at the Three Old Kegs inn in Baldur's Gate (all of whom were once huntresses in Tethyrl, Ithtyl is a sorceress skilled in the use of *levitation* spells and shielding-type spells. She's training her fellow servers, Katheera and Nathbaera, in magic, but as yet they are still bumbling apprentices.

Ithtyl is devoted to her employer, Nantrin Bellowglyn. She always has spells ready to defend herself, her employer, or the inn. She may also wear a *ring of the ram*—or has devised spells that duplicate its violent ramming action. She's calm and quick in a fight.

JANTHOOL (CN hm T11; STR 16, DEX 17, CON 16, INT 16, CHA 16). This dark-eyed, curly bearded merchant from Athkatla lives to make coins multiply—and is very good at it. He tirelessly travels Faerûn bartering goods, taking advantage of seasonal shortages to make huge profits whenever possible. Chance recently made Janthool very rich through found treasure in Soubar, but he's also steadily gained wealth over the years through shrewd bartering and careful, covert investments. He views Aurora's network of catalog stores as dangerous competition, and he tries to arrange orc and drunken brigand attacks on her outlets whenever possible. He once arranged a stampede of bulls through a Waterdeep outlet—and had to flee the city hastily when evidence was given against him.

Janthool is known to carry huge arsenals of hidden weapons and equipment, such as grapnels on long, coiled-wire lines, on his person. These weapons have allowed him to fight his way free of several nasty scrapes. He's cool and deadly in a fight, and wields a *short sword of quickness*. He's also known to wear a *ring of spell turning*.

JOYBRINGER JHANADRA CASELDOWN (CG hf P7 of Lliira; DEX 16, INT 17, WIS 18, CHA 16). High priestess of the Cry of Joy temple in Hill's Edge, the Joybringer is young and enthusiastic. She works with local Harpers to keep her city from falling under the sway of the Cyricists and the Zhentarim, and is known for her acrobatic dancing and high, clear singing voice.

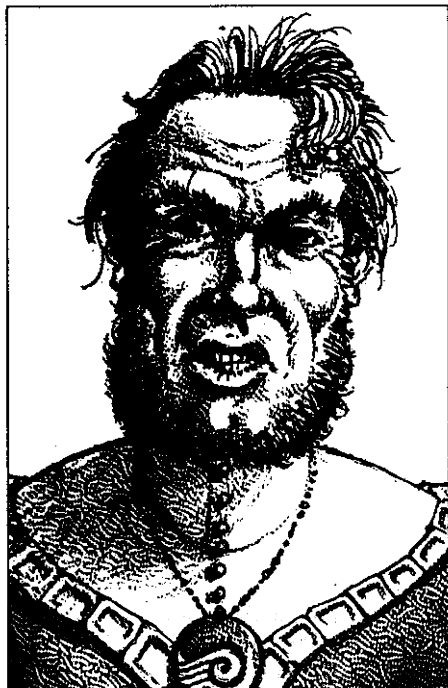
Since joining the clergy, she hasn't used her first name, and few folk know it. Fewer still know the secret behind local rumors of her strange powers—she's a weredragon, able to assume the form and powers of a copper dragon when necessary. Folk in Hills Edge call her the Rose-Red Lady, and most of them love her.

MOST RADIANT OF LATHANDER KELDDATH ORMLYR (NG hm P16; INT 16, WIS 18, CHA 16). Governor of Beregost and high priest of the temple to Lathander there, Kelddath is a patient, even energetic, supporter of local improvement. He's always advising or lending money to new local businesses and to farmers trying to expand or modernize their holdings.

His temple troops police the town attentively and try to prevent adventurers and others from exploring a local ruined castle. Any rowdiness or lawlessness is swiftly and harshly dealt with. Kelddath wants Beregost to have a reputation for being the safest Sword Coast town in order to encourage trade and travel,

KORBUS BRIGHTJEWEL (CN gm W(1)6; DEX 16, CON 16, INT 17). Court Jeweler to the Duke of Daggerford, Korbus prefers the relative peace of Daggerford to the bustle, crowding, and intrigue of Waterdeep, and he steadfastly refuses all inducements to relocate. Some Waterdhavian noble families have offered to sponsor him for life if they can have the exquisite creations of his skilled hands. He's especially fond of crafting detailed insects, birds, and lizards from gems, gold, and silver, particularly into pins that perch on the shoulder of a lady or hold her cloak together.

Korbus identifies and values jewelry for nominal fees (10 gp per piece). He will offer to purchase especially rare or fine pieces, and he has coins aplenty to do so. Korbus uses his *detect magic* ability to examine each piece for enchantments, and he fully and honestly



Krammoch Arkhstaff

reports what he finds. Most merchants who travel the Coast lands bring gems to him. They know his estimates are fair and precise. Korbus teaches the arts of the illusionist only to gnomes, and detests adventuring.

Korbus has treasure cached in many places and has substantial investments in Waterdeep and Elturel. He is known to possess a *ring of protection +3*, a *wand of metal and mineral detection*, and a *robe of scintillating colors*.

KRAMMOCH ARKHSTAFF (NE hm F3; Wis 16). This sage of Baldur's Gate is a retired adventurer generally acknowledged to be the Faerûrian authority on basilisks. By means of certain magical items won during his career, he's gained immunity to petrification, and is thereby able to observe basilisks at leisure—even breeding them and keeping them as pets. Until recently, he kept at least three at his abode in the city, but was ordered by the ruling Grand Dukes to remove them after one merchant too many was turned to stone.

One can still purchase basilisks from Krammoth, who keeps a dozen or more on a country estate near the city. The estate is staffed by blind servants and by a dozen loyal warriors equipped with the same protective magic as the sage himself. The basilisks sell for an average price of 2,500 gp each.

Krammoch is widely consulted by adventurers and by merchants conducting shady business. It is widely rumored that he has extensive pirate contacts. He also operates as a go-between for fences arranging meetings with clients. These are held in various places and at varying times to avoid the attention of authorities and vengeful victims.

LARLOCH (LE hm W26; undead ultra-lich; STR 18/72, INT 18, WIS 18, CON 18, CHA 16). The Shadow King of Warlock's Crypt is a powerful undead mage served by, among legions of lesser creatures, many vampires and liches. Many proud adventurers have tried to destroy Larloch—and all have failed, although many of them contributed skulls or their corpses to Larloch's decor or servant armies. His powers are mighty indeed and are vested in spells, an awesome arsenal of magical items, and his undead powers. He is said to be able to avoid destruction by sinking down into the floors of specially prepared areas of power, only to appear elsewhere, rejuvenated. These chambers are naturally where he spends much of his time.

Larloch also commands a potent arsenal of curses, some spells conferred by his touch, and others unleashed by intrusion into specific areas or trapped caskets and strongcupboards. These can forcibly change the appearance, intellect, and abilities of victims long after they escape from Warlock's Crypt.

Elminster warns that the true extent of Larloch's powers is not known. What the Old Mage does know of Larloch, expressed in game terms, is this: The Shadow King has at least the powers of a lich, but turns as "special." Larloch retains his sorcerous spellcasting abilities, and wields a huge arsenal of magical weapons and other magical items. Silver weapons cause his undead flesh to burn and seem to do him double damage. Wisps of smoke curl away from all



wounds caused by a silver-edged blade.

Larloch continues to develop new spells and other magic. He added a few wrinkles to his own achievement of undeath so that he possesses a natural spell of each level that need not be memorized and can be recast by him 24 hours (144 turns) after he casts it. Larloch's spells, in ascending level order, are *magic missile* (5 missiles per spell), *web*, *dispel magic*, *wizard eye*, *animate dead*, *chain lightning*, *control undead*, *disrupt undead*, and *energy drain*. Larloch also permanently gains hit points drained by *energy drain*.

Disrupt undead creates a beam up to 30 feet long, requiring an attack roll only if the target can hide behind obstacles. It harms only undead and has effects identical to a *mace of disruption*, except Larloch gains all points of damage dealt as hit points of his own. An undead blasted out of existence surrenders all its hit points to Larloch. Larloch can permanently increase his hit point total in this way.

Larloch's spells are cast by will alone, needing no verbal, somatic, or material components. All have a casting time of 2. Larloch is immune to one specific wizard spell of each level, but Elminster doesn't know which ones. Elminster warns adventurers that finding out is a game not worth the cost.

LONTHALIN MINTAR (CN hm W11; INT 17, Wis 16, CON 17). Lonthalin is one of several minor mages who work from stalls in the Wide (open market) of Baldur's Gate. He specializes in adornment spells that give clients temporary fantastic hairdos, tattoos, body scents, and hue changes and cause daring costumes to adhere. Good disguises cost as much as 100 gp or as little as 25 gp extra, depending on what is done.

MOST VIGILANT MAURANDYR (LN hm P16 of Helm; STR 16, DEX 16, CON 18, INT 17, Wis 18, CHA 16). This valorous battle-priest leads the House of the Guardian temple in Hluthvar, and more than any other being is responsible for holding back the spread of the Zhentarim in Sunset Vale from their ever-stronger base in Darkhold. Maurandyr is an impressive general and a formidable foe. He is known to employ many magical protective devices and weapons,

and to have the tenacity and stamina of a lion.

Recently, however, he has begun to fail under concerted magical attacks launched by Zhentarim mages and priests, spells that aim to drive out Maurandyr's psyche and take control of his body. The spells would make him act to let the Zhentarim into Hluthvar with a minimum of fighting, so that Hluthvar can be used as a fortified Zhentarim base down in the Vale.

Maurandyr has fought off these attacks thus far, but for how much longer? They so cloud his mind as to leave him unsure as to their true cause. Worried Harpers are unable to get aid to him—the Zhentarim have already subverted the minds of many of the priests around him. Only the aid Helm sends in his rituals—and the valor of hired adventurers, riding patrols around Hluthvar—have kept the Zhentarim from prevailing as yet.

MYRIN SILVERSPER (LN em F8; INT 17, Wis 18). This dour, silent moon elf is the efficient proprietor of the Halfway Inn, located outside the Gate Glen of Evereska. His steady silver eyes miss nothing, and he's as discreet as any accomplished courtier, handling disputes between proud elves as smoothly and as calmly as brawls between drunken humans. He has a knack for remembering faces and names, and has sometimes identified mercenaries or merchants from their drawn likenesses or when shown them in various vision spells.

Myrin never speaks of his adventuring past. Some suspect he is a Harper and others that he is a disgraced member of the ruling family of Evereska, or at least one of that realm's oldest, proudest noble families. Myrin smiles and says nothing. On more than one occasion he's revealed that he wears a *ring of spell turning* and a *ring of the ram*, presumably trophies of his adventuring days—but he won't say anything about them, either.

NANTRIN BELLOWGLYN (LN hm F8; STR 16, INT 16, Wis 16). Owner of the Three Old Kegs inn in Baldur's Gate, Nantrin is a tall, quiet man with long, curly black hair and a diagonal sword scar from his nose down across one cheek. A retired Tethyrian noble's guard, he's wary of folk from that land. Mindful—from experience—of the



troubles one can get into, he keeps his mouth closed when helping folk dispose of unwanted bodies and other little troubles.

NETHMOUN ALN (CN hm W12; DEX 17, CON 16, INT 18, WIS 16). This reclusive mage is soft of speech and looks a little odd. His head is very small, and his features are plain, but usually untidily bewhiskered as he tries to grow yet another beard. He dwells in a small, ramshackle hut on the eastern edge of Scornubel, surrounded by formidable guardian monsters and by the defensive spells of a complicated ward.

Nethmoun collects rare and unusual spells, trading for them magical training or magical items he's made. Some of the magical training is in learning spells from his own collection. The magical items are usually useful but low-powered things such as *wands of magic missiles* that also emit right upon command. He employs a strikingly beautiful cook, and often uses a *projected image* of her as an agent in his dealings.

OBRIMSUR THUNDERWOOD (LG hm R10; STR 17, DEX 17, INT 17, WIS 17, CHA 16). Proprietor of the Thunderwood Forays outfitting shop in Berdusk, this Harper ally knows the southern Vale, particularly the Far Hills, as well as he does the corners of his own shop. He's probably the greatest living expert on the lay of the land there.

Once leader of the Stormriders adventuring band, Olbrimsur has led many expeditions against the Zhentarim and the monsters of the Sunset Mountains. Olbrimsur is the Stormriders' sole survivor. The rest of the members perished after they all got into a battle with a Red Wizard of Thay.

Olbrimsur now spends his time scouting and he sponsors others to do the fighting. There's a dark, persistent rumor in Berdusk that he knows of a buried city under the Far Hills that's crammed with treasure—and that he is trying to get others to do the fighting and dying necessary to carve a way into it, whereupon he'll use hidden magical items to defend himself against all foes as he goes in and takes all the treasure. Those who know him doubt that the rumormongers are correct about his ultimate intent.

PHIRAZ OF THE NATURALISTS (LN hm W6; INT 18, WIS 18). This sage dwells in Scornubel,

where he sometimes assists the watch with his spells. He is the reigning Faerûnian expert on otyughs, and he makes his field of study the fauna of the High Moor. Many adventurers consult him as to its monstrous inhabitants. A typical interview costs 25 gp; the fee is 50 gp if detailed tactics or locales are desired.

RAGEFAST (NG hm F1; INT 18, WIS 18, CHA 16). This sage of Baldur's Gate is a small, frail, bearded man of rakish appearance and ready laughter—and a widely respected expert on the history and genealogy of the Coast lands, and of humankind's mastery of magic. He makes his home in a tall, narrow, green-roofed house between the temple of Gond and the harbor, and is usually to be found there examining freshly purchased old books and records brought to him by merchants from all over Faerûn. His library is said to rival that of Candlekeep for magical lore—and to be better guarded, though the whispered tales of guardian spells and creatures are as contradictory as they are colorful.

RAMAZITH FLAMESINGER (CG hm F6; STR 16, INT 18, WIS 16). The lean, athletic, bearded Ramazith is dashing handsome and a notorious ladies' man. A skilled dancer and swimmer, he has reached several deep-sunken wrecks without magical aid and can out-dive most humans alive.

He dwells in Baldur's Gate in a ramshackle house next to the Three Old Kegs inn, and he frequently wanders into the inn of evenings for a meal. Ramazith is a sage expert in marine life, particularly sea herbs and the habits of intelligent marine life such as *ixitxachtli*. Ramazith's advice is much in demand by the captains of large fishing fleets, who can learn from the sage just where fish of certain types are likely to be the most plentiful at any given time.

It is rumored that Ramazith has slain several angry husbands in self-defense over the years, and there are also rumors that he's a Harper or even an agent for the Red Wizards of Thay. He has been seen talking to elves newly arrived from Evermeet on more than one occasion, but he refuses to discuss such meetings.



LADY RHESSAJAN AMBERMANTLE (NG hf B14; DEX 16, CON 17, INT 17, Wis 18, CHA 16). Also known as the Old Vixen and, when she was a famous explorer and adventurer, Rhessajan of the Tents, Rhessajan is now the just, wary ruler of the Caravan City, Scornubel. A wrinkled old woman of rasping voice, sharp eyes, and gusty good humor, she still wears the boots, breeches, and tunic of her adventuring days, and is armed with a *ring of regeneration*, a *ring of the ram*, a *scarab of protection*, a *scimitar of speed*, and other, lesser-known magics.

Some say she's a Harper, others that she's secretly part of the Lords' Alliance—and still others, that she sponsors endless adventuring bands in the hopes they'll bring back multiple *potions of longevity* so she can regain her passionate, carefree youth. Rhessajan laughs at such ideas. She likes nothing more than a good joke, and her only bid for longer life is a sponsorship of a certain mage who's experimenting with the long-term effects of humans shape-changing into dragon form. Rhessajan is also well-known among the folk of Scornubel for her keen interest in all news of weredragons.



Shandalar

SHANDALAR (CN hm W25?). This eccentric mage dwells in a floating house just east of the hamlet of Ulgoth's Beard. This house is a rebuilt, moored Halruaan skyship. Most folk believe Shandalar hails from that southern land of mages—and are also sure that he's insane.

Shandalar is a mage of power who's always experimenting with new spells and new magical items. He's trained his three daughters, Delorna, Helshara, and Ithmeera, to be wizards of skill W11, W10, and W9, respectively. They see to the running of his household and sell the mushrooms produced in the caverns beneath the house in the Wide in nearby Baldur's Gate, daily.

Shandalar harnesses lightning from the many local storms to energize the strange magical devices he constructs—and has a permanent magical immunity to lightning. He often strolls about during lashing storms, laughing amid crackling lightning strikes.

Locals swear Shandalar's mushrooms are tended by mushroom people. He's also known to keep treasure hidden deep in his mush-

room caverns for pirates and outlaws who pay steep annual guarded storage fees. His past and his aims in life are a mystery. It seems he wants to left alone to pursue new achievements in magic.

MASTER FLETCHER SUMBARL ARDUSK (NG hm F10; specialization: crossbow). Proprietor of the Bent Bows shop in Hill's Edge, Ardusk is a bowyer/fletcher expert at finding and fixing deviations from true in shafts and bolts. He is a careful man who's always armed with a dagger and a hand crossbow that shoots sleep-venommed darts. A fierce foe of the Zhentarim, he's proud of the fact that his darts and blade have claimed the lives of at least six Zhentarim magelings. He foresees the ruin of his city unless the Zhentarim are destroyed, and he will sponsor adventurers willing to strike against them.

TAEROM "THUNDERHAMMER" FUIRUM (NG hm F1; STR 18/26, Wis 17, CON 18, 25 hp due to unnatural vitality). This master armorer has



his own smithy in Beregost and is a smith whose work is admired even by dwarves. Though he's grown white-haired with the passing of many years, he's still an active, burly giant of a man. He keeps to himself, working at his forge, but can slay orcs with a single blow of his 12-foot-long iron staff, which does 3d4 points of damage plus his Strength bonuses.

Taerom has often made items fine enough for wizards to enchant, but these days he's more apt to make small, useful things like hooks, locks, hinges, and coffers. He sports magnificent muttonchop whiskers and stands almost 7 feet tall, with shoulders almost 4 feet broad. He has a distinctive rolling stride.

TALESSYR TRANTH (CN hf W13; INT 18, Wis 16, CHA 16). This tall, courtly, mustachioed man is actually a woman wearing a semipermanent disguise. Only long-time Baldurians know the truth about her gender, as a result of her disguise slipping during several fierce magical duels. She runs a stall in the Wide (open market) in Baldur's Gate where she creates short-lived magical disguises, body adornments, costume alterations, or the like for clients who wish to impress at parties, hide their true likeness, or shock friends or social rivals.

Talessyr cares not if her work is used by thieves, and she delights in encouraging an air of mystery around herself by having clients made up to look like illithids or drow parade in and out of the private tent at the back of her stall. Her intricate disguises cost 50 to 200 gp, and she's apt to vanish whenever authorities grow angry with the uses to which they're put. There's a rumor she does business with mind flayers, when nights are dark—and may even serve a beholder master.

VIGILANT GODSEYE TATHLOSAR BRIMMERBOLD (LN hm F18; STR 18/69). A veteran war leader (known around the Vale as "Sleepless Teeth"), Tathlosar is a wary and always energetic guardian who believes that civilization only survives in Faerûn through the vigilance of those who take up arms to defend it. Leader of the Ready House of the Right Strong Hand in Berdusk, Tathlosar ensures that his temple is an academy of arms as well as a house of serene

worship. He is known for having detailed, complex, fivefold (or more!) contingency plans in any battle. His war captains are used to quickly responding to a sequence of code phrases that can send troops commanded by the Vigilant Godseye into intricate battlefield maneuvers. He regularly thrashes much larger forces out of Darkhold through this deft battlemastery, foresight, and the magical aid of the senior clergy of Helm. He seems to be able to sniff out treachery and the planned stratagems of foes at a mere glance across a battlefield.

He is a handsome, close-mouthed giant of a man who is almost always clad in a full suit of plate armor—although there are many scurrilous rumors that in younger days he doffed it often to dally with fair maids up and down the Vale. ("Creating more followers of Helm," as one warrior put it.) He no longer indulges in such antics (if he ever did), but young men who resemble him are still turning up at the gates of the House, eager to join the service of Helm and learn to swing a blade in the name of the god.

FIRST READER TETHTORIL (LG hm P18 of Mystra; STR 16, INT 18, Wis 18, CON 16, CHA 16). This tall, impressive, wise, and soft-spoken man is often mistaken for the Keeper of Tomes of Candlekeep. He is more intelligent, regal, and sensitive than his superior Ulaunt, by far—and Ulaunt knows it. Yet Tethtoril is unfailingly loyal, thoughtful, and diligent in his duties, often anticipating troubles and preparing beforehand to spare Candlekeep troubles—or Ulaunt any embarrassment.

Most Holy Mystra often whispers to Tethtoril in his dreams, bidding him to do this or that—and in this way has led him to unearth key spells from forgotten tomes; kept Elminster, Khelben, and the Harpers welcomed or at least, tolerated in Candlekeep; and kept Ulaunt from being seduced by darker powers (most recently, Cyric). In this, Mystra is aided by both Deneir and Oghma.

Although he doesn't know it, Tethtoril is one of the safest people in all the Realms—three deities will protect him against any attack, manifesting as: whatever spell is needed (Mystra); a *wall of force* conjured by a shadowy floating harp (Oghma); or a suddenly appearing magical



symbol (effects identical to the wizard spell of the same name) of one of the known types that flashes and discharges in his defense immediately after it is seen (Deneir). All three deities subtly aid Tethtoril in puzzling out the meaning of cryptic, faded, fragmentary, or forgotten script writings. It is this superlative ability to decipher writings that has led to Tethtoril's present rank.

THALANTYR THE CONJURER (NG hm W17; INT 17, Wis 17). An archmage of note, Thalantyr is a courtly, solitary man who enjoys walks in the countryside while armed with his *staff of power*. He dwells in a griffon-guarded estate known as High Hedge, northwest of Beregost.

Once an adventurer who eagerly sought the lost magic of Netheril in crumbling ruins, he's retired from the perils of that profession, though he'll help other adventurers (though not his former adventuring companions) with advice and spells for fees. He'll also warn them that they may find a lot more than they intended to, as he did—but won't be much more specific.

One gathers from long conversations with him that he met some sort of horrible monster and was enslaved for a time, escaping only through luck. He is said to have won his freedom with spellbooks and other magical relics of Netheril that make him self-supporting, so that he need not travel the planes or go adventuring in Toril any longer.

THESKUL MİRROREYE, LONG LAWFUL ARM OF TYR (LG hm P6; STR 16, Wis 18, CHA 16). A warrior-priest of Tyr often seen riding about Boareskyr Bridge clad in armor of black and silver, Theskul is—with his trusted friend Barim Stagwinter, and their common ally Aluena Halacanter, a sorceress who dwells nearby—the voice of authority in the rough-and-ready Bridge. He dreams of establishing a fortified abbey of Tyr at the crossing and hurling back the monsters and the lawless from the area forever. Ultimately, he dreams of a small farming realm centered on the Bridge, linked to the North and the Sunset Vale by strong fortresses at Dragonspear Castle, the Way Inn, Scornubel, and Triel.

Theskul is tall and splendid in appearance, his flowing hair prematurely white. A fearless

warrior and a shrewd judge of folk, he has little patience for those who try to twist rules and agreements to their own ends or try to set such aside—a source of constant friction between himself and the mage Aluena, whom he sees as lax and over-tolerant. (Aluena is not covered in this guide. She's seldom seen in the Bridge itself, keeping to her own lands.) He suspects she is a powerful Harper and follows aims that may differ from his own.

For Theskul, an ordered Faerûn is a strong Faerûn. "And by holy Tyr, it shall be ordered, town by town, farm by farm, until I'm too old to carry such work forward."

TORLETH MINDULSPEER (CG hm F1; INT 18, Wis 18). This tall, gaunt man has a dry wit and a perpetually gloomy manner. He runs Torleth's Treasures, a crammed shop of odds and ends in the roadside hamlet of Gillian's Hill, south of Daggerford. Torleth loves to buy old pieces of junk brought to him by passersby—and sell them to other passersby. Some folk swear you can get *anything* in his dim, dusty shop.

Others note that for all the variety to be found in the shop, Torleth can't make much on the spread between his buying and selling prices—and that he must live on coins collected in some other way. As a spy or supply or message drop for merchant costers, perhaps? Or for groups of darker intent, like the Zhen-tarim or the Red Wizards? Perhaps the Cult of the Dragon, or the Harpers? Or maybe he's just a smart investor in merchant shipping who can live off the proceeds of his investments. He *does* seem to know every traveling merchant of the Coast lands who's been in business longer than a winter.

Some dim cellar or corner of Torleth's shop is rumored to hide a magical *gate* offering instant travel to Waterdeep, or Suzail, or Mirabar, or Westgate — or perhaps all of those places. Rumors also tell that Torleth makes his gold by charging 100 gp per person for the *gate's* use.

TRASKAR SELARN LORD OF SECOMBER (CG hm R11; STR 16, DEX 16, INT 16, Wis 16, CON 16). This regal, handsome, tall, and good-natured man has agreed to watch over Secomber for the Lords' Alliance. He does this by keeping an



eye on — and descending swiftly upon when necessary—the lawless, but otherwise leaving the people to their own business.

Traskar has a large fortune, gained through adventuring, and he sponsors the garrison himself. His influence and personal popularity have helped to foster friendships among the various races who dwell in Secomber. He knows the High Moor well and often sends adventurers who come to him to areas he knows hold promising ruins that haven't been plundered bare yet.

CHANTMISTRESS ULUENE MAERTALAR (NG hf P16 of Milil). High priestess of Evensong Tower, temple to Milil in Berdusk, this diligent devotee of the Lord of Inspiration has risen fast in his service through hard work and boundless energy rather than through any brilliance of personal talents. The revels she organizes take full advantage of Berdusk's growing community of minstrels, centered on the Harper hold of Twilight Hall, to provide refined entertain-

ment for all cultured (that is, wealthy) folk, not just the faithful of Milil. By such means, Uluene has steadily built the membership and power of her temple.

She is a short, petite lady of dark hair, dark eyes, serene beauty—and a face that betrays only what she allows it to. She is a skilled actress and a superb singer, and is always armed with a full roster of battle spells. More than once her quick magic has broken up crises at her revels. She's known to be seeking a skilled bard as a husband and to be growing hungry for adventure rather than the comfortable but unchanging tenor of the temple precincts.

ULMYN ANDALOR (NG hm F4; STR 16, DEX 16). An affable, portly man with a curly white beard and a bald pate, Ulmyn Andalor is a miller in the roadside hamlet of Bowshot, north of the Way Inn. His sawmill is always busy. Ulmyn, who never seems to sleep, can be seen trotting about night and day, covered with sawdust, overseeing a large staff in turning out cheap, plentiful cut lumber for sale in Waterdeep and Daggerford.

A simple man who takes pleasure in efficiency, Ulmyn knows and can identify both common and exotic woods better than most carpenters. Rumor has it that he was once a guard for a noble family in Waterdeep and fled to Bowshot after an affair with the beautiful daughter whose bodyguard he was—an affair that produced a child now heir to the family fortunes. The rumor also impugns that Ulmyn was paid handsomely to go away and renounce all claim to a place in the family. This payment is said to have subsequently grown into a sizable fortune.

Some say Ulmyn is less simple than he appears, and has survived several assassination attempts sponsored by that noble family by a combination of anticipation, battle prowess, and hidden magical items always kept ready on his person. Other folk whisper that Ulmyn is only a human shape worn by a powerful, possibly evil, creature.

KEEPER OF TOMES ULRAUNT (LN hm W9; INT 18, Wis 18). The head of fortified Candlekeep, Ulraunt is a proud scholar, one of the most learned—and one of the most haughty—peo-



Keeper of Tomes Ulraunt



ple in all Faerûn. His sharp tongue, sharp nose, and dark-eyed, hawklike gaze have earned him the nickname “the Old Buzzard” among acolytes down the years—a term that has even crept into general use in the Coast lands.

Ulaunt has access to more spells than most wizards ever see in their lives, and he reportedly keeps in practice casting them in his private turret chamber and in caverns deep beneath Candlekeep. A secret passage is said to connect these heights and depths. He bears a magical staff of office rumored to be a *staff of the magi* with extra, extremely potent powers. Ulaunt and those among the Great Readers who are wizards also have access to spell scrolls all over Candlekeep—scrolls hidden behind wooden panels and within false tomes.

Ulaunt’s chief interest is acquiring ever more information. His aims in life are unknown beyond making Candlekeep the seat of a land of scholars and a power on the political stage of Faerûn. Several tales link him with young ladies of various noble houses in Suzail, Waterdeep, and Tethyr in his earlier years—and there’s a newer rumor tying him romantically with some of the icy-cold, haughty elven ladies who come to the Sword Coast (though rarely) from Evermeet.

YAJANDRA DLATHAERO (LN hf W17; DEX 17, INT 18, Wis 17, CHA 16). This petite, swarthy, gray-eyed and iron-willed lady was born in Calimshan to a satrap and raised from birth to the duties and style of rule. Disinterested in intrigue, she showed an early aptitude for magic and solitary study, so her despairing father washed his hands of her, apprenticed her off to a local mage, and took another wife to set about fathering sons to be his heirs.

Yajandra was quite content to study quietly, avoiding the cut and thrust of Calishite politics and sorcerous rivalries. As soon as possible, she left that land, slipping away from her master Asheund on a spell-trading trip to Amn. Asheund was later slam by a wizard he was bartering with.

Yajandra disappeared for some years. Most folk think she spent the time seeking out good or lonely dragons and serving them while studying their ways and magic. She visited



Yajandra Dlathaero

Candlekeep once with money enough to fund her studies, and showed up later in Zazesspur to study with the sage Cthethros, considered in his time the greatest living authority on dragons. (He has since died.)

Yajandra was dwelling in Amn with a gold dragon who kept to human shape and used the name Sandro, when a Harper brought word to her of finding the Well of Dragons. Yajandra hastened to the remote village of Ladydove and bought the largest house there, warding it out of habit. That saved her life. Days later the Dire Dragon came out of nowhere—its earlier life remains a mystery—and burned the village to nothing. (See the entry on the Well of Dragons for more information on the Dire Dragon.)

Yajandra’s house was all that survived. She now runs it as an inn while she studies the dying dragons who come to the Well.

She is indisputably the greatest living sage on matters of dragonkind. Her other fields of knowledge include history, magic, namelore, and biology.



Appendix II:

Wards of The Sword Coast

Magical wards, often found in the Savage North, are even more numerous in the Coast lands. In the area covered by this book, wards are usually less powerful than those of the North—slaying innocent and perhaps friendly merchants by mischance is frowned on in the Coast lands, where trade is more important than grim survival.

As in the North, most human wards—and all those encountered by Volo—are variants of the 7th-level wizard spell *wardmist*. They are intended to defend folk and property from thieves, wolves, trolls, orcs, and monsters. Elminster warns that wards are used all over the Realms by the rich and by powerful wizards and priests—and that Volo has encountered very few of them, and of only the most common types.

The crafting of wardings began in the North, probably in ancient Netheril. The oldest wards are found in tombs and subterranean storage areas under ruins or temples sheltered from the creeping destruction of long-passing time, or in forest glades, where they have outlived the buildings that once stood around them. Ancient wards often include

wild magical effects and prohibitions against magical items, which simply won't enter the *wardmist*. There are also instances of prohibitions against spells of a specific school or those manifesting as heat, fire, lightning, or cold. Some old wards incorporate *reverse gravity* effects, or *blade barriers* large enough to encompass an entire *wardmist*!

Wardmist

(Evocation, Alteration,
Enchantment/Charm)

Range: Special
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Permanent
Casting Time: 1 hour
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: Special

This 7th-level spell requires the use of an amount of silver larger in total volume than the caster's fist. Other material components are phase spider silk and three powdered pieces of amber of no less than 500 gp value each. (All the spell components are destroyed in the casting of the spell.) The caster must stand in an area that will become part of the ward and visualize the route of the desired ward boundary.



An area of 600 square feet per level of the caster may be enclosed. If the wizard tries to enclose too large an area, the spell fails and is wasted. Mages casting simultaneous *wardmists* may combine their protections.

The spell creates a *wardmist*. This is a 40-foot-high, 60-foot-wide band of permanent mist that must rest on the ground, floor, or other solid surface. (It need not be level.) The area protected by the ward is measured from the inner edge of the *wardmist*. The thickness of the mist is not included. The ward extends 40 feet beneath the surface of the ground, and may be narrower than 60 feet in width wherever desired. Its boundaries can twist and turn corners as sharply and as often as desired to protect a certain area, and they may exclude whatever areas the caster desires. Once cast, a *wardmist* can't be moved.

A *wardmist* can always be freely entered or left. Beings entering it are sensed by the spell, which reacts by flashing a radiant or audible warning (or both, as desired) to a specific spot or being. The spot or being is set upon casting, and it cannot be changed thereafter. Such a warning would still function in the location of a destroyed room (even in midair) or inside the tomb of a dead being.

Warnings classify those who enter the *wardmist* into two categories: those who bear ward tokens and intruders. *Wardmist* warnings transmit numbers and general locations of all intruders.

Sight and all known magical and psionic means of scrying won't work through the boundaries of a *wardmist*. A being in the mist can see through the mist to a distance of about 10 feet in darkness, and 40 feet when light is present. One cannot see out of the mist though, even if one is only inches away from its edge. One cannot see out of the mist to either the area it excludes or the area it encloses. A *wardmist* can be seen *over* freely by anyone tall enough or stationed high enough to be able to do so.

When visibility is reduced by darkness, intruders in a *wardmist* who don't use lamps, markers, or other means of proceeding in a straight path will move in a random direction each round of movement in which they fail a secret Intelligence check. It is possible to wander, lost, in a *wardmist* for quite some time.

The caster of a *wardmist* spell can try to link certain types of magically animated or undead monsters to the ward as it is forming to serve as guardian monsters. To become guardians, these monsters must be present, and must fail a saving throw vs. spell.

When an intruder reaches a certain locale in a *wardmist* or has been in the mist for a set time, some guardian monsters are teleported to within 20 feet of the intruder. The types and numbers of guardian monsters are set by the initial *wardmist* spell but are limited by the available stable of guardians. Their



Wardmist Guardian Monsters

d8 Number & Type of Monsters

- 1 2d6 baneguards*
- 2 1d3 blazing bones†
- 3 2d8 bonebats*
- 4 3d4 helmed horrors*
- 5 3d4 skeletons or 2d4 monster skeletons (MM, MC1)
- 6 1d2 watchghosts‡
- 7 1d2 wraiths (MM, MC1)
- 8 2d12 zombies (MM, MC1)

Monsters marked with an asterisk (*) appear in the revised FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting box.

Those marked with a dagger (†) appear in the *Ruins of Myth Drannor* boxed set. A diesis (§) denotes those in the *Ruins of Undermountain* boxed set. Those appearing in the MONSTROUS MANUAL™ game accessory are denoted by “MM,” and those in the MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM® volumes have the volume number appended to the abbreviation “MC.” DMs lacking a particular source should substitute another monster from the list.

typical orders are to attack and destroy all intruders, although some may be instructed to subdue, disarm, and capture while dealing as little damage as possible.

Guardian monsters are kept in stasis by the *wardmist* when not active. They do not age, heal, or eat. They become inactive 2d4 rounds after an intruder is slain or leaves the warded area. A guardian monster can be healed at any time by

application of the proper potions or spells. A destroyed guardian is forever gone. It can't be resurrected or replaced by the *wardmist* spell. Monsters can be unleashed to wander in an existing *wardmist*, but to be linked to and teleported about by the ward, they must be part of the initial *wardmist* casting.

Only the types of magically created or undead monsters listed in the boxed text at left can be linked to a *wardmist*, although individual mages may have successfully modified their *wardmist* spells to augment this list. Tales exist of wards defended by golems and even by undead titans.

Mages may combine their efforts when creating a *wardmist* so as to give it multiple sets of guardians of the same or different types. Each mage casts a *wardmist* spell at the same time, though only one ward is created, and it is set to a single sort of ward token.

A few wards are linked to more powerful guardians, such as liches assisted by robed and hooded skeletons (to look like other liches or mages). These skeletons are imbued with spell ability to cast combat spells and have *magic mouths* cast on them to allow them to “speak.” They act as decoys and are used to identify spellcasting intruders to their lich. There are even reports of multiple invisible stalkers linked to a *wardmist*—each being freed from servitude in Toril after they slay a certain number of intruders.

A *wardmist* doesn't seem to exist



for a being who carries the proper token. Ward tokens must be made of a certain material, and they must bear a certain rune that is drawn while a secret word is uttered. The material, the rune, and the word are all set during the ward's casting, and they cannot be changed thereafter. For convenience, tokens to a particular ward are usually of a common shape and size, but the *wardmist* will recognize anything of the right material that bears the right rune. Some ward tokens have been inset into the pommels of swords, for instance, or baked into clay jugs or statuettes. In some large holdings, warders carry rings of varying tokens just as they do rings of keys. Tokens can be made freely after the casting of a *wardmist*—but the requirements for a valid token can't be changed without using another *wardmist* spell.

A being bearing a valid token can't see or be affected by a *wardmist* and isn't subject to attacks by any guardian monsters linked to the *wardmist*. An intruder who seizes a valid token from another being, even while in battle with a guardian, will be instantly free of such guardian monster attacks.

Only one *wardmist* spell can exist in a given area. If a *dispel magic* is cast on a *wardmist*, it increases visibility around the caster by 20 feet, delays the appearance of any guardian monsters by a round, and sets off an immediate warning. Only a *limited wish* or *wish* can destroy a *wardmist*. Even repeated *dispel mag-*

ics will fail, and an *anti-magic shell* cannot form within a *wardmist*. If this is attempted, the *anti-magic shell* is wasted, and the *wardmist* is unaffected.

The most common addition to a *wardmist* is a band of armed human guards assigned to respond to the magic's warnings. *Spell triggers* are also popular; these are spells that have specific preset conditions to set them off. They then launch the effects of other "hanging" spells, also cast earlier.

For example, if someone enters the ruins of Stormwind Tower (an isolated mage-hold near Trollclaw Ford) by the front door, six identical mages appear all around him or her, hurling bolts of lightning. These mages are really projected images linked in some now-forgotten way to a rare spell known as *web of lightning*. Safe entry to the tower is by means of a secret passage whose entry is marked by a gargoyle statue, elsewhere in the ruins—a passage filled with the sword-wielding, animated skeletal arms known as dread. These creatures are detailed in the *Ruins of Myth Drannor* boxed set.

Web of Lightning

(Evocation, Alteration)

Range: 40 yards + 10 yards/level
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Instantaneous
Casting Time: 8
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: ½



This 8th-level wizard spell causes the simultaneous discharge of six lightning bolts. Identical in properties to those bolts created by a *lightning bolt* spell, these bolts do 7d6 points of damage each and manifest in one of two ways.

One manifestation is widely used on battlefields: a starburst of six bolts radiating out from a single point visualized or chosen directly by the caster, who need not see its location. Four bolts spring out in the cardinal directions (forming an equal-armed cross), and two additional bolts leap out in two of the diagonals, in quadrants chosen by the caster.

The other manifestation of the spell is a ricocheting web within a

60-foot-diameter sphere. The sphere can be altered to fill a 30- by 30-foot room or smaller area, but not increased in volume. Compressing it does not affect damage or other spell properties. This effect is often fit into a single doorway, with the bolts leaping from the frame as an intruder steps through.

In either manifestation, target beings must make saving throws individually against all six bolts. They save against fewer bolts if the path of a bolt leaves them out of harm's way, as in most uses of the starburst.

The material components of this spell are four lodestones or a bit of fur, and a small, smooth rod of amber, crystal, or glass.



Appendix III:

Magical Items

Some of the magical items mentioned by Volo in his explorations of the Sword Coast lands are familiar to Elminster. Of these, he permitted words about a few to remain in this edition of the guidebook, and consented to provide details of them for us, with the grudging words, “Well, I suppose all of ye can’t get into *too* much trouble with these—but ye will, I know, and I await thy amusing tales of what befell then.”

Here, then, is what Elminster told us.

Harvyn’s Ring

XP Value: 8,500

GP Value: 16,000

When worn, this plain brass ring automatically grants any wearer (not wizards only) a +1 saving throw bonus, cumulative with any other bonuses the wearer may have, against any alteration spells and identical magical item alteration effects. If the wearer is a spellcaster able to cast alteration spells, foes facing his or her spells suffer a -1 penalty to their saving throws when she or he casts spells at them while wearing this ring.

The ring has another automatic, as-often-as-required power. It can purify water and drink by touch or immersion. This power is strong

enough to neutralize acid or poison and render wines, beers, and spirits nonalcoholic without altering their taste, smell, or hue.

Harvyn’s ring also has two powers that must be deliberately called forth. By will and concentration on the destination (which must be within sight, within 90 feet, and not through any magical or physical barriers), the wearer can *jump* three times in a day (144 turns), carrying up to 400 lbs. of additional weight as long as it is in physical contact and willed to come along, too.

The jumping wearer isn’t magically protected in any way during transit, although the landing will be upright, balanced, and sure-footed. Jumps attempted with too much weight, to a destination too far away, or onto a surface that can’t support the arriving ring wearer will result in falls, unmitigated by the ring.

The wearer of a *Harvyn’s ring* can also cause it, by the utterance of a secret word graven on the inside surface of the ring, to emit a swordlike *force blade*. The word is different for each of the six known rings. This weapon can be called forth thrice every day (144 turns), and lasts for 1 turn—less if the effect is willed to cease earlier. Unused time can’t be saved up for use later. The *force blade* is invisible except to those able to see magical auras or when the weapon is



covered with blood or another adhering substance, and can cleave through any magical barrier created by a 7th-level or lower spell or magical item equivalent, permanently breaching it in a 10-foot-radius circle centered on the blade. In some cases, such as a *shield* spell, this will completely destroy the barrier magic. The invisible blade does not clang, rust, chip, bend, break, or respond to heat, cold, magnetic, or electrical effects as metal does. It is simply a construct of force with a cutting edge and deals 4d4 points of damage per strike (4d6 to large-sized foes), being in all other respects a long sword. A fighter of high enough level can use it for multiple attacks and receives normal bonuses if she or he possesses specialization in long sword. The sword appears in the wearer's ring hand and cannot leave it. If the wearer opens his or her hand to grasp at something else, the *force blade* vanishes. It can't be used in the wearer's other hand or be taken by another being.

GALDAERYN'S GAGE

XP Value: 2,500

GP Value: 6,000

Named for the fighting mage who first devised it, this single mesh gauntlet (mail glove) of either the left or right hand magically alters to fit the size and number of digits of a wearer's hand. It allows its wearer to hurl missiles such as rocks, sling stones, daggers, and axes with a +2

attack roll bonus. Use of the gauntlet doesn't allow the wearer to throw things normally too heavy or unwieldy to hurl and doesn't confer any proficiencies. Thrown stones do 1d2 points of damage, depending on size. Rocks as large as a target's head can deal 1d4+1 points of damage.

The wearer of a *gage* can also try to intercept incoming missiles. Roll a d20 for the glove wearer. If the score is higher than the unmodified die roll of the incoming attack, the catch was successful. The *gage* literally catches physical missiles, and it can hurl them back at their source. This returned fire counts as an extra attack in addition to the *gage* wearer's chosen activity or attack for the round and is rolled at +2. If the *gage* wearer wants to redirect caught missiles at another target than their source, the hurling counts as a regular attack. If a catch fails, the attacking missile has its usual effect.

A *gage* can catch up to four *magic missiles* in a single round. Additional missiles will get through for the usual damage. Caught *magic missiles* are absorbed by the glove, not thrown back.

A *Galdaeryn's gage* protects the wearer's hand as well as a full plate gauntlet against a falcon's talons and other sharp things. It is affected by *heat metal* and similar magics. If its wearer is fighting with a one-handed weapon in the opposite hand, it can be used to grapple with hostile weapons. Treat it as a shield for Armor Class purposes when used in this fashion.



Hand of Fury

XP Value: 2,500

GP Value: 7,000

This single mesh gauntlet (mail glove) of either left or right hand magically alters to fit the size and number of digits of a wearer's hand. When worn, it improves the wearer's Armor Class by 1 point. An unarmored warrior lacking a shield or high Dexterity would move from AC 10 to AC 9 by donning the glove. It allows its wearer two special attacks: *magic missile* and *forceblow*.

The glove's *magic missile* attack is identical to the 1st-level wizard spell of the same name. A *hand of fury* holds two such spells. Each unleashes three missiles causing 1d4+1 points of damage when used. When one such attack is used, it can't be called on again until 3 entire days (72 hours, or 432 turns) have elapsed.

The *forceblow* attack can be used only once per day. After it is called on, 24 hours (144 turns) must pass before it can be employed again. A *forceblow* is never wasted. It can occur only when a *successful* attack lands, defined as a punch with the gloved hand that is deemed a use of this attack by the player *as the attack is launched*. Rather than normal punching damage, a *forceblow* does 6d4 points of damage, and has two possible additional effects. A struck victim must save vs. spell to avoid being stunned on the following round, and she or he must also make a Strength check to avoid being hurled away in a fall by the force of the blow, with possible additional damage upon landing. Stunned victims are reeling and unable to take any deliberate action the round

following the one they are struck in. Fragile worn or carried items exposed to the force of this strike or the impact of a resultant fall must make a saving throw vs. crushing blow or a saving throw vs. fall, as applicable, or break.

A *hand of fury* has one additional property. Its magic can be exhausted and converted into a single, automatically successful bend bars/lift gates attempt, causing it to crumble to dust. The glove must be touched to the barrier to be so used.

Torc of The Titans

XP Value: 4,500

GP Value: 12,000

This plain, heavy, silver neck collar never tarnishes or breaks. It resists even reforging attempts. It allows the wearer to speak, understand, and read the tongue of titans and to call on titan-like strength in limited ways, as follows:

Once per day, the torc wearer can make a Strength check as if she or he were a titan of Strength 25.

Twice a day, a torc wearer can launch an attack with titan strength at +7 to the attack roll and +14 to damage, due to 25 Strength. If the attack misses, the attempt still wastes the torc's magic.

Thrice per day, a torc wearer can make an open doors or bend bars/lift gates attempt as if possessing Strength 25. The attempt to open a door is successful on a roll of 19 on a d20 or less, or 18 or less if it is locked, barred, or magically held. The torc wearer in this situation has a 99% chance of successfully bending bars or lifting gates.



Appendix IV:

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his index does not include references to people, nor to most building map references. Private homes are listed only if they're of interest to the adventurer or historically minded sightseeing traveler. The Fortalices section lists all structures that have been built, or converted, for use as defensible strongholds in time of war. In uncertain times, travelers are advised to keep a bookmark at this spot in the guidebook when making fast travel plans. The structures may also appear under other headings, corresponding to other uses.

Places that function as both inns and taverns are listed in both sections. Tankard houses are a new attraction in Faerûn, fast spreading from the city of Berdusk where they first appeared. None are indexed here. Consult that city entry (pages 153–174) for names of these establishments.

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