

The book cover is made of brown leather with intricate embossed patterns. The central text is in a stylized, metallic font. There are metal hinges on the left edge and two glowing orange gemstones on the right edge. The background features a repeating pattern of stylized, swirling motifs.

THE
Candlekeep
COMPENDIUM

VOLUME IX

VOLUME IX

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EDITORIAL



elcome to the ninth volume of the Candlekeep Compendium. A collection of the finest Realmslore selected from the shelves of Candlekeep and delivered to us from our wandering scribes, forever seeking to further our knowledge of the Realms.

A long time coming, but certainly worth the wait; our scribes have been frantically searching the Realms, collecting lore and material to bring to our faithful readers. Herein are some of our classic ongoing articles, as well as the return of older works and newly undertaken studies. Sadly, our regular Hammer's Stroke article is not featured in this volume, but will hopefully return soon to please our dwarven friends.

With the omission of Hammer's Stroke, our opening article in the volume should be an intriguing and interesting piece for all scholars of the Realms - *Age of Sail*, penned by Brian R. James and illustrated by Toni James, delves into the sea-faring element of the Realms and opens up many fine details for discussion. Staying on the seas, we journey into the beginnings of a new *Perilous Portals* column, starting initially with *The Sea Gates*. Our study of the little folk of the Dalelands continues, this time with the *Hin of Stumphill*. Again, the old classics are contained in this volume, with *Untold Stories*, *Journal of an Apprentice Scribe* and *Folk of Faerûn*. Our *Sprites* column also continues with yet more detail on these faeriekin, and the return of *Mercenary Companies of the Realms* sees a focus on the *Redeemers of Dawn*. Truly, a wondrous collection of knowledge.

So, enough of my introductions, for I am sure ye wish to begin feasting thine eyes upon this lore.

- Alaundo of Candlekeep

*This volume is dedicated to Brian R. James;
our very own Candlekeep loremaster who made it to be a Forgotten Realms designer with The
Grand History of the Realms*

AGE OF SAIL

part 1 - Merchant powers of the high seas

By Brian R. James

Illustration by Toni James



For centuries, merchant vessels have plied the waters of the Sea of Swords, suffering unfavorable weather, pirate attacks, or worse, to deliver their precious cargo to distant ports for a meager profit.

The second half of the fourteenth century Dalereckoning has seen a period of unparalleled economic expansion. Few question the impact the discovery of the New World had on the economies of the Sword Coast. From the colonies came an influx of precious metals, predominately gold and silver. Before the Deepwater War and the siege by the Sothillisian Empire, Amn seemed poised for complete dominance of sea trade throughout the Trackless Sea. Yet an organization little known a decade before has now positioned itself to claim the prize.

Herein, discover for the first time the details of the mercantile company poised to dominate sea trade for decades to come.



BOZEMAN LINE SHIPPING LANES 1375 DR

The Bozeman Line

"Let me understand exactly what you are saying." The High Burgher sighed and stared directly into the eyes of the ship's captain. "Amn's scepter fleet was destroyed? Their entire fleet!?"

The Mulhorandi captain brought his arms together across over his chest and nodded. "Yes, Lady Tolans. We rescued twenty of their number from Tarseth Bay as we sailed past Murann."

"This is an interesting development indeed." Never one to let a business opportunity pass her by, Eleanor Tolans had difficulty concealing a growing smile. "We've also received reports in recent weeks that Amn's colonial fleet suffered a similar fate in the New World. Without reinforcements from New Amn, Murann would have been hard-pressed to defeat the blockade on the port."

"This move is too bold for the pirate king. I smell Runderne involvement, somehow."

"Still, with their navy scuttled and their armies engaged against the ogre magi, Amn's position is severely weakened. We must take advantage of these fortuitous events before the Runderne move in."

"Hondo, recall your sailors and prepare your ships. You set sail for Trythosford in the morning. Amn's monopoly on shipping to the colonies is no more."

-6 Eleint, Year of the Unstrung Harp (1371 DR)

The Bozeman Line is an independent trade consortium based out of the Moonshae Islands, with operations extending throughout the Sea of Swords, the Trackless Sea, the Shining Sea, and beyond.

Little known before the Year of the Tankard (1370 DR), the Bozeman Line has enjoyed unparalleled success in the succeeding years, propelling the once small shipping coster to dominance over sea trade throughout the Sword Coast and the fledgling colonies in the west.

The Line is dedicated to pursuing a monopoly on sea trade throughout the region. They are an equal opportunity group, willing to sell to the highest bidder. Once a contract is signed, however, the deal is sealed and their services are ensured.

Today, the Bozeman Line is a more generalized trade consortium, but a sizeable percentage of their profits still stem from the shipping enterprise.

Brief History

When her majesty High Queen Alicia Kendrick (LG female Ffolk human fighter 6/druid 7) ascended the throne of the Moonshae Isles in the Year of the Sword (1365 DR), she vowed to end the tradition of isolationism long practiced by her people. Seeking to reinvigorate the economy and

promote trade with her neighbors, the High Queen established the Royal Office of Commerce and Public Works. Within this new bureaucracy, she appointed the title of Master Shipwright to a young journeyman named J.P. Bozeman. He was tasked with building the High Queen a navy: the swiftest, most formidable navy on the Sea of Swords.

Abandoning the oar-powered vessels¹ crafted by their peoples for centuries, Bozeman instead chose to build large, sail-powered ships modeled after the great warships coming out of the shipyards of Amn and Tethyr.

A scant three years later, in the Year of the Banner (1368 DR), the Royal Navy of the United Moonshae Isles numbered thirteen vessels. Comprised primarily of deep-hulled knarr for trade and fast-moving drakkar for defense, the Queen was quite pleased with her new navy and the craftsmanship of J.P. Bozeman.

In the Year of the Gauntlet (1369 DR), Bozeman delivered to the High Queen and her newly crowned husband High King Keane (LG male Tethyrian human wizard 20) the flagship of the royal fleet, an imposing carrack² named *Callidyrrr Hugh*.

Following the delivery of *Callidyrrr Hugh* and with the High Queen's blessing, J.P. Bozeman left the Royal Office of Commerce and Public Works to establish his own company of carpenters and shipwrights he named the Bozeman Line. A smart merchant in his own right, Bozeman secured an exclusive contract with the High Queen to maintain her navy and the royal shipyards indefinitely.

Later that same year, sea trade throughout the Sea of Swords dropped precipitously in the wake of the Deepwater War³. Sahuagin attacks on major port cities along Sword Coast left harbors in ruin and fleets shattered.

¹ A currach is a small fishing vessel primarily used by the Ffolk. The Northmen (Illuskan settlers) typically prefer the longship, or a larger warship known as a drakkar. The knarr, an Illuskan trading vessel, is thought to be the precursor to the Tethyrian cog.

² The first carrack-class seafaring vessel, named the *Osprey*, was invented by master shipwright Elwin Elrod McAllister in the Year of Shadows (1358 DR). The *Osprey* was magically transported from Raven's Bluff to Murann in the Year of the Maiden (1361 DR), to lead the Golden Legion to the New World as the expedition's flagship. Later scuttled by Cordell, the *Osprey* now rests at the bottom of the lagoon off the shore of Helmsport.

³ In the Year of the Gauntlet (1369 DR), a mysterious and charismatic leader named Iakhovas led an army of sahuagin and other sea monsters against port cities all along the Sword Coast. The Deepwater War was originally used to describe only the invasion of Waterdeep through its deep water harbor, though today the term is used to describe the greater conflict throughout the Sea of Swords.



Lords of Commerce

The layout of this article is modeled after the organizations presented in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign accessory *Lords of Darkness* (2001), p.4. The statistics for guilds described later in this article are modeled after the rules described in *Dungeon Master's Guide II* and more specifically, the format presented in *City of Splendors: Waterdeep*, p.22.

Inexplicably, the island nations of the Sea of Swords remained relatively untouched by the sea devils' fury. Based out of Callidyrrr on the Moonshae Islands, the Bozeman Line weathered the sahuagin conflict and emerged with a position of strength within the region. Of the Royal Navy's more than twenty ships, only two vessels were lost to sahuagin attacks. None of the Line's privately owned vessels were attacked. Comparatively, Waterdeep, Baldur's Gate, and countless port cities up and down the coast lost nearly their entire fleets.

Following the Deepwater War, the shipyards of the Bozeman Line in Callidyrrr were the largest fully functioning shipyards throughout the Sea of Swords. Orders came in from governments along the Sword Coast for new ships. The Line happily obliged, and used the proceeds to purchase the Grey Gull Shipyards from its previous owner in Waterdeep. The Year of the Tankard (1370 DR) saw the completion of construction on the Manticores Shipyards in Velen, Tethyr.

The Line saw its first significant setback early in the Year of Rogue Dragons (1373 DR) when its founder, J.P. Bozeman, was slain in the dragon attack on Callidyrrr. In honor of J.P. Bozeman and his legacy, the Line's master shipwright began construction of a vessel never before seen on the seas of Toril, a "Corvette" named *Black Medusa*.

Today, the Bozeman Line leads its competition in commercial shipping throughout the Sea of Swords, surpassing in recent months even the largest shipping guilds of Amn.

The Organization

Headquarters: Until its destruction in the Year of Rogue Dragons (1373 DR), the Line's operations were headquartered at the Westhaven Shipyards in Callidyrrr. Today the organization is steered primarily by Theomund Dugas from his offices in Velen, Tethyr. Operations in the New World are directed from Caedmon Manor in Newport.

Members: Thousands, including the many merchants, tradesmen, and sailors employed by the Line.

Hierarchy: Segmented

Leader: Theomund Dugas and the five High Burghers.

Religion: The Bozeman Line, as an organization, venerates no particular deity. The faiths of Istishia, Waukeen, Valkur, and Umberlee are all popular with its members.

Secrecy: Low

Symbol: The symbol of the Bozeman Line is a disc inscribed with a mermaid. The Line began minting electrum coins in the Year of Risen Elfkin (1375 DR), bearing the mermaid symbol on the fore and a likeness of J.P. Bozeman on the reverse. In transactions with merchants of the Bozeman Line, these coins are worth 2 gold. Otherwise, they are viewed as standard electrum coins and are valued at only 5 silver.

Hierarchy

The Burghers

The elite of the Bozeman Line are the Burghers. These merchant lords oversee the day-to-day operations of the Line, including everything from contract negotiations to putting down labor disputes. Burghers are found among many professions, including money lenders, harbor masters, and ship's captains.

Every four years, the Burghers elect the leadership of the Line. These individuals, known as High Burghers, command great wealth and prestige within the organization. The current High Burghers include the following individuals:

Theomund Dugas (LN male Illuskan human fighter 4/aristocrat 5)

Edwin Wallis (LN male Ffolk human aristocrat 8)

Eleanor Tolans (LN female Tethyrian human aristocrat 11)

Sar Bana (LN male Kultakan human jaguar knight 15)

Torynbar Rowe (LN male Illuskan human aristocrat 7) is the youngest of the Line's five High Burghers. Merely twenty-six winters old, Torynbar's acute business acumen and extensive contacts have allowed the young merchant great successes. Elected in the Year of Lightning Storms (1374 DR), Torynbar is also secretly a member of the Kraken Society⁴ reporting directly to High Captain Rethnor⁵ of Luskan.

⁴ The Kraken Society is a group of information brokers who use their knowledge to influence events in coastal countries along the Trackless Sea. Reference *Lords of Darkness* (2001) p.154

⁵ Rethnor (LE male human Ftr16/Rog7) is one of the five High Captains of Luskan, and leads the society's coastal operations from the Mere of Dead Men northward.

Tradesmen Guild

The lower echelon of the Bozeman Line is primarily comprised of common laborers. They load and unload cargo when ships are in dock. They work in the shipyards, crafting and repairing the Line's many vessels. These laborers work in gangs called Hogs, and report to a supervisor known as a Swine Lord. It's rumored that J.P. Bozeman's first ship, the *Silver Raven*, was built by unskilled laborers from a pig farm outside of Cantrev Aith, his boyhood home. Though it's unlikely there is any truth to this tale, the Hogs take pride in their name and believe their superior craftsmanship speaks for itself.

Tradesmen Guild (Expansive Merchant): AL LN, N, LG, NG, CG, LE, CN; 100,000 gp resource limit; Membership 575; Mixed (humans 290, dwarves [shield] 180, halflings [lightfoot] 85, others 20); Salary 10gp/month (none to join).

Authority Figure: High Burgher Edwin Wallis
Important Figure: Camdon the Shipwright

Associated Classes: Bard, expert, fighter, rogue, warrior.

Associated Skills: Craft (any), Knowledge (architecture and engineering), Profession (sailor), Profession (siege engineer), Spot, Use Rope.

Requirements: A seafarer is expected to serve an average of 30 hours per tenday. This might involve several tendays away on a voyage, followed by a long leave in which you are free to do as you please.

Favored in Guild Fringe Benefit: The Line subsidizes the costs of any non-magical construct you created, reducing your raw material costs by 10%. Additionally, any fees on an ocean voyage are waived.

Special: Admittance into the Bozeman Line tradesmen guild typically requires demonstrable understanding of the shipbuilding trade (4 ranks in Craft [any]). Admittance as an engineer or shipwright typically years of experience (6 ranks in Knowledge [architecture and engineering]).

Carpenter (Expert 2)
Cartographer (Expert 4)
Clerk (Commoner 1)
Dock Worker (Commoner 1)
Guards (Warrior 4)

Guards are employed to protect the Line's many warehouses. These men are loyal salaried employees, not freelance contractors.

Shipwright (Expert 6)

The Bozeman Line employs only the finest shipwrights of Faerûn. Well paid, these tradesmen are masters of their craft. Bozeman shipwrights can typically build a new vessel in 3/4th the time of the competition.

Notable members of the Tradesman Guild include the following individuals:

Camdon the Shipwright (NG male Ffolk human rogue 2/expert 11) is a short, muscular

man of middle age, with calloused hands and an infectious smile. Camdon is currently overseeing the reconstruction of the Westhaven Shipyards. Camdon is very influential within Callidyrrr society, and is a personal friend of King Brandon Olafson⁶ of Gnarlhelm.

Seafarer Guild

Members of the Seafarer Guild include the officers, sailors, marines, and other crew of the Line's many seagoing vessels.

Seafarer Guild (Expansive Merchant): AL LN, N, LG, NG, CG, LE, CN; 100,000 gp resource limit; Membership 2,050; Mixed (humans 1,445, halflings [lightfoot] 352, dwarves [shield] 203, others 50); Salary 10gp/month (none to join).

Authority Figure: High Burgher Adrienne Tolans

Important Figure: Hondo the Black

Associated Classes: Bard, cleric, expert, fighter, rogue, warrior.

Associated Skills: Balance, Climb, Knowledge (geography), Profession (sailor), Profession (siege engineer), Spot, Use Rope.

Requirements: A seafarer is expected to serve an average of 30 hours per tenday. This might involve several tendays away on a voyage, followed by a long leave in which you are free to do as you please.

Favored in Guild Fringe Benefit: The Line subsidizes the costs of any non-magical construct you created, reducing your raw material costs by 10%. Additionally any fees on an ocean voyage are waived.

Special: Admittance into the Bozeman Line seafarer guild typically requires demonstrable understanding of sailing (4 ranks in Profession [sailor]). Admittance as a ship's captain demands a veteran sailor (8 ranks in Profession [sailor]) with good leadership skills (4 ranks in Leadership) and a great understanding of the waters throughout the Sea of Swords and/or Trackless Sea (6 ranks in Knowledge [geography]).

Sailors of the Line assume many roles and responsibilities aboard ship. The seafaring roles listed below expand upon those described in *Stormwrack* chapter four:

Artillerist (Expert 4, Profession [siege engineer] 4)

An artillerist is responsible for the ship's heavy armament. Armaments typically include catapults, heavy ballistas, and heavy harpoons. Advanced ships of the Line such as the *Black Medusa* may be outfitted with large smokepowder guns.

⁶ Brandon Olafson (LG male Illuskan human fighter 13) was crowned King of Olafstaad early in the Year of the Maidens (1361 DR), following the death by natural causes of his father Rolf.

Beastmaster (Druid 6)

Not all ships of the Line are powered by sail or oar. A few elite vessels are instead towed⁷ by dray creatures attached to the ship via harness and cable. Beastmasters are the inimitable individuals which command these powerful beasts.

Teams of eight hippocampi [SW p.153] are typically used as draft creatures by the Line, though other sea creatures such as octopi, giant sea horses, whales, or giant squid may be substituted.

Boatswain (Expert 4, Profession [sailor] 6)

Captain (Expert 8, Profession [sailor] 12, Knowledge [geography] 8, Diplomacy 4)

Deckhand (Expert 2, Profession [sailor] 3)
Includes oarsmen.

Helmsman (Expert 4, Profession [sailor] 7, Knowledge [geography] 7)
Usually a deckhand taking orders from the Captain or Sailing Master.

Mage (Sorcerer/Wizard 4)

Marine (Warrior/Fighter 2)

Master-at-Arms (Fighter 4)

Mate (Expert 6)
Officer

Mess Steward (Expert 1)

Sailing Master (Expert 6)
Pilot, Navigator or Conning Officer

Prelate (Cleric 3)
Surgeon, Chaplain, or Priest.

Quartermaster (Expert 6)
In the Bozeman Line, the ship's quartermaster holds a position of authority second only to the ship's Captain.

Rigger (Expert 2, Profession [sailor] 3, Climb 2, Use Rope 2)
Includes lookout.

Carpenter (Expert 4)
Works under the direction of the Sailing Master and Boatswain. The ship's carpenter is responsible for maintenance and repair of the ship's hull, masts, and yards. On vessels lacking a priest or prelate, the ship's carpenter assumes the role of healer and surgeon.

Notable members of the Seafarer Guild include the following individuals:

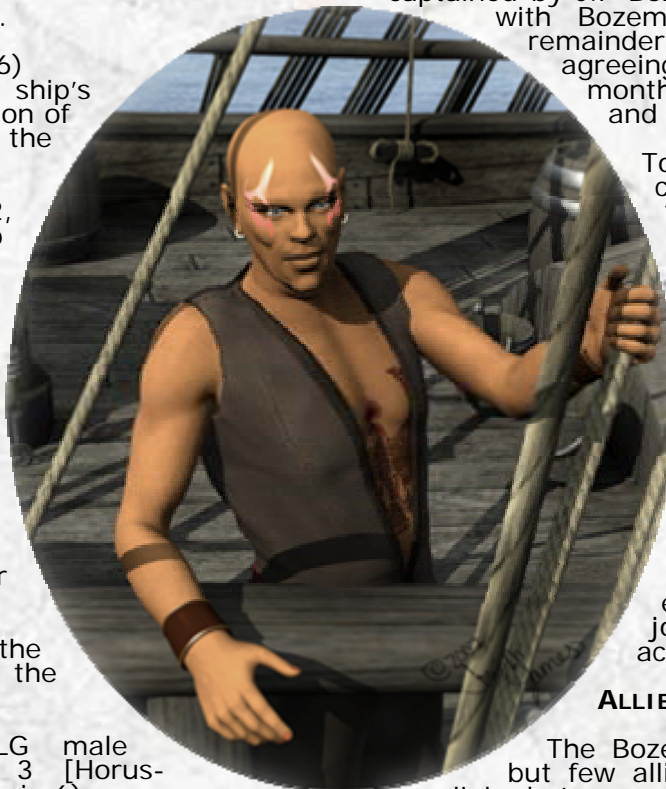
Hondo the Black (LG male Mulhorandi human cleric 3 [Horus-Re]/fighter 6/legendary captain 6)
Hondo was abandoned at a young age, found alone in the wilds of Ganathwood in northeastern

Mulhorand. Taken to live in Rauthil with his adopted parents, Hondo learned the trade of a fisherman. As a young adult, Hondo pledged himself in service to the local precept, a priest of Horus-Re. It was at this time that Hondo earned the distinctive tattoo of the sun god, etched on his abdomen. When the prelate was poisoned in the Year of Maidens (1361 DR), Hondo fled to the port city of Sultim and hired himself out as crew for ships plying the Alamber Sea. Over the next several years the young priest matured into a veteran seaman, adopting the name Hondo the Black.

In the Year of the Gauntlet (1369 DR), Hondo was hired on as a helmsman for a trireme moving troops from Sultim to Shussel in occupied Unther. In the open waters of the Alamber, the trireme was attacked and sunk by the Thayan ironclad *Red Scourge*⁸. Hondo and a handful of survivors washed upon a beach on The Alaor. Their fortune was short-lived, however. Many miles to the south, the long-dormant Ship of the Gods erupted, rocking the earth and sending a massive tidal wave northeast through the Alamber. As the tsunami tore through The Alaor, Hondo whispered a final prayer to Horus-Re as the waves crashed down upon him.

Hondo awoke to find himself on an unfamiliar shore with strange new tattoos wrapping around his eyes. Later, the Mulhorandi would learn he was on Eskember, a small island half a world away, deep in the Trackless Sea. There Hondo was rescued by the *Silver Hippocampus*, captained by J.P. Bozeman himself. Hondo sailed with Bozeman and his crew for the remainder of the summer, finally agreeing to weather the winter months in Callidyr with Bozeman and his family.

Today, Hondo the Black is captain of the Line's flagship frigate, *Black Medusa*. Hondo is pictured here in the center of the page.



MOTIVATIONS AND GOALS

The priority motivation for the Bozeman Line is trade and exploration for profit.

RECRUITING

To join the Line, one must be either a skilled laborer or a veteran seaman. Not everyone that petitions to join the Bozeman Line is accepted.

ALLIES

The Bozeman Line has many clients but few allies. Rumors persist as to a link between the Line and the Kraken Society, but such claims have never been substantiated.

⁷ Reference FOR3 *Pirates of the Fallen Stars* p.92 for more details on towed ships in the Realms.

⁸ The Red Scourge is a Thayan paddlewheel vessel. *Spellbound*

ENEMIES

The enemies of the Bozeman Line consist primarily of other mercantile companies, most notably the Iron Throne, Knights of the Shield, and the Runden. Competition with the Master Mariners' Guild and Order of Master Shipwrights in Waterdeep has earned those organizations' enmity as well.

Following the Deepwater War, the Bozeman Line seized on the misfortunes of the Adarbrent Shipping Company⁹, establishing trade with the New World by completing orders House Adarbrent was unable to fulfill.

The Bozeman Line's recent expansion into trans-oceanic trade has brought them into direct conflict with the Council of Six in Amn and the Royal Elven Fleet of Evermeet.

Encounters

Encounters with the Bozeman Line typically occur between ships at sea. Adventurers may be hired to help crew a ship of the Line, or perhaps the PCs seek passage on a vessel to a far away land. Unless the PCs' general alignment is evil, it is unlikely the adventurers will engage a member of the Bozeman Line in combat.

Ships of the Line

The Line's fleet consists of 29 large knarr¹⁰ or "Otur", 23 swift drakkar or "Seawolf", 21 lateen-sailed galley or "Galleota", 15 heavy cog or "Hoolk", eight fast carracks or "Glathar", and one frigate or "Corvette" named *Black Medusa*.

Continuing with a tradition established by its founder, ships of the Bozeman Line are named after mythical beasts, with a color designator prepended to the name. For example, three famous ships of the Line include *Green Hag*, *Silver Hippocampus*, and *Black Medusa*.

Green Hag

The *Green Hag* was one of the first carracks built by the Line in its early years. In the Year of the Gauntlet (1369 DR), *Green Hag* was captured by the notorious Black Alaric of the Nelanther, after it ran aground on a hidden reef outside the port city of Valtreth. The Pirate King demanded a ransom of 500,000 gold pieces for the release of the ship and its crew. Opting not to pay the ransom, the Bozeman Line instead chose to set the *Green Hag* aflame to prevent the ship from falling into the hands of the Runden.

Frigate (Corvette)

Colossal Vehicle (Warship, Seafarer)

Seaworthiness: +6

Ship handling: -2

Propulsion: Sails

Speed: wind x30 ft. (x15 ft. heavy)

Maneuverability: Average

Overall AC: -3

Hull sections: 240[60] (AC 3, HP 80,

Hardness 6)

Rigging Sections: 4 (AC 1, HP 80, Hardness 0)

Space: 180 ft. by 50 ft.

Height: 20 ft (Draft 10 ft.)

Complement: 500

Watch: 20

Cargo: 750 tons

Cost: 100,000 gp.

Ram: 6d6

Mounts: 20 heavy

Weapons Fore: 2 Heavy Harpoon

Weapons Aft: 2 Heavy Ballista

Weapons Broadside: 16 Lantan Bombard

Special Qualities: None

Reference: Stormwrack p.95

Silver Hippocampus

Until its destruction in Callidyr Harbor in the Year of Rogue Dragons (1373 DR), *Silver Hippocampus* was the personal vessel of J.P.Bozeman and flagship of the fleet. *Silver Hippocampus*, certainly a sight to behold, was a large four-masted carrack towed by eight large hippocampi.

Black Medusa

Black Medusa was completed in the early months of the Year of Risen Elfkin (1375 DR). This 200 foot long, three-masted frigate carries 750 tons of cargo and reaches speeds of 12 knots with full sails and a strong wind. Most impressive of all is her 21 inch thick hull and the 16 large guns¹¹ lining the deck.

⁹ House Adarbrent is one of Waterdeep's leading shipping clans. Reference *City of Splendors: Waterdeep* p.60

¹⁰ The knarr is a small Illuskan cargo ship about 75 feet long and 20 wide. This vessel sports a single mast with a square sail. In times of poor wind, however, the knarr's crew of 12 can row from the bow and stern to add additional power. The knarr carries a maximum of 50 tons of cargo.

¹¹ Cannons are a relatively new invention in Faerûn. When mounted on a ship, this weapon is known as a gun. The most common gun carried on a ship of the Line is the Lantan Bombard (described in greater detail later in this article).

Shipyards

The Bozeman Line has four major shipyards strategically located along major shipping lanes.

Westhaven Shipyards (Callidyr/Moonshae): The first and largest shipyards of the Line were the Westhaven Shipyards at Callidyr. Westhaven was devastated in the Year of Rogue Dragons (1373 DR) when the ancient red wyrm Hoondarrh¹² attacked Callidyr, destroying much of the city, including the dock ward and nearly all its birthed ships.

Grey Gull Shipyards (Waterdeep): The Grey Gull Shipyards were purchased by the Bozeman Line when the previous owner went bankrupt following the Deepwater War in the Year of the Gauntlet (1369 DR). At the request of the city's Hidden Lords, the Bozeman Line was instrumental in rebuilding Waterdeep's merchant fleet.

Manticore Shipyards (Velen/Tethyr): Construction on the Manticore Shipyards was completed early in the Year of the Tankard (1370 DR). Later that year, a labor dispute nearly shut down operations. Order was restored with a generous new contract and the formation of the Tradesmen Guild.

Salt Rock Shipyards (Zilhatec Island/Maztica): After the sacking of New Waterdeep in the Year of the Gauntlet (1369 DR), the colony Trythosford swelled with refugees from the fallen city. In the Year of the Unstrung Harp, Trythosford and other smaller colonies of the Borderlands declared their independence from New Amn and established a naval harbor across the Mothia Strait on Zilhatec Island.

Seeking to expand its operations and establish trade with Maztica, the Line reached an agreement with the newly established government of Trythosford and began construction of their first shipyard in the New World. The Salt Rock Shipyard was completed in late summer of the Year of Wild Magic (1372 DR).

Sea Routes

The Bozeman Line follows the profits and will ship goods to any port along the Sword Coast, the Trackless Sea, or beyond.

The Line, however, does have five primary trade routes where the majority of the fleet spends its time.

Sea of Moonshae Route: Leaving from Callidyr, the Sea of Moonshae Route takes the ships of the Line through the following port cities in order: Kingsbay (6.5), Aithelar (5), Iron Keep (2.5), Olafstaad (2), Gnarhelm (4), Caftenor (2), Graystaad (2), Hammerstaad (2), Rogarsheim (3), Morray (3.5), Corwell (5), Westphal (9), Callidyr (7.5). The entire route takes 54 days.

Northern Islands Route: Leaving from Callidyr, the Island Kingdoms Route takes the Line through the following port cities in order: Mintarn, Ventriss, Ruathym, Gundbarg, Vilkstead, Uttersea, Bjorn's Hold, Fireshear, Luskan, Port Last, Neverwinter, Waterdeep, Callidyr.

Sword Coast Route: Leaving from Callidyr, the Sword Coast Route takes the Line through the following port cities in order: Waterdeep, Baldur's Gate, Athkatla, Murann, Velen, Callidyr.

Maztica Route: Leaving from Callidyr, the Maztica Route takes the Line through the following port cities in order: Sambar, Helmsport, New Waterdeep, Trythosford, Newport, Fort Flame, Barth, Callidyr.

Southern Islands Route: Leaving from Callidyr, the Southern Islands Route takes the Line through the following port cities in order: Velen, Skaug, Thordentor, Kirlyntar, Zazesspur, Myratma, Memnon, Calimport, Sambar, Callidyr.

Recent Events

Year of the Tankard, 1370 DR

- **Hammer 30:** The Rundeen secretly approach the Shadow Thieves for information and access to the colonies of New Amn. Considering the Rundeen a barrier to its ability to work in Calimshan, the Shadow Thieves refuse.
- **Alturiak 21:** Despite sea storms throughout this month, over a dozen ships set sail for Maztica, loaded with mercenaries and priests of Helm to reinforce those at Helmsport, New Amn.
- **Ches 28:** The cities of Riatavin and Trailstone in Amn rebel and petition Tethyr to join that country as cities and potential counties. Queen Zaranda of Tethyr accepts their petition and makes them Tethyrian.
- **Tarsakh 1:** The Bozeman Line completes construction on the Manticore Shipyards in Velen, Tethyr.
- **Tarsakh 15:** Of sixteen ships that left Amn in Ches, only eleven arrive at Helmsport.
- **Eleasias 22:** Humanoid forces move against the Amnian port city of Murann. As the Sothillisian troops besiege the city, the Rundeen contract with pirates of the Nelanther to establish a naval blockade of the city. ^[CD p.134]
- **Eleasias 24:** The *Black Alaric* and a number of unmarked pirate ships tighten the blockage around Murann's port. Unable to flee the city, the humanoid army seizes the gold-laden ships trapped within the harbor. ^[Lo12 p.25]

¹² Source: *Dragons of Faerûn* p.43,150; *Dragon Magazine* #241

- **Marpenoth 2:** The first Durpari merchant ships return from Maztica with trade goods.

Year of the Unstrung Harp, 1371 DR

- **Ches 23:** The Council of Six sends word to Governor-General Cordell of New Amn, requesting aid. Cordell is unable to send the Golden Legion, as the bulk of the army is engaged in the south against the Star Worm H'Calos.
- **Tarsakh 10:** From Athkatla, the Council of Six sends a fleet of twenty carracks to break the blockade on Murann. Secretly aided by the Runderen and select Tethyrian nobles, the pirates withstand the attack, leaving the majority of Amn's fleet scuttled in Tarseth Bay.
- **Midsummer:** By midsummer, Murann is captured by the ogre magi and his army. Sothillis declares Murann the capital of the so-called "Sothillisian Empire". ^[PoF p.41]
- **Marpenoth 10:** The Bozeman Line sends an envoy to Pristoleph the Purple, Ransar of Innarlith, to offer the Line's support in constructing the Great Canal. The ransar politely refuses.
- **Eleint 4:** Hondo the Black is dispatched to Trythosford to establish trade relations with the fledgling colonies of the New World.

Year of Wild Magic, 1372 DR

- **Hammer 19:** The church of Selûne musters an army of crusaders to retake Moonmaiden's Hall in Murann. The Sothillisians successfully repel the attack. ^[PoF p.41]
- **Eleasias 3:** The Bozeman Line completes construction on the Salt Rock Shipyards on Zilhatec Island in Maztica.

Year of Rogue Dragons, 1373 DR

- **Tarsakh 18:** Lantana missionaries from the Church of Gond establish a temple on the largest isle of the Green Sisters. The priests name the island St. Ippen, in honor of a great hero of their faith, and begin construction of the Great Lighthouse.
- **Mirtul 9:** The ancient red dragon Hoondarrh¹³, "The Red Rage of Mintarn", emerges from his subterranean lair beneath the isle of Skadaurak and flies west toward the Moonshaes. In a rage befitting his name, the Red Rage vents his fury on the city of Callidyr, setting much of the city ablaze.

Mercantile Campaigns

Mercantile campaigns require a style of roleplaying different from that of the prototypical D&D adventure. *Dungeon Master's Guide II* outlines rules and approaches for running a business or guild. Additionally, the FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign supplement *Power of Faerûn* contains additional rules for running a mercantile campaign in the Realms.

- **Mirtul 11:** A circle of powerful druids led by Robyn Kendrick teleport to Callidyr and drive Hoondarrh off. The damage left in the wyrm's wake will take years to rebuild.
- **Mirtul 12:** In his flight from Callidyr, Hoondarrh temporarily shakes off the effects of the Rage and retreats to his lair beneath Skadaurak. There he begins preparations for the casting of a spell that will ensure his immortality and protect him from future madness.
- **Mirtul 14:** Hoondarrh completes the ritual and transforms himself into a ghostly dragon¹⁴. Free from the effects of the Rage, the Red Rage plots against the Moonshaes.
- **Flamerule 9:** Construction of the Great Lighthouse of St. Ippen is completed.
- **Eleint 4:** The colony of New Waterdeep is resettled on Maztapan Island.

Year of Lightning Storms, 1374 DR

- **Tarsakh 23:** In a series of ground-shaking explosions along its forty mile length, Innarlith's Great Canal connecting the Lake of Steam to The Nagaflo is destroyed.
- **Midsummer:** The city of Murann and settlements all along the Trade Way from the Cloud Peaks to the Wealdath come under attack by packs of stingers ^[MoF p.80] strange scorpion-men from far-off Maztica. They demand repayment of all treasure plundered from their lands across the Trackless Sea. ^[PoF p.43]
- **Eleint 5:** The Council of Six in Amn and the Murkul Sothillis of Murannheim declare a truce and form an alliance against the tincallis of Oaxaptupa, as the stingers call themselves and their newly established kingdom. ^[PoF p.43]

¹³ Source: *Dragons of Faerûn* p.43,150; *Dragon Magazine* #241

¹⁴ Source: *Draconomicon* (2003) p.161

Year of Risen Elfkin, 1375 DR

- **Kythorn 16:** The world's first frigate, *Black Medusa*, launches from the Manticore Shipyards in Velen, commanded by the legendary captain Hondo the Black

Mercantile Campaign

Taxes & Fees

DOCKING AND BERTHING FEES

Most seaports throughout the Sea of Swords will collect a docking and berthing fee upon entering port. This fee is typically 5 gold pieces, and is paid by the ship's captain.

ANNUAL HARBOR TAX

It is also common for port cities to collect an annual harbor tax from each business or merchant family that uses the harbor. This fee, in the amount of 1 platinum, is used to pay for needed repairs and expansion.

Voyages

STANDARD BERTH

The standard rate for a working berth on a ship of the Line is 4 gold per person, per day. For 6 gold per person, per day, a passenger need not work on the voyage.

CHARTERED SHIPS

A few ships of the Line are available for those adventurers that wish to charter a private vessel, complete with a fully trained crew. One may charter a ship to travel nearly anywhere throughout Faerûn's many seas. Ships are never chartered without a crew. Travel to distant islands or continents beyond Faerûn, however, has restrictions (see Exotic Destinations below)

Exotic Destinations

THE LAND OF FATE

The Bozeman Line began regular trips to Zakhara, the Land of Fate, starting in the Year of Lightning Storms (1374 DR), when High Burgher Theomund Dugas established trade relations with the Council of Corsairs of Hawa, City of Stilts. The Rundeen tried to establish trade with the corsairs of Hawa years prior, but were turned away. This was likely due to the Rundeen trafficking in the slave trade, like Hawa's chief enemy—the mamluks of Qudra.

A direct voyage from Velen to Hawa takes roughly 90 days each way, with an occasional stop at Cathtyr, Dambrath to restock or repair. Cargo ships from Faerûn chiefly export paper,

gemstones, fine wool, wood, and grain to Zakhara. Imports from the Land of Fate include desert horses, fine carpets, coral jewelry, and exotic dyes, salves and perfumes.

THE EASTERN REALMS

Voyages to the Eastern Realms of Kara-Tur are extremely rare as most goods from the Far East are brought into Faerûn via caravan along the Spice Road. Occasionally, however, an intrepid captain and his or her crew will brave the unforgiving seas and months aboard ship to reap the rewards of the orient.

As an organization, the Bozeman Line has not established trade relations with the lands of Kara-Tur.

THE NEW WORLD

Amn's Council of Six imposes a steep fee for travel to the Maztica. The standard rate is 250 gold for a working berth on a westbound ship, and 400 gold for a working berth on an eastbound ship from New Amn to Amn. If an additional 50% is paid, the berth is compensatory and no work is required while on board ship.

A ship heading west toward Maztica must pay 2,000 platinum plus 10% of the net worth of any trade goods on board. Ship's returning from Maztica must pay a 4,000 platinum fee. Optionally, a ship's captain may petition the Council of Six for a charter to ensure safe passage to the New World. 5,000 platinum gains the captain an official Centaur Charter (one round-trip voyage to Maztica), while an official Pearl Charter grants unlimited voyages to and from Maztica for a mere 100,000 platinum. If a merchant or ship captain does not pay these fees, the ship risks confiscation if it tries to drop anchor in New Amn.

Fortunately for travelers, Amn no longer has a monopoly on shipping to and from the New World. As of the Year of Wild Magic (1372 DR), the Bozeman Line now offers transport to and from Maztica at a fee substantially cheaper than Amn. Passengers need pay only 100 gold for a working berth on a westbound ship, and 200 gold for the return trip. Vessels of the Line never dock at Helmsport, instead preferring Trythosford, New Waterdeep, or other colonies to the north of New Amn.

THE DARK CONTINENT

In the Year of Lightning Storms (1374 DR), Hondo the Black became the first Faerûnian to navigate the Strait of Lopango and explore the fabled Dark Continent of Katashaka. Accompanied by representatives from Chult, Hondo successfully established contact with the native tribes of Tabaxi.

Trackless Sea Gazetteer

HAEL

The Trackless Sea was formed millennia ago, when the continent of Merrouroboros was ripped apart by the Sundering. As the continental shelf was pushed westward, the Black Sea was opened up, forming the Moonshaes and other islands of the Trackless Sea.

Even today, much of the Trackless Sea remains uncharted.

Perilous Waters

OBORON'S MAW

Located fifty nautical miles south-southeast of Nindrol, Oboron's Maw is a turbulent stretch of ocean that has claimed many a ship that dared to sail through its deadly waters. Within, huge 100-foot wide whirlpools form, seemingly at random. This region did not receive its name from the dread whirlpools, however. Oboron is whispered to be the name of the largest and most ancient of the giant squid that live in these waters. Vessels trapped in the maelstrom are easy prey for these aggressive predators from the deep. Most sailors wisely risk the pirates of the Nelanther, rather than venture through Oboron's Maw.

Uncharted Islands

Mij

Located in the waters west of Chult, this tiny island is most frequently found by sailors heading southwest from the Ssan or Mother-of-Mists on the journey to the Whale's Flukes. As the fog lifts from the ship, visitors find themselves about a mile from shore in shallow waters teeming with jellyfish^[SW p.161]. The inhabitants are a friendly enough people. Still, due to the difficulty in navigating the mist-shrouded waters, no merchants have attempted to establish regular contact with the island.

THE TEETH

These four small islands, located southwest of the Moonshaes (about 120 miles due south of the Gullrocks), are collectively known as the Teeth. The largest of these islands, named Barth, is the infrequent home of "The White Worm" Arveiatrace¹⁵. The Teeth rarely receives visitors, save the occasional patrol from an elven warship out of Evermeet.

SARAMBRIL

Due west-southwest from the Teeth, about 650 miles into the deep ocean, the sea is dotted with numerous small islands and rocks. The large northernmost island is named Sarambril by the natives.

South of Sarambril, sheltered by it and by Eskember from the worst winds, are many small, rocky islands inhabited by simple fisher-folk. These brown-skinned, long-limbed people are called "the Hael" by local pirates, after the name of one of the larger islands.

ESKEMBER

To the west of the islands of the Hael is the large island of Eskember, which is roughly teardrop-shaped, with its long axis running north-south and its larger, bulbous part at the south end. Eskember is usually covered with a light mist, and is always covered with a forest of huge shadowtop trees, of a height and girth astonishing to most mainlanders who see them. The port of Eskember, in particular, has become something of a crossroads trading place, haven, and 'neutral ground' for pirates, outlaws, slavers, whalers, far-faring fisherfolk, and outcasts from all over Faerûn.

Weapons and Magic

Unlike many seafarers of old, the sailors of the Line do not fear magic. They view it as welcome tool to ensure a safe voyage.

Weapons

Harpoon, Heavy: A harpoon is an extra heavy crossbow adapted to fire short, barbed spears. The spears can be affixed to a cable (up to 60 ft. in length) that is wound onto a spool affixed beneath the muzzle of the bow. Though designed for hunting whales and other large sea creatures, the harpoon can be used on dry land.

If a creature is struck by a heavy harpoon, it must make a Reflex saving throw (DC 10 + damage dealt), or the harpoon will lodge in the creature's body. The creature is then bound by the cable to the harpoon, and can be tugged toward the wielder with an opposed Strength check. A harpooned creature moves at only half speed and cannot charge or run.

The cable (AC 14, hardness 8, hp 2) can be cut with a slashing weapon, or the spear may be pulled out of the body (a partial action) with a Strength check of 20 (inflicting 1d10 points of damage).

Loading a heavy harpoon is a full-round action that provokes an attack of opportunity.

[15gp; 1d12 (L); 19-20/x2; 60ft.; 15lbs; P]

Slime-Coated Harpoon: This +2 *aquatic corrosive acidic burst heavy harpoon* is the creation of the Kraken Society. These imposing weapons are mounted on the Society's squid brigantine warships.

Strong evocation; CL 12th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *freedom of movement*, *acid fog*;

¹⁵ Source: *Dragons of Faerûn* p.17,146; *Dragon Magazine* #231

Bombard, Lantan: First used in the Year of Burning Steel (1246 DR), bombards are large smokepowder weapons designed to fire heavy stone balls (known as shot) great distances. Sometimes referred to as a basilisk, the Lantan Bombard is an imposing and deadly weapon.

Shipboard guns fire many different types of shot, including chain shot, bar shot, and grape shot. Sometimes a *langrage* or fire-arrow is loaded into a gun. This projectile may set an enemy ship alight if fired into the sails or rigging.

Unlike a Thayan Bombard [UE p.55], a Lantan Bombard is much heavier, slower to fire, and not of magical construction.

Swabbing, loading, and aiming a Lantan Bombard is a 10 consecutive full-round action requiring DC 15 Profession (siege engineer) and a DC 10 Strength check.

[8000gp; 6d10 (L); 20/x3; 200ft.; P; 8 Crew; DD, Heavy Mount]

Smokepowder: Smokepowder is an expensive alchemical substance used to fire many types of firearms in the Realms. Smokepowder can be created by anyone with 9 ranks in Craft (alchemy). One pound of powder costs 25 gp; it takes 1 oz. to fire a pistol or musket, and 20 pounds to fire a Lantan Bombard. Lighter, more recent versions of the Lantan Bombard require only 4 pounds of smokepowder to fire.

Wondrous Items

Trident Badge: These amulets, fashioned in the form of a three-pronged trident, are given to seasoned sailors following their tenth year of service. Officers of the Line are awarded a *trident badge* following a single year of service. A *trident badge* allows the wearer to use *water breathing*, as the spell, once per day. The spell effect can be triggered as an immediate action, even if it isn't the sailor's turn.

Faint evocation; CL 6th; Craft Wondrous Item, *water breathing*; Price 7200 gp; Weight –.

References

Several core and Forgotten Realms supplements are referenced herein. In many cases, this reference is in the form of a superscript abbreviation of the book's title, which is tacked on to the end of a monster, timeline event, or other game element. The books and their abbreviations are as follows: *Cloak & Dagger* (CD), *Lands of Intrigue Book Two: Amn* (LoI2), *Monstrous Compendium: Monsters of Faerûn* (MoF), *Power of Faerûn* (PoF), *Stormwrack* (SW), *Unapproachable East* (UE). A page number usually follows the book reference.

FOLK OF FAERUN

Nadlok Atheon

By J P Hazelhoff

Illustrations by Julius Ryan Petilla



s an apprentice to a Cowled Wizard – Tarkas Thallavv the Gemayor¹ of Keczulla – Nadlok's life in Amn was not easy. Nadlok's drive to master the Art bordered on the insane, and drove him forward towards an almost exclusive focus in necromancy. Unbeknownst to the young wizard, his path towards the dark side of the Art was guided by divine hands. Velsharoon himself, seeing the potential of Nadlok, wanted to ensure the wizard's works were to further his own plans.

These plans came to an unfortunate end of sorts, when in 1362 DR, internal Council of Six power struggles (exposing the Meisarch's long-term duplicity as a high-level Cowled Wizard) had fall-out effects on 'expendable' members of the secretive wizards' organization. As a junior member of the organization, and a perceived liability due to his morbid fascinations, Nadlok Atheon was duped, dying at the hands of a mob.

A Velsharan priest and member of the Cult of the Dragon, who had been observing Nadlok on his deity's bidding, recovered the necromancer's body and attempted to create a useful servant. This experiment resulted in

¹ *Lands of Intrigue* – TSR1159; *Amn* booklet page 41: Tarkas Thallavv the Gemayor (N hm W9), is an effective manager, accountant, and public speaker who has kept Keczulla growing (with the Tanisloves' help, of course) for the past 15 years (per 1370 DR). He was once a family administrator for the Vinson family, but their influence dwindled while his skills brought him up. He is also secretly a member of the Cowled Wizards, and he has a secret library of magical tomes beneath the Gemansion.

Nadlok rising as a wight in full command of his necromantic Art, and with a more stable and cunning mind.

Pleased with his new form and additional powers, Nadlok fully embraced the worship of Velsharoon and joined the Cult of the Dragon on sponsorship of the priest who raised him. When the priest was called elsewhere for Cult duties, Nadlok took over the reins of the cell. Under his guidance, the living members of the cell approached Ringreemeralxoth, a young adult green dragon, who has his lair in the northeastern hills within the forest southwest of Brigand's Gorge, west of the Gulf of Storms. This was in addition to the attention the dragon had received from the Cultists of the Sembian cell. Only the young and increasingly vain dragon realized the double attention he is receiving; he is playing it to his full advantage.

Beshaba's hand must dabble in Nadlok's unlife, too, despite his rise in status and power: the former human is still being taken advantage of. His Cult superior is an agent of the Twisted Rune, reporting indirectly to the Rune's dracolich member, Sapphiraktar the Blue, via the beholder Vaxall of the Dying Gaze. The dracolich's plans for the young green dragon differ from those of Sammaster's followers, but he will use the Cult to turn Ringreemeralxoth into a dracolich under the Rune Master's control.

Unbeknownst to the wight Nadlok and the Twisted Rune, information about the Cult Wizard's whereabouts, activities and the identities of his secret sponsors are known to none other than Shoon VII. As an 'undercover' member of the Cowled Wizards in his form of the elven wizardress Zallanora

Argentresses², Shoon is looking for adventurers he can subtly put on Nadlok's trail.

Nadlok Atheon, Wight Wizard of the Cult of the Dragon: Undead Nec6; CR 9; Medium-size undead (Tethyrian human); HD 6d12+12; hp 35; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 19 (touch 15, flat-footed 16); Atk +3 melee (1d4-1/19-20, claw bracer) or +6 ranged (1d8/19-20, masterwork light crossbow); SA (Wight); SQ (Wight); AL LE; SV Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +6; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 0, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 14

Skills and Feats: Alchemy +12, Concentration +11, Knowledge (arcane) +10, Listen +4, Speak Language (Draconic), Spellcraft +12, Spot +4; Brew Potion, Great Fortitude, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (Necromancy), Greater Spell Focus (Necromancy), Spell Penetration (Necromancy).

Spells Prepared (5/5/5/4; base DC = 13 + spell level):

0 – *detect magic*, *disrupt undead**†, *ghost sound*, *ray of frost*, *read magic*

1st – *burning hands*, *chill touch**†, *mage armor*, *ray of enfeeblement**†, *spider climb*

2nd – *Aganazzar's scorcher*, *ghoul touch**†, *invisibility*, *resist elements*, *summon swarm*

3rd – *fly*, *haste*, *lightning bolt*, *vampiric touch*†

*These spells belong to the school of Necromancy, which is this character's specialty. Prohibited school: Divination.

†Because of Greater Spell Focus (Necromancy), the base DC for saves against these spells is 17 + spell level.

Possessions: *amulet of natural armor* +1, *wand of magic missile* (3rd), *ring of protection* +1, *arcane scroll of darkvision*, *potion of hiding*, 2 *potions of cure light wounds* (1st), *masterwork light crossbow*, 20 bolts, *silvered claw bracer*.



² *Lands of Intrigue* – TSR1159; *Erlkazar* booklet page 8: for more background on Shoon VII's reincarnation as the female elf.

UNTOLD STORIES

Collection IX

By Chris Jameson (Adventures I – VI)
& Scott Kujawa (Adventure VII - XII)

Being a collection of adventure hooks and starting tales for use in the *Forgotten Realms*

Adventure Hook I

A farmer's daughter finds the chance to live her own bard's tale.

Any bard worthy of being called such can recall a dozen tales about a poor farm lad who suffers a great wrong, and becomes a mighty hero to avenge the injustice. More widely traveled bards, such as Alariel Snowlark or Tanon the Taleweaver, can recite scores of these tales, alternatively moving their audiences to tears or causing them to cry out in joy and admiration.

Most of these tales revolve around poor farm lads, simple boys who begin the story innocent and unaware of the dangers of the world around them. Maeryn Doster, a farmer's daughter, knows many of these tales by heart. She never thought she'd have to live through one.

Maeryn Doster was born and raised in a small farming community. It was a simple life, with one season leading into another, while everything else remained unchanged. Though Maeryn loved listening to the heroic tales spun by passing bards, or recounted by village elders, she had no ambition further than marrying Jalson, the handsome son of the village smith.

Strangers passed through the village from time to time. Most were simple peddlers, but bards were not an uncommon sight. Adventurers occasionally passed through the village, as well, swaggering with bravado and the casual arrogance their kind so often displayed to unassuming farmers. Despite their willingness to spend gold, adventurers

were not overly welcome in the village, for they too often caused a great commotion and left the local boys discontent and rebellious.

When the Company of the Singing Scorpion came through the village, no one expected any more trouble than what adventurers usually caused. But these wandering bravos caused far more trouble than most, actively enjoying bullying and hurting the townsfolk, whenever possible. The leader of this rough band, the swordsman Orndal Duskin, became a terror to the women of the village, forcing his attentions on any that caught his eye.

One such maiden was Maeryn's younger sister, Annali. The unfortunate girl resisted Orndal's drunken advances, triggering his anger. He became abusive. Annali fought back, but this only enraged Orndal. His drunken lust giving way to fury, Orndal nearly beat Annali to death.

Maeryn's love, Jalson, tried to rescue the battered girl. Though years of working in the smithy had left Jalson broad of shoulder and strong of arm, he was no match for Orndal. The swordsman cut the boy down without a thought, leaving his body lying near that of the unconscious girl.

The next day, Orndal and his companions, perhaps fearing a reprisal, left before dawn. It was hours before Orndal's handiwork was discovered. Annali was coaxed back from the brink of death, but her would-be rescuer was lost to Kelemvor's halls. All of the townsfolk were enraged, though perhaps none were as strongly affected as Maeryn.

When the PCs arrive in the village barely a tenday later, they are greeted with barely

concealed hostility. All of the townsfolk shun them as much as possible, but keep wary eyes on them. The PCs are all but told their kind are no longer welcome in this village.

Maeryn is the one exception. Though angry, she's bright enough to realize that not all adventurers are alike. Moreover, she sees in the PCs her chance for revenge. A fair hand with an axe or dagger, Maeryn knows she is no match for Orndal and his companions. With the PCs aiding her, though, she can meet the swordsman on her own terms.

She has little to offer, but she begs the PCs to follow the Company of the Singing Scorpion. She readily offers all of that group's belongings to the PCs, if they will help her hunt down the evil swordsman and his friends. Her only request is that it be her hand that slays Orndal. The PCs have to help her find and fight her foes, perhaps training her in proper combat along the way.

Adventure Hook II

All Cilser Runefall wants is to be back in a body.

In life, Cilser Runefall was a careful and studious mage. Despite a love of both learning and magic, Cilser was not one to take risks. He spent a considerable amount of time in study and research, only venturing out of his tower when it was necessary for his studies. Despite his admittedly retiring nature, Cilser still managed to rise to levels of power that most mages never see.

In his later years, Cilser began researching methods of circumventing death. It wasn't that he feared entering Myrkul's realm; Cilser just wanted to keep studying magic. Undeath, however, was not something Cilser sought. He had encountered liches before, and he feared the effects undeath would have on him. Prolonging his life through arcane means was possible, but even that could have unintended effects.

Cilser instead chose to transfer his sentience into an inanimate object. He worked towards this goal for many years, eventually giving himself the ability to possess and animate

any non-living object, while leaving his body in stasis. Once this goal was achieved, his next objective was to construct a mechanical body for himself, an automaton that would be animated and directly controlled by his own spirit.

He never had the chance to construct, or even design, his new body. On the first day of Kythorn in the Year of the Dracorage (1018 DR), his tower was razed to the ground by a flight of berserk red dragons. Cilser barely had time to cast his mind into a nearby dagger before being crushed in the fallen masonry of his own home.

In the centuries since his death, Cilser has seen most of Faerûn. He usually inhabits small bladed weapons, but has also animated many pieces of jewelry, some coins, a statue or two, and on one occasion, a door in a popular Waterdhavian festhall. He has usually acted as a silent observer, not revealing his presence unless absolutely necessary.

After more than three and a half centuries, Cilser is tired of observing the world without interacting with it. At some convenient quiet time, one of the PCs is surprised when a previously inanimate, non-magical item on his person suddenly animates itself and begins speaking to him. Cilser wants to either possess a suitable automaton (if the PCs know of one), or he wants assistance in designing and building one that he can then animate.

Cilser can offer nearly anything as a reward. Having seen so much of the Realms, he knows where a lot of treasures lie forgotten. He could tutor another mage, or, at the DM's option, Cilser may have been present in some prior situation the PCs would dearly love to know about.

Once Cilser has a body to occupy again, he retreats to some inconvenient locale to resume his arcane studies.

Adventure Hook III

Even as some humans are called to a life at sea, so are some merfolk called to a life on land.

Many of Faerûn's folk, particularly bards and sailors, wonder about life under the sea. It is known, particularly since the Deepwater Wars of the Year of the Gauntlet (1369 DR), that there are intelligent races below the waves. While some claim to have peacefully dealt with the sea-dwellers, their numbers are few. Fewer still have ventured beneath the sea, to experience firsthand the wonders of the aquatic lands. And even these few are unaware of the fact that sometimes the sea-dwellers leave their watery home and choose to live on dry land.

Daevel the merman is one such former sea-dweller. The third son of a baron in the duchy of Calnead, in the merfolk kingdom Eadraal, Daevel found his prospects limited, so long as he remained at home. He developed a habit of traveling; his father was quick to take advantage of this, and sent his son on various diplomatic missions.

Several years ago, Daevel was given a rare *Drywalker's Amulet*, a magical device that allows a merfolk to assume human form for extended periods of time. With this device, Daevel was sent into Cormyr to obtain some rare materials for trade in Serôs. Daevel succeeded in his mission, but fell in love with a human woman, Sadira Talloak. After returning to Calnead one last time, Daevel turned his back on the Sea of Fallen Stars and prepared for a life on land.

Nearly ten years later, Serôs is still recovering from the events of the Twelfth Serôs War. Both of Daevel's older brothers were recently slain in a daring sahuagin raid, leaving Daevel as the heir to his father's barony. The baron desperately wants his remaining son to come home.

This adventure hook can begin above or beneath the waves, at the DM's preference. If the PCs are already exploring Serôs, recruiting them should be an easy matter. If they are still on land, then they are contacted by one of the baron's agents, who recruits

them. Further complications could include a rival adventuring company, who hears of the search and chooses to capture Daevel, ransoming him back to his father. Alternatively, Daevel could now have a family with Sadira; their children would be a major part of the decision to remain on land or return to the sea. Daevel could have also earned some position that makes it difficult to leave, such as working for Sadira's merchant father.

Adventure Hook IV

Faelanys Kammeral is one of her parents' greatest joys – or the source of their worse sorrow.

The Kammerals were once a very wealthy family, but lost a great deal of their fortune two generations ago. After much time and a considerable amount of struggle, the Kammerals managed to reclaim enough wealth to keep their social status secure. It has taken almost fifty years, but the family is once more gaining in prominence.

Perevon Kammeral is the current family patriarch. He is renowned for his exceedingly shrewd business sense, and his ability to predict economic trends is so accurate that some claim he's blessed by both Savras and Waukeen. A kindly man, he is exceedingly dedicated to his wife, Lindra, their three sons, Perren, Rolden, and Sansen, and their daughter, Faelanys.

Faelanys is a beautiful and intelligent girl. Seventeen summers old, she is attracting a considerable amount of attention from men – some her age, some as much as three times older than her. Her father is already in negotiations with several prominent families, trying to determine how best to use her hand in marriage to benefit the family.

However, there has always been some mystery surrounding Faelanys. Though Perevon and Lindra had always wanted a daughter, the gods did not see fit to quicken a girl child in Lindra's womb. Their daughter was given to them in a different manner: they awoke, early one Marpenoth morning, to find an infant girl left in their dooryard. They

were delighted at their good fortune, but still spent nearly two years trying to find the girl's real parents. Neither divination nor investigation revealed Faelanys's heritage, so her new parents were only too happy to *raise* her as their own.

Now, however, they are far more concerned about their daughter's mysterious past. Three nights past, all three of her brothers were brutally slain in their beds. Faelanys was discovered in the family library, dazed, incoherent, and covered with blood. Clerics were summoned. Under their care, Faelanys fully recovered – except for her memory. She has no recollection at all of the previous night. Even with mind-reading magics, no one can determine what happened to Faelanys, or how she came to be found drenched in her brothers' blood. The spirits of the three brothers cannot be contacted; it is impossible to raise or question them.

Perevon hires the PCs to investigate. Lacking any reasonable leads, he feels that the answers may lie somewhere in Faelanys's past. Though he loves his daughter greatly, he now fears that she may have been specifically planted in his family for these dark deeds. Even while praying for her innocence and lack of involvement, he suspects that magical control or possession may have caused Faelanys to attack her brothers. If the PCs can delve in Faelanys's past and ascertain what happened to her brothers, they will be richly rewarded.

Adventure Hook V

Janser Talfin has always admired his lady Reisa for her intellect – but now he fears her.

Janser Talfin is a farmer's son. Like many boys in his position, he wanted more than a life of raising crops. He dreamed of adventure, and great deeds, of courageous acts and the defeat of terrible foes. In his imagination, he saw himself winning great wealth and earning the respect of powerful men. And he dreamed of one other thing: his future with the girl Reisa.

Reisa lived with her parents on a nearby farm. She and Janser became good friends at

a very young age, and the passing of years only strengthened their bond. They grew up together, their childhood games eventually giving way to shared moments and explorations of passion. It was clear to anyone who saw the two together that Janser and Reisa would spend their lives together.

Though Reisa would have been content to marry a farmer, she understood that Janser wouldn't be satisfied with such a peaceful life. She tried to dissuade him, but eventually accepted his decision to leave home to seek his fortune. Reisa swore to await his return, and kept her promise for six long years.

When Janser, now a seasoned warrior, returned from his life of adventure, he found Reisa waiting for him. Building a modest manor, he settled down to enjoy life with Reisa. Soon after the manor was constructed, preparations for a grand wedding had begun.

On the day of their wedding, Janser gave Reisa a gift: a magnificent magical mirror he had discovered while adventuring. Reisa was delighted with her gift. For the next month, the couple was overwhelmingly happy.

A little more than a month after the wedding, everything changed. Overnight, Reisa changed. Where she had previously been quiet and gentle, she suddenly became loud and demanding. She became abusive to everyone around her, and seemed to be constantly angry. Even Janser was treated rudely; Reisa acted as if he was little more than a barely intelligent servant. Janser soon found himself constantly on guard, trying to contain his wife's increasing violent rages.

Only after several days had passed did Janser notice that the mirror was gone. It all became clear to him: the mirror had contained some malign intelligence, and this evil entity had displaced the mind of Janser's beloved Reisa. Though devastated by the fact that he had brought this upon her, Janser realized he had to stay with Reisa, to keep her from hurting anyone. Janser asks the PCs to do what he can't: find the mirror and free Reisa from her magical prison.

Adventure Hook VI

The archfiend Thexannion has finally gained the upper hand in his millennia-long conflict with the solar Serenraliel.

The powerful balor Thexannion has been battling the solar Serenraliel for millennia. Sages knowledgeable about the planes know of this conflict, and can even cite specific battles from throughout history. It is not known to sages why the two feel such a powerful enmity, nor do they know exactly when the conflict began.

Almost a century ago, a foolish wizard summoned Thexannion to Faerûn. The demon quickly broke free of the mage's control, slaying the ambitious but weak spellcaster before departing. Having had dealings with the Netherese in times past, Thexannion entered the Anauroch desert, looking for powerful artifacts that were left behind during Netheril's fall. Thexannion searched for several decades, but managed to avoid the notice of the Bedine and the phaerimm – he didn't want Serenraliel finding him before he was ready. His search accumulated an impressive arsenal of magical items, but yielded few items of great power – until five years ago.

In a workshop buried deep beneath the High Ice, he found something that appeared to be an altar. Studying the altar, he determined that its appearance could be changed to resemble an altar dedicated to any deity desired. Further, it was magically linked to a magnificent golden throne. If a sentient being was sacrificed on the altar, its magics would capture and consume their soul. The unholy energy created by the sacrifice would flow into anyone seated on the throne. Anyone evil enough to use the altar would be strengthened by the influx of energy – but the stolen energies had a very corrupting effect. In his experiments, he found that the sacrificial energies could drive an evil man mad or turn the most virtuous paladin into a depraved murderer.

His weapon selected, it was time to turn it on Serenraliel. Thexannion traveled in disguise to Selgaunt, where he set himself up as a wealthy merchant named Malacon Firekin. He

captured several lone travelers, in preparation for his fight with Serenraliel. Thexannion then gave his location to one of his underlings, and sent the minor demon on a mission that he knew would result in the underling's capture by Serenraliel. Thexannion next had a *charmed* human sailor sacrifice the prisoners, filling the demon with an incredible amount of power.

As the demon knew he would, Serenraliel soon came to confront Thexannion. The solar was unprepared for the temporary power the fiend had gained, and was quickly captured. Thexannion forced Serenraliel into the throne, binding the solar to the seat.

Through more *charmed* humans, Thexannion created a cult dedicated to the worship of Serenraliel – who he was now posing as. Demanding sacrifices in exchange for money and power, Thexannion soon had a steady stream of unholy energy flowing into Serenraliel. After three years of this torture, the solar is nearly mad with grief and shame, and is dangerously close to becoming corrupted by the evil power.

The PCs can either become involved when someone they know mysteriously disappears, or when a relative of a missing person asks them to investigate their loved one's disappearance. It can be as difficult or as easy to find the cult as the DM wants, but finding the truth and freeing the solar should be rather difficult.

Adventure Hook VII

A caravan carrying grain from Goldenfields to Waterdeep has gone missing. Trackers, which were sent from both Goldenfields and Waterdeep, met up between the two settled lands. After looking around for a day or two, the trackers came to the conclusion that a band of goblins has taken the caravan. Oddly, none of the guards or the caravan workers were found, nor were their tracks. The only tracks are of the wagon wheels, which head east, and the footprints of the goblins. Goldenfields has offered a reward for any information about the caravan or for the

return of the grain, so that it can be delivered to Waterdeep.

Adventure Hook VIII

Teraunt, a human male Gondsman and member of the Society of Creative Castle Design and Construction, has created some designs for a new type of castle. He claims that the designs came to him in an epiphany from Gond. However, so far no one has expressed any interest in his blueprints, and he is starting to be discouraged because he wants to see the castle built before he passes into Gond's realm. He has thought about how to acquire the funding, and has decided that an adventurer could be his patron, since they always seem to have money to spare. He has set out to find a band of adventurers who are looking to build a stronghold and who could supply the funding that he seeks.

Adventure Hook IX

While riding north towards Silverymoon, Kesslada, a virgin member of the Order of the Unicorn, saw one of Lurue's unicorn children being stalked by a band of Malar worshippers. After Kesslada slaughtered the small band of Malarites, she freed the captive unicorn. Once the unicorn was freed, it offered its thanks by lowering its head and allowing the Kesslada to use it as a mount. However, Kesslada didn't realize that she let a member of the Black Blood see her slaughter, and now the werereatures of Malar are stalking her and the unicorn. The leader of the band, Eskaer, a male wereboar, seeks Kesslada because he wishes to turn her into an evil wereboar. He seeks the unicorn because it was going to be a sacrifice to Malar. (The PCs could get involved when they notice the werereatures stalking Lurue's follower and her unicorn mount.)

Adventure Hook X

During the Time of Troubles, Lady Kaitlin Tindall Bloodhawk served as the Red Knight's avatar. While she was away, her ancestral

home in Tethyr was burned, and all inhabitants put to the sword. After the Time of Troubles had ended, Lady Kaitlin rebuilt the castle as the Citadel of Strategic Militancy, a temple to the Red Knight. She searched for the perpetrators of the slaughter, but never found any information. Recently, Lady Kaitlin received a report that the group responsible for burning the castle and murdering its inhabitants was an army of followers of Garagos. The report further went on to say that the army was lead by Garagos's avatar. She isn't sure who has sent her the report, and the messenger that brought it disappeared the moment that the report was handed to the guards at the gate. For now, she has asked the king and queen of Tethyr for permission to hire some adventurers to look into the report. Her only clue about who might have sent it is the image of a variant version of Tempus's holy symbol, a stiletto stabbing into the silver sword. Lady Kaitlin believes that the report came from somewhere in Tethyr, and she fears that followers of the war deity have sent it to her to trick her. She is hoping that hired adventurers could supply her with more information, and she is willing to reward them with training, money, or masterwork weapons or armor.

Adventure Hook XI

Alnshin, a Chondathan human male, has grown tired of being a farmer's son and he has run off to find his fame and fortune. This young boy finally made it to a (hamlet/village/town/city), where he has been begging any adventurers to take him on as a follower or helper so that he could learn from them. He isn't sure if he has been called by the deities or if he has any spark of the Art to wield the power of Mystra's Weave, but he is willing to listen to his more knowledgeable companions and learn what they are interested in teaching him, even if all he can do is swing some blades.

Adventure Hook XII

A female half-moon elven hermit who calls herself Niamh seeks the aid of the followers of Silvanus. She sent a message, using a flighty hamadryad, to the local gathering of Silvanus's followers, but she hasn't received a reply and isn't sure if they received her

message. She is concerned because she needs the followers to come for the wolf pups that she has been raising, who are now getting too old for her to raise. She doesn't know it, either, but the wolves are dire wolves. Niamh found them when the weak cries of their dying mother led her to the wolves' den.

SPRITES OF FAERUN

Part 11

By Jorkens

The Society of Sprites



Most of the information that follows is what I have gathered from conversations with elves and druids of Cormanthor, in addition to my meetings with the sprites themselves. These are all secretive folk, so I have had to puzzle together the information and fill it in with my own educated guesses. Though I question the veracity of this information, I have here chosen to give my sources the benefit of the doubt about their trustworthiness. As the information was given to me in this form, I hope you will forgive its presentation in a slightly note-like form.

In most worlds where sprites have made their homes, they are known as creatures of the forests and deep woodlands. In my travels, I myself have met small groups of faeries in secluded mountain valleys and by small lakes, both in this world and others, but this is a rarity. In many ways, these sprites have reminded me more of pixies and water-sprites in their general way of life.

When a group of sprites decides to settle in a world, they will usually pick a place as far away as possible from other intelligent creatures not of the Faerie Court – no one has ever accused the sprites of being a neighbourly race. Once settled, however, it is almost impossible to get them to move on, as long as they see a reasonable chance of surviving the next turn of the seasons. Sprites will therefore fight ferociously and even thrive in lands where few others dare tread.

Sprite groups will usually settle in the largest tree they can find near a permanent source of water. An open area, such as a field or a

glen in the woods, is almost as important as water. The dwelling tree will be the home of all the sprites; they will continue to expand their dwelling both in the branches and within the tree itself as much as possible. When this one tree grows too crowded, the sprites will separate into two groups, and one group will leave the dwelling, in search of a new home. The magic of Faerie gives the dwelling tree eternal life for as long as the sprites make it their home; the tree grows to its maximum size and then goes into a form of magical stasis, with seasonal changes but without aging. Duskwood, oak, maples, shadowtops and chestnuts are the favoured trees for dwellings, but any large tree species will do.

These settlements usually consist of between ten and twenty families, with villages of about a hundred sprites being the norm. I have seen some larger settlements in my time, but this is rare, and will usually act as a capital for a sprite land of sorts. In Cormanthor, there is a settlement near Semberholme where close to four hundred sprites make their living in an ancient shadowtop. I have also heard from the honorable sage Hazgeilon Bharaidii of Alaghôn that there is a settlement in the Misty Forest, where the sprites have magically grown several trees into each other, forming a castle of sorts, where hundreds of sprites and other faeries make their dwelling.

Each settlement will elect a leader, usually the greatest hunter or warrior, as there is little need for leadership among sprites except during major hunts and times of war. The sprites, known for their lack of ability to concentrate on anything for a length of time or cooperate with others, can, when their home is threatened, show an impressive talent for coordinated hit-and-run warfare. Anyone who has provoked sprites knows that their generally non-aggressive nature should

not be taken as cowardice. In my humble opinion, it would be more correct to say they were fearless. Sprite armies are feared in those forests and lands where it has been necessary for the faeries to band together against a large threat. One can, for example, find in several texts about the last days of Myth Drannor descriptions of sprites' courage in the war against the Army of Darkness. The war leaders of Chondath could (when drunk and in private) tell many stories of the losses they had suffered against the allied fey creatures and sylvan races of the Chondalwood. The diminutive sprites, combining their magical abilities of *invisibility* and *sleep* with sword and arrows, are opponents to be reckoned with.

This leader of the sprites, who bears the title of Chruchain, whether male or female, does in theory have tyrannical power within the community. However, it is extremely rare for a Chruchain to use his influence at all, outside of times of crisis. If a Chruchain proves to be overly demanding, the solution is quite simple: the other sprites say that the Chruchain is no longer the leader, and that's that. More often, a nagging leader will just be ignored if the majority of his subjects disagree with him. Leadership is an honour and a responsibility, not a right to power among the sprites. I wish more peoples of Faerûn could take up these traditions from sprites, but I am not holding my breath.

The Chruchains are responsible for keeping contact with what can best be described as the monarchs of the sprites. I am not referring to far-off Titania and Oberon in the dimension of the Faerie Court, but of the more local rulers in the world of the sprites' dwelling. Several settlements will be joined together in a form of nation, with the oldest settlement acting as the capital, and the eldest male and female there being monarchs of a sort. One of these monarchs is responsible for managing the capital; the other with maintaining the ties to the other settlements. The size of these countries will vary greatly, depending on how long the faeries have dwelled in this part of the world, and how hard their existence has been. In some places, we are talking about single settlements; in other cases, there can be dozens. It is not uncommon for other

immigrants of Faerie to settle within these lands, and in some cases the sprites' capitals can seem like miniature versions of the Faerie Court itself.

Several migrations from Faerie can settle in different parts of the same world; many of these countries can therefore be found in the same world. I myself know of at least half a dozen on Faerûn myself, in addition to those of Cormanthor, the Chondalwood and the Misty forest.

The position of monarch is a thankless one for sprites, as their main concern is to handle those responsibilities most sprites don't want to be bothered with. At the same time, their word is the word of all sprites when it concerns the relationship with the world at large, and they are the only ones with the power to gather the sprite armies. When this call goes out, all adult sprites must gather under the banner of the monarchs.

The daily life within each settlement is rarely influenced by the Chruchain or other persons of power. Every family has its own dwelling, either a small house or a cavity in the tree itself. The houses themselves rarely stand taller than a few feet, but this still gives the diminutive sprites two floors. Wooden boards are the most common building material, with the tree itself magically growing partially over the house after it is finished, holding it in a form of hand. The sprites decorate their dwellings with carvings, and in the summertime the houses are covered in orchids, honeysuckles and various vines.

When a new couple starts their life together, they will usually start by building their new home together. Other sprites will help in gathering building material, but the new couple must use their own hands to build the house. As the home of a sprite will often be its home for hundreds of years, much care and thought goes into this work.

I have encountered some sprite communities that surround themselves with a magical sphere that keeps the temperature of the area summer-like throughout the year. This is rare, however, as it makes the sprites' home all too easy for enemies to detect. Even conifers and other evergreens are

conspicuous when the snow never settles on their branches. In my experience, this is only done in lands where elves still are lords and the forests safe for them and their allies. These areas grow fewer and fewer in our time.

Rangers and elves from the lands east of the High Moor have told me of some sprites in their lands that live in hollow trees, but this is relatively rare, as few of these hollow giants have enough life left in them for the sprites' magic to preserve them. I suspect that a life deep inside these wood giants would be a little too claustrophobic for faeries, and evil tongues have whispered that such homes made them feel like they were copying their cousins, the pixies. Sprites do not have much love for caves, either.

Sprites may hide their dwellings, but there are few things in this world that show more activity than a sprite community when the inhabitants feel safe. As with most fey creatures, they need little sleep and a great variety of experiences to live a happy life. Sprites can therefore be seen hurrying back and forth from their dwellings to the forest throughout the day and night. These trips are usually aerial, but it is not uncommon for sprites to keep a herd of pixie colts that they ride during the summer months. These small horses rarely reach a height higher than the flowers in the meadows near the sprites' dwellings. Like the sprites themselves, these pixie colts, which in spite of their name are rarely found with the invisible mischief makers of the forest, are also denizens of the Seelie Court. They are as intelligent and magical as the sprites themselves. Sprites do not regard the pixie colts as pets, and would be shocked at the thought of keeping any creature in slavery. Any relationship between a sprite and a pixie colt is a partnership, not one of master and servant. I have heard stories of some southern sprites having the same relationship with large birds that they fly upon through the branches of the jungles and tropical forests.

Most sprites spend their days constantly hunting for food and adventures in the lands surrounding their homes. Sprites fly through the forest alone or in small groups, with boundless energy, seeking out new mysteries

and unknown creatures. As sprites have a selectively bad memory, there are always new sights to be seen and new places to see. In the moment of discovery, everything is a mystery to a sprite. It is difficult to say which of these is the single most important factor in a sprite's life; a sprite without the possibility of sorrowless play and adventures of discovery is even sadder to behold than a starving sprite.

Between each impression the world throws at them, sprites pass the time by playing games with each other. Games such as hide-and-seek, catch the leader, and various ballgames are all popular with sprites. Nothing delights a sprite more than when a creature by chance or by choice joins them in these games, as the element of unpredictability brings new life to games played daily for centuries.

All the groups of the faerie family are, to a degree, known as pranksters and tricksters that love to fool the "wingless" with (in their eyes, at least) harmless tricks. With pixies, this becomes almost a compulsive and uncontrollable urge. Sprites cannot rival the skills of the pixies when it comes to tricking others, as they have neither the illusionist abilities of their brethren nor the disposition, but I should point out that among faeries, sprites are the ones most able to use their keen wit and knowledge to think out traps and mischief that could be really harmful if the need should arise. This is rare, though, and usually sprites will be satisfied with stealing a few items and sabotaging a few possessions. This is also a favourite tactic for weakening opponents right before a battle.

As I already mentioned, the purpose of a sprite's wanderings are (in theory, at least) to collect food; sprites need a relatively large food supply, compared to the other faerie peoples. That is, when one is barely a foot tall, this is not much, but the sprites have a high life of enormous energy and constant movement, and will usually eat two to three small meals a day.

It is rarely a problem for sprites to find food in the woodlands, as they are omnivores that can eat almost anything, if necessary. Their diet mostly consists of nuts, roots, herbs and

mushrooms, but nectar and pollen are seen as delicacies. Sprites are not vegetarians, but both the size of living prey (even a mouse is huge when a creature so small is going to fly it home), and their respect for nature in the worlds they inhabit, make vegetarian food the largest part of their diet. When they do hunt the living, they prefer to hunt in large bands, so as to bring down as large a prey as possible. If they kill a deer, there is food for every one in the village for weeks; if they kill a mouse, a family has meat for a week. In both cases, one creature dies for their sake.

Sprites, when hunting, will always try to inflict as little fear and pain on their prey as possible. They will sneak up on their prey; though this is not strictly necessary, as no wild creature fears sprites. If they are noticed, sprites will see it as a breach of the pact between them and nature to kill the creature, and will seek out a different prey. When they are near enough, they will shoot their sleeping arrows into their prey, and then kill it as quickly and painlessly as they can. For sprites, the killing of the prey is as much a ritual of sorrow as of joy.

When sprites return to the village after food gathering, all the food they themselves do not need is shared with the rest of the village. Greediness is unknown among these creatures, and it is not their way to hoard what they themselves don't have a current use for.

Home life

With sprites' slightly hyperactive way of life, during three of the four seasons, the only time they spend in their homes is for meals and their short daily sleep. This changes during the cold season, when they enter a state of near-hibernation. As I have seen it, there is no natural tendency for family members to travel out into the forest together; some have preferred traveling partners, but these might as well be friends as members of the same household. Because of this, sprite families rarely see much of each other; this is what makes meals such an important part of their lives. During meals, family members will tell each other about the day's happenings and what they have seen; grown sprites will tell children about what

they can learn out of these happenings – and the children smilingly ignore every word. From what I have seen, this is what passes as child-rearing among sprites.

If one looks at the life of a sprite, there is not much of a family life outside of the meals. They live as monogamous couples and stay together until the death of one of them, but it can take hundreds of years for a sprite to find a partner they want to share their life with. Sprites are playful creatures, but the deeper feelings of falling in love take time and the feelings must mature before sprites make their choice. The advantage with this is that they know each other inside out by the time they start their life together.

As weddings are rare in the small sprite communities, the celebrations are made as glorious as only faeries can make them. The whole community (and any other faeries or Seelie creatures within a week's flight) will take part. All will dress up in their most glorious costumes, and the meadow where the wedding is held will be decorated with flowers from all the surrounding forest. The collected magic of the faeries will go into making the action as spectacular as possible.

Weddings will almost always consist of two sprites. It is quite uncommon for a sprite to go into a physical relationship with a creature from outside the faerie family. They will laugh at the innumerable proposals from brownies, leprechauns, and even satyrs, as few of their cousins of the Seelie Court are as choosy as the sprites. It is a rare, though not unheard of, occurrence for a sprite to accept such a proposal. The blessings of far-off Titania make the Seelie creatures fertile with creatures one would never consider related, and the results of these matings have given birth to unique creatures and species throughout the multiverse.

As there are so few rules and routines in sprites' lives, it is somewhat difficult to set a clear line between adulthood and childhood. The first ten years of a young sprite's life will be used by the parents to teach the young the basic skills and abilities they need to survive, and to show them which real dangers exist in the nearest areas. After this, the young faerie is expected to learn the rest

of what the world has to offer through experience.

This makes the first hundred years or so of a faerie's life a dangerous period, as they fly throughout the woodlands at random. The sprites' ability to turn themselves *invisible* saves them from many of these problems, but many sprites never reach maturity, due to the numerous dangers. Compared to other Seelie creatures, sprites have a high mortality rate among younger members – but they have adapted through time to have a larger birth rate than most.

In the life of a sprite there is only one day, except for marriage, that stands out: the Bachloill, or Turnback. It was decided long ago, when time itself was dawning, that each Seelie child shall at least once return to the halls of the Seelie Court, and swear their allegiance to Titania and Oberon. This journey is supposed to give the faerie a glimpse of the world they come from and in which they were created. Here they can also see the collected community of the Seelie creatures. After one year in the world of the faerie king and queen, the young sprite will have to decide if they wish to go home or if they wish to enter into the service of the court. If they wish to stay, they will spend the next hundred years in the home world of the faeries, before again being asked if they want to leave or stay. Most sprites, as with other Seelie creatures, will decide to serve for at least one century, but no one will take offense if they chose to return home instead.

What services in the mostly chaotic world of the faerie court consist of, I have never been able to determine. All sprites, faeries and Seelie creatures I have been fortunate enough to be able to ask have refused to answer this single question.

So, except for the one marriage night and a trip away from home, is there any form of structure in the world of the sprites?

There are, in fact, few races that celebrate as many ceremonies and individual days of importance as sprites. Sprite holidays are not tied just to the life of the individual, and do not last longer than the time needed for a party. If you are lucky enough to spend a

length of time among sprites, you will soon see that there are numerous celebrations, parades and dances. These give sprites an excuse for a party and for dressing up in their finery, and these events also symbolize the structures of the universe and dimensions that hold the multi-world existence of the sprites together. There are days of joy, days of sorrow, days of contemplation and days of play; what they all have in common is that they need a party.

These traditions can vary from settlement to settlement, but there are some common points among the sprites I have visited. I will concentrate on those I have seen among the sprites of Faerûn.

All sprites celebrate the night of the full moon with a solemn procession and a slow-moving dance, performed without music on a meadow near the steading. These nights are usually dedicated to Titania, but this is more out of courtesy than a close connection between the sphere of the goddess and the queen of the Faeries. The solstices and equinox are also important, and are usually celebrated with more a more festive celebration, with the whole of the sprites' repertoire of costumes and decorations, themed with the season being celebrated. As I understand it, these days are used to give thanks and praise to the world the sprites inhabit. Both greater gods of the wilds, Silvanus and the Great Mother, are given praise, in addition to the gods of the elven and Seelie races. Usually, these celebrations are attended by beings of the forest with friendly relations to the sprites. Large amounts of food are gathered for the festival, from all of the woodlands, so that on that night, peace can rule in the meadow. It is said that the magic of the forest is on its strongest on these nights, and I have heard that in the northlands, the goddess Mielikki attends the ceremonies among the sprites of the High Forest.

In addition to the holy days of the seasons, there are many local days celebrating happenings of importance for the community in question.

As can be seen, religious festivals are not terribly important to sprites. As with water-

sprites, grigs and other members of the faerie family, sprites worship the almighty Nathair Sgiathach. According to stories told by sprites, the fairy dragon god, a close ally of the Seelie Court, made himself the protector of the faeries on a whim – for at the time, no other god had claimed dominion over the faerie races. The faeries, not being overly religious (the reason for their lack of divine protection), like the mischievous side of the god and his good intentions. Most sprites I have spoken to smile a little over the dragon god that has made them his, but even they have admitted that in the collective divine spheres of all the universes sprites inhabit, they have found no gods who represent their basic values better than Nathair. He is whimsical, curious, and extravagant; that he is also lazy and pompous, they can tolerate. The sprites have had thousands of years to get used to their diminutive god, and are by now sincerely fond of him.

The presence of Nathair Sgiathach does not change the fact that both the sprites and their god are lacking in the basic abilities and mentality to form a true religion. Nathair has no priests or dogma, and no rituals that are celebrated by the faeries. The god of no creeds has only one command for his followers: "Enjoy yourself!"

Sprites have stressed that Nathair the Fairy Dragon is not an uncaring god, and the collected prayers of the sprite community can, in dire need, summon the god to help them. This is only done in the greatest need, as they do not see their god as the perfect guest. Nathair is a lazy, pompous braggart that expects the entire community to wait on him hand and wing, with a steady flow of food, compliments, and gifts. He is one of those gods that is best at a distance.

When a sprite's life finally comes to an end, there is rarely the sorrow one sees in other races at such occasions. Titania has made it clear since the early days of the gods that all Seelie creatures in all worlds will return to her when they die, no matter where they

have made their home. When they return to the halls of the Seelie Court, she will give them new life and new bodies. No sprite knows if he will return in this world, the Seelie Court, or in a different world; they do not even know what form of body they will inhabit. What they are sure of is that life will continue.

Life until that is long, however. Sprites are practically immortal, dying only from violence or by accident. In spite of this, most sprites chose to let their bodies wither and die around their thousandth year of life, as each world has only so many sights to offer, and the dreaded feeling of boredom will start to set in.

The sprite's body will disappear only minutes after death, and the essence of the being will travel away to the Seelie Court. This is the reason no faerie grave has ever been found.

The news of a faerie's passing will be received with sadness by friends and relatives, but this is the sadness of knowing they will not see their friend again: they all know the sprite's life continues somewhere else.

* * * *

I hope you have enjoyed these musings over the life of the winged ones of the forests, dear reader. I will again give warning, though. As I have mentioned, the races of the Seelie Court are so widespread and so diverse that there are few absolutes. There are therefore several exceptions to what I have said in each world, so don't follow my words blindly.

I sit here now staring at these notes, and will say a silent prayer to the gods that the information the sprites themselves have told me is correct, and that they did not treat me to one of their jokes by filling my notes with all the jokes their old brains could think out.

- *Dhamina of Deepingdale*

THE HIN OF THE DALELANDS

Stumphill

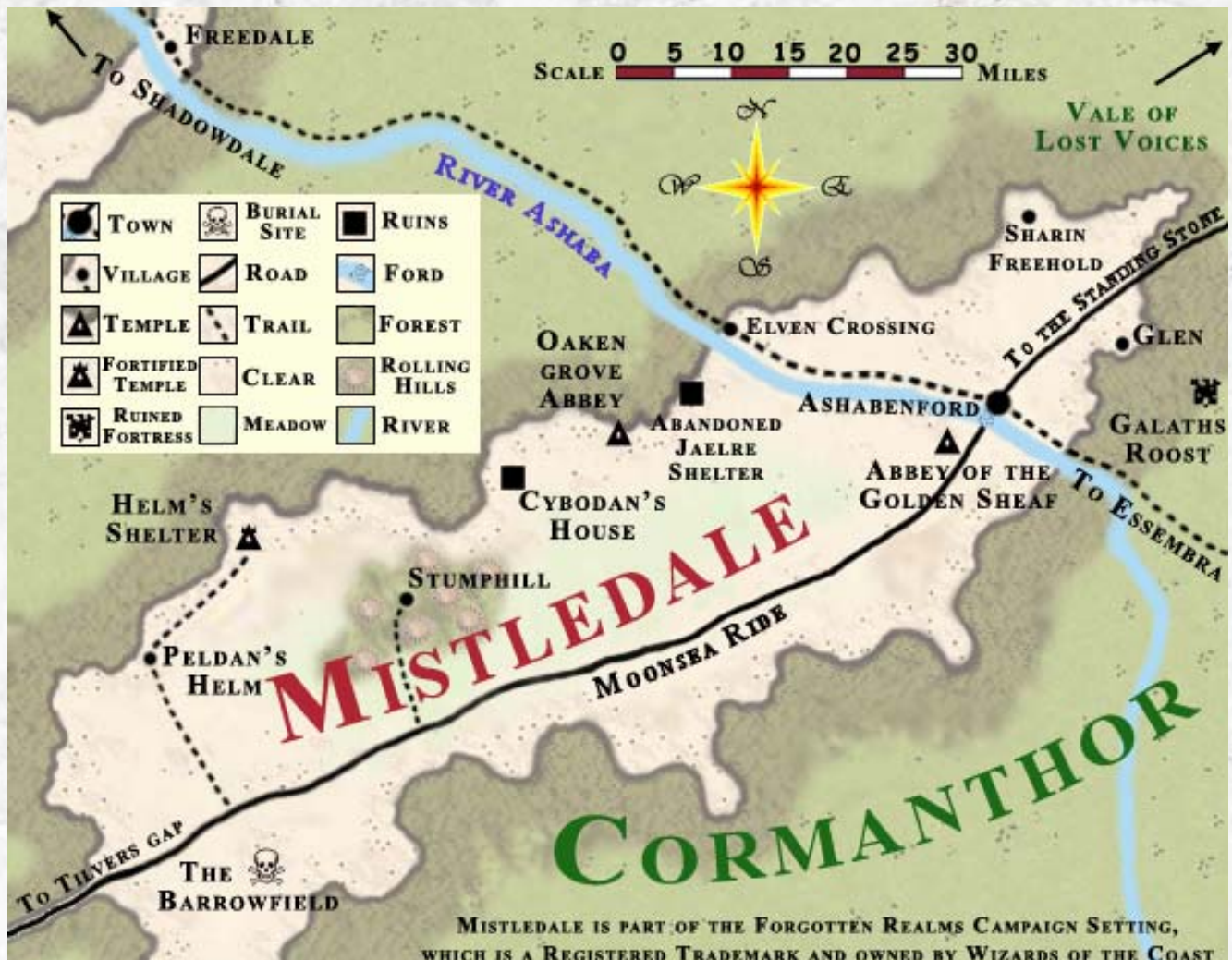
By Jared Rascher
Maps by Mark Taylor



Within the borders of Mistledale, there are just over five hundred and fifty halflings, and a fairly large number of them live in the very traditional settlement of Stumphill. The halflings of Stumphill enjoy their farms and the outdoors, and they enjoy the occasional trip to Ashabenford to buy what creature comforts they cannot appropriate within

Stumphill itself. The halflings have no trouble being considered citizens of Mistledale, though their first allegiance is to their own families.

Over the years, there have been no known halfling members of the Mistledale Lancers, but some halflings from Stumphill have served in the militia, usually as scouts. Because of some skillful engineering and its fortuitous location, Stumphill has, until



recently, remained free of any turmoil, even the few times that the rest of Mistledale has found itself in dire straights. However, one recent event has served to make Stumphill much more aware of the dangers of the world around them.

Stumphill has gone through several forms of government, most of which without much turmoil. Originally, Stumphill was organized as a farming settlement under the direction of a Sheriff, supported by clerical advisors. Later on, rule passed to a council of elders, then a council of merchants and land owners with a mayoral figurehead took charge of the town. In the current incarnation of the settlement, the town is once again under the control of a Sheriff, and the halflings are much more vigilant.

Stumphill was founded nearly two hundred years ago by Arbalen Shieldstar, an adventuring paladin of Arvoreen originally from Luiren. In Mistledale, Arbalen found many halflings that did not feel represented by the humans around them, and sought to provide them with a place of their own. Eventually he and his followers found the Stumphill, a somewhat low-rising hill that hides a downward sloping bowl of several smaller hills. While the Stumphill itself was easy enough to spot, it was difficult to see the hills in the bowl behind it without actively looking for them.

Arbalen built a concealed watchtower in the weirwood tree growing on the Stumphill, and his followers built an entrance and a small guard house in the hill below the tree. A halfling can enter through the concealed door in the base of the Stumphill and travel up through the weirwood to the platform, which affords an excellent view of the routes leading to the Moonsea Ride.

The Winding Trail is a well-concealed wagon path that leads down into Stumphill proper. It is difficult to spot, due to the excellent concealment and the careful planning of the original construction. The halfling carts and their animals can easily navigate the skillfully graded path, but it's only visible to those that are fairly observant (DC 20 spot check to notice that the grass doesn't match the vegetation around it, and that the ground is

intentionally graded and smoothed out). The Winding Trail leads directly to the Moonsea Ride, where the halflings of Stumphill follow it into Ashabenford to trade their goods.

For years, the watchtower on the Stumphill allowed the halflings to spot numerous orc, goblin, and hobgoblin raiders, giving them plenty of time to either fortify their homes or to set up a defense. Skirmishes were known, but rarely amounted to much. The halflings built houses into the hills, started their farms, founded a trading post, and built a church called Yondalla's House. Their town prospered. Like the humans in Ashabenford, the halflings of Stumphill were hard working farmers – but prosperous, well-educated ones.

In recent years, Stumphill has more fully integrated itself into Mistledale's day-to-day workings than it ever had in the past. The Winding Trail was made into more of a formal road, and the manning of the watchtower on the Stumphill was more and more of a formality. Dumic the Red, the councilor that represents Stumphill, became a more frequent visitor, and the watchpost under the Stumphill was renovated and made into an inn that could accommodate human-sized visitors.

In 1372 DR, the peaceful existence of the halflings of Stumphill came to an end. A patrol of Mistledale Lancers found Stumphill gutted. Everyone in the settlement proper was killed, their bodies laying in the streets where they'd been slain. In addition to the halfling corpses, there were some drow bodies, as well. Upon investigating the bodies, insignia of House Jaelre were found. The Lancers, already worried about the Jaelre because of the events in Battledale, were now convinced that the drow were their greatest threat.

The adventuring company known as the Company of Shining Fangs (friends of Matron Fleet of Stumphill) investigated the matter, and eventually uncovered the fact that the drow did not slaughter the halflings of Stumphill – they were slaughtered by a band of surface elves. While the adventuring band found that the slaughter was an atrocity engineered by the Eldreth Veluuthra, the

matter is not public knowledge, and those that know of the Stumphill Slaughter believe it to have been the work of the drow of Cormanthyr. Haresk Malorn and the other councilors of Mistledale know the truth, as does the Company of Shining Fangs, Nelyssa Shendean, and Luvon Greencloak (and through him, the newly returned elves of Myth Drannor).

A few of the halflings native to Stumphill were in Ashabenford, Glen, and other settlements at the time, so the entire population was not lost. According to traditional Luiren practice, a home should not sit empty, as it will upset the family members entering the Greenfields. Thus, the halflings that survived set out to find relatives to take ownership of the abandoned houses. Two figures were instrumental to the resettlement of Stumphill: Burablen Shieldstar and Nelsmer Longstrider.

Burablen was the first Shieldstar in generations to take up the mantle of the paladin, and was serving Arvoreen by making the world safer for halflings abroad. During this time, he became friends with a cleric of Urogalan named Phandable Murlgevin. Upon receiving the news of the Stumphill Slaughter, Burablen immediately returned home and began to donate funds to rebuild homes, Yondalla's House, and the guardhouse in the Stumphill.

Nelsmer Longstrider, a retired adventurer and merchant of great wealth, had been staying in Ashabenford and Shadowdale for the last few years (and according to some sources, Nelsmer is somewhat reticent to enter Ashabenford these days). Not only did Nelsmer donate funds to rebuild the town, but he also used his many contacts around the Dales, Cormyr, and Sembia to call in various relatives to take possession of the homes in Stumphill. Nelsmer himself took over a farmhouse to the north of Stumphill, the old Keener farmstead, for whom no relatives could be found.

Within a fairly short amount of time, Stumphill was almost as large as it was before the tragedy, but the demeanor of the settlement was greatly changed. Among the new arrivals, there is still a generally cheery

nature, but among those few survivors that were away when the slaughter happened, there is dire vigilance. While the Stumphill guardhouse has been remodeled once again, it no longer serves as an inn, although there are still human-sized guest quarters, mainly for Mistledale Lancer officers that might be passing through. The barracks are much more serious, and a handful of the eldest sons of the families of Stumphill serve as the Sheriff's Hin and man the watchtower.

While Nelsmer has managed to find out the truth about the Stumphill Slaughter, no one else in the town knows that the leaders of Mistledale are remaining quiet on this matter. The only survivors of Stumphill were those that were away in other settlements for one reason or another.

Stumphill (Hamlet, Conventional); AL LG, NG, LN; Spending Limit 100 gp; Assets 3000 gp; Population 278; Races Halflings (30% strongheart, 70% lightfoot)

Authority Figures: Sheriff Burablen Shieldstar (strongheart halfling male, paladin 6, LG, Arvoreen)

Important Characters: Nelsmer Longstrider (prominent merchant, lightfoot halfling male, rogue 9, NE), Father Ghelvin Skennering (head priest of Yondalla's House, lightfoot halfling male, cleric 6, LG, Yondalla), Brother Phandable Murlgevin (strongheart halfling male, cleric 8, LG, Urogalan)

The Stumphill: The Stumphill is the landmark that gives the hamlet of Stumphill its name. There are many smaller hills in the area, but the Stumphill crests a fair bit above the rest. Due to the fact that the majority of the smaller hills terminate in a small basin, most of the town of Stumphill is concealed behind the Stumphill itself. It is therefore easy for those who don't know that the place exists to completely miss the hamlet itself.

Within the Stumphill are the barracks for the Sheriff's Hin, and on top of the hill is a fair-sized weirwood tree, through which runs a channel that allows the halflings manning the barracks to scurry up into the limbs of the tree onto the watch platform. The halflings refer to the tree as the Watchtower, a



reference which often confuses those not used to the town.

The Stumphill Watchtower: A channel on the north face of the Stumphill runs up the back of the weirwood tree, allowing the halflings in the barracks to climb into the tree unnoticed. There is a camouflaged platform within the tree, and there are also chests filled with skiprocks, warslings, short bows, and crossbows in the boughs.

Directly below the Watchtower lies the barracks. Within the barracks are two rooms built for human-sized visitors, each one able to house two guests comfortably. While there is a hidden, human-sized door for the barracks, it is still a difficult squeeze for larger humans to fit through.

Beyond the rooms for human-sized visitors, the Stumphill barracks can comfortably house about ten halflings, as well as having room for an armory, a pantry, a kitchen, and Burablen's quarters. There are about twenty of the Sheriff's Hin serving at any one time, with ten of them on duty for a given tenday, then switching to the other ten on alternating tendays. Five of the Sheriff's Hin are on watch during the daylight hours, and five are on watch during the night.

After Burablen, the highest level member of the Sheriff's Hin is Semner Ulderskind (lightfoot halfling male ranger 3, NG). The rest are warriors, rangers, scouts, or fighters. Although he is interested in finding other halflings to follow in his footsteps, Burablen has yet to find another halfling in town that is dedicated enough to learn the ways of Arvoreen's Defenders.

Glenim Torncloak (lightfoot halfling male expert 5, LN) is Burablen's cook. Originally settling in Ashabenford, Glenim relocated to Stumphill when other halflings started to migrate to the rebuilt hamlet. Glenim now spends nearly all of his time within the barracks, sending out various members of the Sheriff's Hin to shop for him. The more observant members of the militia note that Glenim is especially keen to keep out of sight of Nelsmer Longstrider.

The Winding Trail: The Winding Trail is a cleverly constructed trail, wide enough for a halfling wagon and fairly easy to travel down. It is difficult to see, however, for it is concealed under specially chosen undergrowth that covers the road. The road itself is constructed of carefully selected stones, which appear to be little more than flat, natural stones. It takes a DC 20 spot

check to notice the stones under the undergrowth, and another DC 20 search check to notice the pattern of the stones.

Long years ago, a druid of Sheela Peryroyl from Stumphill, working with a dwarven stonemason from Glen, created this road, at the behest of Arbalen. While it's not perfectly hidden, it is less than obvious, and this fact has kept quite a few hobgoblins and other marauders from wandering into the halfling hamlet.

The Fleet Farmstead: No members of the Fleet family could be found to resettle the Fleet farmstead when the call for kin went out. The priests of Yondalla's House noticed a special property of the Fleet homestead proper: the farmstead is warded against scrying, teleportation, or summoning spells.

Matron Fleet lived alone in the last years before the "drow" raid, most of her family having passed on into the Greenfields. Not long before she died, she took in two human children, and the adventurers known as the Company of Shining Fangs visited her from time to time. Despite this, Matron Fleet was believed to have lived a rather happy, if uneventful, life, save for the early loss of her sons and the raid that ended her own life.

One of Matron Fleet's sons was a wandering adventurer and cleric of Brandobaris. The priests of the local church have assumed that the wards that surround the home are some kind of blessing that the Trickster left behind, to show his favor in his lost servant. Regardless of the source of the ward, Burablen has kept the properties of the home quiet, and claimed the land for the Sheriff's use, until such time as a Fleet can be found to take over the farmstead.

Hundlestuld's Sundries: One of the few buildings in the town that isn't a traditional halfling burrow, Hundlestuld's Sundries is a general store, as well as a general trading post for the farmers in town. The proprietor of the business is a young man named Hundlerand Hundlestuld. Despite his youth, he has served as a scout for many of the trading costers in the Dales, and has many merchant friends.

Hundlerand borrowed a good amount of gold from Nelsmer to get his business started, but so far has felt no undue pressure to repay the mysterious halfling. Hundlerand has a handful of his cousins working as caravaneers for his store, and they often go to Ashabenford, Glen, and beyond to fill orders for various items that the townsfolk want. Over the past few months, Burablen has been sending a fairly steady stream of orders for armor and weapons to merchants in Glen.

Hundlerand is a healthy, strapping young halfling, and is considered an eligible bachelor by many of the younger female hin of the town (strongheart halfling male scout 3/expert 2, NG). Hundlerand's stock is generally limited to items costing 200 gp or less, but he can order from Ashabenford, Glen, and beyond for items that are more expensive, although the wait for these items is several tendays, at times.

Yondalla's House: This structure is also located outside of the traditional halfling burrows. It is a fairly large square building, with simple architecture, surrounded by a beautiful, well-tended garden. In the outside courtyard are statues of several halfling deities, carved masterfully of wood and treated against the elements.

Within the church itself is the chapel proper, the priests' quarters (which has cells for about ten clergy, though only half are currently filled), and the stairs that lead down to the catacombs.

Brother Phandable Murlgevin has his quarters within the catacombs, just outside of the crypts themselves. He is most at home here, and worries that those interred will be troubled without his constant supervision. He knows that something terrible happened during the slaughter, and that many souls may not rest easy, but he has vowed not to let any of the troubled spirits rise as evil undead.

While the church proper is dedicated to all of the halfling deities, it currently only has representatives from Yondalla's church. Father Ghelvin is technically the highest ranking priest, even though Phandable is a

more powerful cleric. Such politics have yet to trouble the church, however. The remaining four clerics are low-level adherents of Yondalla's faith.

Stumphill Pond: A gentle, unassuming pond that many of the inhabitants of the hamlet enjoy fishing in, Stumphill Pond is notable because most town gatherings happen on its banks. Most meetings are outdoor affairs, and in happier times, after any official meetings, feasts would break out as the sun went down, and the halflings of the hamlet would enjoy swimming and playing in the waters of the pond.

All bodies of water tend to have legends associated with them, but some of the older halflings used to tell tales of caves at the bottom of Stumphill Pond that lead to all sorts of fantastic treasures. The truth of the matter is that the caves do indeed lead to a mysterious path away from the eyes of the surface world, but treasure is secondary to the danger involved.

Years ago, in Arbalen's time, a wandermage named Quenlist Argosphan settled in Stumphill, and used her magic to explore the pond's depths. She found a tunnel leading to a passage that ultimately terminated in the Underdark, and ran afoul of an aboleth. The aboleth, Ouluthuloglesht, nearly killed Quenlist, but she managed to cast a chronomancy spell she had liberated from a Netherese tomb, and caught the aboleth in stasis.

Afraid that other halflings would wander into this passage, Quenlist passed the secret down to her family members, not only keeping secret the passage that led to Ouluthuloglesht's lair, but also the entire water passage to the Underdark, as well. Whenever any halfling got too curious, wards that Quenlist had set upon the pond would warn whoever held Quenlist's staff, and they would warn the halfling involved away from the potential danger.

All of Quenlist's descendants were killed in the "drow" raid, and as such, no one in town knows of the true danger that lies within the pond. So far, no halfling has found the Underdark passage, let along the

passageway that leads to the aboleth lair – but if they do, it would not take much to damage the fragile stasis spell that holds the Underdark horror at bay.

Longstrider Homestead: At one point in time, this was the Keener farmstead. Popular wisdom says that no Keener arrived when the call went out to resettle Stumphill, and Nelsmer Longstrider paid the proper price for the plot of land to the Sheriff, who holds the sum in trust for five years until it fully becomes Longstrider's land.

What actually happened is that Nelsmer Longstrider determined that the remote northeastern farm suited his purposes well, and when the first Keeners arrived, Nelsmer murdered them in their sleep before they could put in their claim with the Sheriff.

Nelsmer Longstrider is a dangerous halfling. He betrayed his adventuring company, the Company of Low Ceilings, and actively sought to steal their treasure once the majority of its members retired. His attempts were foiled by the Company of Shining Fangs and by the ghost of Gerlricks Cybondan, the gnome leader of his old adventuring company.

Nelsmer carefully avoided the members of the Shining Fangs for a few years while he cultivated contacts in the area. He began a trade in Luiren Spring Cheese through the Dancers gang in Scardale, and made quite a bit of gold by getting wealthy halflings hooked on the addictive substance. He still travels to Scardale on occasion, to follow up on his illicit business, but he has moved on to other enterprises.

In the intervening years after Cybondan's ghost foiled him, Nelsmer tracked down and killed the other two members of the old Company of Low Ceilings. During this time, he also acquired a new "friend." While rifling through stolen magical items, Nelsmer was possessed by a shadow demon named Shasskoterrassk. Shasskoterrassk has urged Nelsmer on to even greater evils, even while Nelsmer tries to plot in a more methodical manner.

Nelsmer has lent nearly every settler of Stumphill, including Burablen, gold to rejuvenate the fallen village. Nelsmer is quietly using these favors, especially with merchants like Hundlerand, to extend his contacts outward. He has even managed to gain the ear of a Zhentarim agent, and a House Jaelre operative, as well, and is quietly feeding them information about Mistledeale and its defenses, in exchange for gold.

Nelsmer would be happy to betray and manipulate his way into riches and comfort, but Shasskoterrassk keeps pushing Nelsmer forward to new atrocities. The shadow demon knows about the aboleth in Stumphill Pond, but he has not passed this knowledge on to Nelsmer. He has, however, started to push Nelsmer to fund an "expedition" into the pond, quietly, to see what might be down there. The demon would like nothing better than to see the aboleth rise and turn the whole town into mindless skum, for the sheer destruction of it.

Shasskoterrassk has pushed Nelsmer to murder a few halflings traveling to Stumphill in the recent months. The shadow demon has been careful to push Nelsmer, but not to take

over and force him to kill, or else the corruption would not be as complete. Eventually Shasskoterrassk will tire of Nelsmer, but the idea of torturing and destroying the community of upstanding, goodly halflings is too much of a temptation for Shasskoterrassk to pass up.

One other goal for Shasskoterrassk has been to break the spirit of Burablen Shieldstar. Nelsmer is aware of the real history of the Stumphill Slaughter, and he has found out that Haresk and Dumic the Red are aware of the actual events that transpired. Shasskoterrassk wishes to reveal this information at the precise time to make the paladin more insular and paranoid, driving a wedge between him and his allies, such as his friend Nelyssa Shendean. So far this goal has been slow going, due to the fact that Nelsmer is reluctant to spend time near the paladin, even shielded as he is from the paladin's ability to read the evil in his soul (Nelsmer is never without his *ring of mind shielding*).

PERILOUS PORTALS

The Sea Gates

By Mark Taylor
Map also by Mark Taylor



ail and well met, my erstwhile explorers! My name is Sir Richard Montoya, Lord of Amn¹ and sometimes pirate. It may seem audacious of me to admit such, but it has been quite some time since I've participated in any 'true' piracy. Most now call me Captain Montoya, but in those long ago days I was known as "Richard the Dread Pirate". My own tale begins when I was a mere child, only twelve years old. I was on a ship traveling to the True World² with my parents, who had recently been granted lands in the colonies. We were from an old but poor noble house, and my family could not pass up this offer to make a better life for themselves. Alas, it was not meant to be. We were waylaid by Nelanther pirates, just off the southern shore of Toaridge, and my family and most of the crew were killed. The survivors were given a choice – join the pirate band or die. Most chose to join, but the rest had their throats cut and were thrown overboard. As for me, I was given no choice at all; I remember at the time wanting to die... to be with my parents

¹ We looked into Seeker Montoya's background, to try and ascertain the veracity of his claims. It seems the Montoyas are indeed an old noble family in Amn, and have only but recently fallen upon hard times. However, the only Richard we could find (an uncommon name in Amn) is the one year old infant son of Lord and Lady Montoya, currently living in Esmeltaran. Although the supplicant appears to be lying, we can discern no sense of untruth about him; most peculiar.

² "True World" is a native term referring to the lands we know as Maztica, discovered in 1361 DR. Since this was only fourteen years ago, it is doubtful that Captain Montoya could have traveled there when only twelve. Furthermore, there is no record of the king of Amn granting any lands to Montoya family since 692 DR.

again. The captain had other ideas, however, and decided to hold me for ransom. Unfortunately for both the captain and myself, the money would not be forthcoming, and I was soon assigned the duties of the captain's personal cabin boy. I suppose, thinking back, that he must have taken a perverse pleasure in having a nobleman's son shine his shoes. By the time I was twelve I was an accomplished seaman, and by the time I was sixteen I had killed a man while robbing his ship, but I never stopped hating the one person responsible for what I was. When I was only eighteen I challenged the aging captain to a duel, and ran him through with no remorse.

I had my own ship, and I had not even reached my second decade of life. By the time I was twenty-one I had five ships under my command, and was known as one of the fiercest buccaneers on the Sword Coast. There was a small pirate cove located in Jannath's Tears³, and this small settlement held a big secret known to scant few. In the center of the three islands a *portal* would appear every morning, and allow sailors to travel to distant shores! Being the man of opportunity that I am, I seized this tiny settlement as my own. At age twenty-six, I had twelve ships under my command and my own growing town. I had a mighty flagship constructed for myself, one like no other, and I planned to rule the seas or die trying. I was young, and fearless, and thought I was undefeatable. Ah, the brashness of youth. If I

³ Jannath's Tears are three small islands, located some 160 miles due west of Candlekeep. This name dates back to their discovery by the Netherese, and is normally only used by sailors from Calimshan and parts south. Most of the legitimate captains of the Swordcoast today refer to these islands as the "little Shaes".

had only known then... One of my contacts in the Moonshaes had given me some information concerning a prize I just couldn't pass up. It seems Princess Bridget⁴ was to be married to a Northlander Prince, formalizing the growing cooperation between the two peoples. My informant told me she would be traveling up the coast of Alaron and through the Korinn Archipelago on her way to Norland with three ships, all laden with treasure and gold to be her dowry.

We set sail that fateful day with all of my ships, and a full complement of merciless marauders. Not wanting to take any chances, I had to assume the Princess's entourage would be well defended. When we espied her, she was just starting to round the northern tip of Alaron. There were five ships then, but I was not worried about the additions; after all, I was unstoppable. As she rounded the cape with us in close pursuit, there suddenly appeared fifteen royal warships that had been hiding out of sight around the strip of land. Still, I was not to be deterred. If this was going to go from an easy robbery to a bloody battle, so be it! I still felt my ships and their crews could handle this threat, despite being outnumbered nearly two-to-one. Then we spotted the sails of the Northmen....

Deciding then that discretion was indeed the better part of valor, I turned sail with my fleet and headed back to my home port, hoping to outrun this now obvious trap. I thought that the fast ships of the Northmen would be able to catch up with us in time, but if I could put some distance between the Moonshae navy and my men, we would have a chance, albeit a slim one. I figured if we could take on the two forces one at a time, perhaps our superior firepower would hand us the victory. Alas, Umberlee herself must have been against me that day. The

⁴ I'm not sure as to whom this is a reference to. Queen Kendrick has no daughter named Bridget, although she does have several female children. Her one adult daughter has been married for several years to a Waterdhavian noble, and I believe they have a six year old child name Bridget. Perhaps the good captain is getting confused with a female elf living on the island by the name of Brigit, who had some involvement with the royal family some years ago.

Moonshae ships had obvious magical help, because those cumbersome galleys moved as quickly as the Northmen's fleet. Soon it became obvious that we would not make port, and there were now nearly fifty ships in hot pursuit. I could have gotten away easily on my flagship, the *Blue Diamond*, but I chose to stay with my men as long as I could. There was but one chance left to me, and one I loathe to use with the combined military forces behind me. I made for the secret *portal* that lay somewhere in the center of Jannath's Tears. It was a 300 mile run, and even with a strong wind it would take nearly an entire day at full sail to reach if we sailed straight through the night. It isn't the most intelligent thing, traveling at that speed in the darkness, but desperate times call for desperate measures. When the sky began to lighten we saw the sails of the enemy close behind, and one of our own number had vanished during the night. I only prayed that we would be in time to see the *portal* open, for that was the easiest time to see the shimmer in the air that was the barest indication of its presence. Our luck finally turned for the good, or so I thought, when the *portal* opened directly in front of us and only a few leagues off. As we passed through the *gate*, I realized my troubles had only gone from bad to worse.

There was a raging hurricane in the Great Southern Sea that day, and we emerged right in the middle of it. I lost two more ships almost immediately when they were swamped by a forty foot wave. My only consolation was that the fleets of the Northmen and Ffolk had followed me through. There was to be no battle now; it would take all of our effort and seamanship just to stay afloat. That's when I saw just how badly the Bitch Queen truly hated me that day: I spotted an enormous maelstrom open up in the waters ahead, like a great gaping maw of the Sea Queen herself! That's when I decided to leave my men to their fate, along with that of my enemies, and tried to move my ship in a way that only it could. I have to laugh now, thinking I had outsmarted the sea herself, but even my ship could not escape the pull of the mighty whirlpool that doth suck us in. I lost

consciousness as I was pulled down into *Umberlee's Fist*⁵.

I was surprised to awake to the morning sun. I was sprawled on the deck, along with a number of my crew. My ship was a wreck, and listing to one side. I looked out over the calm blue sea and saw that most of the Northmen and Ffolk ships had survived but were badly damaged as well, and were now making for the distant western shore. Of my own ships only three remained, plus my own vessel. I know where we should have come out of the *portal*, but we were tossed about and blown way off course, and I was unsure how to proceed. I took a vote, and we at last decided to head to the strip of land in the distance just as the enemy ships had done. However, we took a more northerly course to avoid any more trouble with them. We found ourselves a small cove with a village, and there we beached our vessels and began our repairs. The tiny settlement was called San Tuar⁶, after some old wives' tale about a minotaur that had saved them all from some catastrophe a century before. It mattered little to us; we had found a safe haven once again and settled down for a long stay. Just how long I would eventually, to my horror, realize.

Although that took place many, many years in the past, I still like to think on it, and wonder if I would have made the same decisions knowing what I know now. But the past cannot be changed, at least not easily, and I have resigned myself to lead the life fate has given me. At least, until now...

⁵ Umberlee's Fist is the name given to the huge Maelstrom that swallows entire fleets whole. This phenomenon has been spotted in almost every sea in Faerûn, and nearly every ship that enters it is never seen again. [DM's Notes: Check out the *Perilous Gateways* series of articles at

<http://www.wizards.com/default.asp?x=dnd/pg/20030423b>]

⁶ San Tuar is a very archaic name for the town of Esbresh, which is technically within the borders of Ulgarth. Why Seeker Montoya refers to it this way is yet another mystery. The port is known for its acceptance of less-than-legal practices and contraband goods. For some reason the good king of Ulgarth refuses to do anything about this obvious den of inequity, and pirates from as far away as the Corsair Domains in Zakhara make it their port of call.

Now that you know my tale, I would like to impart to you, the good scholars of Candlekeep, a dissertation on something I've come to call the "Sea Gates". The few sages I've come to know that are familiar with these types of *portals* trace their origins back to something called 'Batrachi'. I have no idea what those are, but I'm more than happy to make use of their legacy. Although they all have their own quirks, there are a few things they have in common. First off, except for the Skullport *portals*, all of the Sea Gates appear at sunup. They start out as a tiny pinpoint of 'strangeness' on the water's surface, at the exact moment the sun's first rays peak over the horizon, and slowly grow until they are 120' in diameter. The best time to see them is during this period, because they appear as nothing more than a shimmering in the air. Once they have grown to their full radius they are not so easily discernable, although a trained eye will still be able to spot a 'disturbance' in the air. The *portals* remain open until sundown, when they slowly begin to shrink from the instant the sun first touches the horizon, until it peeks its last over the wave tops. Anything caught in the *portal* while its closing is usually cut in two, with a piece winding up on either end of the *gate*.

The rather odd thing that most have in common is that they are surrounded by three islands. Some of those same scholars I mentioned earlier theorize that perhaps these are the tops of Batrachi ruins poking through the water, but in most cases they just appear to be normal islets to me.

Another common oddity among them is that they drift! I have calculated that they move about inside a circle precisely 5 leagues (15 miles) in diameter, appearing in a new location within that circle each day, but never more than 1 league (3 miles) from the last location. I have heard rumors of ones that move while open, but I do not personally know of any. They remain fixed until the following day, with the center point located precisely on the surface of the water at the time they appear. This has led to the often funny, and occasionally disastrous, appearance of *portals* at the crest of waves in stormy seas. Ships have been known to drop 20-50 feet and hit the water hard upon

exiting a *portal* that set itself too high due to tides or rough seas. As an interesting note, it is the center of the *portal* that appears on the water's surface, so that any creatures of the depths may also make use of this handy method of travel through the *portal's* lower half. It is this constant movement that keeps any one faction from controlling any of these *portals* to any extent, although many have tried. The last thing that I feel deserves mention is that all of these *portals* are two-way, although getting back through some of them is sometimes a problem.

The first pairing of *portals* I would like to discuss are the ones attested to in my story above. As I mentioned, the Sword Coast *portal* is located somewhere in between the three isles that comprise Jannath's Tears. The drift pattern of this *portal* covers a slightly larger area than usual, and can appear anywhere within the thirty mile circle between the islands. The other end of this *gate* lies 120 miles south of the mouth of the River Gundar in Estagund, in the center of the islands known as the Naarlith. This *portal* is typical of these types, and the only thing worth mentioning is to be careful of the tropical storms that often appear in this region during the hurricane season.

Just 360 miles southeast of Naarlith is the second *portal* located in the Great Sea. It lies in the tiny isles of Far Nermoree, which consists of only two small islets. Although that makes it stand out from the norm, there is a very shallow reef located a mere 20 miles west of them, and it is possible that storms and tidal action have eroded away the third island, especially considering that the opening appears between the two strips of land and the reef. The close proximity of this *portal* to the one that leads to the Sword Coast makes it extremely useful to sailors, and the pirates and corsairs of the south make extensive use of the two to carry out their nefarious business. The far end of this *gate* ends on the other side of Zakhara, between the three islands just off the coast of Afyal, the Isle of the Elephant. This *portal* is useful to folks wanting to get into the southern islands of the Crowded Sea, which brings me to my next *gate*.

The southernmost *portal* that I'm aware of is located between three small islands located in the Islands of the Utter South, nearly 300 miles directly south of Harab, Isle of War. The destination reached by this *portal* is perhaps the most interesting of all. It ends in a large chain of islands, or actually several chains, called the Punjabbi Archipelago⁷. The majority of the central islands in this chain are controlled by pirates, and sailors from everywhere on Toril can be found here. The main island is simply called 'The Claw', because of its strange shape; the eastern half of the island consists of two peninsulas that curl around to form a large round bay twenty-five miles in diameter. It is in this bay that the *gate* always appears, making it unique among the Sea Portals. The island has dozens of pirate coves and settlements, but the main one is practically a city, and is considered the 'capital' of the pirate region, if such a thing could really exist. This town, called Torabago, is located at the mouth of the single river that pours into the bay. A group of thirteen Pirate Princes rule the city from their palaces, castles and fortresses. Each 'prince' hails from a different part of Toril, and claims dominion over the pirates of his homelands.

There are ruins on the island of an older culture, and some say that hundreds of years ago, a group of seafaring elves called this chain home. It is even said that Torabago itself was built upon the ruins of an elven port, and the very elaborate docks may be some evidence of this. A small cluster of isles off the northern coast of Katashaka, called the Tanjari Islands, is home to the fierce Dark Corsairs, large ebony-skinned pirates known throughout the seas for their ruthlessness. It is said that the elves of Punjabbi at first welcomed the ships of these

⁷ The Punjabbi Archipelago is a series of island chains located between Maztica and Katashaka. It was discovered in 1371 DR by Tethyrian seamen on a royal expedition to map the southern coasts of Maztica, in hopes of establishing a colony of their own far from the influence of, and possible contention with, Helmsport. Unknown to most of Faerûn, a settlement was established on a spur of Lopango called San Gaustino. We at the keep are only privy to this information due to our good relations with 'Lhaeo', the former scribe of Elminster, and find it worrisome that its location is marked on Montoya's map.

corsairs into their docks, not knowing what they were. The pirates feigned friendship, but eventually attacked and, as legend has it, drove the elves from their island home. Evidence of the truth of these matters lies in the oldest structure in town – the grand palace of the Dark Corsairs is clearly of elven architecture.

One point I must make: although the *gate* leading to this destination is the easiest way for the people of Zakhara to reach this region, most legitimate sea captains and naval vessels prefer to cross the sea, if only to avoid appearing in the center of a pirate harbor. In times past they would use the *portal*, but with the establishment of their two settlements, travel across the ocean has become somewhat easier and a whole lot safer.

Forgive me, for I have made that region my home for many years, and I grow nostalgic for its shores. The next nearest *portal* is just due west of the Punjabbi Islands, in the Sea of Lopango⁸. These waters are very dangerous, because they are infested with sahuagin. In fact, the merfolk who make their home in the waters around the Punjabbi Archipelago have been known to approach surface ships for safe passage across the sea, so that they may have dealings with their eastern brethren, the ningyo, who dwell in the seas east of Katashaka. This *portal* is unique in several ways – first off, instead of being surrounded by islands, there are three plinths of unknown bluish stone rising out of the sea 300 feet above the surface. Each of these curve toward the others, so they appear to be reaching toward one another. They are spaced exactly 15 miles apart at the base, but come within seven miles of each other near the top. It is the most impressive sight I have ever laid eyes on, and have seen many amazing things in all my long years. The *portal* always appears somewhere inside of this strange structure, and it is theorized that the plinths continue under the water and are part of some greater structure. Some

⁸ The Sea of Lopango is another recent discovery by the Tethyrian expedition, and is a very large triangular-shaped body of water between Maztica and Katashaka. The good captain's familiarity with geography only recently discovered is most disconcerting.

even believe there is an ancient Batrachi city in the depths, but because of the profound presence of sahuagin in the area, no one has been successful in puzzling out this riddle. The far end of this *gate* has been used for hundreds of years by the Wako of the island nations of Kara-Tur, and was only discovered by Shou Lung in the last century. The Shou government has since stationed several warships around the *portal* and claimed it as their own, and has even set up a colony on one of the islands in the Baygandu Archipelago, in the eastern Punjabbis. This has caused some consternation amongst the pirates, who always considered the *portal* theirs. Several vicious battles were fought before the Wako conceded control of the *gate*, but they still occasionally use it for two reasons – because the *portal* moves, the Shou are not always nearby, and also it is the only *portal* that is always open. In the case of this *portal's* drift, as it closes in one spot at sunset it slowly opens again in another spot at the same time. In this way, the *portal* is open overnight, and if the pirates are able to find it they can use it without much fear of the ponderous Imperial warships finding them in the darkness. It is still extremely dangerous, however, because the sahuagin are most active at night. The eastern *portal* opens up in the usual three island set-up in the Celestial Sea, in the chain known as the Three Sisters Islands. These waters are disputed with T'u Lung, making it a strategic target for both powers. However, the *portal* opening on this end drifts much further around between the three large islands. That is why it avoided discovery by the two kingdoms for so long, although it is widely believed that the Tan Clan of the Joi Chang Peninsula has been aware of it for centuries.

Another *portal* used by the Shou is located in the northern Yellow Sea, in the middle of the chain known as the Talmaruk Islands. This one is typical of the standard set-up, and was only discovered by Shou Lung in the last decade. This island chain is inhabited by tribes of fierce Wu-Haltai, and landing on them is usually avoided. The Wako of Wa claim to have explored some of the interior, and they say that there are strange non-human ruins spread over all three islands, but the Wu-Haltai kill anyone who tries to

enter what they consider sacred ground. This may change, because now Shou has claimed these islands in order to protect their interest in the *portal*. The far end of the *portal* leads to the Inner Sea in Faerûn, in the center of the Dragonmere⁹. This *portal* managed to escape the attention of the Dragon Coast and Cormyr for so long because it is in open waters, and is completely invisible. The usual shimmering that accompanies these types of *gates* is conspicuously absent, and finding the *gate* from the western side is nearly impossible. Shou wu jen have come up with a solution to the problem, however, and have created a magical compass capable of pointing to the nearest functioning *portal*. Some forty of these were commissioned by the Emperor, but nearly half were stolen from the artificers before the order was completed; some believe the Pirate Princes were behind the robbery. The order was finished belatedly, and the *portal compasses* have been given out to the most trusted captains of the Shou navy. Some say that some of these devices have additional powers, as well as acting as a normal compass.

This brings me to another *portal* located in the Sea of Fallen Stars, which has been known about by pirates and honest sailors alike for several centuries. The *portal* opens somewhere between the three islands at the mouth of the Vilhon Reach: Alaghôn, Wavecrest, and Ixinos. The Emerald Enclave holds sway over this region, and in times past, perhaps some of their number, called 'Gray Druids', used this portal to reach its dark destination – Skullport! This is only one of two *portals* to Skullport believed to be modified Batrachi gates, but who altered them, and why, is a secret lost in time. It exits on the River Sargauth in Undermountain, and is considered a "wild and woolly ride" by those who have used it. Only an expert pilot can get the ship safely down the narrow flooded passages and into Skullport safely, and traveling back the other

⁹ Another piece of not-so-common knowledge. This *portal* was discovered several years ago, and has led to the establishment of a Shou embassy in Elversult. Shou ships are starting to become a common sight on the Sea of Fallen Stars as a result, and seem to be conducting extensive trade with Thay as well.

way is almost unheard of (magic was used the two times it was accomplished). The one odd thing about this *gate*, aside from its destination, is that it only opens at night! Unlike the other *portals* I am revealing here, this *gate* and the other I will discuss next both open at sunset and close at sunrise. I suppose that is only fitting, given their destination.

The other Sea Gate that leads to Skullport also opens up onto a tributary of the Sargauth, and the other end resides in the Sea of the Long Morning, between Wa, Kozakura, and Koryo, about 50 miles west of Gatajima Island. It is not located between three islands like usual, but the amount of volcanic activity in the region leads to many smaller isles disappearing or being created constantly, so the surrounding landmasses may have sunk beneath the waves long ago. The Wako Pirates from all three nations make extensive use of this *portal*, and it is not uncommon to see a Shou junk at the docks in the undercity. Whether the governments of these countries know about the *portal* is unknown, but given the destination and the difficulty in getting back, it is doubtful they would even put it to use if they did. In the case of this and other *portals* leading to Skullport, pirates often get stuck taking a route known as the "long way home", in which they use a series of *gates* to get back to their home port. In this case, the first *portal* I discussed is often used as the first destination, being the nearest to Waterdeep. It takes the pirates of the Inner Sea no less than five *gates* to make it back to their point of origin.

The final *portal* I am aware of in the Kara-Tur region is the one located in an unnamed chain of islands off the coast of Malatra¹⁰, some 400 miles north of the island of Bawa and 200 miles northeast of the coastal city of Marabaya. If you get a chance, you really should visit that strange and exotic city; there are things you can see there and merchandise you can buy that can be found nowhere else in the world. If you have some

¹⁰ Malatra is the name of the wild jungle lands located south of T'u Lung, and home to several primitive tribes of creatures and a dozen small countries that worship strange, barbaric gods.

interest in religious practices, the bizarre temples and gods of these people are worth studying. Also, the extensive use of elephants as beasts of burden is a sight to see, and I am told that warring nations of the interior often employ them in battle! The *gate* here leads to another set of islands that only appear on Zakharan maps, although they are far to the west of that place. The western coast of Zakhara is called Akota, and is ruled by a powerful mercantile people of whom very little is known, but about whom much is whispered. Off their coast is a very large chain of islands, often called the Isles of the Gods by inhabitants of Zakhara, and the people of Akota have many settlements amongst the islands. Several are named after various deities of Toril, but the largest and most southwestern land is called Nobanion's Island. The relationship between this power and the island is debatable, but it is said that there are a fair number of fey creatures that call it home, along with animals that can speak! Obviously, there is some exaggeration here, but I myself have never set foot upon this land. Just north of it, however, is a *portal* I have used many times, and like the others, it is located in the center of small islands. The main difference is that these islands number four, and are sometimes referred to as "the Four Elements". They are evenly spaced in a diamond pattern, and the *gate* may appear anywhere within the 10 mile radius of the center point in the waters between them. It is interesting to note that Zakharan merchants have built a substantial settlement on a large island directly east of these, but not so much to facilitate the use of the *portal*. Instead, they use it as a stop-over point on the way to the Punjabbi Islands to the west, and like the Shou, they also have a settlement there in the Baygandu Archipelago. Both the Emperor of Shou and the Grand Caliph of Zakhara have great interest in Katashaka, and have established quite a bit of trade with the natives.

This brings me to the final *portal*, that I have made use of only once. This *gate* leads from the northwestern coast of Katashaka to Gbor Nor, called Brightstar Lake in Faerûn. Its western terminus is located between three islands, one large and two small. The large one has several names, depending on who you ask, but the natives claim it is called

Ptah. I find this particularly peculiar, because I know that is the name of a god from 'elsewhere', and have had run-ins with his priests myself. Since the *portal* leads to an area that has traditionally been controlled by the Mulhorandi, this gives me the impression that it was named so by them in centuries past. Around 912 DR, Mulhorand had begun settling the east coast of Katashaka, and many of their ruins remain. They abandoned this colony after only twelve years, due to pressing military issues back home. Supposedly, many of the Mulan chose to stay when their soldiers left, and evidence of their culture still exists amongst the natives. The *portal* in Gbor Nor is located just southwest of the cursed island of Bhaluin. Both Murghôm and Semphar avoid the area because of the island, and that *gate* does not move more than 3 miles from the island at any time.

There are rumors of others – I am told of one that is completely submerged that connects the Annrock to the Alaor, but perhaps it was destroyed during the last eruption. I am also told of one somewhere between Nimbral and Yal Tengri, the Great Ice Sea, although I have never seen it. I am sure there are many, many more undiscovered *gates* on the high seas, but the oddest one I have heard stories about is called "The Nexus", which is located somewhere in the Western Ocean. Supposedly it is a series of nine stationary *portals* laid out in a circle, and a ship can sail from one and across into another, and each is connected to a different *portal*-pair. I'm not sure how a captain knows which terminus he will exit, but I suppose some sort of key or password is involved. By using these, a savvy captain could use any of the other *portals* I have discussed, and even some I have not. This would put quite a bit of power into the hands of anyone who could control this artifact, and the people most often attributed to claiming ownership are a strange sea-folk who are said to live on their ships. I would not even believe these tales, if I had not seen some of these folk myself, with their large eyes and webbed fingers. They keep mostly to themselves, so I know very little about them¹¹.

¹¹ Captain Montoya is referring to the Beiy'maar, a strange group of people recently seen trading on the

One last note, for the sake of completeness, before I finish this manuscript: In the northeast of the Punjabbi are a group of islands called the Wakaloni, and it is the home of a race of people called the Makoi. The Makoi appear to be half-elves, except that they are not the offspring of two races, as are others of their ilk. They are also much larger than most, with males averaging around 6' in height, and have athletic, well-muscled bodies. They all sport beautiful golden tan skin, and are amongst the friendliest people I have ever encountered. In fact, it is because of them that I swore off piracy for good – they do not allow pirates on their islands and will sink any ships they believe to be pirates. For such a fun-loving, happy people, they are more than capable of carrying that out that threat with their navy of strange ships consisting of two separate hulls! I have seen some primitive humans in the outlying islands using a similar type of boat called a *bangca*¹², but these larger versions are both impressive and deadly. The islanders do a brisk trade with the peoples of Shou and Zakhara, through their settlements in the southern islands. They also trade with Nimbral, which is just northeast of them. There is a string of islands between these and Nimbral, and the Sea Haven has a small settlement called Farhaven on an island at the halfway point. There are still many secrets to discover, both in the Punjabbi Archipelago and throughout Toril's many bodies of water, and I hope that I set down in these pages something useful to many an erstwhile explorer.

A note from Athol: We received this document as the gift requirement for entrance into Candlekeep. He wished entrance into our hallowed halls in order to research what he calls "the serious nature of

Sword Coast. Not much is known about them, and they almost never leave their ships. Their eyes resemble those of elves, but are much larger and without pupils. Also, like elves, they have pointed ears, but theirs come to longer points and have a weird bat-wing look to them, in which they enjoy wearing multiple earrings. Other body piercings are also common. A strange lot, even amongst the myriad folk of Waterdeep.

¹² This is a type of double-hulled canoe used by the peoples on the coasts of Lopango and various island cultures.

paradox", and he needed information that could help his family. We were, of course, at first skeptical as to his memoir's authenticity. Normally we do not accept personal journals of explorers unless we are sure of the source, but the sheer amount of information provided in this document had us make certain allowances. Much of the information is verifiable, through our own extensive resources, and with the help of charts and maps provided us by a fellow scholar on Evermeet. However, the rest appears to be nothing more than half-truths and fabrication. And yet... all of our means of identifying lies have proven fruitless. We suspect that he must have some sort of magic about his person that allows this, although we've yet to discern it. Another conundrum that we were faced with while interviewing him after reading his text was his disconcerting way of referring to things that happened in the distant past as if they were recent events, and recent events as if they happened in the distant past. Although he appears to be a man in his late thirties, or perhaps early forties, he has obviously had too many life experiences for a man his age, or even twice his apparent age. We have been able to discern some longevity magic in an item he wears about his neck that looks like a religious symbol popular in the Old Empires called an ankh, but when asked about it he merely shrugs. He claims to have drunk from a "fountain of agelessness" he found somewhere in Lopango, but also claims to not remember its exact location. It is obvious that he is prevaricating to some extent, but until we can ascertain as to how much, we must file his 'report' away in our fiction section for now. It troubles me to do so, but so much of what he has claimed in his tales is just too wild to be believed... and yet... I look out my window even as I write this, and stare out at his marvelous craft. The view I am blessed to have looks out upon the Sword Coast and the Trackless Sea, and it is grand indeed, with my tower being perched high on the rocky cliffs, over a hundred feet above the waters. Yet there, at the same height as my window, sits his ship, the Blue Diamond, floating in the air a hundred or so yards off shore from the Keep. As I gaze upon this wondrous vessel, I can only imagine the places he has visited, and things he might have seen...

[DM's Note: For the culture of the Wakaloni islands, the D&D sourcebook *The Kingdom of Ierendi* will prove very useful. The history will have to be altered, but the islands can be used as written; simply adjust the scale to half that given on that product's maps. If you can not obtain that source, the culture is similar to that of early Hawaii during the

reign of King Kamehameha. For Katashaka, the highly recommended Nyambe rules will work just fine, and the author has gone to great lengths to make the lore compatible.]



MERCENARY COMPANIES OF THE REALMS

By Charlie Grimes

From countless regions and races, men and women gather to fight. They are called by many different titles: Sellsword; Soldier of Fortune; Mercenary; Hiresword. Though they have many differences, they follow a common cause. They fight for gold. The battlefield is their home. The death cries of the fallen are their lullabies. For those that have it, the lust for power is an endless cycle – and so these men and women always find work when the horns of battle sound.

REDEEMERS OF DAWN

Leader: Tesserazu (Male Balor, Cleric, Outsider [Native])

Number of Members: Approx. 80 Order members, 120 lay followers

Current Sphere(s) of Operation: The Bloodstone Lands, Veldorn, Myth Drannor

General Alignment: Any Good

Other Names: Dawnwalkers, The Redeemed, Order of the Morning, Order of the Sun

Dogma of the Redeemers: "We may not be here forever, but for the time that we are here, we will destroy evil if it can not be saved, protect those who need protection, and lend our strength and knowledge to those who seek it. We do this in the name of Lathander."



The Redeemers of Dawn was first established in the Prime Material Plane in the Year of Dawndance (1095 DR). It was officially established in this year after the members of what was then called "the Order of the Sun" destroyed a cult dedicated to the demon queen known as Malcanthet.

The Order of the Sun was started by a redeemed balor demon, known as Tesserazu. It was in the Year of the Pirates' Trove (1023 DR) that a sorcerer, who venerated Lathander, witnessed a casting from a powerful druid. The druid used the spell upon a tendriculous that was destroying much of the wildlife in the area. Rather than destroying the creature, the druid changed the plant creature so that it would protect the forest it was despoiling. Sertian was astounded at the power that the spell had, and soon after, he discussed with the druid what this spell was, and what was needed to cast it.

It took Sertian sometime to decide how he should use the spell, and he asked Lathander for some guidance. While awaiting the Morninglord's answer, he began making a coffer to hold a diamond, one of the spell's components. The finished coffer was fashioned from gold, with red velvet lining. On the coffer's lid, inlays of rose quartz formed Lathander's holy symbol.

Inspired by a vision, Sertian set out towards Narfell, in the Bloodstone Lands. He had heard tales of that land; the stories spoke of a land where many fiends, summoned in earlier wars, still roamed. Once there, he hired a group of local adventurers, who would know the land. Although it was expensive for the sorcerer, he knew he would need their assistance if he was to complete his task. He warned them of their possible fates, and upon hearing their acceptance, he told them what they were seeking. After one conversation, they set out to find a demon.

Several nights later, they discovered a balor. Sertian told the band of adventurers that he would need time to cast the spell, and he would lower as many of the balor's defensive powers as he could. After successfully sneaking near the demon, and negating a few of balor's demonic powers, Sertian began casting the spell, while holding the diamond in his hand. During the process, he witnessed two of the eight adventurers get torn apart by the balor. Trying not to falter, he finished the spell as the balor killed another of the adventurers. The arcane energy pulled the demon into the diamond. Sertian stayed to witness the burials, and to give last rites to the men that he had hired.

He left Narfell and went to a temple of Lathander in Voonlar. He knew the high priestess of the temple, and he gave her enough information to keep the coffer in safety. She had asked him if he would come back and he simply shook his head and gave no answer. Soon after, he left her and the temple.

Knowing nothing more, she placed the coffer in the great hall, under a statue of Lathander. There the coffer stayed for a year and a day, until one early morning in the Year of Lathander's Light (1024 DR). With a surge of light from below, a large being came forth, spreading its massive white wings and looking around, while keeping its features smooth. Teserazu had no idea where he was or, for a short period, who he was. When the balor felt the sun behind him, he turned to see the statue of Lathander glowing with a faint rosy light. The balor fell to his knees. As he knelt silently for an hour, the clergy slowly began to come back inside the temple.

When soft whispers broke out, Teserazu realized he was being watched. He turned around slowly, seeing them, and unfolded his great wings. The clergy were stunned, except for one, who walked out of the group. An older, attractive woman, she extended her hand to him. She told him that she was Yrilthia Silveropal, Dawnmaster of the temple in Voonlar, and that he was brought here a year and a day before by Sertian Mercoilith, a sorcerer.

Seeing that he was not responding to her, she took the balor to a private room as the clergy watched. Sending the clergy away, she guided the balor into the chamber, where she explained all that she knew about the demon and what he was.

It was then that Teserazu began to remember the battle, and his last killings. Tears formed in his eyes as it came back to him. Yrilthia smiled at him and told him that he was forgiven. She left him to himself for a time. While he was alone, she found him the largest set of clothing that the temple had. When she returned to the room, she gave the clothing to the balor, along with the box that contained the now shattered diamond.

The next day, the entire temple learned of what the being originally was. A considerable amount of controversy broke out within the temple; most of the clergy demanded that the balor be killed. Some in the clergy saw it as a true rebirth for the balor, as the balor obviously had Lathander's great blessing, while others were entirely unsure.

After a tending of deliberations and prayers, it was decided that the balor, upon his request, would remain within the church. Soon after, Lathander began granting the redeemed fiend divine spells, and permanently removed the balor's demonic abilities.

It was two years later, in the Year of Crimson Magics (1026 DR), that Teserazu came to Yrilthia with a suggestion. He told her that he wanted to start an order dedicated to Lathander, an order that consisted of redeemed fiends like himself. The Dawnmaster knew that this idea would be good and true, and she told Teserazu that he would need to remain within the church for a few more years before he would be ready to undertake his quest. Three years later, Teserazu asked Yrilthia her permission, which she granted. After gaining her and Lathander's permission, he began to ask others to journey with him to a place that had many fiends: Narfell.

Zeyelia, a former erinyes, was the first to come into the Order. The clerics were successful in keeping her inside a ring of light while Teserazu preformed the ritual for the

spell, which came from the sky as thin, powerful beam of light that flowed into her. With shrieking screams from the erinyes, the beam pushed the devil into the diamond as Tesserazu completed the prayer. Exhausted, Tesserazu managed to place the diamond into the same box that he was placed into, before he collapsed.

Another demon was captured six months later. This time it was a hezrou demon, known as Birethlz. During the battle, one of the clerics was severely injured, but the clerics managed to hold the light. Tesserazu finished his casting, and after the spell ended, he placed the diamond into a newly crafted, though equally beautiful, box.

The church began to worry about how the devil would interact with the demons, knowing a bit about the Blood War that has been raging between the two fiendish races since the dawn of the time. It was rough for the three former fiends at first, but they stayed with the church for five summers, and between them managed to find a common ground. They also learned and helped each other, before officially founding the Order of the Sun. The Order has since grown to five fiends, two of which were exalted but not redeemed.

Areas of Influence

The Redeemers of Dawn are a powerful group, but small in numbers. They aren't as widespread as other groups, like the Harpers. They can't openly bring new members into the Redeemers, either: some find it hard to accept the idea of redemption for fiends. Nonetheless, they have chosen three fiendish-infested areas on Faerûn, with each one of the leaders taking up a position after the Year of the Dawndance (1095 DR). The leaders don't get to see each other as often as they would like, partially due to their locations, but mostly due to the difficulties of traveling in the open. There are said to have a few minor safe holdings, mostly for keeping an eye on enemies and aiding those who seek refuge in Lathander.

The following regions are where Dawnwalkers have set up major temples; other minor temples are known only to the leaders of the Redeemed.

Bloodstone Lands: This is where Tesserazu, Zeyelia, and Birethlz were redeemed. Birethlz choose this region, which has seen wars involving summoned fiends.

Veldorn: A land controlled by beasts and a great deal of evil, Zeyelia has taken this area, but she remains outside the border. This temple has more exalted beings, rather than redeemed, due to the high amount of monsters and other creatures that roam the area.

Myth Drannor: The largest temple of operation, with the most redeemed. Myth Drannor was home for Tesserazu until the elves resettled here in Year of the Lightning Storms (1374 DR); he and the others left three years later. During that period, Tesserazu attempted to redeem many of the fiends that laired in the ruins, and he was closely aligned with the church in the area.

Those supporters who are outside the Order often use their homes as gathering places for as many members as they can accommodate.

Joining The Redeemers of Dawn

The Order doesn't recruit like most other divine organizations: they seek out fiends. However, they often are successful in bringing a couple of redeemed fiends into the Order each year.

The redeeming process is often an intense battle, and it is emotional for the fiend. If the Redeemers are successful, they ensure that the diamond used remains undisturbed, as it always runs a risk of shattering. If the diamond does shatter, the captured fiend comes out of it early, having no chance at all of being redeemed.

The prayer form of spell known in Faerûn as *sanctify the wicked* is different. Lathander will grant, for a short time, almost any member of the Order the necessary power and abilities to perform the spell. The lower

the caster's experience, the more the casting will drain them, which often makes the caster need to sleep or rest for forty-eight hours.

Throughout the year and a day, the fiend inside the diamond looks back on its life. If it was once mortal, it looks back on that life as well, to learn from its memories as a mortal. Once outside the diamond, the temple leader will often have a private session with the newly redeemed fiend, letting them know what has occurred, and helping them become used to the changes in thoughts, feelings, and emotions. For most of them, the process is the same. They don't remember anything at first; but when the memories of their lives as mortals and fiends return, their emotions are raw. If the leader of the temple is not there to help with this, the second highest ranking member within the temple will often fill that role. During some point in the session, a mirror or reflective object is often offered to let them see their new appearance. It isn't uncommon for them to assume some mortal features, such as a beard or elongated elven-like ears; they all do this subconsciously while coming out of the diamond.

Usually a few days later, the redeemed fiend is offered a place to stay, and a chance to join the temple. Most of the time, the fiend accepts and becomes a member of the Redeemed, although few have been known to decline and look for a different enlightened path of their own.

Being a former yugoloth, devil, demon, or something entirely different is not necessary for joining the Order. A fair amount of the members are exalted creatures, those who found their own way to the Order. One such exalted is Eleras Nerktisa, a half-illithid female saved by Zeyelia at a young age. She is a very good example of being evil (or raised in evil), and finding a new path: helping, rather than destroying.

Cost and Benefits of Membership

Once someone has decided to stay within the Order, it becomes a great part of his or her life, although many of them try to have some life outside of it. All of them know that they

cannot leave the temples for long, because they may be caught and tortured for information.

Continuing the fight against the darkness and evil, redeeming others, and granting safety to those who need it: these are the costs of the Order. In return, Lathander has vowed to each member of the Order that upon his or her death, they may be reborn once more if they wish it. If they do wish this, he will offer them the path back to him, and ensure they are not taken by the fiends again.

Redeemed fiends (yugoloths, demon, devil, etc.) can not be banished from the Prime Material Plane if their diamond and box are both on the Prime Material Plane upon release from the diamond.

Members will often have a mark of Lathander somewhere upon their bodies. These marks are most commonly found on their foreheads, the back of their necks, or their arms.

Many can recognize the members of this order by the clothes that they wear, which are most often gold, white, and soft crèmes. Along with their clothing, they may carry a holy symbol or object. While wearing a robe, their brooch also often acts a magical item.

Acting Within The Redeemers

The Dawnwalkers do not often gather together. When they do, they discuss any news about fiends that may be plaguing settlements, and whether they should get involved and learn if the fiend can be redeemed. Members will also give suggestions on what other members should or should not be doing.

Arguments and strong debates are not frowned upon; they are often encouraged, for they are needed and things should not be kept from the members of the Order, and no hatred should be allowed to fester within the Order.

Acting Outside the Redeemers

The Redeemers of Dawn are not well known. Other races may be frightened by their assistance, because they partially resemble the fiends that they once were. The Redeemers do walk amongst the different lands, and they are often thought to be some kind of half-celestial being that has been blended with another race. They will assist anyone that they can, as long as they believe that they are doing a good deed or a deed that will expand Lathander's dogma and beliefs.

It isn't uncommon for them to help a barmaid clean up, or to keep an eye on young children running through the woods, keeping them from getting hurt or attacked. Small things mean just as much to them as do the large things.

Leadership

Teserazu, *Leader of the Redeemers, NG male balor, Cleric, Outsider (Native)*

Teserazu, the First Redeemed, is the leader of the Redeemers of Dawn, a secret order in service of Lathander, the Morninglord. Teserazu stands roughly six and a half feet tall, with a muscular frame, soft green eyes, and rich red flesh. His wings, which formerly had a demonic look to them, are white with a soft, feathery appearance, giving them an angelic look. His horns are short, and ivory in color. His hair color has softened, but it retains a brown hue.

Teserazu is quite contemplative. He keeps the calm when things get rough, and tries to maintain an open dialogue between the members of the Order, for the former demons and devils do bicker with one another from time to time. Teserazu constantly works for the Order that he made, striving to help others find their way back from being consumed by the darkness and evils of the Lower Planes. Teserazu works hard to understand his fellow Redeemed. Most clergy in the church of Lathander do not know of this order, which sometimes makes it difficult for him and the others to do their work.

Teserazu is the most powerful cleric of Lathander within the Order, so he is often the being who decides whom to lead into battle. An active leader, he prefers to be part of the battle, rather than holding back and directing others. One such occasion was the "Great Battle", as members within the Order call it, which involved one of Malcanthet's most valued followers, Zsullith the Dark Beauty. It was a horrendous battle, the first for the Dawnwalkers. Zsullith planned to sacrifice numerous children of different races, using their energies to create a *gate* that to her demon queen's Abyssal realm of Shendilavri, the five hundredth and seventieth layer of the Abyss. If not for Zeyelia, the Redeemers would likely to have died at Zsullith's hands, allowing Malcanthet access to the Prime Material Plane. Wielding awe and beauty, Zeyelia used Dawnfire to give Teserazu the necessary time to complete his spells. Teserazu gave Zsullith one of his strongest prayers, burning the demon-nymph to nothingness.

Soon after the Great Battle, Lathander sent an envoy to Teserazu, congratulating him and the Order in dealing a blow to the demon queen. The envoy taught the Order new ways to protect themselves from Malcanthet, and also gave the Order a new name, a name they today carry: the Redeemers of Dawn.

Zeyelia, *Co-Leader of the Redeemers, female erinyes, Monk, Outsider (Native)*

Zeyelia is said to be one the most beautiful members of the Redeemers. She receives many compliments to this effect, but she doesn't feel that it is so. She has soft yellow eyes and stunning silver hair. Her obsidian-like skin gives those around her a sense of awe, earning her the unusual nickname of the "Black Angel of Morning". Her appearance is quite similar to the appearance of a dark elf. This isn't a surprise, for she was a drow monk of Lloth, the Spider Queen. While still mortal, Zeyelia was sacrificed to devils by one of her sisters, who attempted to forge an allegiance with the fiends so that she could defeat a higher ranking house. Zeyelia still remembers the battle she had with her sister, Ultha Kerlittina, Matron Mother of the Thirteenth House in Sshamath. Zeyelia fought fiercely, severely wounding the House

Mother before she was stabbed in the chest with the family's most valued sword. Regrettably for Zeyelia, she was barely living when her sister dragged her to an inverted pentagram, where she began a ritual. Zeyelia remembers the darkness that embraced her, and her belief that she was being sent to Lloth's domain. Instead, she saw the fangs of a devil in front of her and heard her sister laughing.

Zeyelia is a new name for her; she doesn't remember what she was called as a drow. She was given this name upon being summoned and bound by a wizard that resided in Narfell. She killed hundreds of mortals for this wizard; she feels pain for her deeds every day. Zeyelia loves to help children, giving them gold and small gifts, etc. She is one of the few in Lathander's clergy to have received one of his most precious gifts: Dawnfire. Dawnfire can be used by its wielders against evil, causing devastating effects to them, especially the undead and fiends. The gifted are only allowed to use this ability in the direst of situations, something Zeyelia has only needed to do once. That time occurred when she was battling the cult of Malcanthet; Zeyelia's use of Dawnfire saved her life and lives of the many members that were battling beside her. It healed most of their wounds and gave them the strength needed to fight the cult, and gave Teserazu the time to destroy Zsullith.

She has encountered numerous demons and devils during her time with the Order. She has redeemed almost two dozen fiends herself, and has aided others, like Eleras Nerktisa. Eleras was one of first non-fiends that Zeyelia helped see the light. It took a great deal of time for Zeyelia to get through to Eleras, but she made it her personal mission. She showed Eleras love, compassion, and care, something that Eleras had never experienced from anyone. To this day, Eleras plays a fair role within the order, and often travels to each of the regions for the leaders; this is something that gives Zeyelia great pride.

Birethlz, *Co-leader of the Redeemers, male hezrou, Necromancer, Outsider (Native)*

The most visually changed of the three leaders is Birethlz the White Necromancer. A former hezrou demon, he stands roughly six feet in height, with a deep gray skin tone that seems to shimmer. Birethlz still retains some of his former appearance, but it is softened now. His body has become more slender and his hands are more flexible for the spells that he used to cast before Orcus turned him into a hezrou demon. His eyes are still green, but they are a rich emerald now, and he has a mixture of blond hair that he keeps cut short.

Birethlz was the second to be redeemed by the high prayer that Teserazu chanted, six months after he did the same to Zeyelia. Birethlz, like Zeyelia, and like their friend and leader Teserazu, decided to continue what he was best at, but in a much different fashion. In his mortal life, he was a human necromancer who venerated Orcus, the Prince of Undead. Jlerra, as he was formerly known, was obsessed with using corpses for his personal agenda. He believed that Orcus was going to help him, and he unknowingly sacrificed his soul, believing that he would become a demon-lich of Orcus's own creation. Unfortunately, he was turned into a pawn by the fiend that he served, and then into a murderous hezrou demon. He retained that form for nearly three hundred years, before Teserazu found him destroying and killing families.

It took Birethlz the longest of the three to understand what happened and the rebirth that he was given. It took him a similar amount of time to follow the studies of necromancy and other spellcasting. Unlike his former life, however, he considers himself a white necromancer, rather than a necromancer who deals with the dead. He has been challenged a great deal, and has learned to not make demands, as he did in his former life. Instead, Birethlz has learned how to work towards his goals. He has been blessed by Lathander with a talent for locating and achieving new methods of magic. He carries several magical items, including a unique one known as *Staff of Celestial Light*. This staff was a gift to him from Aseri Leala, who exalted this staff, formerly a *Staff of Fiendish Darkness*. It was one of the few items Birethlz had hidden in

his mortal life; he discovered it was still there upon an expedition to recover his hidden treasures from his former tower. He also peruses most of the books and tomes the Dawnwalkers have discovered and purchased over time. He, or one of his companions, will often make copies of the item to send to the other stations.

Allies of the Redeemers

Aseri Leala

Illumian male wizard of Deneir – NG medium humanoid

A longtime friend to Birethlz, he was the one who exalted Birethlz's former staff for him. Thanks to his knowledge and the abilities granted by Deneir, he has been a great help to the Redeemers, in more ways than he understands. Aseri has pale white skin and deep blue eyes, and stands a foot shorter than his friend. His hair is long and golden-blond hair. His rich purple robes are adorned with magical topazes and star sapphires. Aseri has a soft voice, but angers when he sees anyone hurt. Like most Illumians, Aseri will attempt to outwit his opponent.

The Darksong Knights

Zeyelia has learned about her former family through this small group dedicated to the goddess Eilistraee. Small in numbers, much like the Redeemers, and mostly comprised of females, they seek to further their goddess's aims, and to destroy the yochlol demons that serve Lloth.

The Harpers

Teserazu has met some members of the Harpers over the years, and has become friends and allies with several of them since then. Their relationship is helpful to one another, as they share a common dislike for the Cult of the Dragon.

Order of the Aster

The Order of Aster came seeking the Redeemers not long after the Great Battle. With their help, the Redeemers were able to

further the construction of their new base of operations. Only the oldest and wisest members within this order know of the Dawnwalkers.

Zealots of the Written Word

More of an alliance for informational exchange, the oldest members of the Zealots have a keen interest in the redeemed fiends and their followers, for their knowledge of the places they have been. In return for that information, the Zealots trade information with them. Some Zealots find it to be an honor and pleasure to sit down with a being who has been redeemed from such a horrid path.

Enemies of the Redeemers

Malcanthet, Queen of the Succubi

Malcanthet became an enemy of the Order of the Sun in the year 1095 DR, after a ferocious battle which involved, at the time, all the members of the Order. It was called "The Great Battle" for those within the Order, and a great deal came of it, such as the death of the powerful and evil courtesan Zsullith the Dark Beauty. It was after this battle that they earned the name Redeemers of Dawn, and powers within themselves were revealed.

Orcus, Prince of the Undead

Orcus, the great bloated demon, is one of the Abyss's most feared powers. His minions are often encountered by the Redeemers, though it is usually mortal followers, not demons. Orcus is also an enemy of the Order because of Birethlz, as he was a former follower of the Undead Prince in his mortal life. Birethlz was turned into a demon by Orcus, who had tricked him into it.

Cult of the Dragon

The members of the Cult of the Dragon are enemies of the Redeemers for disturbing the dead, and for their creation of dracoliches. They haven't had many encounters, but it was one of the first times the Redeemers had to leave the battle before all was lost. For

Birethlz, they are a bit more of a personal enemy, considering their disgusting practices of necromancy.

Inthracis

Little is known about this ultroloth lord, only that the Redeemers encountered his minions early in their years as Order of the Sun. It is known that he is not only a powerful general, but a powerful necromancer. The two parties have not had many encounters with each other, but are often on the highest scale of battle when they do.

Timeline of Events

1023 DR – The demon Taserazu, a balor, was caught inside a diamond by a Lathanderite mage named Sertian.

1024 DR – Taserazu the Redeemed comes out of the diamond in the church of Lathander in Voonlar.

1029 DR - Taserazu and a group of mages and clerics ventured back to Narfell, where the devil Zeyelia was causing great havoc. They sought this devil out to grant her the same choice that Taserazu was given. Six months after Zeyelia was found, another demon was found and located near a small village. They set out once more to redeem Birethlz.

1030 DR – The erinyes Zeyelia and the demon Birethlz emerge from their diamonds after a year-long look back at their lives.

1035 DR – After staying within the church for five more years, Taserazu, Zeyelia, and Birethlz formed the Order of the Sun. Soon after, they set out to the planes with two exalted allies, in search of others.

1043 DR – The Order of the Sun briefly encountered the followers of Inthracis, an ultroloth demon lord of immense power.

1095 DR – The Order of the Sun came to the attention of Malcanthet, Queen of the Succubi, after they destroyed one of her strongest cults on the Material Plane.

They also managed to redeem a few of her followers in the process. Soon after the battle, Lathander sends an envoy to Taserazu, Zeyelia, and Birethlz, telling them of ways to better protect their future sites from possible assaults, and to give the new name of the Redeemers of Dawn.

1098 DR – The Three Leaders separated, and making bases in Myth Drannor, the Bloodstone Lands, and Voonlar.

1104 DR – Zeyelia met some drow followers of Eilistraee, and helped them against drow followers of Lloth. She soon discovered that members of her house were still alive, and may be within the churches of Lloth, Eilistraee and Kiransalee.

1120 DR – Taserazu was successful in redeeming five devils in Myth Drannor, and also caught the eye of the local church of Lathander.

1128 DR – Birethlz and others faced the Cult of the Dragon for the first time.

1130 DR – Birethlz lost seven order members, and several more exalted allies, in a battle against a dracolich.

1212 DR – Zeyelia learned of a mind flayer who had several beings under his control, and decided to destroy it. In the process, she found Eleras Nerktisa, a half-illithid human female of young age. Once capable, Eleras Nerktisa became a traveler to each of the bases, and began work for smaller bases.

1374 DR – Invasion of the daemonfey in Myth Drannor. The Redeemers of Dawn managed to escape and attempted to help the church of Lathander, but they were unsuccessful. Taserazu and twelve other Redeemed, along with followers, met with the elves of Evereska and Evermeet. They were successful in staying with the army, vowing to help in any way that they could; they mostly helped heal the wounded. This was the first time that Evereska and Evermeet were introduced to the Dawnwalkers.

1377 DR – Teserazu the First Redeemed left the Prime Material Plane behind after the elves successfully took back Myth Drannor and purged it of evil. He took along only a handful of Dawnwalkers and exalted allies. Most others left the Order, or went to join Birethlz in the Bloodstone Lands, or Zeyelia in Voonlar.

Adventures

Wila Turimoss is pregnant with a blessed child. A medusa female, Wila was saved by the Redeemers when she was very young.

Perhaps the child's father is one of the other members; perhaps she is in love with another male of the church. The child could also have been fathered by the local village leader. Wila's child will need the blessing of the largest church of Lathander before it is born, to insure that the child is of good nature. There is said to be a rogue group seeking the child, sponsored by the medusa's mother. It is unknown what her intentions are with the unborn child. It is known that she is a powerful conjurer, and commands a coven of witches, something unusual for medusas.

JOURNAL OF AN APPRENTICE SCRIBE

The Legend of Impresk Lake

By J P Hazelhoff

Rikos Illustration by Toni James

Dwarf Illustration by Julius Ryan Petilla

Well met, fellow scribes and learned scholars!

Allow me to introduce myself. I am Rikos Dughol, late of Saradush, in Tethyr. I have been traveling across Faerûn, at least across the regions known as the Western Heartlands and the North, as an apprentice scribe with my master Brin Orgul.

During my travels, I have kept a journal of the places I have visited and things I have seen. As I retrieve and edit these journal entries while staying in Candlekeep, I will make them available for all to read. My journal might resemble the works of Volothamp Geddarm, whose writings I came across during my studies, but are by no means copies of his excellent work, which has served as a wonderful source of inspiration.

Most of the journal has been written during those moments when I did not have to perform some tasks for my master, or when I wasn't occupied with the physical part of traveling. Because of this, the entries in the journal may sometimes seem disjointed. Also, the entries might not be published in chronological order; the pages were scattered during an unfortunate incident with an overeager air mephit.

I hope that for the places I've visited, the journals will provide you as much insight as Volothamp's journals provided me.

*Till swords meet,
Rikos Dughol of Saradush*

Journal of an apprentice scribe by Rikos Dughol of Saradush

18th Marpenoth 1371, Year of the Unstrung Harp



hough it has only been a few rides, it seems a long time ago since I left Saradush. But I do not feel homesick, yet... Traveling with Master Orgul is opening the world to my eyes; I am seeing



wonders large and small, and this makes me want to learn and see more of Faerûn.

Our journey northward took us through the eastern highlands close to Morninggold Keep, the former keep of our Queen and now home to the Order of the Silver Chalice. The keep and the order were not our destination, although I would have liked to see the place;

instead I had to make do with glimpses of the famous stronghold while we traveled on.

Master Orgul's journey was to the Abbey of St. Alaric. This holy place, dedicated to the Church of Ilmater, is nestled in the hills a few miles southwest of Morninggold Keep, in the foothills on the Tethyrian side of the Snowflake Mountains. During our stay at the Abbey, I learned of an ancient myth regarding the smaller of the two large lakes beyond the Snowflake Mountains: Impresk Lake, an ice-cold lake fed by four rivers and many streams. Master Orgul told me to write this story down as part of my training – and not only this story, but any other items of interest I would encounter during our travels north.

In ancient times, when Calimshan was still known as Coramshan, giants ruled vast stretches of land in the mountainous highlands. War with Coramshan and the dwarves of High Shanatar had driven these behemoths further and further away from what is now eastern Tethyr and Amn.

To me, High Shanatar is almost a legend; few are the dwarves that live in and around Saradush, and most often these are a tight-lipped bunch. The little details in the monk's tale showed me, once more, that I know so little of the ancient history of my homeland. To learn that the dwarven merchants I glimpsed from Master Orgul's stained glass window on the ground floor of his three story house were likely hailing from Iltkazar... Iltkazar: a kingdom millennia old and still alive, though hidden from most eyes.

Their ancestors were among those that fought the giants and drove them from the highlands, from the Kuldin Peaks and the Snowflake Mountains, to places far north and east from here. The lore of ages that must be assembled in that dwarven delve, deep under the Omlarandin Mountains...

I wish I would have a chance to visit that fabulous realm one day, though it will not be for a long time. At the pace we're going, it will almost be a year from now before we arrive in Silvermoon.

Though it is the giants that give me the creeps, the memories of that brute fire giant and his armies laying waste to Saradush in the Year of the Banner¹ still haunt my dreams at times. With the vivid memories of the siege and the ensuing fights, I can imagine the desire of the dwarves to chase these behemoths away.

Oh, about the legend... I guess I should make an attempt to write it down more completely. The stories, handed down the generations as folktales, have only recently been penned down by scribes of the Binder.

Brother Tynnos Denaad of the Soaring Spirit, one of the Binder's scribes, is attempting to unearth some more lore on the topic. The good brother came to visit the Abbey of St. Alaric. From him and a blacksmith I heard the story as penned down below.

The smith, Pyram Beyross, is clan elder and spokesperson for a small hamlet half a day's walk from the Abbey of St. Alaric, in the foothills of the Kuldin Peaks. He guides the hamlet in daily matters, but the smith defers the more important questions and decisions relating to the hamlet's welfare to the Abbess of St Alaric. The agricultural community produces goods predominantly for self-sustenance, and donates excess produce to the Abbey.

Pyram's works are the only items which have traveled well beyond the sphere of influence of the hamlet. His utilitarian metal works, bearing the briar rose symbol of St Alaric, have traveled with priests of Ilmater throughout the region. In the Year of the Staff, the Abbess blessed the smithy in the name of the Crying God for services rendered to the church of Ilmater – Pyram is the fourth generation blacksmith supplying to the Abbey. Since then, the smith's commissioned works have been stamped with a briar rose.

¹ Year of the Banner (1368 DR): The army of the giant Yaga Shura, and a subsequent dragon attack, laid waste to large sections of Saradush. Source: *Throne of Bhaal* (novel)

As told by Brother Tynnos Denaad of Oghma and Pyram Beyross, in the Year of the Unstrung Harp:

In times which even the eldest of the longer-lived races would refer to as ancient times, giants ruled the lands between the Cloudpeak and the Marching Mountains. These lands were covered in vast swathes of old forest growth, where our ancestors dwelt in primitive barbarian tribes. Not all of these realms of the giants survived into the annals of history, but amongst those that did are Alfwode, Darchar², Keovesheim and Tuzessdalir.



These giants needed large pastures to graze their herds, and they cut down huge swathes of the forests that once covered most of Tethyr and Erlkazar. Their extensive logging angered the elves, and their arrogance in herding their livestock on the large plains they created attracted dragons. Greatly the land suffered from the wars these creatures fought. Though the giants were many and strong, the arrows and magic of the elves slowly forced them eastward.

While their northern steadings diminished due to more frequent rampages of dragons in that region, they still ruled vast stretches of

² At Taintain's Barrels & Crates in Asbravn one can find a relic of Darchar, a giant brass spittoon [TSR 9460 - *Volo's Guide to the Sword Coast*]

the eastern highlands, and all but the tallest mountains.

But then the dwarves came. They mined and delved deep under the roots of the mountains, but sought also the lands above – lands where the giants brooked no intrusion. Yet the stout folk are and were stubborn and tenacious. At first there were only skirmishes, though soon these grew into battles and prolonged campaigns.

The dwarves were too many and their tactics too much for the giants. More and more, they found themselves giving ground, at high costs. Enormous bones bleaching in the scorching sun of the highland summers were soon among the few reminders of the giants that had walked these lands. Huge cairns were another, though many a soul walked past or over a hill without realizing that it was a giant's grave. The giants buried their dead under big stone mounts; this is how many of the large hills of the Erlkazar uplands were formed.

One of the last rulers of the giants in the east was called Impresk. Though the legends do not specify this, most sages believe Impresk to have been a stone giant.

Impresk came from a line of chieftains that ruled a large area between the Giant's Run Mountains and the Snowflake Mountains, called Felsaarlik³. The eastern and western borders of the realm were where the rocky hills gave way to the rolling fields of the Shining Plains and the Giant's Plain, respectively.

While Impresk's realm remained outside the main areas of conflict between the stout folk and the giants, frequent dwarven patrols harried Impresk's folk. Having buried his father, who died of natural causes, the new Thane was grief-stricken. Whilst Impresk was mourning at his father's grave, a dwarven warband killed the giant's daughter Hainalka, a young giantess named for a variety of briar

³ Felsaarlik was a vassal realm of Nedeheim, and one of the last to fall before the dwarven axes and hammers. The name of the realm lives on in the name of a ghost town in Erlkazar, Saarlik, on the south shore of the Arglander River.

rose rare in the lands east of the Snowflake Mountains and Kuldin Peaks, and more common to the Marching Mountains region.

As he placed the body of Hainalka next to the fresh mound under which he had recently buried his father, a bitter and grieving Impresk cursed the gods for abandoning his people in their time of need. The combined burial mound became the largest in the area, and is now known as Saint Alaric's Hill.

The story does not end here, though. The last Thane of Felsaarlik had only one last stone to place, but as the giant tipped the rock, water gushed forth and the huge stone buried Impresk beneath it. It was as if the rocks themselves wept for the passing of the giants. The resulting stream of water kept flowing to form a lake, which over time received the name Impresk, in memory of the last giant. Legend has it that sometimes the spirit of Impresk tries to break free and causes tremendous waves on the lake, endangering any sailing the waters and flooding the banks when these waves hit the shores.

It was on the burial site of three generations of giants, covered in bushes of a wild orange-red rose variety, that Alaric of Ilmater found himself slipping into a divinely-granted vision. Alaric, the son of a Calishite healer and a Tethyrian wizard and scholar, saw in his mind a place of lore, a place of learning and both physical and spiritual healing. Alaric took the rose prominently growing on the hill as a symbol and representation of his vision. This briar rose is the symbol that signifies the Abbey and the Order of St. Alaric.

The Abbey of St. Alaric, which sprouted from the priest's vision, did not come immediately into being. It took shape in the material world only later in his life⁴, in the first half of the 13th century DR, after many feats which lead to Alaric's saintly status – amongst these saving the life of the wizard-hero Bowgentle⁵, who later helped found the abbey and library.

⁴ Alaric of Ilmater lived in the 12th and 13th centuries DR.

⁵ Bowgentle was born to a fisherman and his wife on the last day of the Year of Bane's Brood (1034 DR). He apparently died in a fall, while traversing a mountain

Today, the Abbey, currently headed by Abbess and Revered Sister Janyrah yr Sarsora, is a library for medical knowledge and a center for training Ilmater's specialty priests. St. Alaric's is one of the larger abbeys of Ilmater in the Lands of Intrigue, and it houses monks, priestesses and priests, and a number of lay scholars. It is also the most scholarly of the ten Tethyrian monasteries founded by the order of Ilmater, and the best school for any learned person in all of Tethyr.

The Abbey had connections – some rumor through *portals* – with the Edificant Library in the Snowflake Mountains. The mundane connections are still in place, now leading to the Soaring Spirit, the monastery High Scrivener Cadderly has built on the location of the former library. No one knows if any magical connections survived the construction of the reborn house of learning.

I actually met one of Deneir's faithful in the Abbey's gardens: Taarin el Busym⁶, a woman from Calimport, traveling towards the Soaring Spirit and stopping over at the Abbey of St. Alaric. She was pleasant company; though I yearned to learn something from her about her home city, she kept the conversations to small talk while she fed a flock of the Abbey's white doves.

Many of Ilmater's devout followers throughout the region travel to the Abbey to spend a year with their monastic brothers and sisters. The start of this year at the Abbey of St. Alaric typically takes place on one of the four cardinal days in the year – the spring and fall equinoxes, or the winter and summer solstices – but can commence on any day of the year.

path in the higher forest during the winter of the Year of the Lost Lady (1241 DR).

⁶ Taarin el Busym (LN hf P3 of Deneir) travels to Erkkazar and Deneir's holy cathedral of Soaring Spirit there. She relays information about all the doings in Calimshan to High Scrivener Cadderly. [TSR 9589 – *Calimport*].

During this year, these visitors join in the daily chores and rituals of the Abbey and go through repetitive periods of fasting, from the thirteenth to twenty-second day of each month⁷. During these fasts, they pray and meditate on the mysteries of the church.

After a year in the Abbey, the priests and paladins that leave with the blessing of the abess have been initiated in the greater secrets of Ilmater's faith. The suffering and personal sacrifices made during the year have given them closer access to their deity, and have left them better prepared to serve the Crying God, spreading his dogma by example.⁸

⁷ These days coincide with two monthly holidays on the religious calendar of Tyr: The Maiming (13th) and The Blinding (22nd).

⁸ In game terms, a cleric or paladin of 7th level or above who spends a year at the abbey gains the Initiate of Ilmater feat [886470000].

CREDITS



Volume IX of the *Candlekeep Compendium* contains the work of many people, who have put much time and effort into penning these articles of lore. Many thanks to all who contributed and helped on this project.

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We hope you have enjoyed this volume of Realmslore. Any feedback is greatly appreciated. Please email us at compendium@candlekeep.com or visit the Candlekeep forum at <http://forum.candlekeep.com>

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Volume X

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