THE BORDER KINGDOMS



BY ED GREENWOOD & ALEX KAMMER

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ON THE COVER

In this cover illustration by Britt Martin, a party of adventurers are beset by a trio of monsters magically compelled by a fell and mysterious enchanter, in open wilderlands near the Crumblerock Crags, less than a day's ride from Irl.

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Foreword

Well met, reader! Ye hold a tome both entertaining and invaluable. For these pages provide, for the first time ever, a good look at a fabled dark corner of Faerûn, a region most folk have heard of but never seen, but that they've heard plenty of wild tales about.

"The Borders," as many call it, is where adventurers go to make themselves kings, and hide their treasure or try to wrest riches from aging resident adventurer-kings. It is a place of half-tamed wilderlands and prowling monsters, an everchanging crazy-quilt of backward, struggling, tiny and more-or-less lawless realms, where the lord you feast with in spring may have been swept away and replaced by summer's end.

This dangerous frontier is home to outlaws, smugglers, shapeshifters, fugitives from justice elsewhere, brigands, and hermits who want to be left alone to forge their own lives—amid the ruins of scores of fallen baronies and the towers of mages who have died or transformed themselves. A land alive with magic, both native and restless, and hidden in the tomes and enchanted items of hundreds of adventurers' caches and lone mage's hide-holes. Most of all, it is the Land of Adventurers—and seems able to endlessly offer new adventurers to every resident and visitor, from the intrigues of its residents and outlanders seeking to conquer or dominate, to the raids and foragings of the monsters who lurk in astonishing, likely magically-renewed profusion.

Oh, yes, let that be the first of my revelations, or rather confirmations of long-recurring rumors: there are Borderers who breed monsters, or magically transform beasts to make them more monstrous. Many of them hide behind the daily chaos they create, while others abandon all subtlety and craft monster skeleton guardians, or undead beholders, or shield guardians—or more exotic agents to fight for them. Beware.

Yet I get ahead of myself, as busy archmages concerned with the wider world are all too wont to do. Know ye that the Border Kingdoms are crammed into an east-west strip of well-watered,



hilly land drained by many streams and rivers, that lies between the Lake of Steam to the north and the Landrise (the cliff that forms the northwesternmost edge of that vast plateau known as the Shaar) to the south, and by the Suldolph Strait (through which the Lake of Steam empties into the Shining Sea, and Calimshan finds its easternmost end) and the westernmost Firesteap Mountains (those peaks that lie to the west of the Golden Road trade-route, south of Innarlith) to the east.

A region not all that large, as gazes traversing a map of Faerûn go, yet it holds a greater variety of lifestyles and strivings, and terrain and rulership, than stretches of countryside thrice the size, or more. Remember always this, if ye'd dare to visit: spells that seek to detect magic spells function with less than trustworthy reliability in the Borders because there's so much overlapping, shifting, decaying, twisting-wild, and freshly cast magic about.

And yes, the Underdark lies beneath it as it doth below all of Toril I know, with known ways down in the hills known as the Shieldmaidens in the easternmost Borders, and hidden ways elsewhere that I'll leave ye to find for thyselves. Some perils should be personally earned.

So why, if this region is so restless and dangerous, so overrun by adventurers and misfits and monsters, so studded with ruins and traps and the lurking snares of yesteryear, would anyone ever want to go anywhere near it? Well, aside from the chance to found thy own kingdom, and king it from thy own throne, there's greed. Or as the Stout Folk say, "Treasure hath an undeniable allure." And I happen to know of seventy-score—I embellish not!—and more magical treasures, to say nothing of coffers of gems and strongchests heavy with trade-bars and coin, that have come into the Borders by various means . . . and thus far, come not out again. Which of course means it's all still there, for the finding!

Let me share just a short list.

Several mages of Netheril, in the gloomy end-days of its splendor, fled the strife alone to what is now the Borders, to build new and simpler lives—and they brought their riches and tomes of magic and enchanted items with them. I've seen scepters with mine own eyes. Later, when feuds arose in Halruaa, archwizards of that land came to the Borders for the same reasons—and they came again in the tumult of the Spellplague, though most perished or survived addled, their minds burnt out. In my own youth, certain of the Magelords who afflicted Athalantar used the Borders to cache magic that they did not live to return for—as did, much later, certain rebel Zhentarim and Red Wizards and Wearers of the Purple and even renegade mages of High Imaskar. Hags and druuth have recently found some of this magic

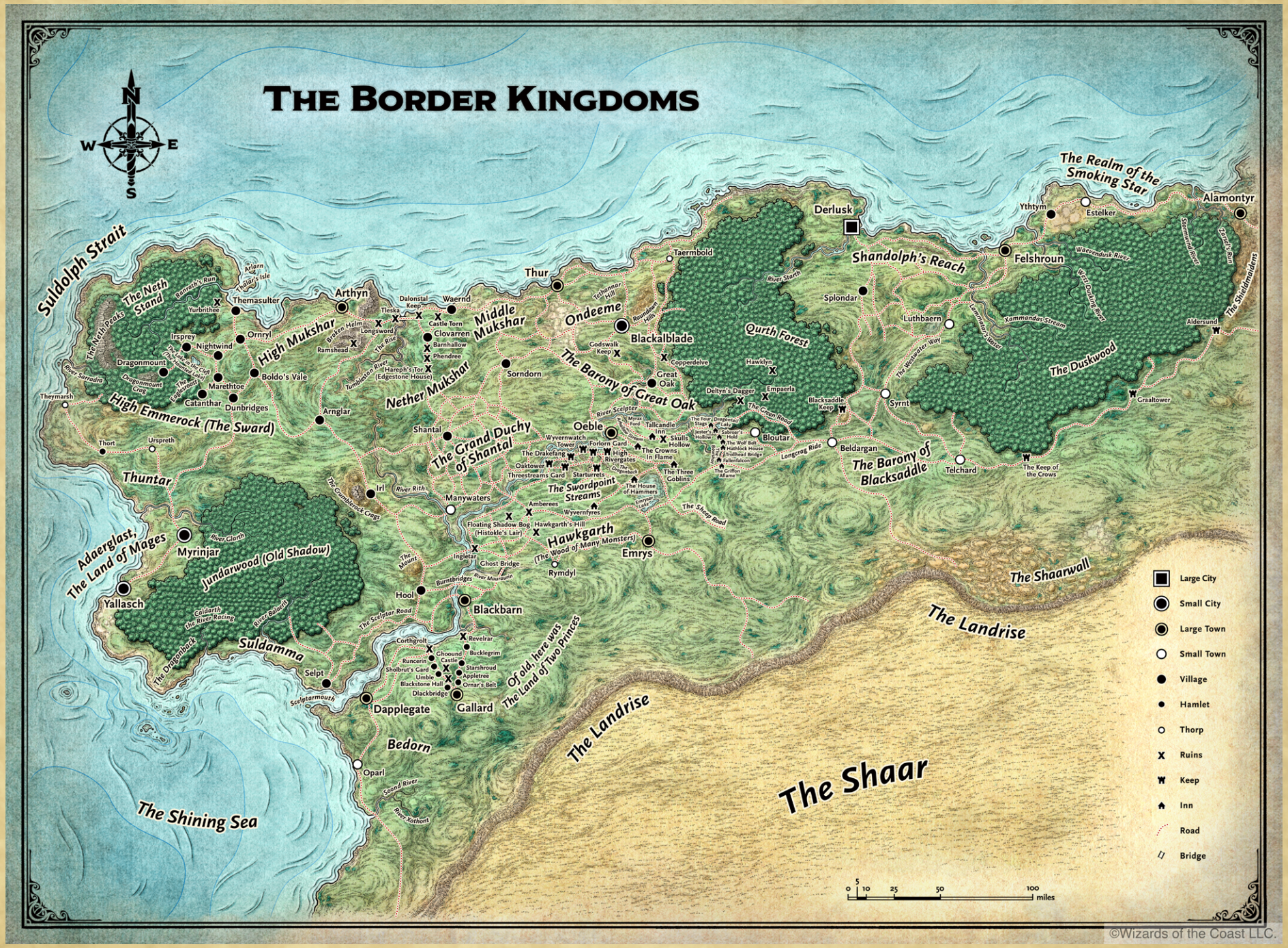


and put it to new and fell uses, but much remains lost. Which is to say: awaiting ye.

So I wish ye splendid adventuring; may ye flourish long and happily, surviving to spin many new wild tales of the Border Kingdoms to make hearthfires and campfires seem the brighter!

Yours in the service of Mystra,

Elminster of Shadowdale



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Chapter 1: The Border Kingdoms

Players interested in carving out their own kingdom of the Realms can find no better place than the Border Kingdoms, where "a wayfarer can find just about anything."

The Border Kingdoms are little more than names on a map to most folk in the Heartlands of Faerûn. Only a few sages and well-traveled merchants know anything useful about them, thanks to their ever-changing nature, and travel there being constantly hampered by incessant Borderer wars with each other and land-hungry satraps of Calimshan.

According to the sage Meriadas of Westgate: "The Border Kingdoms are the most favored destination for adventurers who want to proudly and boldly conquer a realm or establish their own new kingdom. Lords, counts, dukes, kings and emperors rise, proclaim themselves, and are swept away with the speed and regularity of waves crashing upon a shore. What comes to our ears . . . are a stream of amusing or colorful little tales of their most daring, disastrous, or funny deeds.

"Few folk go there except those who want to carve out a place for themselves with a sword. Borders and even the names of the realms they define change with each passing month and even tenday; there is no such thing as an accurate history or even map of the Border Kingdoms, which are named thus because they stand in the way of Calishite expansion, their turmoil and stubborn strength defining the eastern border of that proud realm. South of the Lake of Steam, the Border Kingdoms spread east and south to take in all the lands drained by the River Scelptar as far as the Shieldmaidens (the hills at the western end of the Firesteap Mountains, just east of the Duskwood) and the rising land that defines the northern edge of the vast rolling grasslands known as the Shaar."

If you would travel there, Meriadas adds: "Take strong spells, trusty friends, and sharp swords, and you may live long enough to have a brief look around." Meriadas was writing in the mid-1300s DR, but his words remain true today.

Even before the Spellplague, the infamous mage Elminster warned that the Border Kingdoms are "riddled with wild magic, as a tattered cloak covers much but not all of the beggar beneath it." They are even more alive with unmastered magic today.

The Geography

In the wake of the Sundering, the Border Kingdoms very much settled back into the topography prevailing there before the Spellplague.

They occupy a triangular strip of warm, lush coastal downlands between the grassy uplands of the Shaar and the Lake of Steam. Four major forests divide up the Border countryside of rolling, fertile, overgrown hills. Though smokeholes and volcanoes are common around the rest of the Lake of Steam, the only known volcanic activity in the Borders is centered on a wood-cloaked ridge known as the Mount, where sulfurous fume-holes vent steaming vapor that from time to time causes trees to catch fire and burn to the ground, while leaving neighboring trees untouched (hence the old term "the Flaming Wood"). Many volcanic-warmed caves and crevices on the Mount shelter brigands and monsters to this day.

The Border Kingdoms aren't all "kingdoms." They are many small principalities governed in a wide variety of ways, a confusing, ever-changing hodgepodge of tiny, unstable realms with names whose grandeur often outstrips reality. This verdant, chaotically-governed region is prime adventuring territory. Many adventuring bands come to the Borders to conquer their own realm—yet those who succeed often spend the rest of their days defending it from other adventuring bands with similar ambitions. The Borders are the birthplace of many a mercenary and merchant who hails from "a place you've never heard of."

Borders and rulers have always changed with bewildering rapidity in the Border Kingdoms, so even local maps will be sadly out of date at best, and full of willful distortions at the worst (many cartographers seek to suggest the realm they represent—or want their local ruler to trade with—is larger and more important than it really is). Misinformation is the rule when Borderers travel the Realms in search of adventurers to hire. So beware: on any map of the Border Kingdoms, boundaries are at best approximate, and between the making of the map and your journey, realms will probably have appeared, disappeared, or moved.

The land of Thuntar, for example, is named for the self-styled "King of Adventurers," a huge man from the Tashalar who hoped to find quiet retirement in the Border Kingdoms but found himself continually hounded by the one thing he couldn't fight: magic. Accordingly, the land known as Thuntar has moved thrice. Once it was roughly where most maps place Talduth Vale now. Later it occupied the coastal uplands of Ondeeme (before the mage of that name transformed or drove out all inhabitants to found his own realm there), before finding its present locale on the western shore of the Borders—where it was once in the uplands, but lost territory to marauding giants (land later seized by adventurers who slaughtered the giants and founded the land of High Emmerock).

Peddlers of the Border Kingdoms

Anywhere along the lanes and trails of the Border Kingdoms, travelers may encounter peddlers: aging, craggy men with cudgels, in worn weathercloaks and battered old hats, leading a string of laden pack-mules strung together with clip-ring leather reins. Most are longtime veterans, and know almost anything in these pages a DM wants to impart to players.

They buy, sell, and swap small everyday-useful items like candles, needles, thread, cord, flints, bottles, bowls, handcoffers (small latching boxes), lanterns, blankets, belts, footwear, and knives.

All peddlers are adept at throwing knives, keeping silent, and noticing things; they customarily sell information about what and who they've seen, to contacts at certain inns and taverns for factions, cabals, and costers.

The best-known peddlers are Guldrukh Huth (CN human male rogue), a large-nosed, homely, hoarse, amiable black-haired man who specializes in quill pens, inks, parchment and paper; Hulmur Draeklar (LN human male fighter), a hawk-faced (prominent brows and a sharp beak of a nose) bald, bony man with a nasal voice and a habit of looking over his shoulder every few moments, who specializes in decorative statuettes and tiny knickknacks; and Boalym Dree (CG human male fighter), a jovial whittler who has one blue eye and one green eye, and carves small wooden toys he gives away free as toys to children; he specializes in small ironmongery (hinges, hasps, hooks, trivets).

Since the Sundering, realm names have survived in the Borders, and even most boundaries, as bewildered Borders sought to cling to anything reassuringly familiar, but what's within lands that cleave to "being the same on maps" has often changed markedly. For one thing, the Sundering brought (and left behind) a deluge of wild, bewildered beasts from Abeir, so the Border Kingdoms were, in the words of one resident, the Derlusk-based peddler of inks, quills, writing-parchment and bound "blank books" Ieirstredd Montryth, "inundated by all manner of monsters."

Ways of Life

Migration and skirmishing are constant in the lives of most Borderers. The warm climate and fertile ground make it possible for inhabitants to do battle whenever they desire and still have food enough to see them through the winter ahead, and to live in caves or shelters in the deep woods and not freeze in the "cold months" (which are actually foggy, slushy months far warmer than the howling, deadly "winters" of more northerly regions).

The adventurer Steeleye once called the Border Kingdoms "a deadly but enchanting place where every winding lane takes you to another dotty little realm, complete with pompous rulers and customs, grinning and well-paid mercenaries—dubbed the "Grand Guards" or the "Imperial High Host"—who tolerate these ruling dolts until the coins run out, and crumbling castles here, there and everywhere . . . monsters roam, crops fall off their vines in such plenty that the feast-tables groan, and magic goes wild, opening gates to perilous realms or inverting keeps as often as it does whatever was intended. It's hard to ride half a day in the Border Kingdoms without befriending or offending a Lord High Protector, a Grand Savant, or a High Puissant Duke—or all three."

The Border Kingdoms are often raided by nomads from the Shaar (seeking food, weapons, and whatever else they can carry off). Their raids on caravans have given the Realm of the Ready Sword its name, and forced the creation of alert and capable military forces in all of the Border realms south of the River Scelptar. Borderers spend much of the rest of their time fighting each other or privately-sponsored Calishite armies.

This makes many Borderers reluctant to leave their lands (or at least the region). Consequently, most merchants traveling through the Border Kingdoms are enterprising folk from the Vilhon Reach, who trade both coins and trade goods (such as fine clothing or bolts of cloth and all manner of smithywork) for the ever-abundant food.

Borderers tend to build stout and well-guarded granaries, gather in food to these compounds, and wait for merchants to show up, buy it, and carry it away. Many folk in the overpopulated Vilhon Reach lands would starve if Border Kingdoms crops ever failed or were mostly destroyed.

Adaerglast, the Land of Mages

Realm

This pastoral-looking realm of coastal farms, "the Garden Coast," is one of the most prosperous—and dangerous—in the Borders. Adaernen farmers work hard every day, hauling in and spreading manure, rooting out weeds, and digging the soil for ever-more-efficient irrigation. Once they led more sedate lives, knowing their crops always brought good prices in the nearby city of Yallasch from the citizenry and merchant captains who docked there to buy food for many hungry mouths in Calimshan.

That all changed when two young, close-mouthed and very observant mages from Murghôm arrived. Deeming the Adaern farmlands ideal, they built a castle in Myrinjar. Safe behind its stout walls, defended by many animated or conjured guardians,

they began to work magic on the surrounding lands. Their keep became known as "the Castle of Dark Dreams" because spells they devised sent dream-visions to all Adaernen, revealing the two mages as the rightful, gods-chosen rulers of Adaerglast. Soon brutally officious mercenaries appeared in the land, commanded by constructs (animated armors) controlled by the wizards from afar. Bodyguards of helmed horrors accompanied the two mages at all times, protecting Lord Iraun and Lord Srivven against possible treachery from their own hirelings. It wasn't long before the two Lord High Mages were absolute rulers of Adaerglast, holding court in Myrinjar and seeking to control affairs in Yallasch. The wizard-kings destroyed Zhentarim and Red Wizards, and even rebuffed an emissary from Halruaa—before the Spellplague came and twisted them into horrid ghostly spellhurling undead who haunt their castle but are now magically tied to it, able to send forth their animated armors but not depart the crumbling castle themselves.

The castle is crammed with seized magic items and roiling permanent spells—linked by magics that cause one item or spell to erupt against intruders if another is disturbed.

The ruthless, power-mad undead Lord High Mages hunger to rule everywhere, and will entice visiting adventurers and mercenaries into carrying out assassinations of, and bearing threatening messages to, surrounding rulers for them.

The badge of this realm is a wickerwork basket full of rounded red fruit (tomatoes, most folk think) on a white circular field whose border is a purple ring of lightning bolts arcing out in all directions, on a green background.

Alamontyr

Large Town

This quiet, peaceful, prosperous fishing port and farmers' market town has an old, crumbling castle, and town walls in slightly better repair. The first Borderer stop for caravans southbound on the Golden Road, Alamontyr was well-ruled and protected by its Shield Duke and his Griffon Knights (forty mounted plate-armored warriors who patrol the realm tirelessly, and have been known to affix magical wands to their lances).

However, the Shield Duke and several knights vanished a few months back, and the town is alive with dark rumors and wild tales of their fates—as well as a rising chaos as ambitious folk from everywhere in the Realms arrive to try to seize the dukedom for their own. The reason for this is that Alamontyr is home to the largest gathering of finesmiths, woodcarvers, potters, glaziers, jewelers, tailors and other craft-folk in the Border Kingdoms. Their wares are exported widely. However, agents of Westgate, the Zhentarim and the Red Wizards are all busy trying to corrupt anyone they can among the Griffon Knights or the ducal household (civic inspectors and clerks).

And the threat from the Underdark beneath Alamontyr is growing. Back in the 1330s DR, Alamontans delving into the Shieldmaidens in search of once-plentiful local copper broke into extensive subterranean caverns and passages, and disturbed the denizens; since then, ropers have repeatedly been discovered in Alamontan cellars, crypts, and sewers. A shadowy cult of the Tentacled Ones exists in Alamontyr, and it's widely believed that "something dark and terrible below" is commanding the ropers, or at least forcing them up to the surface.

Moreover, the Zhentarim have at least once in the past made use of a portal to send monsters into Alamontyr; just where this portal is located is a secret not known to Alamontans, but they fear it's still in use to ferry trade goods, coin, and Zhentarim spies in and out of town.

The badge of Alamontyr is a full-face silver shield held aloft by two white wings, on a dun background. The shield displays a rampant red griffon facing to the viewer's right, and its base (bottom tip) drips three large, crimson teardrops of blood. The dun banners of the Griffon Knights display a plain winged shield.

Arnglar

Village

This high, windswept sleepy hill-village is home to hardy shepherds and their flocks. The fierce Arnglarren make their own sleep-venom (a secret mixture of local berry juices and plant saps, equal in effects to drow poison) and are always armed with crossbows and envenomed bolts to use on wolves, wild dogs, and human sheep rustlers alike.

High, windswept Arnglar stands on the site of the ruling seat of the long-vanished elven realm of Glorfindral; burial mounds of elven kings form a defensive ring around Arnglar's simple cottages and central never-failing well of deep, crystal-clear water. Several of the mounds are crowned with the crumbling ruins of old, long-abandoned, spell-blasted brigands' keeps. In more sheltered locales, ruins tend to get overgrown fast, reclaimed by the ever-creeping forests, but on the high, windswept hills where Arnglar sits, the storms and sharp frosts keep growth slow and stunted. Aside from the hill grass eaten by the sheep, crops not shrouded and sheltered will fail.

The ruined keeps are plagued by lurking monsters, and are said to conceal treasure (the caches of the long-fallen brigands), but persistent legends insist the elven burial mounds are crammed with stupendous wealth and magic—that's powerfully guarded, and as the years pass is being tunneled into by "dark things from Below."

Arnglarren worship Talos, Hurler of Lightnings, mainly to appease his wrath and so preserve their flocks. Arnglar is an independent community governed by a Circle of Elders. This council (of eight laconic, weather-beaten local ranchers and the village blacksmith) doesn't welcome visitors looking to settle, but will sell or trade wool, tallow candles, and mutton sausages fairly with outlander merchants. Arnglarren look most favorably on small groups of merchants—and very suspiciously at large, well-armed bands of strangers.

The sign of Arnglar, scratched on boundary-stones and on the standing Beacon Stone in the center of its market, that shelters the well, is two circles linked by two diagonal zigzag lines (the sun or moon over the well, joined by two lightning bolts).

Arthyn

Large Town

A proudly independent port on the Lake of Steam shores, Arthyn has a poor harbor but has always been an important trade-town, thanks to rich copper and iron deposits in the surrounding hills. Borderers still prefer the fine daggers made in town, known as "Arthyn fangs," over other knives. Arthryn also has a strong local population of crafters and hill-farmers, who avoid strife and seek to keep trouble away from their town. It has always been a smuggling port, and from time to time buried "treasure" is found, often in the sea-caves near town, usually left behind by smugglers who perished before they could return for it. Slaves, horrific monsters, and kidnapped nobility from realms all across Faerûn are among the smuggling cargoes that pass through Arthyn, because they can easily be concealed among large shipments of daggers.



Of old, Arthyn was the home of the Witch of the Mists, whose medicines saved the lives of many Borderers in days gone by. Arth-folk still make, use, and sell medicines claimed to be made from her secret processes and ingredients, and "Borderers born" grow up believing that "healing is at hand in Arthyn." A shrine to Lathander, the Morningtable, and a long-established Arth walled garden temple of Chauntea, the Bright Sheaf, seek to meet the needs of the diseased and dying folk who come to town willing to trade everything for life and health.

The two temples sponsor and largely control the Arthlord, who is more of a police chief and magistrate than a mayor. The Arthlord maintains the "Lockgates" (jail) and commands the town watch (sixteen leather-armored "stalwarts" who patrol in groups of six, wield a variety of weapons, and are liked and respected by Arth-folk). There's also a militia of seventeen "badged" merchants, who pay lower taxes in return for responding when called by the Watch-horn; miscreant outlanders should be aware that these "Badgelars" include several former adventurers of surprising battle-competence. The Arthlord sits in judgment in all trials, which are local public spectacles held in the town square, and advocates can argue for and against accused persons, and eloquent arguments often sway a verdict. Public policy is proclaimed by the Arthlord, but formulated by landowners of Arth.

The current Arthlord, a handsome old man named Trannath Urmhreld, was well-liked and widely believed to be fair and kind—but he fled after briefly changing shape into a "horrible slithering monster with tentacles and two biting heads on long necks" in public, a transformation that seemed to astonish and horrify him as much as it did onlookers. He's not been seen since, so there's turmoil. Appoint a new Arthlord? Who or what was the old one, and does he still lurk in town? What dark aims or purposes might he be pursuing? As usual, ambitious folk are showing up from seemingly everywhere in hopes of becoming the new Arthlord, and some local landowners have already been bribed or intimidated.

The badge of Arthyn is a white pick (head to the upper left) and crutch, diagonally crossed on a green circle. In battle, this is simplified to a white "X" on green silk armbands worn by Arth-folk.

The Barony of Blacksaddle

Realm

One of the most widely-known of the Border Kingdoms, Blacksaddle is thought of across Faerûn as a place of endless war by distant folk who know little else about it.

It's a land of many small hill farms, with walls of heaped stones separating the fields. Small stone watchtowers stand everywhere, each with a well inside (thus, ready night-shelter for travelers, though Sadlar frown on outlanders entering them).

The towns of Syrnt, Telcharn, and Bloutar occupy the three corners of the barony (see their own entries for more). In the center of their triangle stands Blacksaddle Keep, formerly home of the Swords, Blacksaddle's standing army, and its ruling baron.

Sadlar are always armed, alert for trouble, and tend to be hard-working entrepreneurs. In addition to farming, Sadlar earn their coins by stonecutting. Both "blue gloss" and "red sheen" (blue and red marble) are quarried in the Shaarwall, the range of hills along the southern border of the barony that cloak the rise of land separating the Border Kingdoms from the Shaar. Stonecutting in the Shaarwall "clefts" often reveal gem-lodes, and Sadlar artisans have perfected a means of crafting goblets, small coffers, and hand-sculptures of gemstone dust and chips mixed with paste (akin to alabaster). To increase sales of these fragile items, some merchant long ago dubbed them "Wizard Ware," and many wild but utterly fanciful (or are they?) tales arose about magic being used in the crafting (and possibly properties that a "lucky few" gain in their Wizard Ware).

Twoscore very skilled Sadlar carve small "whitestone" cameo inlays, for adorning jewelry and coffers fashioned in Calimshan and around the Lake of Steam from rainbow glass, polished amber, and obsidian. Sales of cut and polished whitestone enriches the barony steadily.

Blacksaddle is haunted by the ghost of its founder, Uorn Blacksaddle, "the Old Baron," a tireless whirlwind of a warrior infamous and much feared in his day; his battered black coat-of-plate armor in still seen on misty nights, drifting along above the ground as if some invisible wearer is silently treading the air. Soon after every sighting, a foe of Blacksaddle attacks; a sighting of the Baron's armor as a sign of clear, reliable warning of impending invasion.

Such bladeswinging comes often. Blacksaddle's location, prosperity, and the ease of entering it swiftly on horseback down one of many broad quarry-cart roads, makes it a popular target for Shaarans, orc bands, and brigands seeking to raid the Borders. The military prowess of Sadlar (among so many lands whose armies are amusingly inept) serves only to attract the arrogant-at-arms to try their mettle against the Swords of the Barony. The constant warfare also attracts many carrion-eating monsters.

In recent years, the baronial haunting seems to "open the way" for undeath: undead of all sorts (except vampires and liches—at least, not yet) appear in the wake of the flying armor, to stalk the living.

The Haunted Barrel

The Border Kingdoms hosts several hauntings or apparitions that are more odd or curious than perilous or frightening. Perhaps the oddest is an oak cask of the sort ale is often transported in, that silently appears, without fuss or glow or heralding, at random locations all over the Border Kingdoms.

Of the usual size, it appears standing upright on any level ground or akin-to-ground surface. Almost black with age and coats of painted sealants, it has four rusty iron hoops and no markings.

No one knows what it holds or once held, because anyone trying to touch it will find they, or any weapon or item they toss or swing through it, encounters nothing but empty air—and causes the barrel to slowly and silently fade away (and appear at some other random location in the Border Kingdoms).

If any living being "touches" or is within the space seemingly occupied by the barrel, even for an instant, they will "see" (in their mind) a vivid, detailed vision of the same location they're in, but at some point in the past. This vision will remain in their mind, and can be recalled with undiminished clarity, for 4d12 days, and is panoramic in all directions; if they turn to look all around, the vision will show, unbroken, what was once there. How long ago the vision shows varies, seemingly at random; these mind-images have often been used to locate now-vanished features and aid in treasure searches.

The Haunted Barrel is not undead or a haunting at all, but some sort of permanent magical effect rooted in a long-dead local wizard's experimentations (there are many contradictory tales of just which wizard, and how such an effect came to be chosen or accidentally came about).

Casting dispel magic or any other spell on the barrel will cause it to "wink out" (but it is not destroyed; it simply goes elsewhere). Nothing is known to have ever been successfully attached to or sent along with the barrel, though many spellcasters have tried. (Elminster disagrees, saying he knows of one now-dead mage who successfully used the Haunted Barrel to escape a marauding monster, magically getting it to take him along to its next destination.)

* Please note that if the barrel is removed from its discovered location, the magic/effect is permanently broken.

Quarrying in the barony broke into Underdark caverns more than a century ago, and creatures from below issued forth with such swift ferocity that quarrying ended forever. Despite tons of rubble being shifted to block access to the surface "things from below" still find their ways up into Blacksaddle, to maraud, all too often.

The arms of Blacksaddle are a lone white castle turret centered on a black shield.

The Barony of Great Oak

Realm

This land occupies the high, wooded hills on the north bank of the River Scelptar, just downstream from its headwaters in the thick, almost impassable Qurth Forest. The woods around the Barony grow swiftly, and many a visitor has become lost on lanes that fade away in deep woods, the farms and hamlets they once reached now overgrown and reclaimed by the forest.

Farm crops and forest game amply feed Oakers, but the barony has traditionally traded little (beyond forest syrup, berry wines, and woodcarvings) with wider Faerûn.

The "village" of Great Oak is now just a handful of ruined cottages, a half-collapsed mill used only a few days a year as a sawmill, and an inn facing the doors of Great Oak Keep, the Old Oak (Poor/Cheap), that's run by the Baron's staff, and serves as servants' quarters when there are no visitors. Of old, the village was much larger, and was the site of a Talking Tree—an oak of huge girth—all trace of which has now vanished. Some believe it was burned years ago by priests of Baelros (Talos), who believed it to be "a vile thing" whose "dark power in the land" had to be destroyed. Traveling merchants are made welcome; the coins brought in by the careful hospitality of Great Oak's inns (a store stands near each inn, where merchants can purchase the forest syrup, woodcarvings, and berry wines made by Oakers) buy many things not otherwise available in the barony. However, the largest source of local income has for a century been the housing, healing, and provisioning of adventuring companies who come to the Barony to explore the ruins of Godswalk Keep and the long-abandoned dwarf-hold of Copperdelve.

Godswalk Keep was a proud fortress-city in the days of proud Netheril. Today, it's an overgrown valley of crumbling ruins haunted by spiders and ettercaps, where stones often collapse underfoot to plunge intruders down into dark cellars where treasure or death may await. Before the Spellplague, gods were said to walk these spider-haunted ruins when the stars were right: Garagos would slay all creatures he found—except the Dancing Lady (the goddess Sharess) and the Forgotten One (the sinister, shadowy figure of Jergal). But the Meeting of the Three (or the Howling, as it was also called, after the sound Garagos is said to make when he encounters the deities he cannot slay) has not befallen since the Sundering; it seems the gods come to Godswalk no more.

However, something does; brief lights have been seen flaring in some of the ruins, and there are furtive comings and goings by night, by small groups of dark cowl-hooded figures—who keep silent, and may not even be human. What they come to the valley for, and do there, remains mysterious; Oakers stay away.

Copperdelve is a small underground city overlying a dusty, worked-out copper mine. The dwarves left when the copper ran out, though some say fell Underdark creatures slew or drove them out. Many monsters roam the hold today, and some adventuring bands even seek out Copperdelve to gain experience in facing such foes.

The badge of Great Oak is a stout old oak tree, its foliage curving to form a circle meeting its roots.

Bedorn

Realm

A verdant coastal land of water-meadows, thickets, and treacherous bogs that protect it against raiders from the Shaar, this little-known land has fallen into wild lawlessness. The outermost lamp-posts of the independent town of Dapplegate mark its northern limits; the only other coastal settlement south of Scelptarmouth, Oparl, stands at the heart of Bedorn.

Of old, Bedorn was the little-known private playground of rich satraps from Calimshan, where they hosted beast-hunts, month-long revels, or dangerous games involving monsters and champions fighting to the death. Many of them delighted in having landscapes resculpted to please themselves, and remade Bedorn into a manicured realm of great beauty, dominated by extensive lawns of "greengrass" or moss and trees planted and pruned back to create pleasant vistas for the eye—if one was beholding the terrain from one of the many, many soaring pleasure-palaces.

The Spellplague and the Sundering changed all that, inundating the land with all manner of marauding monsters who swiftly exterminated those Calishites who didn't flee fast enough. Other beasts broke free from the breeding menageries of some eccentric satraps, and prowled, hunting many humans.

Today, Bedorn is overgrown and wild, studded with the crumbling remnants of many grandiosely over-ornate palaces. Where the swamps end, follies and terraces begin, but the scrub trees of the bogs have reclaimed the lawns and overgrown everything, offering ample tangled cover for the roaming monsters who make exploring and plundering the derelict palaces perilous indeed.

Oparl was shattered by raging wild magic in the wake of wizards' duels twisted awry by the Spellplague; many of its grandest buildings cracked and fell. Today, Oparl is a ramshackle trademoot of makeshift dwellings fashioned crudely out of the cracked foundations of its once-soaring edifices. It's home to outlaws being hunted elsewhere, the desperate, slavers, and thieves, where stolen goods too "hot" to be fenced elsewhere, poisons, weapons, and skilled slaves are bought and sold. Unscrupulous merchants come here—and adventurers, too, for there's abundant coin to be made hiring out as bodyguards, and a lucky few even gain magic and riches in the ruined palaces.

One notably unplundered site is just east of Oparl, where Tantar's Fine Enchantments once stood. This extensive workshop was destroyed in a magical explosion before the Spellplague, but some of its deepest storage cellars may have survived, and they were reputedly crowded with spell scrolls, healing and love potions, glowing globes to illuminate shops and homes, firewarded doors and shutters, and enchanted daggers. The magical blast left spells spontaneously and randomly taking effect in the area, and the Spellplague has intensified and varied these until almost any magical effect can be encountered, without warning—as well as swirling scores of will-o'-wisps, and, it's rumored, a "ghost beholder."

Beldargan

Small town

This town has always been fiercely independent of the surrounding Barony of Blacksaddle. Often raided by brigands sweeping down out of the Shaar, it consists of many stone cottages and attached stonewalled orchards that climb the steep flanks of Beldargan's Mount, a natural hill crowned by a tiny ring-fort and central stone keep. The keep, a single square tower bristling with catapults, is known as Beldarg's Folly after its builder. (Beldarg was an ancient warrior with a bristling beard, tusk-like protruding teeth, big nose, and surly manner—all preserved in local childrens' jokes and tall tales, though his deeds and fate have been forgotten down the years. "Beldarg" long ago became the collective name of the inhabitants of Beldargan.)

Beldargan is ruled by all town landowners, voting in council. Government in Beldargan is light. In daily life, its patrol-riders keep order, dispense rough justice (there are prison cells in the Folly, and patrols often just beat thieves and ruffians, and then "ride them out of town"), and carry the sick to local shrines for healing and shelter.

The conical, 300-foot-high Mount is home to over 450 of the 650 or so inhabitants of the town. It's surrounded by an unfriendly ring of deliberately planted thorn hedge (taller than two men in most places), pierced in three places by gates (stone arches whose stone doors are fitted with drop-spikes that can be slid down into stone-lined pits to wedge the doors solidly open or shut). A miniature barbican fitted with arbalests (capable of transfixing several horses and their riders with one of their giant quarrels) stands just inside each gate, commanding a clear view through it and along the road leading to it. Forty households in town are forgiven all taxes in return for providing trained, fully-equipped armsmen to man the gates at all times, and defend the town when the war-horns are sounded (from the keep or by one of three senior patrol-leaders who have them).

Springs rise in the heart of the Mount (which is honeycombed by dungeons, cottage cellars, and natural caverns, in a crazy maze of damp underground ways leading down into the Underdark) and cascade down its slopes in lovely little gardens of stone-lined plunge-pools and moss-planted spillways where townfolk rear edible fish (mostly blackfins) and snails. Beldarg bridge these waters with tiny arched, covered follies festooned with small crystals and shaped metal chimes that dangle over the tinkling waters to flash reflected sunlight or moonlight across their vestpocket-sized gardens. Many cottages are built into the hill, and seem to grow out of the heart of an endless garden; at dawn the hill is alive with birdsong.

The orchards of Beldargan grow large, sour green apples, used by the locals in the making of sauces, potent and fiery green wine, cider that's "like liquid fire" (so saith a Sembian merchant, Mlaxlan Alderguth), and to fatten the shaggy-coated sheep Beldarg tend on the nearby Shaar and its downslopes. The local delicacy of Beldargan Groundworms and Snails in Pepper Butter sounds revolting, but is mouthwateringly good; the groundworms taste like roasted pecans.

The Mount is a lone spire of beauty in otherwise rugged downslope country dominated by cairns, bramble clumps, and wary, well-armed shepherds—whose children "sit watch" on the heights as sentinels. Turf-roofed dugout huts and stone fences with turn-and-turn-back-again entries (openings in field walls too narrow for livestock—or fat or bulky armored humans—to fit through, that open into narrow passages turning diagonally back into the wall, which then sharply double back again to reach the outer world) rather than gates are the usual local building style once away from the central hill and its ring of ponds and pleasant surrounding manors.

A typical exit from a field consists of walking past a jutting post and turning sharply to the left, into a passage perhaps five feet long, wheeling around another post to come diagonally back the way you came for about three feet, and then doubling back around a third post to parallel the same route once more, heading outbound around a last "windcutter"

post. This sort of entrance cuts drafts and prevents animals from wandering; when farmers do want to get stock in and out, they use whips and cudgels for herd control, and "slide out the slabs." These zigzag entries are made with stone posts erected in pairs to bracket upright stone slabs or slates: two strong men can raise these up and out of their "keeper" posts to reveal a much wider opening; locked or even warning spell-enchanted top-bars are often used to prevent unauthorized slab removal. There are many tales of hidden treasures behind loose stones—and waiting traps, both mechanical and magical—in the cozy confines of turn-and-turn-back-again passages.

The outlying farms, home to perhaps three hundred folk, are known as the Horn Meadows because horns typically signal the approach of any traveler, large animal, or band (though it's rare to hear a local say more than "out Meadow way" or "somewhere in the Meadows"), and look to Beldargan for protection and supplies—and render taxes to its patrol-riders.

Many adventurers doing a little brigand-hunting or seeking the legendary Lost Mine of Hollowhill make Beldargan their base. The Lost Mine is said to be a linked series of eight or nine caverns whose walls glisten with sapphires—enough to make many large realms rich for years. Discovered by Barask Hollowhill over three centuries ago, it was hidden by magic he hired, walled away behind rock and earthshifting magic so that it could only be entered through an invisible portal: a "Moon Door" opens just on certain moonlit nights, and that can only be used by someone passing through a particular spot from a certain direction. This entrance is said to be somewhere very close to Beldargan, in the open country on the slopes of the Shaar—but just where the Door is, and when it's open, are secrets lost when Barask disappeared. Legend whispers that he died (or was murdered) in his mine, and now awaits would-be plunderers as its undead guardian. Some folk say the land has sunk or worn away since the Door was made, and it can only be found now by someone stepping off a ladder erected in the proper place.

Disquieting rumors are now spreading throughout the Border Kingdoms that "something is amiss in the Mount."

Something is. Doppelgangers working for a death tyrant and some night hags (in a shadowy band calling itself Old Wisdom) have infiltrated Beldargan's Mount from below, are slaying and impersonating the folk who live there one by one, and intend to make this their home and from it conquer the surrounding Barony of Blacksaddle. Posing as locals who "think they've found a way into the Lost Mine, but can't dig their way in alone," they're making covert deals with variously Zhentarim and Lords' Alliance agents (separately, of course) to sponsor and aid them—purely to get access to higher-ranking individuals of those factions so they can slay and impersonate them, and spread their reach. As a result of this aid, secret adventuring expedition after expedition are exploring the subterranean ways inside the Mount, to try to get into the Mine—but really to map and scour out (of monsters) these ways for the benefit of Old Wisdom.

Blackalblade

Small city

This haughty, wealthy walled city is named for a notorious pirate, Kururn Blackalblade, who built the first (long-vanished) house on the site, and died in it at the ripe old age of one hundred and twenty-six winters. A magically-preserved painting depicts him as balding, fierce-moustachioed, and fat—and sitting on a heap of gold coins as tall as a coach!

Blackalblade is the capital of the realm of Ondeeme (which was named for the merchant-mage from Schamedar who founded it), but isn't much larger than a grand and sprawling castle. Yet Blackalans possess all the airs and graces (complete with arcane laws, fast-cudgel guardsmen, and ridiculous fashions) of Calimport and other prosperous, decadent cities of the South. It has cobbled streets, tall stone buildings with tile roofs which touch each other, but no parks or open space (except street-moots). It does, however, have large shop windows gleaming with fine—and expensive—wares from all over the known Realms. Rundaleer's, on Reldruth Street, is as pricey, glittering, and haughty a gem-merchant as one can find anywhere in Faerûn, with gliding, supercilious sales staff, wizards to cast tracer spells against would-be thieves, and furnishings opulent enough for many a palace.

Blackalblade's prosperity began with the wool-trade. Its weavers were enriched by working for, and having their designs enhanced by, mages and would-be mages (wastrel sons of rich Calishite merchants) that the wizard Ondeeme gathered around himself. When Ondeeme and his school were shattered and destroyed overnight (by an attacking Red Wizard, some say, or a furious Calishite rival, others swear; still other sources insist it was a spell-duel or dark summoning that got out of hand, or that something known only as "the Night Parade" was involved), the weavers were well established, but wise enough to attract more sedentary wizards to dwell in (and thereby defend) their city with generous offers of free residence and special status under local laws. After a brief, ruthless power struggle, Blackalan merchants formed a ruling council of eight. They set about increasing Blackalblade's wealth and importance—only to cower into hiding at the return of the Slee (who remained the true rulers of the city until the Spellplague drove them all drooling mad).

Fine-forgers and jewelers came to Blackalblade because of many and rich gem lodes in the Raundawn Hills northwest of the city. The wily council hired famous gemcutters to come to Blackalblade and live like kings in Sparkling Hall, the first formal (human) school of gemcutting and jewelry-making. This establishment swiftly acquired a reputation for hauteur extreme even in Blackalblade, for the excellence of its stylish products (now adorning many a noble across Faerûn), and for the sadistic cruelty of its Masters to their pupils.

Borderers laugh at Blackalblade as a ridiculously pompous copy of the worst of larger, older cities. Visiting Borderers are careful not to show such feelings within the city's high-towered walls, however, because Blackalans have high prices, quick tempers, and harsh laws (featuring floggings, confiscations of all goods, and exiles down the cobbled streets to the nearest gate at a fast drag—bound on the end of a rope pulled by a well-whipped horse).

Blackalans in turn sneer at "back country hayheads" who come visiting from less fortunate places for "a look at the good life." Blackalblade is one of the wealthiest cities in the Borders, and "the" place to buy odd, arcane, expensive and fashionable things. The acquisitive hungers of its citizens—and those who visit to shop—keep the nearby port of Thur very busy. It's a city of glittering shop windows, few successful thieves, and grand, luxurious inns where guests share scented baths, and can hire any sort of service (for extremely stiff fees). These inns vie with each other to be the "best" or at least the haughtiest, but the top three are generally thought to be Naraxalan's (Excellent/Expensive) on Gardlaer Street; the Old Knight (Excellent/Expensive) on Reldruth Street; and Orlisk's Orb (Excellent/Expensive) on the Street of Stallions.

The ruling council functions well because Blackalans are careful to elect bitter rivals to its seats. Thanks to its years of being puppets to the now-gone Slee, it's derisively known in the city as the Lords of the Empty Throne, but now wields real power through decrees enforced by the Kauroanars (russet-with-gold-trim uniformed constabulary), whom citizens heed, and who wield cudgels, capture-nets, swords, and daggers, patrol in groups of five, and pounce on thieves, arsonists, and anyone fighting or creating disturbances (except in "drauda," local clubs that combine the functions of taverns, restaurants, brothels, and gambling houses; city law doesn't extend into the drauda, which have their own armed guards to keep the peace). There are over seventy leather-armored Kauroanars, headed by the Lord Mace, who lives and works in dark-pillared,



frowning Lawgauntlet Hall on Murloar Street, which also houses the Hall of Law (courtroom, for the rare cases when disputes are heard, as opposed to Kauroanars dispensing justice on the spot), the Kauroanar armory and barracks, and the dungeon cells below (where the incarcerated are always manacled to the ceiling with choke-chains).

Drauda

Most Blackalans like the spice of danger—in small doses. Once or twice a tenday, usually after dark when the shops are closed, they venture into a drauda. A few are wealthy enough, or desperate and lawless enough, to visit specific sorts of drauda often, at any time of night or day.

Drauda can be roughly divided into three sorts of establishments. There are "respectable" drauda, frequented by wealthy matrons and families, where nothing darker than gambling and cutting-tongued gossip occurs. The Sunset Cloak (Excellent/Expensive) on Darcandle Street is the haughtiest and most expensive of these.

There are also "manydoors" drauda, open to all and tightly policed by the house guards to keep violence to a minimum, where shopkeepers, drovers, and most visiting outlanders go to gamble and eat. These are the cheapest of drauda, where any festhall pursuits are discreet and carried on via code-phrases, on upper floors, and range from small, dingy places dominated by locals relaxing and chattering, such as Droum's Beard (Poor/Cheap) on Turnwall Lane, to large, bustling, noisy places with central floors given over to dancing, darts and hurlball and other sports gambled upon, or exhibitions of fashions, inventions, or new goods—such as the Laughing Nazir (Good/Moderate) on Glaudra Lane.

Finally, there are "dark" or "blood" drauda, usually dimly-lit, violent places where stolen goods are bought and sold, illicit business is conducted, adventurers and hireswords are hired, dancing girls writhe for customers in full view, fights (sometimes duels to the death) are frequent entertainments for gamblers, and halfbloods and near-monsters unmask to drink at ease (food can sometimes be had, but there's seldom a variety of fare; one place might specialize in platters of stewed, spiced eels, another in liquor-drenched cheeses, and a third in particular fish or fowl eaten raw). The most notorious of dark drauda are Skaeling's Scorpion (Poor/Expensive) on Sarkskull Lane and the Burning Mask (Fair/Moderate) on Dragonfang Street.

Blackalblade is now a center of investment from elsewhere in Faerûn, and home to a shrewd community of speculative investors (some of them members of the ruling council) who invest in businesses, shipbuilding, land and building acquisitions, and even wild ventures, in many places across the continent. These "coinlords" often hired adventurers to investigate the doings of others, or as bodyguards.

There are recent and disquieting rumors in "the Blade" that someone is refounding the Slee—that is, a new and shadowy cabal of mages has been formed with an eye to controlling local affairs and enriching themselves by assassinations, investments, and influence promotion across the Border Kingdoms and neighboring lands. Some say the Zhentarim are behind "the new Slee," others that it's the plaything of the Red Wizards of Thay or the Wearers of the Purple or even the Lords' Alliance—but the wisest gossips believe that even if such groups are involved in the Slee, the Slee themselves are renegades who deceive and betray such outside factions without hesitation, for their own personal gain. Very much as most "highcoin" Blackalans would do.

The arms of Blackalblade are two vertical unsheathed black broadswords, points uppermost, bracketing a trio of all-alike gray castle turrets, the turrets overlapped by a horizontal bottom border of three gold coins, each of which has a faceted gem graven on it.

Blackbarn

Large town

This dun-hued walled town is a busy market for the farmers who dwell around it, dominated from dawn to dusk by wagons on the move, and is home to some superior wagonmakers. It stands where the Long Trail (that runs along the edge of the Shaar, "down the back" of the Border Kingdoms) meets the Scelptar Road, that runs north-of-west out of Blackbarn to the ruined Burntbridges.

Blackbarn is a prosperous place of bustling cobbled streets and maroon tile-roofed brown stone buildings, with nary a barn (black or otherwise) in sight. Produce is stored in low buildings called "wagonhouses" where farm deliveries are shoveled into rows of large storage pits—which have wooden gates at their bottoms, allowing them to be emptied in small quantities into merchants' long-haul wagons brought down ramps into cellars beneath for loading.

The loading gates are fire bellows-shaped wooden chutes that can be aimed by pulling on side-ropes, and are fitted with sliding gates at top and bottom. The gate at the top is opened to allow a crop to spill down from the storage pit, and closed again when the chute is full or a desired quantity has fallen into it. Then a wagon is driven underneath the narrow bottom mouth of the chute, and the lower gate opened to let the crop down into it. When the wagon is nearly full, the bottom gate is closed, and after the potatoes or cabbages have stopped falling in from above, and the chute is full again, men called "pokers" thrust wooden poles in through small side-ports in the chute to clear the way for the upper

gate to slide across, closing off the bin. The lower gate is then opened again, to dump the last chuteful of produce into the wagon (the origin of the Border expressions "Well, he's taken in his last chuteful" and "Had a chuteful too many, eh?"). Many wagons loaded in Blackbarn go to the Scelptar and straight onto barges for shipment throughout the Border lands (and, via Border ports, to Calimshan and the city-states around the Lake of Steam).

The Blackbarn Curse

Blackbarn is widely known to sea captains and merchants as a granary. More infamously, it's infested with thieving, vandalizing, annoyingly hard-to-exterminate "graywings" (imps), whom Blackbarnans wage endless war upon. For every graywings slain, a handful more seems to spring up. How they came to be here, and why they stay (because of them, things in town are either made of stone or locked away behind stout locks and cupboard doors) are mysteries; in the Borders they're known as "the Blackbarn Curse."

Despite this curse, Blackbarn is regarded as one of the more desirable places to dwell in the Border Kingdoms, largely because it's also the home of the Ghost Lances. Blakkar call undesirables or enemies "grayskins" because of the graywings, and warn those who've wronged them that "a Knight'll get you for this!"

The Ghost Lances

The Lances or "Black Knights" are watchghosts, said to be knights exiled from Tethyr centuries ago because they backed the wrong royal claimant. The wizard Kulaskular, forbidden to slay them but commanded to harry them from Tethyr and ensure that they never returned, laid a powerful curse upon them, putting them to sleep in a crypt deep under Blackbarn, where water drips endlessly past the stone biers where they lie, and allowing only their ghostly essences to ride forth. Other tales claim the Lances all fell in love with a local elf sorceress centuries ago, and she enspelled them to guard the place she loved, keeping them waiting so she could court the elf lords she desired.

Whatever the truth, the Lances appear as spectral knights in heavy armor, atop silent warhorses (whose hooves never quite touch the ground) along lanes and across fields around Blackbarn. They have lowered visors and lowered lances (the tips of which deal chill touch effects). They hunt brigands and thieves, galloping hard across fields and through walls without affecting crops or solid objects they have no interest in disturbing, but otherwise striking with the strength, fury, and weight of living knights of large size and much skill. Silent, watchful Lances (usually a trio or a dozen, but sometimes as many as forty-six) appear anywhere and at any time when deceit, violence, and criminal intent is loosed within Blackbarn's walls—from men kicking dogs to poison being poured—or the town is threatened. They seem dedicated not to harm those who intend no harm to others and have no desire to despoil or pillage Blackbarn. The Lances never speak, but are eloquent in their gestures, and have even been known to write messages (in many languages) to living persons in mud, ashes, dust, or snow. The presence of the Lances has helped make the town a safe haven where foes may meet in unspoken truce—and seldom dare to do otherwise!

Many adventurers have sought the crypt of the Ghost Lances, because local legend insists they sleep in a subterranean complex guarded by their enchanted swords: blades that can fly and fight by themselves.

Oddly, the ghostly knights never molest or watch over adventurers digging in cellars or poking around in the city's sewers. Locals who say this inattention is due to the delvers being engaged in a fools' task, seeking something that's not there to be found, are unable to explain why more than one adventurer down the years, notably Aldegut of Port Kir (or Kirlyntar, as it was then) and Myrmeen Lhal of Arabel, left Blackbarn with a magic sword they did not arrive with, and a quest they decline to discuss to go with it.

The first time one sees a silent armored form materialize at one's elbow is disconcerting, but the innocent have nothing to fear. Others may well find that speedy flight is their best option. Locals tell of one spiteful outlaw who tossed torches into buildings as he rode out of town with the Lances hard on his heels. By some magic at their disposal, the ghostly knights teleported the conflagrations he caused onto his own person, causing his horse to rear and throw him—and his own fiery doom.

The spreading legend of the crypt of the Ghost Lances has led to many brigand visits—and not a few brigand deaths. This in turn has led many peaceable folk to seek the sure safety of Blackbarn. (Its protection is even celebrated in a soothing ballad, Safe Behind Blackbarn's Shield, a gentle "restful place to go when the heart is torn" song composed by an anonymous minstrel, but now popular up and down the Sword Coast and Shining Sea lands.)

Blackbarn is ruled by a High Trantor, elected by the Trantors (merchant lords) of the town from among their number. Thanks to the Lances, the town neither needs nor has a Watch.

For the Visitor

Travelers are directed to the Silent Knight inn (Excellent/Expensive: quiet, respectable, tasteful, and very pricey), the Black Boot (Good/Moderate: busy, crowded, reasonable, and noisy: the inn for "everyone"), or the Unsnug Snail (Fair/Moderate:

a house of low repute, where escorts and gamblers work, much drink is consumed, and live entertainment of all sorts is the order of the day—and the night through, too).

Patrons of the Snail need no tavern to address their complete pleasure, but others are directed to the Laughing Cat (Good/Moderate) on Sarwynd Street, or the Minstrel's Folly (Good/Expensive) upstairs above Bryntyn's Barrelworks, at the corner of Asp and Shariykian Streets. Most townsfolk prefer the quiet frugality of the dingy Old Nag (Fair/Cheap) on Gulgate Street. Those in the mood for a brawl or revelry should go to Dance with the Knights (Poor/Cheap) on Ravalaster's Lane, an establishment named for the frequency with which Ghost Lance knights materialize forbiddingly in its chambers, to silently admonish patrons to desist from whatever illegalities they are engaged in.

Like the very different Beldargan, Blackbarn serves as a base for many merchants and adventurers exploring local reaches of the Border Kingdoms. Most find it a trifle too dull ("all work, all hustle, no fun") for their tastes, but some happily settle here. Prominent among the town merchants are the bakers; most mornings bring a lingering, mouth-watering smell of fresh-baked buns and pastries to the streets.

Local Legend

Blackbarn is named for a long-vanished large black barn (made of duskwood) built on its site by early human settlers (female mercenaries of the Silent Knife band, exiled from Calimshan in the days of the Satrap in Purple for their support of She Who Would be Queen) who fought off fierce local halfling bands to keep the land.

By night, Blakkar are increasingly used to hearing tappings, ringings, and occasional short thunderous stone tumblings of mining close beneath their feet. The relatively safe security of their town, and its trade-road importance, have led many traders, down the years, to covertly store coins, gems, and other valuables in cellars all over Blackbarn—and in tunnels and hide-holes surreptitiously dug down from some of those cellars. The Spellplague, and many personal tragedies since, have led to a large and mounting number of traders never returning to claim their hidden caches. Now, agents of the Zhentarim and various unscrupulous thieving bands are racing to explore and plunder this subterranean wealth—and Harpers and members of the Order of the Gauntlet are working to thwart them, through open armed confrontation in and beneath the cellars if need be. At least two sizeable caches have been found and emptied so far, and probably a score or more that Blackbarn has never heard about—but night after night, the chiseling and tunneling goes on, and rumors are rising that these would-be plunderings have broken through into the Underdark, and the monstrous denizens thereof have begun creeping up into Blackbarn's cellars and even, in the dark hours, its alleyways!

Bloutar

Small town

This dwindling town of woodcutters and hunters nestles against the southern verges of Qurth Forest. Of old it was the hold of the "Bloodsword Baron" Bloutar Hilathan, for whom it is named.

Bloutar was the scourge of orcs, rival rulers, and just about anything living that came within his reach and failed to swear fealty to him. He is said to have slain no less than three dragons, the first when fighting alone, and to have been an ugly monster of a man, as shrewd and wary as he was iron-fisted and mighty in battle. The Bloodsword Baron led his small but fiercely loyal band of followers in always-victorious raids on the lands around and all travelers who happened by. He took to the saddle when over seventy years of age to defeat a rival, Lord Duke Andilyon Ornth of the neighboring (and now-vanished) High Duchy of Blaemar, who'd unwisely judged Bloutar too old to fight. In the end, Bloutar died in his bed after over ninety years of a wild, brawling life. The many sons he'd sired promptly tore his realm apart fighting over it, leaving, over a century later, only the town named for him and the hamlets of Deltyn's Dagger and Empaerla, since overgrown by Qurth Forest. This small remnant, the Bloodsword Lands, suffered under a succession of brutal mercenary warrior rulers, until Klelder Blackhawk (a fighter who'd founded and made famous the Company of the Horn) conquered it and some neighboring hamlets. It was named the Barony of Blackhawk in his honor, and he retired there. However, Klelder unwisely made an enemy of the archmage Lyrildan of Calimport, whose spells made Klelder's realm teem with monsters. Klelder died in his castle forecourt fighting seven dark nagas long after most of his subjects had perished or fled the mage's curse. The Barony of Blackhawk continued to spawn things taloned, fanged, and tentacled for over three hundred years until Lyrildan was slain by an ambitious apprentice. During that time the barony became a widely-feared peril that made the lands around unsafe. It occupied many adventurers and avid hunters alike, yielding glory to some and untimely graves to many others.

Even today the rolling, forested hills around Bloutar are known as superb hunting country and the nearby forest as decidedly perilous hunting grounds. The area's dangerous reputation has made it a refuge for outlaws, exiles, and hunted folk who dare go nowhere else.

Over the years, Bloutar's folk have become known for fierce independence, hardiness, fearless defiance of authority, and dislike of outsiders. These traits kept Bloutar ungoverned but independent until a large army from the Barony of Blacksaddle overwhelmed a few defiant armed Bloutarran townsfolk. Bloutar has sullenly remained part of the Barony ever since, largely because of the wealth that comes by trade along the new road built by order of Blacksaddle Keep. Bloutarran pelts and smoked forest beast meats are snapped up as fast as the locals can produce them. The pelts are traded north to Derlusk for export to Calimshan, the city-states around the Lake of Steam, and Tharsult, for use in making fine fur garments sold throughout Faerûn. A charismatic leader (priest of a forest god, fighter of commanding prowess, or even a tightly-knit adventuring band) could easily bring Bloutar to rebellion.

Bloutar is a maze of long, rambling log houses that seem to grow out of the sheltering stands of trees, with wagon-ruts winding off in all directions to outlying farms. From a few nearby woodcutter's clearings, hunting trails plunge into the vast gloom of Qurth Forest in all directions. Hunters, trappers, seekers after rare woods, adventurers, and other visitors are strongly advised to hire a local guide.

North of Bloutar, the trails lead into deep ravines where owlbears lurk, and forest-dwelling spiders spin many trap-webs. These features have almost certainly been allowed to survive, or are even encouraged by Bloutarrans, to ensure their employment and control over Qurth's most easily reached resources. More than one hunter and sage has (from a safe distance) voiced the suspicion that local powers may have placed a deepspawn in a nearby cave to produce endless stags, because Bloutarran-led hunts seldom fail to bring back two or more such prizes.

Beyond these defenses and arranged perils, a few paths wander into the heart of Qurth Forest through reaches roamed by korred and intelligent fungi, to ruined, overgrown cities (including Hawklyn, where Klelder made his court). Treasures are said to lie forgotten under tree-roots, and monsters roam the deep cellars and crumbling halls.

Every summer, hunters and adventurers with a taste for hunting stags and boars or battling darker forest beasts arrive. They find accommodation at Althyn's Lodge (Fair/Moderate; a shabby but cozy rambling, old rooming house that leaks in rainstorms) or the Spitted Stag inn (Good/Expensive; a beast-trophy-decorated feasting hall at the heart of three wings of guest suites decorated in solid, rustic furniture, with hip-baths and good wine available).

The badge of Bloutar is a tree stump cloven in half by a broadaxe (blade lower left, long curving handle running to upper right. A rack of antlers protrudes from the stump (as if it was the head of a gigantic stag).

Tombweed

Thanks to its climate, everchanging and often haphazard agriculture, and countless plantings down the centuries, the Border Kingdoms abounds in a wide variety of wild-growing herbs, many having medicinal, alchemical, and magical uses as well as in cookery. The Borders are also home to a few unique herbs, including tombweed.

Tombweed is usually found in old, overgrown stony ruins, graveyards (where undead often rise), and disused mine-workings and underground storage cellars ("dungeons") in the Borders. As a result, it's not picked by just anyone, and remains rare and pricey. A handful of fresh or dried tombweed can command 1 sp or more, and it's a trading commodity for those who know its properties (with major buyers in Derlusk and Yallasch).

Tombweed is a creeping ground-vine that anchors itself often to stones or other plants by means of entwining side-tendrils (shoots); what catches the eye are its triangular "arrowhead" leaves, growing in clusters of five or more, that are green mottled with a ghostly white that glows slightly in moonlight. Chewed and swallowed (ingested), or crushed and pressed into a wound, or mixed dried or as a pulverized paste with a little water or dew and poured into a wound or over skin, it quells spreading infection, and has a 8 in 10 (result of 1 through 8 on a d10) chance of having the same effects as a protection from poison spell, though it is not magical.

Mixed into poisoned or tainted water or other drinkables with a strength of one-fifth tombweed to four-fifths liquid, or more, it has an 8 in 10 chance of making the liquid safe (not necessarily beneficial) to consume.

* For D&D Adventurers League play, Tombweed must be discovered in an adventure and is not available for purchase. Further, Tombweed must count towards the rewards that the adventure can award.

Bowshot

A winding wagon road through the heart of the land of Owlhold, the Bowshot has a well-deserved "fell and dangerous" reputation, thanks to brigands, monsters, and breakneck ravines and bogs that claim a toll of travelers every season. Far more travelers survive but lose their way, wandering for days on the various backland trails of Owlhold before either finding a way out, or succumbing to bogs or repeated brigand attacks.

For all its windings, the Bowshot can be said to run north-south, linking the Four Stags inn at the midpoint of the Green Road (a larger, better-traveled trade road between Oeble and Bloutar that largely skirts the land of Owlhold) with the Griffon Aflame inn on Longcrag Ride (a newly-rebuilt road that

runs between Talduth Vale and Beldargan), in Owlhold's interior.

Traversing the road from south to north, the traveler will find the following features.

The Griffon Aflame (Good/Moderate) is a rustic, timber-built inn standing in a wooded hollow. Always damp and dimly-lit (like the misty dell around it), it has a certain gloomy charm. Mushrooms sprout unbidden in the wet, rotting wood of this cozy house that throws rambling wings out into the forest in all directions. It's home to many permanent residents (some of them interesting folk indeed, with surprising skills and secrets) as well as way-guests. The Griffon boasts comfortable beds (many slung from the rafters on thick ropes), formidable beer and wine cellars, and generous, tasty stews. It's named for a long-ago aerial battle wherein a dragon rider downed a flight of griffon-back foes. A good way to start an argument at the Griffon is to ask the identities of those warring parties or why they clashed.

Fallenfalcon: Traveling the Bowshot north from the Griffon, the wayfarer will first find Fallenfalcon, a camping pavilion beside a drinkable stream and pool faced by four cottages inhabited by half-elven families, who serve hot or cold bread and soups to travelers on short notice and can manage substantial meals by prearrangement. Plentiful herbs and edible berries grow wild for the picking along the trailside north of Fallenfalcon.Trollhead Bridge: The next site (continuing north along the road) is Trollhead Bridge, a wide, rail-less span across a bog. A message-stone at its south end is carved in the likeness of a long-nosed troll head as tall as a large warrior. (A message stone is rock in whose crevices written missives are left by prearrangement. Anyone who removes or alters a message not meant for them receives an arrow through one hand if any Owlen sees or hears of the deed.) At the Bridge is a sleeping pavilion with firepit and a pump. Travelers are warned that dry firewood is rare in the vicinity, but stinging swamp insects are not.

Hathlock House: The farer north from the Bridge will traverse the road up out of bogs to arrive at Hathlock's Rest, a former foresters' settlement now abandoned except for Hathlock House (Fair/Moderate), a rustic way-inn that offers uninspired food and clean but spartan sleeping and stabling. Luxuries and amenities can't be had no matter how many coins a traveler offers. The House is primarily the common residence of seven hunters and fur-trappers, not a well-supplied inn.

The Wolf Belt: Two days of hard travel through deep, wolf-roamed woods north of the Rest stands the Wolf Belt (Fair/Expensive), a tavern of sorts. It's a large, open campground with privies at one end and a serving-shack at the other. The serving shack is no more than a rough, wooden shed built over a keg cellar, wherein staff serve drinks across a counter to patrons standing on a covered porch. The drink is strong and rough rather than refined, famous, or imported from afar, but the supply is seemingly endless, and in winter the fare is usually supplemented by a hot mushroom-and-herb rabbit broth. The Belt is open at all hours. At night or in severe weather, the porch shutters are fastened down to leave only a single serving-opening.

The twenty-odd staff of the Belt dwell under the serving-shack in cellars arranged in a series of defensible points, with the keg-cellars outermost, a firewood cellar next, then living quarters (with beast-screened airshafts that come to the surface halfway down the side of a wooded hill behind the Belt, under the concealing greenery of many broadleaf shrubs), and a pantry innermost. Much of the drink sold at the Belt is brewed or distilled in the woods behind the serving-shack. There are rumors that an altar to a dark god (tales vary as to just which one) stands back there, too, and that the staff of the Belt worships this dark power. Such tales, it should be noted, do little to discourage clientele or consumption. The truth is that two local trappers worship Shar at an old altar, and the staff of the Belt (who dwell together in one large, multispouse family) avoid it.

Sabroar's Hold: Sabroar was a locally famous priest of Silvanus who consecrated many groves to the Green Father but here established herb gardens for the use of his followers. They continued to tend them after his death. So many buyers came here, needing a place to stay overnight, that the two-story inn of Sabroar's Hold (Excellent/Moderate) was built. In turn, its presence spurred artisans (weavers, glassblowers, and sellers-of-seeds) to take rooms here from time to time to sell their wares and then melt back into the forest until next they have enough to sell to make the trip. Priests of Silvanus police the inn against thefts, swindlers, and to settle trade disputes, acting as moneychangers and bankers (keeping the funds of the nervous hidden safe in exchange for trade-tokens). The inn kitchens turn out wonderful breads, cakes, and pastries. In addition, there are satisfying stews and roasts garnished only with forest fowl, which owe most of their hearty taste to forest vegetables and sauces seasoned by fare found in the woods around the Hold (mushrooms, mosses, roots, and berries). This would come as a surprise to many of the travelers who delight in the hearty "boar" and "stag" roasts that seldom have anything to do with either beast.

Jester's Hollow: This broad, wooded stream valley is hung with lanterns and is often adrift with pleasing cooking-smokes. It holds the inn that bears its name and a dozen charming cottages. Six are the clearly-signed homes of folk who welcome

customers. A rock-studded brook meanders through the hollow. Laughing Lady Stream is named for a long-dead sorceress who once dwelt in the hollow (the inn stands on the foundations of her tiny tower) and whose proper name, Jestra, became corrupted into "Jester" to give the hollow its present name. Jestra Illowhand liked to preserve music to hear over and over in the privacy of her tower without musicians. She devised a spell that captured short snatches of sound in rock crystals and gemstones. Any human touch on a stone caused it to "play" the captured sounds. Somewhere in the woods near the hollow is the buried entrance to the cavern where Jestra stored the gems she'd thus treated, now a priceless collection of not just music but of long-dead kings, wizards, bards, and sages speaking on everything from the whereabouts of buried treasure to philosophical musings on the purposes of life and ruling and wars. Its finder can literally name his price for most of the gems. Descending into the hollow from the south, the traveler comes first to the home and shop of "Belomeier Tathchant, Dealer in Locks, Keys, Chains, Hinges, Coffers, and Lanterns." Belomeier is long dead, but his descendants carry on his business, making and repairing small and dainty specimens of all the items the sign proclaims. They also sell tiny, razor-sharp daggers with sheaths for strapping onto forearms, into boots, and onto belts, at prices are just slightly above average (but the wares are of the best quality). Would-be thieves or "aptrons" desiring to take wares by threat and force will find out the hard way that no fewer than fourteen Tathchants are semi-retired adventurers (of formidable skills), wizards and rangers among them.



Next to Belomeier stands the stone cottage of "Jarvathra Ploorst, Talismans and Fortunes." In her spicy-scented, cluttered home, Jarvathra—a dreamy-eyed, gushing woman who never seems to sleep or close her business—dispenses all manner of talismans which may or may not have any real power to ward anything. Some of them are unique mixtures of feathers, carved glass, stones, and smoked leather bindings. She tells fortunes, specializing in the reading of candles lit by a client and in the interpretation of card games played between her and the client. Jarvathra has many male patrons who delight in her affectionate, comforting ways, but her oft-used bed is not for sale, and reacts with cold anger when considered an escort-for-hire. Those she entertains might be alarmed to learn that Jarvathra is apparently about a hundred and sixty summers old, and so can't possibly be the graceful, not-yet-aging woman she appears to be. (The real Jarvathra died almost a century ago; the "Jarvathra" of today is a doppelganger who deftly learns all she can of the doings and aims of her guests, and sells this information to anyone willing to pay—which includes roving spies of the Zhentarim, the Lords' Alliance, the Red Wizards, and several brigand and thieving organizations and shady merchant cabals.)

Beyond Jarvathra's home are the overgrown foundations of two now-gone cottages, and beyond them stands the inn: the handsome fieldstone Jester's Hollow (Excellent/Moderate) crowns a little knoll at the bottom of the hollow where a simple bridge crosses Laughing Lady Stream. This wayhouse makes its coins as a resting-place for those who come to trade with the artisans of the hollow. Apt to be damp (and clammy in winter), it's breezy year-round, bright and welcoming within (all rooms having pleasant window views and solid, comfortable furnishings). It features a common, heated herbal bathing tub just off the taproom, where tired travelers can relax and banish the aches of weary feet.

The mint wine is excellent and clears the palate for buttery biscuits, served to all guests. Warm robes are also provided for all, and the staff wear them to encourage such casual dress everywhere indoors. The dining room has a wall of windows that opens onto a little dancing green where harpists, singers, and horn players often entertain. Guests are encouraged to dance for fun, not worrying about skill. Those who like the Jester tend to really like it and return to stay year after year, whenever they can, lingering as long as possible. It's said that a disguised Azoun IV of Cormyr was among their ranks more than once, accompanied by a certain grumbling Royal Magician of Cormyr.

The woods hide several other ruins, including the former home of the Jester himself, who went mad when the Spellplague hit, and died soon

after—for he was a wealthy, powerful, and reclusive archmage. Whose spellbooks and magic items (he was known to wear several enchanted rings, and carry multiple wands when expecting trouble) were never found. So, find the right ruin, and uncover its hiding-places. . . .

The Four Stags (Good/Expensive) is a large, handsome, cedar-shingled log building with flagstone floors. It sits on a hillock surrounded by a circular earthen wall thickly planted with tall pines. It's a bustling place that has three wings of sleeping-chambers opening off a long, lofty, crosswise common hall dominated by two spit-sizzling cooking hearths at either end (each having an adjacent kitchen). "Below" the inn, on the slopes of the knoll, are sheds where one can rent a secure "long stall" for one's intact team and wagon to be driven into, settled (and locked in) for the night, and then driven out the other end come morning.

"The Stags" is where many Owlen come to trade goods with passing merchants, hire companionship, and see all they desire of the wider world. Fresh news from afar is eagerly devoured while maps and curios from "the outlands" fascinate the visiting Owlen. Ruffians and brigands beware: the live-on owners and staff of this inn are a retired band of adventurers, who've lost none of their magic items, weaponry, or skill at arms.

Burntbridges

Burntbridges is a series of seven fords across the River Scelptar linking five almost-submerged islets to each other in a bending, doubling-back route across the fast-flowing river. The fords are named for the bridges that once carried traffic dryshod over the Scelptar at this spot—and their fate. A sequence of islet-hopping bridges called "the Sevenspans" once carried the Scelptar Road across the River Scelptar, linking the town of Blackbarn (to the east and south) with lands north and west across the river. Most of the wagon trade crossing the bridges was between Blackbarn and the land of Suldamma to the west and south. The bridges were of wood and massive enough to withstand more than fourscore years of wind and weather before the summer of 1317 DR, when they were destroyed by fire in a fierce spell-battle.

No one quite remembers who was fighting whom, but most tales agree that one armed force of knights with a sorcerer was trying to stop another warband of knights (who'd hired three lesser wizards to ride with them) from crossing the river. The struggle cost the lives of all but a few—the survivors fled, spreading wild tales of fire raging across the river and armored men screaming as they were transformed into strange, ever-shifting beasts that foundered, drowned, and were carried away by the Scelptar as they struggled to learn how to control their new, unfamiliar shapes.

The fords are passable only when the water is low at high summer (at the end of Flamerule and the hot early days of Eleasias) or in harshest winter, when river ice is thick. Otherwise, barges must be built and used unless travelers are strong swimmers and can mount multiple ropes from bank to bank or islet to islet. The rotting wrecks of dozens of riven barges litter the islets, and anything useful was salvaged from them long ago.

Although this would seem a logical place to establish a ferry, attempts to do so have been ill-fated. One group of ferrymen were revealed to have been "replaced" by shapeshifters, most of whom perished in a battle against three adventuring bands, but a few escaped and fled into the Borders in all directions. Later, an adventuring band decided to "retire" to Burntbridges and become ferrymen, but dwindled one by one, falling victim to mimics that crept onto their barges and hid as part of the barges or cargo until tired ferrymen slept on the barges. A third group was eaten away to toppling, blood-drenched bones with frightening speed by a fell magic unleashed by a passenger they'd displeased (unleashed from a casket, most tales insist, not cast as a spell).

Many and fell are the tales told about Burntbridges, over tavern tables and by firesides late at night all across the Borders. Stories of hauntings, of strange undead or monstrous guardians standing on phantom bridges of moonlit nights, bringing death to all who seek to cross. Stories of whispering, formless, chilling-fingered things encountered while crossing the fords, that cling to the living for days or weeks afterward, weakening and draining them. Of treasures hidden under the islets, or in clefts in their streamweed-slick, submerged, rocky flanks (treasures never found by persistent searches, old Borderers will remind the tale-tellers). Of creatures that rise, dripping, from the Scelptar to drag down travelers crossing the fords by night. And of a "doorway of cold fire" that appears, on rare nights, on one of the islets, a portal through which strange beasts step—or slither.

At least two efforts have been made to rebuild the burned bridges, and both have ended badly. One was a sudden, silent slaughter of forty men and oxen, all found slumped in the midst of their ropes and timbers, with no mark on them but the buzzing flies, as if they'd all just fallen dead at once in the midst of bridge-building. The other was an emptying of riverbank camps by night with fires still burning and tools, weapons, and wealth all dropped as if laid peacefully aside for slumber. The tents and wagons were simply empty of men.

Borderers tell and retell the tales, and no one tries to rebuild the Burntbridges now, though nothing at all ill seems to befall travelers who bring their

own spars, build rafts, lash their wagons to them, and struggle across the Scelptar. Outlanders who seek treasures or the legendary portal depart empty-handed, and nothing seems to tarry around the islets—not even the birds (squawkwings, drey, and dundippers) that nest in profusion up and down the Scelptar-banks above and below the old bridge sites.

Dapplegate

Large town

This independent, lively place stands on the northern border of Bedorn; Borderers know Dapplegate as a pleasant place of cobbled streets and solid, three-story stone buildings where merchants rule (in a council of forty that can never agree on much of anything) and fill the town with cheerful bustle at all hours.

Native Dapplans can sleep through anything thanks to crafters hammering through the night and the din of wagons and pull-carts groaning and rumbling endlessly through the streets—this town never sleeps. Dapplegate's resident craftfolk make superb stormlanterns (of wrought iron or brass with glass panes and hanging chains), adequate chain, and rough but sturdy crates and chests for the transport of bulk goods. Most businesses are open night and day, staffed in three shifts, busily selling Borderers all that Calimshan and more distant lands have to offer and buying Border goods for export. Goods are hauled north to wharves along the left bank of the River Scelptar for shipment via barges. The riverbanks in that area are so marshy and insect-infested that there are no other Borderer settlements there. Lizard folk and mudmaws battle for supremacy, and no less than six mercenary companies based in Dapplegate are kept busy providing protective escort duty for bargebound shipments.

All of this makes Dapplegate a worthwhile stop for shoppers seeking variety of wares (often an elusive quality in the Border Kingdoms), but hardly an exciting place for the romantic or adventurous. Visitors to Dapplegate are directed to the Place of Arrows (the central marketplace and the site of a long-ago battle between rival companies of archers). There, stalls of traveling merchants crowd together inside a ring of eight circular, waist-high, walled ponds (for watering draft animals).

The Place of Arrows was overlooked by Danchilaer's Tower, a simple, slender dark stone tower that stands immediately northwest of the market in its own walled garden (which it shares with ancient, massive, stunted oaks, a cairn commemorating the Valiant Fallen of Dapplegate in the many wars that have raged across the region, and—at most times—many children of the town at play, though they shun the tower itself). Before the Spellplague, this had been the home of the reclusive Danchilaer the Mad Mage, but even before that



calamity, his home had been dark and empty (except for occasional roaming bands of adventurers seeking treasure in its trapped, labyrinthine chambers and cellars), though his brooding, watchful presence could be felt by anyone who drew near. Some say Dapplegate grew up around this tower, after folk staying at the nearby Dapplegate Inn struck bargains with the sorcerer to protect them with spells in return for payments of money, cooked food, and lifting-and-carrying service around the tower).

The Spellplague destroyed the Mad Mage—or did it? He's still seen in the town from time to time, as a silent, gliding apparition, his face hidden by his pulled-down cowl. He points or makes other gestures, and then glides away. He was known to be very wealthy, and magically mighty, and according to Dapplans, no one has ever found his riches nor any of his magic. Betimes adventurers still brave the tower to search . . . and often perish within, or flee babbling of "strange monsters."

Beside the Tower is the round, turreted Council Hall, an ungainly pile of a building that has flung out wings in all directions over the years as kitchens, meeting-rooms, and rental storage lockchambers for visitors were added haphazardly. Its roof leaks in many places, and no one seems bothered to do more than slapdash repairs, so it might not grace Dapplegate much longer.

Facing the Hall across Lockwyvern Street is the Chased Unicorn (not, as some travelers think, "the Chaste Unicorn"), an inn (Excellent/Expensive) offering superior dining and fairly luxurious appointments, including gaming rooms, private baths, and

chamber service. Such accommodations are rare in the Border Kingdoms—and are priced accordingly.

Most visitors stay at one of the three less expensive (and more spartan) inns just inside the town gates. Hard by Bedorn Gate is the Old Tin Tankard (not, despite its name, a tavern; Good/Moderate). Just inside Easting Gate is the Watchful Warrior (large, new, noisy, and bright; Fair/Moderate), and beside the River Gate is Mistfall House (which many folk in town suspect has something to do with the Harpers; known Harpers stay there when in town; Excellent/Moderate). The best tavern in town is Black Blasko's on Sharaghil Street (Good/Moderate). The most raucous and shady is Tarnalar's Tipple on Bloodserpent Lane (Poor/Moderate).

Persistent local rumors insist that anywhere from seven to a score tombs of Halruaan archwizards lie hidden beneath the cellars of buildings all over Dapplegate—including the crypt of Quarlin, a Halruaan wizard who specialized in making many magical staves of various sorts that unleashed battle magics. Both Elminster and Volo have written in the past that these rumors are founded on facts, but refused to specify how to access any of the tombs. Optimistic adventurers keep searching.

The badge of Dapplegate is a side-on wyvern's head facing to the left, jutting up from the center of a crenelation (toothed stone top of a tower, represented by three merlons separated by two embrasures, so the wyvern's neck rises squarely up behind the center merlon).

Derlusk

Large city

Derlusk is a large port on the Lake of Steam, among the best and busiest harbors in the Border Kingdoms. It fills a natural bowl valley, sheltered on the west and north by wooded Dragonsmoke Ridge, which many of its lanes climb, and many of its stout stone buildings are built into. By night, Derlusk is a quiet, attractive vista of slate roofs and shimmering lanterns.

Most of the crops and goods produced in the Barony of Blacksaddle and Shandolphyn's Reach are shipped to wider Faerûn through Derlusk. Its four rival shipyards are known for building swift, sleek "wave runner" coastboats (preferred by smugglers and pirates for their speed, nimble helms, and low silhouettes), but their daily coin comes from repairing visiting cogs and caravels, and maintaining the local fishing fleet. A local acquired-taste delicacy is salty "dlurn paste" of revolting drab "slug" green hue, made from the small, green dlurn fish found in profusion in Derlusk Harbor and nearby inlets). Dlurn keeps well, smells marvelous, and makes a solid meal when spread on biscuits, but its saltiness goads fierce thirst.

Derlusk is a city of music where bards are highly regarded; every inn, tavern, tankard-house, and breakblades club (where patrons fence for exercise and to improve their swordplay) offers musical entertainment.

Derlusk is also a city of scriveners, bookbinders, and book collectors, where bookshops prosper. Books (fiction—the more fanciful, the better), are eagerly collected, lent (for fees and book-deposit sums), and discussed by Derluskans. Parties are held to celebrate new releases or a collector's acquisition of a long-sought tome. Authors are treated like royalty, and annual revels are held to commemorate their deaths. Many scholars, sages, and limners dwell in Derlusk, and it is Faerûn's center for procuring old, rare books (or hiring a "seeker" to find and procure such a tome elsewhere). If a particularly rare or valuable volume can't be bought, a seeker will try to negotiate a price at which the book's owner will allow bonded scribes to make a copy in the safety of the owner's private rooms (for this, buyers can expect to pay at least 100 gp per copied page, and thousands more for especially rare, valuable, or sought-after tomes). Fees for copied maps begin at 1,000 gp each and rise rapidly from there; most cost about 4,000 gp (one-of-a-kind or heavily illustrated maps and books are accordingly more).

Derlusk also offers street-corner shops where a new book can be had for as little as 6 sp. Passages can be copied out from old books in most shops' stock into a fresh chapbook for a customer willing to part with 12 to 25 gp, or double that for anything longer than a dozen finished pages. All of this literary interest gives the port an air of sophistication akin to far larger, cosmopolitan cities like Waterdeep.

Accommodations in Derlusk range from seedy, short-rent upstairs back rooms reached by rickety outside stairs and shared involuntarily with gulls and pigeons to the luxurious, sprawling the Turrets at Twilight, a renovated former sea-castle with plentiful chambermaids and no less than three dining rooms. (The Turrets is famous for surviving hosting a MageFair—but many magical pranks wreaked widespread damage, leaving rooms, doorways, cellars, stairs, windows, and even some guests under nasty recurring enchantments. The place reeks of magic, not to mention rumors of magical treasures hidden away behind its wall-panels. According to Elminster, at least one garderobe-seat, in his time, wasn't just something to sit on, it was a powerful magic item of a sort that's usually found in quite a different shape.)

The Turrets at Twilight stands on the northeastern corner of the streetmoot of Shalath Street and Runereaver's Run. The complex sprawls for an entire city block and encloses its own internal courtyard, with a horse-and-coach tunnel from there to its fortress-like stone stables that fill the next

block to the east. The stables are crowned by floors of rooms for guests' servants and the inn staff.

Most Derluskan inns are modest, quiet places of friendly, slightly shabby comfort, like several homes of old-money wealthy gentry who don't care for ostentatious show spliced together to provide three floors that fill a city block of rooms, suites, and lounges. Stalwarts among these hostelries are Saltsea House on Yarendevvur Street, Beltarn's Hearth on Moonspire Lane, and Ostegul's Roost on Spurnserpent Street.

Many scholars, sages, and limners have settled in Derlusk, creating a localized shared world of interests that most Borderers dismiss as quite mad—or at the very least odd, eccentric, and frivolous. This is the place to come if you seek an old, rare book. Though many dockworkers of Derlusk find the world of books to be something strange, they regard book lovers as harmlessly eccentric, true fellow citizens—provided they share an appreciation of music, and especially if they enjoy music that's sung lustily off-key as barrels are being loaded on the wharves or bawled drunkenly out of windows when the moon rides high.

Wealth is everywhere in Derlusk. It is a very clean city, kept that way by rat-catching cats and diligent streetswabbers, paid by the city so that no one need hesitate to bring refuse to one of the frequently-passing carts. These carry dung and trash well outside the city, to "the pits" dug out when an all-faiths cemetery hill was erected (and ringed with shrines where local priests watch for, and work against, the rise of undead from among the many buried).

Derlusk's shops provide superb arrays of choice in goods, from the old, used, repaired, and simple, up to the latest styles and innovations. Many Derluskans live above their shops, having a storage cellar below, the shop at street level, the floor immediately above given over to wares-storage and workrooms (very successful shops may expand into this floor, with internal staircases opening onto little "halfway-up" landings for the display of still more wares), and all floors above that being living quarters with window-box herb-gardens and rooftop laundry-lines. If the shopkeeper lives elsewhere, these floors are usually rented out, often to shop staff or trusted friends. Shady wares and oddities (such as some specialized adventuring equipment, drugs, poisons, and "monster relics") may be hard to find in Derlusk, but it can collectively offer a choice of more mundane wares that rivals important trading-ports like Baldur's Gate or Alaghôn.

Derlusk's streets aren't laid out in a strict grid pattern, but those routes that generally run down from the lip of the valley to the wharves are named "streets," whereas those that wind in concentric arcs around the valley, paralleling the shoreline, are usually called "runs." Streets tend to be dominated by wagon-traffic moving to and from the dockside warehouses, and runs tend to be dominated by shopping and pedestrian traffic to and from above-shop lodgings. The mansions of the wealthiest Derluskans tend to stand on the highest runs, high up on the valley sides.

The busiest streets include Shalath Street, Wavecaundel Street, and Arbelloe Street, and the most popular shopping runs are Runereaver's Run (home to both the Faring Falcon and Fendelmer's Fine Folios), Furlar's Run, and Oscalyaun Run.

The most exclusive addresses in Derlusk are along the winding, garden-flanked Dawndancer's Run and Athal's Run, where iron gates, ironspear walls, and private guards lurk amid the greenery.

Governance

Derlusk has no city wall and no gates, though it does have slender stone watchtowers from which members of its storm-gray-uniformed Watch observe arrivals and departures from the city. Their main task is to quell brawls, catch murderers, arsonists, vandals, and thieves, and generally keep the city safe for trade. They tend to be disinterested in shady dealings, except when those dealings involve kidnappings, slavery, or thefts from Derluskans.

Derlusk has no guilds, and the independent-minded merchants of this independent city frown on such organizations. However, merchants vote nine of their number to annually fill the Coinseats—the chairs of their ruling Council, which passes laws (usually to settle disputes between neighbors or trade rivals), passes judgment in disputes brought to them, and directs and pays (from docking-levies) the Watch (sixty-odd strong, with another twenty-some trainees) and the streetswabbers. Despite their distaste for guilds, merchants in a given field tend to nominate and vote for "one of their own" to sit on Council. Being a Councillor is a thankless, time-consuming job that tends to hurt the personal trade prosperity of those sitting the Coinseats, so few agree to serve consecutive terms or numerous terms.

All in all, Derlusk is lightly governed and prefers matters that way. Local trade competition isn't as cutthroat as many other mercantile centers in the Realms. When dusk falls, every shop that isn't concerned with nightly entertainment (food, drink, and clubs) closes its doors and citizens relax or play. It's a rare Derluskan who sits up nights doing extra work, though conducting trade negotiations over a tankard or tallglass isn't considered work.

Derlusk offers probably the widest selection of goods available in one place in all the Border Kingdoms; Borderers believe you can buy anything in Derlusk if you've coin enough, and they just might be right.

Dunbridges

Village

This picturesque, sleepy-looking village meets the eye as a chaotic tangle of hedges, meandering paths, and walled gardens studded here and there with thatched, thick-walled cottages. Surrounded by rolling pastureland, the settlement is dominated by mills and their millponds, freely-wandering sheep and goats, and the many small bridges for which the place is named. The Dunbridges (named for Aldunn, the dwarf stonemason who built them centuries ago) leap over ponds—and the springs that feed them—in railless arches too narrow for many an outland merchant's wagon. As a result, Dunbradar spend a lot of time hauling overturned wagons out of normally-placid local waters by means of blocks, pulleys, spars, and horse-winches (almost as much time as visiting merchants spend heartily cursing the bridges). The Dunbradar take such things with patient good humor, secure in the prosperity won by their sharp-flavored, Dunbradar cheese made of nuts and goats' milk, well-stocked fish ponds, and woolen mills which produce distinctive Dunbradar blankets—always woven in green-on-green, swirling patterns that make good camouflage.

Defenses

Dunbradar can call on no less than three resident adventuring companies of note to repel attempts at brigandry, invasion (almost always by the legendarily greedy and belligerent folk of Thuntar, who rise every decade or so in another attempt at building an empire), and enforced bridge improvements (even by their nominal superiors, the Sunbright Lances of High Emmerock). All three companies have defended Dunbridges on occasion and have done so in full muster together at least twice—during the Wyrmstrike of 1332 DR (a dragon attack) and at the battle of Six Smoking Shields in 1348 DR (the most recent resounding defeat of invading Thuntarran armies).

These three stalwart bands are a rollicking, pranksome, tankard-tossing rabble of dwarves known as the Merciless Manticoreslayers (all outlaws from the dwarven Deep Realm, led by Khaladaen of the Double-ended Axe, a 14th-level LN male gold dwarf fighter); the all-female Company of the Bent Blade, formed some eighty years ago by the daughters of the Company of Sun Knights (who founded High Emmerock); half-elven and human, uniformly magnificent in gleaming plate armor and mounted on glossy chargers; and the Deadhelms of Dunbridges, a motley crew of semi-retired adventurers and mercenaries from a score of kingdoms and a dozen races.

The brawling, boisterous Manticoreslayers make steady coin by distilling a strong, rough whisky called "Slayers' Fire" which is growing in popularity as merchants take it throughout Faerûn. Local rumor insists that they are girt in battle with strong defensive magic and that their annual "long vacations" are spent hunting and slaying dragons for sport.

Rumor further asserts that the ever-wary Deadhelms, who dwell in a fortified keep at the western edge of Dunbridges, wield an array of strange and powerful magic items. Further, it whispers that their leaders are the remnants (human and otherwise) of the crew of a ship that sailed through the sky and between the stars!

Not to be done yet, the same ever-tireless rumor mill holds that the "Blade Queens" (as the warrior-women of the Company of the Bent Blade are affectionately known) are all sorceresses and Harpers, or at the very least allies of and spies for Those Who Harp.

The daring exploits (and domestic dalliances, as the Blade Queens are endlessly courted by various stalwarts of both other companies) provide constant entertainment for Dunbradar and also

Wayfarers' Food

Peddlers, wagon merchants, and Borderers walking from place to place will often carry journey food in belt pouches: non-messy meals that keep well. In the Border Kingdoms, inns and taverns do a good sideline in selling these to departing guests. It's considered the height of rudeness to buy and eat such fare while staying at an inn rather than buying their fresh hot meals (it implies you don't trust their food).

"Staples" frequently on offer at such establishments include nuts, raisins (dried grapes), wild grapes and berries picked trailside when in season, handwheels of local cheese sealed in beeswax, sausages, dried figs threaded on cords, and even honeycomb wrapped in oilcloth.

In some places, one can even buy knitted sleeves of onions and garlic.

All along the southern Border Kingdoms (for about a day's ride north of the Landrise), darthweed grows wild, in profusion: a weed with a distinctive tall central green shoot or spike topped with a dark green pod. Darthweed pods are edible raw or cooked. They resemble short, fat pea pods and taste rather like green bell (sweet) peppers. When fried with roast boar (bacon), they soak up the taste of the bacon as they dry out; darth dried in this way keeps well, is chewy like beef jerky, and tastes like bacon, so it's a favored local trail food that many visitors develop a taste for.

Good drinking water is plentiful "in the wild" throughout the Borders, but larger inns and taverns often sell skins for carrying enough water for riding and pack beasts, or something stronger than water.

leave them unimpressed by most visiting adventurers. Brigands may be able to force Dunbradar folk into doing things, but they'll fail to scare them into doing anything.

Governance

Dunbridges is governed by the Mouth, a council of local merchants (nominated by any citizen) who serve for three seasons and have equal votes. No councilor can serve two consecutive terms. The Mouth has eleven members-at-large and a speaker, the Lord of the Bridges. The Lord directly commands the only employees of the Mouth: the Fingers, a dozen-strong mounted constabulary (veteran, capable LN male human fighters) who patrol the streets, lead the militia, and keep close watch on visitors, under the direction of their leader, the Lord High Protector. This general-cum-chief of police is an office which in the past was all too often occupied by corrupt villains (several of whom tried to take direct rule of Dunbridges and paid for the attempt with their lives or were forced to flee far, fast, and permanently). However, the principled Tharorgaun Tarntree established a new alert and attentive standard, and established "wide patrols" that scour far afield in search of brigands and winter wolves, always checking trouble spots like Sarglar's Hill. In his time, a mind flayer merchant with a wizard in thrall once came to town and tried to take over the minds of local millers. Tarntree beheaded the illithid in single combat. The grateful, freed wizard cast a preservative spell over the head, and it still hangs on pike-point above the front gate of Tarntowers, the Lord High Protector's fortified mansion, eyes glowing faintly and tentacles endlessly and gently curling (an eerie sight that has made many a visitor hurry past but of which locals are quite proud).

Mysteries

Dunbridges long ago became a supply center of sorts for folk who dislike overly tight scrutiny and local laws—or rather, a place for such folk to leave their supplies. The Six Whistlers Lockhouse in the side of Sarglar's Hill just northeast of the settlement is a fortress mated to a network of caverns where folk can rent space to store whatever they need to keep hidden for a while. No one but the Whistlers knows how many human warriors guard the Lockhouse fortress gate. The now-long-dead Bold Bards adventuring band of Tashluta, who are known to have disputed the fees charged by the Whistlers, claimed some of the Whistler guards are doppelgangers who shift their appearances to make clients think there are far more guards than the place really possesses. Down the years, many wild tales have



been told about the true identities of the Whistlers themselves, most often that they wear human guises until it suits them to take their true shapes, as vargouilles who have heads six feet tall! Local legend insists great treasures are hidden in some of the Lockhouse caverns; treasures that would "rock all Faerûn and tumble not a few of its thrones" should they ever be released.

Perhaps only the watchful gods know what other mysteries lurk behind the cozy cottages and bustling little shops of Dunbridges. Visitors from larger and more sophisticated places are warned that local legend has always hinted that great power lies "hidden, unsleeping" in and about the mills and their placid ponds.

Duskwood

Deepest and least tamed of the Border Kingdoms forests, the Duskwood fills the eastern end of the Borders, separating the Realm of the Smoking Star (a bucolic forest a-crawl with wild magic) from the largely-lawless Realm of the Ready Sword (home to brigands, misfits, and many monsters).

Few folk dare to venture far into the Duskwood's thick tangles of moss-girt trees, clinging vines, and many tiny rivulets that tumble down from knife-sharp, central ridges to carve deep "breakneck" ravines thickly cloaked in underbrush. The breaknecks render impossible mounted passage through the forest—or ground pursuit of anything that can jump long distances or fly. The undergrowth provides ample cover for giant spiders, snakes of astonishing size, and owlbears. Beholders are reputed to drift menacingly among the trees, and the forest is known to harbor at least one large thirst (flock) of stirges.

So numerous are the monsters of the Duskwood that some sages believe a colony of deepspawn must dwell in its depths. Others point out that the forest's plant life flourishes just as frenetically and that old tales of a nature god dwelling in the Duskwood, or it being the onetime home of a Netherese sorcerer whose now-untended generative magics run amok, may be nearer the truth.

The Duskwood's rich flora includes many rare, shade-dwelling herbs and fungi that grow larger, richer, and in more profusion than anywhere else in the known Realms. Alchemists, dyers, herbalists, scent-makers, mages, and priests will pay handsomely for specimens.

Among the ridges at the heart of the forest lie pools whose waters glow faintly with magic. Some say these were created by a Netherese arcane spellcaster of awesome might, but there are many other wild tales about their origins. The truth is unknown. These pools (the sources of the Dusking Rivers) combine the abilities of a spellward of arcane might with the power to restore charges to immersed magic items of a charged nature. These legendary properties have brought a host of adventurers deep into the Duskwood down the centuries, and most reported the pools to be guarded by something called the Vauntagar.

Dusk Pool Effects. Non-magical items aren't made magical. Magic items that don't use charges are unaffected, but the fact that they don't use charges will be instantly communicated to any creature touching them during immersion. At the end of every ten hours of continual or partial immersion of any magic item that uses charges, roll 1d6. A result of 1 means no charges have been gained, a result of 6 means ten charges have been gained. For rolls of 2 through 5, the item gains a number of charges matching the number rolled. Broken periods of immersion or periods of less than ten hours duration confer no benefit. A Dusk Pool can "supercharge" an item to more than its total charge capacity, but in doing so the item is altered in a way that prevents it from ever again being recharged by that particular pool. At the end of the ten hours in which an item becomes "supercharged," the pool expels the item (Dusk Pools never expel items under any other circumstances).

The Vauntagar

Once venerated by a Borderer cult in ancient times, this magic remains a dark horror in many fireside tales and warriors' legends.

Seemingly lost to wizardry today, the Vauntagar is a permanent spell binding that links monsters of the caster's choice in a symbiotic cycle. Only one monster prowls Faerûn at a time, but it is replaced by the next in the cycle whenever the first is slain, sorely wounded, or desires to escape its current situation. The first beast vanishes, and the second fades into view in the same spot.

Up to a dozen creatures of widely differing abilities, natures, and alignments can be linked without apparent harm or instability (most Vauntagars consist of six to nine beasts). Combat damage dealt by any monster in the cycle heals an equal number of hit points, evenly distributed, among any of its fellow monsters that are wounded at the time (the unseen, "elsewhere" beasts are healed offstage, beyond the reach of even the most potent magical attacks). The onstage beast can't heal itself through the damage it inflicts. This repair extends to regeneration of completely destroyed body parts and elements so long as actual death hasn't occurred.

The Vauntagar magic prevents aging and inhibits disease and poisoning. The beasts in a cycle can only die violently and can't voluntarily leave the binding. The death of a cycle creature doesn't shatter a Vauntagar binding but shuffles the order in which the remaining beasts appear. (Some cycles are reported to include the slumped forms of decomposing or skeletal beasts, but the only account of a Vauntagar

entirely composed of various undead has been dismissed as a drunken minstrel's fabrication.) The adventurer Maurra Thorntyger of Athkatla escaped a Vauntagar in which she faced (in order) an ogre, a grell, a leopard, a gorgon, a tlincalli, a displacer beast, a giant bat, a chimera, and a leucrotta.

At least one Vauntagar guards each Deep Duskwood magical pool. Some sages speculate these beasts bathe in the waters to prolong the bindings. At least one binding (that includes an ogre mage) wanders the Duskwood freely, another (perhaps several) may be encountered in the depths of Undermountain, and they may also lurk in various ancient Netherese ruins.

Just what other secrets lie hidden in the depths of the Duskwood, beyond the perils of the Vauntagars, are the subject of many legends, all or none of which may be true. One speaks of a vein of emerald ore so rich that human-torso-sized lumps can be hewn away from the rock and carried off, and another whispers of an invisible tower where a wizard dwells. A third speaks of a sunken dell where a lich wanders the roofless, overgrown rooms of his once-grand mansion, compelling adventurers who reach his abode to go back into Faerûn under the goad of geas magics and perform tasks at his bidding—tasks intended to change who wears this crown or what road that realm pursues in the years ahead.

Whatever the truth of these tales, there is one cold truth about the Duskwood: it has claimed the lives of thousands of adventurers down the years and is still doing so today.

Emrys

Large town

This large, fortified town is sometimes called "the Throat of Talduth Vale" as it stands on the Sheep Road linking the Borders with the Shaar fringes that Vale farmers use as grazing land—and because it forms a bottleneck for travelers. The countryside around Emrys is typical of the upland Vale (the less lush, more rolling part of Talduth Vale that lies along the Landrise where the lower lands of the Border Kingdoms become the high plateau of the Shaar). Small farms that raise sheep and root crops are laid out in a crazy-quilt of wandering lanes and irregularly-shaped fields separated by high fieldstone walls, with thorn trees and a few felsul standing where walls meet.

Dominated by the massive and severe battlements of central Emrystarl's Keep, Emrys occupies a hill at the south end of cold, deep Emrysar Lake. Treacherous bogs drain into the lake from the north and stretch to the Dragonback, a long, sharp, distant ridge. Travelers going east or west must trek most of the way to Oeble to pass these natural barriers if they want to avoid Emrys. Most don't bother.

Taldans come to Emrys for protection in time of war (extensive underground caverns under Emrystarl's Keep contain armories and a stream of sweet water), for selling sheep and wool to outlanders in the Bawling Market (named for the din made by penned sheep), and for supplies; Emrys is Talduth Vale's main source of ironmongery, livestock feed, pottery, and large gear such as wagons. The town is prosperous. Well-stocked shops offer reasonable prices, and folk are always eager to buy.

What Meets the Eye in Emrys

Defended by two concentric walls, Emrys is only a little more than a mile in length and roughly half that in width, cloaking the slopes of the oval hill crowned by the keep. It is a crowded place of cobbled streets, no trees, and tall, narrow, steep-roofed shops with rental living-quarters rising four floors or more above the selling floors. Cellars below house "candle-shops" (small chambers where skilled workers repair or alter shoes, garments, or small items by candlelight). New wares are never sold in candleshops.

There are only two open spaces within the town walls: the Broad and the Bawling Market. The Broad, used for parking caravan-wagons and assembling their harness-teams, lies between the outer and inner town walls on the town's southeastern edge. The Market is the always-bustling local meeting place, a ragged oval perhaps a quarter of a mile long, bounded on the west by the frowning keep walls and on the east by the Church of All Souls, a temple of six sanctuaries open to all faiths (Chauntea, Lathander, Tempus, and Tymora predominate among Emryans).

Lodgings in Emrys tend to be noisy, cramped, and expensive. Stabling and even hitching fees are higher than accommodation, so many caravan merchants pay four to six silvers a wagon to camp in one of the nearby fields. From these, they trudge into town through one of three gates—the Vigilant Gate (on the south), Vale Gate (northeast), and Sundown Gate (west). A fourth gate, Sunshadow (on the southeast), was blocked up after folk took to arriving and departing from the Broad without stopping for inspection and taxation by the Eagles of Emrys. These town guards collect levies of one silver piece per handcart or "man-drag" litter, two silvers per palanquin or two-wheeled cart, and three silvers per wagon. Many visiting merchants still defiantly consider the Broad to be a "free merchant stand" territory where town laws can be ignored, but the Eagles (and their masters) disagree.

Emrystarl's Keep is an ancient, human-built fortress from the times of Glendarl, a sorcerous realm that preceded the yuan-ti rule of Sselempurrt, the dwarven and human trading post of Brokaun, and, most recently, the human land of Thuntar (now

flourishing far to the west, halfway across the Border Kingdoms).

No one now remembers who Emrystarl was, though folk share a vague impression of a mighty warrior who died in his keep old, well-respected, and undefeated—leaving behind, of course, a treasure hoard no one's ever found (yet). Tales are told of the old lord's phantom walking in the secret passages that honeycomb the keep walls ("By the Old Lord's Ghost" is a local oath), but greed-besotted adventurers are warned that (to the best of anyone's knowledge) every "secret" passage in the keep has been found and thoroughly explored. A silent apparition of a helmed, fully-armored warrior has been seen from time to time stalking the passages, and legends tell of its chilling, insistent touch awakening certain young men and maids and leading them to weapons, maps, or missions that need doing. Most Emryans, however, scoff at the notion that Emrystarl still walks among them.

Governance

Emrys is ruled by a council of six hereditary Grand Merchant Dukes and a citizen-elected Imperial Overduke. These counselors consider themselves the equals of the rulers of any great realm.

A flogging in the keep's cellar awaits any visitor who belittles the power or status of these seven rulers. They swagger about Emrys or the Vale within sight of the town daily (cynical Taldans say this is because their real power only extends as far as they can see from inside the town, and they know it). The Dukes want no one but themselves to have importance or influence in Emrys, so resident adventurers and prominent merchants are few. Emryan wizards and priests of any standing are unknown. In the daylit hours, there's always at least one Duke (or his personal equerry) on careful watch in the Broad for challenges to the dignity or authority of the Dukes or the law of Emrys.

Severe affronts against these sacred matters earn miscreants a body-brand in the shape of the symbol of the Emryan Dukes (a large gold coin surrounded by a circle of six smaller silver ones) and banishment from the town by being "flogged down the streets without delay." The goods and property of such offenders are forfeit to the "Ducal Hand." (In other words, the Dukes take it as their own and fight over the division behind closed doors.)

Many predecessors ago, the Dukes long ago seized the best houses in town for their own use. As real estate is in very short supply in Emrys, and therefore overpriced, the ability to hand out residences gives the Dukes real power. The Dukes, however, have arrived at some painfully blunt understandings with other powerful merchant families in town concerning the inadvisability of future seizures of properties belonging to said families. These days, the Dukes seldom move personally into any newly-seized building.

An exile who was forced out one gate doubled back into the city by another gate right after his flogging and poisoned all the bottles in the extensive cellars under what had been, until minutes before, his house. The poisoning caused terrific carnage among the ducal families and their allies and favorites. That and many traps built into residences (such as heavy furniture that crashes down to crush anyone sitting in the high seat at table, or using the high-poster master bed) caused enthusiasm on the part of the greedier Dukes for future acquisitions and house-movings to evaporate.

The office of Imperial Overduke was charged with giving all Emryans a say in government in order to prevent the hereditary Grand Merchant Dukes from becoming decadent tyrants. In practice, the elevated commoners (who serve a seven-year term) are quickly corrupted by the supposedly subservient Dukes. Those who can't be corrupted are kept senseless with drugged wine and then poisoned, if they prove particularly stubborn, principled, or power-hungry. The current Overduke, Urlingh Varrtro, is a retired Sheirtalan merchant who loves fine food and wine to a fault, enjoys tales of adventurers and their doings, and enriches himself with "insider information" investments in cities all over Faerûn.

The six families who supply Emrys with its hereditary Grand Merchant Dukes (and true rulers of the town) are the houses of Bulisstan, Dlanivaer, Klornu, Lylitrath, Orglast, and Relantovir.

Those Who Defy the Dukes

Despite all the local tales about the corruption, cruelty, and underhandedness of their rulers, most Emryans support the Dukes, crediting their energetic aggressiveness for giving Emrys a (little) international importance, and therefore trading prosperity. Other citizens keep their hatreds of the ducal rule well-hidden and obey the Dukes out of simple fear.

There are a few defiant exceptions, such as the Masked Ladies of the Bronzen Buckler and Butterfly dance and gambling club (whom the Dukes were bluntly told, a century back, to leave alone or face a general revolt of town merchants, and so content themselves with inspecting the club often and taxing it heavily).

A second is an underground group styling itself "the Riders of the Cracked Cauldron," alluding to the steaming cauldron badge of the onetime ruler of Emrys, the fat, jovial, High Councilor "Mother" Laddath Hambreth (who died in a Vale hovel after being exiled by the first Merchant Dukes some four hundred winters ago). The Riders play pranks on the Dukes and occasionally threaten something more dangerous. Once, the portcullis of the Vale Gate fell

on a horse and knight of the Ducal Bodyguard a bare armlength ahead of two mounted Dukes. Another time, a fire started in the Overduke's feasting hall, and fleeing guests discovered that a wagon just confiscated from a banished merchant was wedged into a bend in the stairs, blocking that way out. Certain outland merchants covertly support the efforts of the Riders in hopea of doing away with the present system of governance in Emrys.

There are also local legends of a masked bandit, Creeping Caladyn, who uses a bit of magic and an unmatched knowledge of the secret passages that "everyone knows" link many cellars and shops in hidden ways all over (or rather under) the town. This shadowy figure steals from the Dukes as ruthlessly and as often as they take from everyone else, and has been doing so for well over a century now, suggesting that a succession of miscreants have operated under this nickname.

From time to time, an exasperated visiting merchant or Taldan farmer from the outlying Vale growls that "the Dukes must go!" No one has yet mustered the necessary force. Would-be conquerors are warned that the Dukes are known to have effective spying and slaying magic items, and they have used them swiftly and mercilessly to quell two revolts and at least four external takeover attempts (that the town in general knows about).

The Dukes also have their private, personal bodyguards. Most of them are never without at least a dozen ready-for-battle fighters and thieves. Add to these their family retainers, house guards, and the Eagles to call upon whenever trouble erupts.

Emryan Attractions and Perils

Why travel to Emrys at all? It's a prosperous place where people are always eager to buy. The shops in town are judged by most wayfarers to be unusually well-stocked for so small a center, and to charge reasonable, though not bargain basement, rates. Like the folk who run them, few are superb or particularly memorable. This allows the wares of a good traveling merchant to shine, and business is usually brisk.

The exceptions to the mediocrity of local establishments are the Old Barrel Run tavern (Fair/Cheap), a dark cellar where locals like to drown their troubles in strong tankards of local brew, and visitors come in search of low-priced ale and relative anonymity when negotiating deals; and the aforementioned Bronzen Buckler and Butterfly dance and gambling club (popular neither for dancing nor gaming, but rather for the company of the Masked Ladies, who, as one outlander merchant put it, "make up for shortfalls in ambience with enthusiasm and a lively sense of fun"). The hushed, isolated stone cellars that make up the private chambers of the Old Butterfly are the best of the very few places in Emrys where business can be discussed in complete privacy. Nevertheless, patrons of the Butterfly are warned that the Dukes and their agents visit the place often, hoping to overhear things of interest. Delicate negotiations are best conducted at the back of a chamber with a Masked Lady singing a soft ballad between you and the firmly closed door.



The Eagles of Emrys

The town guard consists of hired, fairly competent outlander adventurers under the command of officers drawn from the families of the Grand Merchant Dukes. Their ranks, riddled with spies for the Dukes, are in a constant state of rivalry and intrigue engineered by the Dukes to keep the troops from becoming bored or uniting to overthrow the ducal rule. The Eagles patrol throughout Talduth Vale under orders to slay or drive out suspected wizards and priests of "any but trifling power," so no such persons are known to be resident in Emrys.

Over the past two centuries, local legend has always insisted that a mighty archmage dwells in hiding in Emrys, using the unwitting Dukes as a front—and propping up their rule against all serious challenges—to keep order in the town around his hideaway. According to these tales, this shadowy man (who must be undead by now, or if living has been supplanted by a younger apprentice) occasionally hurls world-rending magics at any wizard brash and capable enough to seriously challenge the Dukes. There have been confrontations between Dukes or their agents and traveling mages over the years, and the mages have mysteriously disappeared or moved on without the mayhem and carnage one might expect to befall. The ranks of the vanished are even said to include Zhentarim magelings and Red Wizards. Are they the origin of the phantom apparitions of floating, flying human skulls seen flitting above the Emrysar Bog some nights?

The mysteries at the heart of Emrys remain to be unraveled. Yet what might seem a simple thing for wayfaring heroes to untangle persists from year to year.

The badge of Emrys is the device of the symbol of the Emryan Dukes, a large gold coin surrounded by a circle of six smaller silver ones.

Estelker

Small Town

This market town in the Realm of the Smoking Star consists of modest wooden houses standing amid shady trees. It stretches along both sides of the coastal road that runs the length of the realm (which is typical of Starran settlements—it's been said the only difference between a Starran settled area and a "wild" area is that in settlements, tree branches don't meet over any road to roof it in a continuous canopy). Most cartographers copy larger, grander maps, and so perpetuate the omission of Estelker from their depicted views. On the map published in Power of Faerûn it stands on the road (dotted brown line) east of Ythtym, directly under the top curve of the capital "S" in the word "Smoking."

Cartographers trying to view the Border Kingdoms from aerial steeds or conveyances to check their maps can be forgiven for missing Estelker. Despite its local importance, it's largely hidden by the trees, except to travelers on the coastal road. The everpresent foliage and its coastal location makes it a damp, shady, often fog-shrouded and dripping place.

Almost all of Estelker's houses sport roadside stalls (counters with bench seats and awnings) where Stelkers sell forest herbs and roots they've gathered, live rabbits and crayfish caught locally, and rabbit pie. Folk from all over the realm come to Estelker and pay a few copper pieces or a silver piece for the use of a stall for a day to trade and sell smoked forest meat and fish from the Lake of Steam, medicines derived from sylvan substances, and clothes and furniture both newly made and no longer wanted.

Within the curve of the sharpest road bend in town, near the west end of Estelker and on the north or seaward side of the road, stands a rustic but well-run inn, the Haunted Harpy (Good/Cheap). Sellers who can't find stall space to rent usually pay the inn to set up in its stable yard.

Most Stelkers are carpenters and boatbuilders. Though the town sits on wooded cliffs well above the Lake of Steam, most folk who dwell on the north side of its lone road knock together small, poorly-made, open fishing boats and let them down the cliff on ropes to go fishing. They troll with long lines for whatever they can catch for their own tables, but their main effort is drag-netting for rocklhar, a large, speckled, gray, hard-armored crayfish that digs in the shallow, coastal mud of the Starran shore of the Lake of Steam. Rocklhar flesh has (in the words of one traveling Harper) a flavor "like old cheese." They are eaten locally with gusto—and various herb sauces.

Like all Starrans, Stelkers have minor aptitudes for magic. For example, one can conjure faerie fire in his or her palm and either carry it along or leave it stationary in the air where it first formed, whereas another might manage an outbound-only, six-words-maximum sending. They tend not to use or speak of these abilities around strangers.

Local legends say something of "great magical might" lies hidden in Estelker, perhaps behind a false wall or in a shallow cellar. Something so powerful that its emanations permeate everything in Estelker and everyone dwelling there, "twisting" them subtly so as to awaken abilities to influence the Weave ("steer" the areas of effect of spells cast by others, or other manifestations of magic).

The badge of Estelker (most often seen as low-to-the-ground blazes on forest trails, marking the "way back home" when ground fogs are thick) is a crab balanced atop a vertical (disembodied) human finger. The crab's two large claws curve out and around (in a horns-down crescent) to touch the finger on both sides.

Free Barony of Felshroun

Town

This independent town stands between Shandolphyn's Reach, the Realm of the Smoking Star, and the Barony of Blacksaddle, where roads from all three places meet. An important trading market and neutral ground meeting-place in the Borders (much visited by outlander traders), Felshroun is the center of a highly-regarded horsebreeding industry.

The surrounding horse farms (ranches) rear hardy, go-anywhere mounts (such as the Feathermane and the Dusky) that are larger than ponies but smaller than most riding horses, yet have the stamina and sure-footedness to carry saddle loads over rough terrain like the best mountain ponies. Word of these practical, rather plain horses is spreading in the Vilhon and Tashalar, and every year more buyers come to Felshroun to procure all the horses they can.

Ruled (very lightly) by an elected-for-a-decade Free Baron, Felshroun claims as its protectorate domain all land north of the Duskwood between Lammatar's Water and the West Dusking River. This pleasant, rolling meadowland is given over to horse farms, open pasture, small walled gardens, and coppices from which folk of the Free Barony cut their fence posts and rails. It holds few perils beyond a rare banshee or doppelganger.

The Free Baron

Since the founding of the barony, there have been nine Free Barons. Although certain Felshrounans have always suspected the Four Mages of subtly steering this or that baron (especially Baeroph Heglaern, the second baron, who had decidedly dishonest tendencies) into acting as they saw best, or directed unwitting Foresters into encounters with forces advancing to attack the town stealthily on their own terms, such meddling has never been proven.

The current Baron, a grim retired adventurer by the name of Jathralee Haernhand, a NG human female ranger who is gaunt, much-scarred, tall, ramrod-straight, and smiles very rarely) tries to avoid all contact with the "Unseen Friends" (as the Four Mages are called by Felshrounans, sometimes wryly or bitterly). She adjudicates crimes, trade disputes, and visitor and citizen complaints in the Hall of Domes at the center of town. The Hall of Domes has an armory and a dungeon, but the Free Baron much prefers to use its meeting rooms, dining lounges, and Hall of High State. Any visitor or citizen is entitled to bring complaints before the Baron or her three Knights of Justice (black-masked and robed judges appointed by the Baron, who at the moment happen to be two elderly Felshrounan matrons, shrewd and worldly-wise, and one irascible old male halfling rogue who was one of Jathralee's longtime adventuring companions in her Company of the Bared Blade). Fines, exile for a season or a decade, and "the tenday lockup" or "the month of rotting" (in a dungeon cell) are the usual punishments handed out. There's an emphasis on restitution to the victims of crimes and a "forgive but don't forget" attitude. Habitual criminals may find a watchful Forester or even one of the Baron's bodyguard at their elbows whenever they set foot out of their homes in Felshroun. ("There goes Aldhoun, with his tail wagging behind him" is a typical local comment on this sort of vigilant escort.) Disputes between merchants are more often settled by negotiations and the payment of damages than jailing. This tolerance, coupled with light taxation (10 gp/building owned/year, plus 1 sp/wagon owned/gate passage) long ago made Felshroun a popular "echo of Waterdeep."

The Foresters of Felshroun

Felshroun keeps order in its domain by means of the Foresters, highly skilled rangers who know and love the land they patrol. They dress informally in brown, green, and gray battle leathers adorned only with maroon sashes marked with their symbol: a watchful falcon's head, beak to the right, atop a bear pawprint, nails downward, all in silver except the falcon's eyeball, which is emerald green).

The Foresters do as much diligent planting, irrigation, and burning away of diseased plants and trees as they do drawing swords against miscreants. They ride the Free Barony in dozen-strong mounted patrols bolstered by priests of Chauntea and Mielikki. The patrol leader (a ranger of 8th or higher level) carries a silver hunting horn and wears a ring of shooting stars crafted so that its light power consists of a blinding burst of amber-hued fireworks that blossoms 200 feet into the air.

This fireburst or a ranger's horn call alerts local Watchers (usually tavernmasters or farmers) to light one of three beacons which are always ready to each Watcher. A lit beacon summons aid in the form of two dozen Foresters riding pegasi and accompanied by at least two battle-ready hired outlander mages. This backup force is stationed on Highgirt Hold (a grassy hill on the edge of the Duskwood). As a result, brigand and monster raids in the Free Barony are few and brief.

The Four Mages

The Free Barony of Felshroun was founded by its original Four Mages, who forged that rarest of things: an agreement among powerful wizards to dwell near each other in peace, without trying to control or watch over each other, trusting in common cause and skill to keep their shared demesne safe and in good order. The Mages founded the

offices of the Free Baron and the Foresters, then let both function unhampered by sorcerous meddling. They raised the wall around Felshroun and the towers at the four corners of that wall, one to be the abode of each Mage.

In the Spellplague, all Four Mages went mad and soon died thanks to wild magical miscastings or misadventure in their babbling delirium; the Four Mages now resident in Felshroun are newcomers who came to the barony from elsewhere seeking shelter from the world—as all four happen to be shy, reclusive students of magic, not power-hungry nor adventurous.

As their predecessors did, these new Four Mages keep to their towers, working on their magic, and are usually seen in public only at the festivals of Midsummer, Shieldmeet, Greengrass, and the Feast of the Founding (the fourth day of Ches, which marks the day they raised the town walls around what was then largely farm fields and announced their pact and the formation of the Free Barony). They prefer seclusion and magical study to statecraft or adventuring and take no apprentices.

The Four Mages of today, in order of decreasing amount of contact with the world outside their tower, are:

- **Ethantra Tarthsemmer,** a rail-thin woman of raven-black hair, sharp features, and piercing green eyes, who is most interested in crafting warding spells and fields that serve as alarms, barriers, and attacks. (9th-level LN human female spellcaster)
- **Jalavandra Harreth,** a brown-skinned, plump woman covered with tattooed sigils that each contain a stored emergency spell (casting one "burns" the tattoo out of her skin and costs her 1d4 + 1 hp) who has teeth filed to points, hair dyed tomato red, and brown eyes, and is a jovial person most interested in linking spells to other spells so that casting or "setting off" one triggers or readies or wakens another. (7th-level NG human femalespellcaster)
- **Ivander Varlwyvern,** a sallow-skinned, brown-haired and hazel-eyed short man with "dagger-board" sideburns and a sharply-pointed cleft chin, who always wears grandly-styled robes, and is short-tempered, irritable, wasp-tongued but timid; he's most interested in devising new versions of battle spells that offer increased precision in their effects, or can be sent at multiple targets, or that "look different" than most offensive spells and have a secondary effect that shields the caster, like a "smoke screen" or vision-distorting field. (6th-level CN human male spellcaster)
- **Beloume Dawnhond,** a sun elf afflicted by a bloating disease caused by a miscast protective magic reacting with her blood, that's made her body bulge grotesquely all over, each bulge growing many warts, all of which sprout silver-blue hair; she is sour and depressed by what she's become, and liable to lash out ruthlessly at those who ridicule, oppose, or threaten her; the rest of the time, she's obsessed with finding a cure for herself, and casts many experimental spells on her own body that often leave her racked with pain and her shape shifting involuntarily for short periods; music soothes her, and she loves to listen to or read poetry, and watch dancing. (8th-level CN sun elf female spellcaster)

What Meets the Eye in Felshroun

Felshroun is a town of walled gardens, tall houses, and narrow, winding, crowded streets.

It takes the shape of a large diamond with towers at each compass-point corner and gates in the center of each wall between. Each tower can be entered (by those on foot, in the conventional manner) only through a huge double door on the inside of the town walls, in the angle where two walls meet. Each swinging door of these entries is actually a stone golem, and the two golems grind open to reveal an iron inner door that is an iron golem. Beyond it is a gauntlet of traps and holding areas that vary from mage to mage but are known to include trained mimics, portcullises that fall in closely spaced grids to create pillar-like trap areas just large enough to encase an immobile standing man, and so on. Defenses are typically activated by any use of hostile or destructive magic, any attempt to dig, pry open, or shatter any part of the walls, floor, or ceiling near the doors, or whenever a scrying apprentice believes that visitors mean ill to those in the tower.

The northern turret is Lakelight Tower, and the gate on the northeastern wall is the Dusking Gate. The road out of it to the Duskfords is called Ralavar's Way.

The eastern tower is called the Sentinel. It commands an easterly view clear across the Waevendusk to the far banks.

The southeastern gate is Lambsgate, so called because it opens onto a meadow divided into paddocks where sheep are marshaled for market rather than emitting a road that goes anywhere.

The southern turret is named Watchwood Tower because it overlooks the Duskwood, and the southwestern gate is Burning Banner Gate thanks to a long-ago battle between competing mercenary bands which hoped to rule Felshroun (both came to bad ends, one at the hands of the other and the survivor at the hands of the Four Mages). The road out of it is Westwater Way, named for the ford over Lammatar's Water, where the road winds on its way southwest to Luthbaern and the Barony of Blacksaddle.

The town's western tower is Felshroun's Folly (or more often simply "the Folly"). The name comes from the grizzled old farmer whose lands these once were. He built a ramshackle wooden lookout tower on this spot just because he wanted to, only to see it fall down in high winds, several times, though he kept calmly rebuilding it. The gate in the northwestern wall is Reach Gate (so named because the Shore Road, which runs out of it, shortly enters the realm of Shandolphyn's Reach).

Inside the town walls is a cramped labyrinth of four- and five-floor houses, winding flagstone streets, little walled gardens with pump-wells and public benches, many cats wandering as public pets, and two focal areas: the central Hall of Domes (seat of the Free Baron) and Sevenways, where seven streets meet in a crazy conjunction of angled alleys.

The best and most popular tavern in Felshroun is the Moldy Cheese and Laughing Spoon (Good/Moderate), with the Rum Boot (Fair/Cheap) and Pinchbeck'sTankard (Poor/Cheap) as competition. The best inn is the Sunset Swan (Excellent/Expensive), but folk who feel uneasy in haughty luxury prefer the less formal the Gone Gallant (Good/Moderate), the more spartan BlackBoar's Eye (Fair/Cheap), or the down-and-dirty Dunselbow's House (Poor/Cheap).

There are also rooming houses (Mother Fustin's is unquestionably the best, thanks to its always-on-offer meat pie with sharp cheese, though "Mother" Fustin herself is long dead) and the Beardhouse, a warriors' hostel (bare bunk and outhouse for 1 cp/night), where gruff dwarves keep order and make sure there's no thievery from sleeping men.

In such a bustling town, shops and deals change with bewildering rapidity, but one superb establishment deserves lasting mention: the Rolling Gnome music shop on Baraedur Lane, where instruments, sheet music, and touchstones (small, smooth, hand-sized rocks enchanted to replay the same short tune whenever touched by a bare finger) are sold. The Gnome is now run by three female elves who live in the shop attic and sometimes make weird harp and flute music at night; all are Harpers and not-all-that-retired adventurers.

Fendle Street is the busiest street for small shops. Used goods and sundries are sold in profusion, and the aforementioned Moldy Cheese can be found, as well as several cheap "soup and frybun" eateries.

Lorndragon Lane is the haughtiest Felshrounan address, lined with gem shops with glittering windows, dealers of fine furnishings, high-coin scent shops, and brightcloak establishments (high fashion clothiers) that stand amid the many-balconied, arch-gated, high-walled mansions of the very wealthy.

Shuttle Street is a long and quiet way where wealthy and successful Felshrounans dwell who can't quite afford (or stomach) the glitter and hauteur of Lorndragon Lane. Up and down "the Shuttle," splendors give way to solid large stone homes surrounded by tiny walled gardens and small private stables "at the back."

Storrockh Street is where visitors and commoners can stable mounts or draft-beasts, coaches and horse-carts (suitably narrow for navigating the cramped town streets) can be rented or bought, and "strongshoulders" (loaders and moving men) can be hired by the day (typically 2 sp/head) or half-day (1 sp/head).

Houndworm Street (and, running off it, Sark Alley and Blackknife Lane) come to mind when Felshrounans think of "the seediest part of town." Brawls and muggings befall wanderers on dark nights, bodyguards and fast-dagger toughs can be hired, and the cheapest "alley-comfort" lasses offer their wares. Those contemplating mayhem are warned that maskfaced Foresters visit the Houndworm often, keeping watch for troublemakers. ("Maskfaced" refers to the Foresters using disguises or otherwise operating undercover, not to the wearing of actual masks.)

The Future of the Barony

Thanks to its trade-friendliness and its steady output of quality equine mounts, the Free Barony of Felshroun is one of the best-known Border locales among folk outside the Border Kingdoms. Minstrels sing of it often when performing the ballads "The Rider o'er the Moon" and "The Dryad and the Gargoyle." The Zhentarim has long been interested in seizing control of the barony, but is opposed by all of the other foremost factions (the Harpers, the Order of the Gauntlet, the Emerald Enclave, and the Lords' Alliance), all of whom have spies and agents in Felshroun.

Crowding within the town walls has been a problem now for nigh a century, and there are now clusters of hastily-erected, ramshackle timber homes outside the walls, along the roads leading out of each gate. By the Free Baron's decree, to cut down on drunken lawlessness and thievery, no inns or taverns can be run for a half day's-ride from the walls.

The arms of Felshroun are a watchful (glaring) silver falcon's head, beak to the right, on a round field of emerald green.

Gallard

Small Town

This walled settlement was once the capitol of the now-fallen Land of Two Princes. Now reduced in populace and reach, it remains home to many locksmiths, pewtersmiths, tinsmiths, potters, enamellers, bootmakers, leatherworkers, and smallsmiths (makers of such things as hinges, wirework, fastenings, corner-caps for chests and coffers, and edgings for doors, panels, and slots). It's a hive of skilled

craftworkers and close-guarded wealth, one of the busiest and most prosperous places in all the Borders, but also one of the most grasping and grubby ("like a Sword Coast seaport," according to Borderers who aren't its friends; Gallard is accurately described as "unlovely" by many). Galardians have earned the general dislike of Borderers for being too unfriendly, self-important, and "sharp" in their dealings. They tend to be hard workers and "always in a hurry." Gallard is a place of bustling commerce, not a romantic backwater of bucolic beauty. In the words of one Galardian, "Gallard's necessary—like a privy or rubbish-heap."

Galardian merchants usually go about accompanied by at least one personal bodyguard and an amanuensis (clerk, scribe, and bookkeeper). Most hire at least three "trustyblades" to guard their home and family when they're at work, and their workplace when they're at home. This vigilance is the result of a long history of nomad and brigand raids out of the Shaar, but these days it is more a matter of custom and status rather than vital to daily survival.

Gallard is a place of winding cobbled streets and mud-and-gravel alleys. Its timbered houses are narrow, steep-roofed, and close-crowded. They rise four or five floors above street level, typically having storage cellars and kitchens below, and a rear chimney flanked by a dumbwaiter and a shaft that serves to drop laundry and refuse to lower levels. Kitchen smells and kitchen warmth waft up these chimneys into any upper room where a metal "shaft screen" stands open.



Firesword Houses

Visitors will search Gallard in vain for grand palaces, manors, or civic buildings. Business is conducted in shops or at Galardian "firesword houses"—numerous establishments (slightly more than three dozen, in all) named for skewers of meat constantly sizzling over cooking fires lit in round brick-and-stone hearths situated in the centers of their dining chambers. The skewers bear roast fowl, sausages, hams, and diced meats. Spiced fried onions and cheeses melted over slabs of bread are customary side-dishes. These (plus savory meat-and-sauce pies whose recipes are closely guarded secrets and a source of competitive pride from house to house) can be had by any diner, typically for 1 sp for a heaping plateful, along with pickles, pickled fish, and a "mint mix" of diced radishes, parsnips, and carrots, a plate of hot bread, and much drink (which costs extra) to wash it all down. Drinks include ale, zzar, "smokespiced" ciders, teas, and wines sold by the tallglass or tankard.

Galardians use firesword houses as meeting-places to transact business, as well as day-and-night-long sources of ready meals. In the better houses, patrons can rent private rooms, or at least curtained booths, plus minstrels to make noise or "fenders" (guards who make sure no one slips close enough to listen to sensitive negotiations). Sleeping accommodations aren't available at such establishments (officially, at least, though it's said one can hire both a bed and someone to share it at certain houses), and they don't deal in stabling or safe storage. The largest houses (for steep fees, and with little price competition among them) will deliver hot food to visitors camped outside the town walls.

The best-known firesword houses in town are the Risen Dragon Finest Fireswords on Ovirstreen Street, the Black Buck on Telsusk Lane, and Oster's Manyfires on Durdarl Street. The Scowling Tankard (Lurusk Lane) is generally held to be the best place to hire folk for shady dealings.

The Council

The closest thing in Gallard to a seat of government is the Risen Dragon Finest Fireswords, as for years it was owned and run by the head of the Galardian Council of Bodyguards and Trustyblades. This organization still licenses every town resident who customarily bears a weapon outside his or her own home. Visitors and citizens "come Updragon" (to the Risen Dragon) to pay their sword taxes, hear Council justice, and hire bodyguards or trustyblades (or rather, to register such hirings with the Council; actual negotiations are typically conducted elsewhere beforehand, though most visitors to Gallard come to Hithtor to swiftly and easily find protection for hire).

The Council keeps the peace in Gallard by enforcing the laws it passes and sending out street patrols of at least a dozen "Watchful Helms." The Helms are senior Council members (veteran fighters) who anticipate traps well, laugh at attempted bribes, and wield blades and fire crossbow bolts dipped in blue whinnis poison. (They dismiss bribes with scornful amusement rather than anger or attempts to arrest, as bribery isn't actually against the law in Gallard, and because Council members are very well off and will do nothing to endanger their standing, with its ready access to means of getting ever richer.) Though there's also no law against being on a rooftop, Helms will loose bolts at anyone they see on a roof after dark or fleeing; only building owners and roofers known to them can expect to pass unchallenged.

Council laws include "no sale of tainted or deceitful goods, no sale or possession of poison, no extortion, no attacking rivals or their goods or premises, no theft, and no murder." Penalties include stiff fines, property confiscation, and "being under the Ban" (exile).

Mercenary companies aren't allowed to operate in Gallard, but several local "sternshields" (weapons-trainers and stalwart Council members) equip and train warriors in town. It is rare for any sternshield to have more than a score of trainees at a time, and to have more than 40 badged (to bear arms in the streets, they must wear the badge of the sternshield training them) and active without voted Council permission is grounds for dismissal from the Council. Trainees who depart or go missing without turning in their badges are usually denounced by their trainer and are considered outlaws in Gallard from that moment on.

Streets, Inns, and Taverns

Few streets in Gallard are named, but the four major ones are:

- Sellserpent Street, which runs on a fairly straight course southwest to northeast from town gate to town gate;
- Rithtor Street, which wiggles southeast to northwest from gate to gate, so that it and Sellserpent form a giant "X" and link up all four gates in the town wall;
- Orlyn's Way, running in a giant circle all around the inside of the town wall, and so meeting with most streets;
- Ovirstreen Street runs east to west clear across town, just north of the meeting of Sellserpent and Rithtor, to enclose a central triangle that holds Gallard's most important and luxurious inns, the Proud Phantom (Good/Expensive) to the west and Sharyn's Smiling Sphinx (Excellent/Expensive) on the east.

Between the Phantom and the Sphinx stands the Tarrasque at Twilight, a pretentious, dimly-lit, cavernous tavern that boasts dancers and minstrels day and night in "grotto" rooms (Good/Expensive). (That is, rooms sculpted to look like caverns that have lots of handy seating and smoothly undulating stone "couches," among a minimum of dangerously-placed stalactites and stalagmites.) Its bouncers wear fanciful tarrasque masks and are rumored to include several real drow and a doppelganger who can impersonate guests who've gone "missing."

More typical of the run-down, cramped taverns of Gallard is the Blade and Bucket (Fair/Cheap) on Mysker Street (just east off Rithtor, one street north of Orlyn's Way), where pipesmoke and the steam of fried fish sandwiches mingle in a crowded, dimly-lit labyrinth of pillars and tables.

Outlying Sites

Its detractors sometimes call Gallard "Dungstink Sty" because of two sites that lie to southwest and southeast of the walls, within sight of anyone atop the walls.

- **Shaarsar,** to the southeast, is a large, muddy market where farmers bring cattle for slaughter and transformation into hides for tanners and the spicy "trailmeat" known to many wayfarers and caravan-guards. Its pens, paddocks, and slaughter-chutes tend to be crowded day and night except in winter and spring. They form a confusing maze for visitors or anyone else trying to traverse Shaarsar in a hurry. Helms don't patrol Shaarsar, where the keeping of law and order is left to drovers' fists, and the hurled cleavers of butchers, who tend to be a law unto themselves.
- **Ong's Batar,** to the southwest, is a reeking cluster of tanneries that service the ever-busy Galardian craftworkers. The Helms don't patrol in Ong's Batar, either (and the Council refuses to have anything to do with events there). No one keeps order in the Batar, though troublemakers are often found drowned in the flesh-melting tanning vats (the tanners, of course, deny having any idea how victims got there). "Ong" was Ongalar, the long-dead, mountainously tall and fat tanner from "far eastern lands" who built the first tannery here. A "batar" is what he called his tannery (this term for such establishments is still used in Murghom and Semphar). Blackmeir's is the largest "hide house" where visitors can buy finished hides in the Batar. The Blackmeir family have always sponsored several bands of adventurers at once to guard them and their premises, do "dirtywork" for them, and protect their investments all across Faerûn.
- **Zarnmoot.** South of the road linking Shaarsar and Ong's Batar lies an everchanging chaos of

encamped caravans and horse dealers. Mounts stolen anywhere in the Borders may appear for sale in this "Zarnmoot" with astonishing speed. From time to time doppelgangers are discovered here lurking in horse shape, hoping to be sold to lone travelers they can devour when their new owners fall asleep. Wandering traders often tell folk to seek out "Marl" in Zarnmoot if they want good bargains in horseflesh, but (as Galardians know) "Marl" is a pseudonym used by at least six dealers who often trade at Zarnmoot.

The arms of Gallard (seen on its black, metal-sheathed city gates) are a side-on steel-gray anvil, tongue to the viewer's left, below which is a column of three featureless coins (gold uppermost, silver in the center, and copper lowest) above a black cauldron at the bottom, all on a light, dun-hued shield.

The Grand Duchy of Shantal

Realm

Some folk call Shantal "the heart of the Border Kingdoms," not just because it's centrally located in the tamer western half of the Borders, but because it's almost stereotypical of these realms; it has bucolic beauty, eccentric rulership, and lurking danger.

The Grand Duchy today is a broad, tranquil-seeming valley of gently rolling farmland studded with woodlots, flanked to east and west by lightly wooded hills, and crisscrossed by winding lanes. At its center rise the triple-spired Duchal Towers, surrounded by a neat ring of cottages; the village of Shantal. These in turn are encircled by a road, beyond which lie long, narrow vegetable gardens that end in orchards, one for each cottage, radiating outward like the spokes of a wagonwheel.

The Vigilant Bailiffs

The Grand Duchy of Shantal is a curiously neat and ordered settlement for the Border Kingdoms, and the impression of alert, tidy authority is further enhanced by the everpresent Grand Patrols of Vigilant Bailiffs, dozen-strong mounted groups of capable-looking warriors who know the ground and work well together in chases, captures, and battle. The Bailiffs are capable fighters armed with crossbows, swords, javelins, and weighted throwing nets. They wear chainmail beneath black surcoats emblazoned with the badge of the duchy: an emerald green Kaudraun (human left hand, palm toward viewer, shown from the wrist up; fingers spread and wavering into tongues of flame; thumb tapering into a zig-zag lightning bolt).

The Vigilant Bailiffs dominate the roads of the duchy. They are empowered to defend Shantal's peace with lethal force but are more sternly tolerant than ruthless or zealous. Bribery drives them to quiet fury, and they are never careless, bored, or inattentive. Visiting mages are closely escorted by Bailiffs at all times while in the Duchy. The Bailiffs won't hesitate to summon reinforcements (more Grand Patrols and certain beasts) by horn if faced with magical or formidable foes, such as adventurers of obvious battle-skill.

Local Goods

Shantan farmers keep livestock, grow vegetables, and sell (to way-merchants and passing travelers) smoky-flavored, dark beer known as "Old Oakey" after the casks it's stored in (hand keg, 10 cp; cask, 4 sp; barrel, 1 gp; and butt, 3 gp; not shipped in tuns). They also deal in sausage, hams, and Shantan Slice, a sharp-flavored, red cheese that sells in 10-lb. wheels for 5 sp. Most Shantans sell from covered carts at their gates, or the traveler can stop at the Roping Post and choose from a wide selection of local produce.

What Greets Travelers in Shantal

Almost any visitor can't help but notice at least three things while in Shantal: visiting mages are watched very closely at all times; there don't seem to be many priests or mages about; and almost all of the villagers are well-armed and look like retired warriors. This is all because most Shantans are well-armed former warriors who are glad to dwell in a place free of hostile magic and those who wield it. Most are self-sufficient farmers and craftworkers producing such things as helms, shields, and bracers of their own design ('Shantan-make' gear tends to be non-reflective, rust-resistant, and fitted with handy dagger sheaths and coin pouches). Most of these veterans also volunteer for occasional duty as Vigilant Bailiffs.

The lack of resident priests is an impression rather than truth; a handful of Tempuran priests who call themselves the Battleforges of Tempus dwell in the Duchal Towers. From there, they minister to the spiritual and healing needs of the Vigilant Bailiffs, the Grand Duke, and any visiting warriors who worship the Lord of Battles. They are allowed to function in this manner in return for their vow never to contest the Grand Duke's authority or that of his Bailiffs, and never to attempt to reach the Daerndar (caverns under the Towers) or aid any mage who does so.

Amenities also seem scarce in Shantal. There's only one well-stocked store: The Roping Post, a cluttered barn across the road from the main gates of the Duchal Towers. It's crammed with old and new hardware, ironmongery, ropes, earthenware,

and all manner of flashy peddlers' wares, as well as outright junk.

Beside the Post stands Shantal's lone combined inn and tavern, the Grand Duke's Griffon (Good/Cheap), a typically dingy, old roadhouse run by two large gnome families, the Haerhogaunts and the Talthwishes, who are all quick, quiet, and ever-bustling. The Talthwishes sell a small but good array of long-lasting dyes for hair, skin, and clothing, sold in head-sized earthen pots for 2 sp each. The Griffon was named for an irascible, long-dead, winged steed of the first Grand Duke. Visitors are warned not to step on, capture, or torment any of the pet toads that hop through the establishment; they're apt to be mages transformed by Flyndara or the Daerndar and can be a mite irascible themselves.

The History of Shantal

The Grand Duchy was founded at the end of the 1200s DR by Pelindar Slendyn, the last surviving warrior-servant of the archmage known as the Arcanauh (after a duel that destroyed the Arcanauh, his Red Tower, and his onetime consort-turned-bitter-foe, the Thayan sorceress Ithcatra Llumen). Present-day Shantal stands on the site of the Red Tower, which was reduced to rubble in the battle.

Pelindar forbade the use of magic in Shantal, as did his son Thaerin, the second Grand Duke. Almost continuous incursions by Daerndar-seekers made necessary the establishment of an Official Mage early in the reign of the third Grand Duke, Orsarr Slendyn. That mage, the notorious "madwoman" Flyndara Rildar, vanished in the onset of the Spellplague and is presumed dead, though there are local rumors that she escaped onto another plane of existence (planewalking being something she was said to do often). The Grand Duke disappeared at the same time, and inevitably tales arose that they escaped together, or she kidnapped him and took him to another plane, or they met with some disaster and died together. All that's certain is that neither has been seen in Shantal since the late spring of 1385 DR, and their bodies have never been found.

For almost twenty years after Slendyn's disappearance, the Grand Duchy went without a ruler, and no mages intruded on Shantal (presumably for fear Flyndara was lurking, and what she might do; she'd previously blasted many intruding mages to dust, including such formidables as a Red Wizard of They, an elder Halruaan archmagi, and a battle-hardened Zhentarim). Then began a long series of adventurers arriving, declaring themselves Grand Duke, trying to give orders to the Battleforges (and being rebuffed or ignored) and to Shantans (and being obeyed only when threats or outright coercion were used to bolster their commands), and then being killed either by Battleforges or Shantans, or by the next would-be Grand Duke.

There have been twoscore-and-two Grand Dukes since Slendyn—and the Grand Duchy is now without one again. It has lacked an Official Mage or any resident wizard at all after Flyndara. One of the reasons Shantal is attractive to mages are the many tales of powerful items acquired and wielded by Flyndara that may still lie hidden in the Grand Duchy, and one of the reasons many shun it are the "wild" wards of the duchy—magical fields damaged in the Spellplague, that affect Shantal in dangerous and sometimes unpredictable ways.

Wards of the Duchy

Shantal is protected by strong, mythal-like wards that absorb all natural and magical lightning and electrical discharges and all magical fire, and prevent the following magics from functioning: web and all hold and invisibility spells (ongoing effects are forcibly negated in the village of Shantal (and the Daerndar), as bordered by the surrounding ring road. The wards also prevent teleportation, dimension door, and all similar translocation magics from operating within, into, or out of their area of effect. They may randomly twist the effects of other spells



(into something else entirely), boost their extent and force (damage), or minimize them to mere harmless visual discharges of magic (showers of varicolored sparks, or brief rainbow-hued swirlings in the air). (Elminster has hinted that Chosen of Mystra and other accomplished masters of Weave manipulation can influence the wards to prevent their negations). Within the Duchal Towers, the wards also negate all cold-based magic, and all shapechanging beings (such as lycanthropes and doppelgangers) are forced through a slow, continual cycle of all of the shapes they customarily employ. Outside the ring road, the invisible edges of the wards shift, seemingly at random, here and there among the outlying farms of the duchy. (Elminster has confirmed that the wards persisted through the ravages of the Spellplague, and survive today, because they're powered by some locally-hidden and truly mighty artifact.)

The Daerndar

The Daerndar, or "Heart of Spells," is a series of dry, natural caverns that once underlay the Red Tower (before its destruction in a magical explosion). They are under the Duchal Towers now. Some say they drove Flyndara mad—and indisputably they are the reason so many wandering mages show up in the Grand Duchy, "nosing around" (as Shantans say) in attempts to find a way down into the Daerndar.

Such reckless fools have a lot of digging to do. There's said to be a single, secret way down into the Daerndar—a flooded tunnel a swimmer must know well, or perish in dead-end side passages—that descends from somewhere in the Official Mage's tower (from under Flyndara's bed, local legend insists, but this may be no more than a long-ago tale-teller's embellishment that's gained credence through constant retelling over the years). On at least one occasion, thieves discovered secret passages in the Duchal Towers connecting with the route Flyndara controlled, and visited the Daerndar on the sly.

Daerndar Effects

d10	Daerndar Effect
1	*Teleport* on a single, randomly-chosen being. This spontaneous expulsion is a one-way trip out of the caverns to 10 feet above the nearest roof, tree, or patch of ground at some random spot in Shantal. The affected being appears in midair, stripped of all clothing, gear, and items, all of which remain behind in the caverns. Villagers tend not to be sympathetic to such arrivals, though they won't be actively hostile unless attacked. They direct naked adventurers to the Battleforges, who tend to be either hostile or to demand services in return for their aid. Mages who attempt their own *teleport* spells in the Daerndar are warned that the usual result is that a random species of monster is teleported into the caverns, to attack the caster. On rare occasions, the mage and another being anywhere in Faerûn (of the same race but having extreme youth, a different gender, and a complete inability to cast spells) instantly exchange bodies. *Teleport* spells cast in the village of Shantal are wasted, having no effect at all.
2	A single, unseen blow is delivered to one random being, equal in effect to one strike of a clenched fist *Bigby's hand*.
3	A *prismatic spray* (or a *wand of wonder* effect) erupts from a random point and in a random direction.
4	*Polymorph* effects are visited on 1d3 random, nearby beings, changing them into other lifeforms (usually giant crabs, camels, boars, large but soft and helpless dew-worms, giant toads, or various sorts of vines and creepers). This change lasts for random periods of time (rarely exceeding an hour), after which harmless reversion to the former shape takes place. The transformation itself never does the polymorphed creatures any harm, and the change is never into a "fatal" form (one that can't live in the Daerndar, such as water-breathing aquatic forms).
5	4d4 chaotically swarming bolts of energy manifest and hurtle aimlessly in all directions, changing their trajectories often and at random. To avoid the bolts before they strike the rock walls of the Daerndarll, all creatures within 200 feet must succeed on three DC 15 Dexterity saving throws. Each failure means that one bolt has struck, inflicting 1d4 + 1 hp damage each.
6	*Chain lightning* (9d6 damage to primary target; the last "jump" ends in a 4d6 *fireball* instead of a lightning strike).
7	*Reverse gravity* (in three random, spot locations within the same cave as the triggering magic). The Daerndar caverns average about 60 feet from floor to ceiling—40 feet in low spots and 80 in the highest.
8	A *flame strike* hits a random spot, dying down into a *flaming sphere* that rolls away in a random direction, then dissipates after 1d3 + 1 rounds. Anyone hit by the flame strike suffers no extra damage from its formation around them.
9	A *cone of cold* erupts from a random point source and in a random direction.
10	A *blade barrier* comes into existence, centered on where the triggering magic was cast or in a random locale. It lasts for 3d4 rounds before silently fading away.

When the few survivors emerged and told their tales, Flyndara (who could ignore the restrictions of the ward she created—or modified; the tales differ) teleported slaying monsters after them.

The Daerndar draw many mages to Shantal because they're full of magical radiations strong enough to recharge most magic items, if one knows the proper spells to focus and infuse. Elminster has described one ritual that caused a wand of magic missiles to gain more charges than such an item can normally hold, but warned that most uses of the radiation gain far more modest benefits. Rods and staves, for example, seem to require a spell per charge gained. (Those who don't know the right magic should beware, as most spell use in the Daerndar causes chain-reaction outbursts of wild magic!)

Twice the Grand Duke granted permission for travelers to try to recharge items in the caverns. Both attempts were made under Flyndara's watchful eye and were partial successes. Some items benefited while others gained no charges or became unstable, their discharges occasionally generating wild magic effects.

Years ago, the Arcanauh accidentally broke into these caverns while expanding his cellars and thereafter used them for storage, spellcasting experiments, and to hide his strongest magics. The explosion that destroyed him and his artifacts imbued the caves with strong magical radiation—fed, some say, by the continuing discharges from ruptured artifacts whose magic has been twisted horribly awry. These radiations block all translocation, scrying, and astral and ethereal spells and spell-like powers. So far as is known, no being can use magical means to journey into or out of the Daerndar.

Blue-green, glowing mists now drift endlessly through the caverns. Within them lurk at least three beholder zombies the Vigilant Bailiffs can somehow summon right across the duchy to fight for them. (This summoning uses command words that compel the obedience of either one or all of the beholder zombies and causes the wards to teleport them, within the wards only, from their present location to right beside whoever uttered the command word.)

Only a few spells, known only to Flyndara and Elminster, can safely be cast in the caverns. All other spells and item discharges cause outbursts of wild magic (see the Daerndar Effects table). Occasionally, violent spell storms arise spontaneously and tear through the Daerndar, involving explosions, raging lightning, and magic that polymorphs only parts of a creature's body. Spellcasters exposed to a storm must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw every round or be feebleminded.

In storm-free times, Daerndar magic teleports bewildered and usually belligerent monsters into the caverns from various unknown, remote locations. In descending order of how often they appear, these creatures include trolls, minotaurs, mimics, ettins, gibbering mouthers, and ropers appear most often.

All magic items brought into the Daerndar float freely (drifting about gently—or hurtling violently if a spell storm erupts) if released and not tethered. The mists generate multiple (usually six or seven) 'ghost images' of any magic item, moving independently, but otherwise akin to the effects of a mirror image spell. Touching a false image will reveal that it isn't solid, but won't make it vanish.

The Daerndar walls seem to move from time to time, changing the shape of the caverns and, in at least one case, crushing a hapless wizard to pulp between closing walls. The caverns have claimed the lives of over forty adventurers during the past decade.

The Green Road

This three-coaches-broad highway runs between Bloutar (in the Barony of Blacksaddle) and the independent trading-town of Oeble (which straddles the River Scelptar). Wagons, horses, and the feet of travelers pound its earth into a hard-packed surface atop gravel and a bed of logs. It is well-drained thanks to the deep ditches flanking it on both sides. The road gets its name from the hue of creeping crushgrass that carpets it, seeming to thrive on the hard and constant travel and keeping the road from eroding.

The road is one of the busiest in the Border Kingdoms and one of the best roads anywhere in the Realms, with few steep slopes, no sharp bends, and no good ambush sites. Diverse local adventuring bands patrol it, making sure brigands, horse thieves, and wagon plunderers never settle in to ply their trades. Travelers who can afford an armed escort, including all caravans transporting valuable goods, also hire adventuring bands to accompany them, which makes the route far too risky for open brigandry.

The Green Road was begun in the 1290s DR when the legendary wagon-merchant Ormurr of Oeble hit upon a scheme of benefiting from debtors who couldn't pay. Using hired adventurers (usually the long-ago-disbanded Company of the Galwyvern) to enforce his authority, anyone who owed Ormurr money was forced to work at maintaining and improving the road. Ormurr judged his creditors' work at fair coin, and rose greatly in public regard for the continual widening and improvement of the road. Many local families now claim with pride that a coin-poor ancestor "contributed to" the road. (Ormurr, of course, has been dead for decades, his extremely successful coster and great wealth broken up and largely lost by many offspring and former employees.)

The Green Road runs for more than sixty miles, largely skirting the green and mysterious land of Owlhold. An eastward-faring traveler on the road, departing Oeble and bound for Bloutar, would encounter the following features.

Myrax Ford

Myrax Ford (pronounced "MY-racks") is a shallow, always-safe ford over tiny Arhallow Stream, about eleven miles out from Oeble. It is named for a dwarf who died heroically here long ago, single-handedly fighting hobgoblins to allow his friends and family time to escape. No trace remains of the much later wooden manor of Arhallow, named after its owner, a retired adventurer who settled here but was coaxed out on "one last foray" by adventuring colleagues; an adventure from which he never returned.

The stream rises in woods, is cold and sweetly drinkable, and runs some miles to end in a bog. From time to time, monsters lair in the thickets around the bog but seldom last long if they challenge travelers camped just south of the ford in three overgrown, onetime manor fields.

Tallcandle Inn

Crowning a hill beside the road about twenty-six miles from Oeble, this old, continually-rebuilt and expanded hostelry is named for a distinctive stone pinnacle that marks its front gates—a sixty-foot-high natural shaft of weathered stone jutting into the sky beside the road, leaning a little to the southeast. Large lanterns hang on chains from the Tallcandle and are lit every night to provide a beacon for travelers. The Tallcandle is the usual first-night stopover for fast-moving travelers heading out from Oeble.

A rambling, single-story structure of fieldstone below and timber above, the Tallcandle is laid out in long halls flanked by guest-rooms that, at irregular intervals and directions, extend short, spider-like "legs" (added-on niches, closets, sitting areas, and entire rooms). It's surrounded by a smokehouse, wagon repair shed, and extensive paddocks for caravans to camp in, all of which entirely cover its hilltop. The inn stands where it does because of the deep, cold-water well in its kitchen, which has never run dry.

The inn has low rates (Good/Cheap) for stabling and wagon-parking (1 cp/night/mount or wagon). Rates for accommodation are reasonable (2 cp/night/bed in a common chamber with four beds and shared tables, wardrobes, and chamberpots, or 1 sp/night for a private room, which is a small cubicle almost entirely filled with a bed that can just sleep two adult humans if they're on intimate terms, plus a chamberpot and lots of wall pegs for clothing). Basic meals (a hearty serving of soup, stew, or a "frymeat" of diced meat and vegetables, fried in various herb sauces, plus free bread and as much mintwater as desired) are 3 cp, but charges are steeper for "full roast platters" (2 sp). Alcoholic drinks cost 1 sp/flagon (to discourage drunken rowdiness).

The Tallcandle has a reputation for being safe and clean, thanks to the worldly-wise (and armed) vigilance of the all-female (human and half-elven) staff, who've inherited half a dozen flying snakes as spies, errand- and message-runners, and fighting companions; they are the descendants of a mated pair that were pets of a past Master of Tallcandle, the long-dead Dantar Brothorr. The inn enjoys its "safe refuge" reputation despite serving as the temporary home for some decidedly ready-for-trouble guests; half-orcs and even drow have traditionally been tolerated.

Skulls Hollow

One of the few "wiggles" in the Green Road is a great sinkhole known as Skulls Hollow, about twenty-eight miles out from Oeble. A lightly-wooded, pleasant place of many ferns, mosses, and edible forest shrubs, it also hosts an eerie apparition by night: seven glowing, bobbing human skulls that rise up from the earth to whisper cryptic warnings and phrases to all living creatures who approach them. People have reported being told such things as:

- Beware the six-blades man, for he knows the dire spell!
- There were three crowns; one is now claimed, one is broken, and if you take the third, they will hunt you!
- Tell the wizard that his chained queen awakens, and it is time for him to flee!

The glowing, flying human skulls are intangible phantoms. If they move through anyone, that being



receives a vivid vision (never forgotten) of some place or exciting incident in the life of the undead when it was a living human. Each contact between a skull and a living person yields a different image. Such contact does no apparent harm to the living or the skulls, though the skulls seem to avoid most contacts. Casting any sort of spell on a skull will cause it to sink into the ground, and it will not reappear that night, but it seems impossible to destroy the skulls. They are not associated with any buried remains that diggers have been able to unearth.

Tales told in Owlhold claim correctly that the Hollow formed when part of a small, ancient, subterranean city or stronghold, not very far beneath the surface, collapsed into itself. That cavern-fall created the current bowl-shaped depression on the surface (though it's large enough that its precise shape is hard to discern). The underground remainders of the collapsed passages served as the lair of bugbears for years, but who constructed them originally is unknown. Legend insists they are crowded with old treasures that the bugbears largely ignored. Other legends say the skulls are the harmless, intangible, undead remnants of adventurers killed in the cavern-fall while battling the bugbears, and whose spells may even have caused the collapse.

The Four Stags

This bustling establishment (Good/Expensive) stands just east of "halfway along" the Green Road (about thirty-six miles out from Oeble) at its moot with the Bowshot (a winding, far-more-perilous road that runs deep into Owlhold, where it meets the trade road known as the Longcrag Ride). The Stags is where many Owlen come to trade with way-merchants, hire guards or agents or a night's companionship, and meet outlanders. (For more, see "The Bowshot" entry.)

Dragontail Lake

About fifty miles along the Green Road from Oeble (and just under fourteen miles outbound from Bloutar, for travelers heading west), the highway curves gently around a small, placid, spring-fed lake that lies only a few strides south of the road. There's room to camp on its grassy shores (in a long roadside strip rather than any large field), and many travelers do, for the lake holds abundant fish (but never, local lore insists, anything larger and nastier).

The lake is named for a long-ago aerial battle above it between two young dragons, wherein one wyrm had its tail bitten off; the severed tail fell into the lake. Although many similar tales are told of various locales across the Realms, this one is true. Only a few sages know a more impressive truth about the lake: that in its shallow depths lies the overgrown, encrusted skeleton of a black dragon that perished of natural causes long, long ago when the lake was a hillock in a swamp. Presumably the dragon's hoard still lies beneath it.

The Green Road remains a busy route. By day, in dry summer weather, it's unusual to be traveling on it and not have other wayfarers in view both before and behind, traveling in both directions. Much of Bloutar's past prosperity (and not a little of Oeble's, too) can be explained by the presence and condition of this relatively safe, wide, ever-more-heavily-traveled highway.

Hawkgarth, the Wood of Many Monsters

Realm

Named for the now-dead pirate and soldier-of-fortune who founded it, Hawkgarth was long known as "the Wood of Many Monsters." Fighting men who loved to hunt beasts visited it by the score to battle "the last" (or so it was said) giant owlbears, giant stags, "greater" perytons, and other rare and deadly predators; monsters that dwelt in Hawkgarth thanks to an earlier resident wizard, Histokle Rireetha. He's aid by some to be a refugee from ancient Netheril, while others claim he still survives, hiding in Hawkgarth as a demi-lich. Histokle assembled many monsters to prowl as guardians around his floating manor house, and bred minor beasts in profusion so his guardians would have plentiful food and little inclination to wander elsewhere.

Today, the grave of Hawkgarth is a grassy barrow, almost all of the wild woods and monsters are gone, and Histokle's manor house is an open-roofed, ruined shell floating in the air fifty feet above Floating Shadow Bog. It still attracts adventurers and sages, for its fading magics bring forth illusions of beings who cast spells therein ages ago and creatures brought forth by Histokle's arts. Such silent visions are especially numerous by moonlight, which is also when the vampires that lurk around the floating manor like to hunt. Yet many adventurers brave the perils of the ruined manor when the moon is high, because the entrance to Histokle's hidden lair is reputed to be through a "moon-gate," a magical portal visible and useable only when moonlight shines on a certain, secret spot in the ruins.

Histokle's Lair

Histokle's lair is a labyrinth of rooms containing guardian monsters (such as bone nagas, cloakers, giant scorpions, and monster zombies); treasure (its stone pillars, in particular, are said to hide many storage niches behind their curving stones containing wands, rare and strange potions, and spellbooks); a large, metal automaton (abilities and means of controlling unknown; it attacks intruders who "do the wrong things" in the chamber in which it stands, and may be a shield guardian); and a magic

throne of unknown origin (a simple seat carved from one piece of smooth black stone that's reputed to "enhance" (permanently augment one random ability score of) any being who dares sit upon it). Floating watchfully above the throne is the demi-lich himself.

Histokle's Dark Throne

The ability augmentation of the throne affects each being only once, instantly upon contact, but doesn't manifest until the sitter sleeps and then awakens. Beings who manage to remain alive on the throne for a continuous hour also gain immediate and fully-detailed knowledge of all magic items and artifacts they're wearing, holding, or carrying. No detail, hidden power, or unawakened ability is omitted, and every command word or procedure is impressed into the sitter's memory.

Where the throne came from and who gave it this power are mysteries. There are persistent rumors that the divine hand of Oghma himself had something to do with its creation. Others insist it was Azuth, or Mystra and Oghma working together, or that it is the last surviving manifestation of the great power that once belonged to Savras the All-Seeing. Considering the swift magically-twisted and melted deaths of the last dozen priests who tried to examine the throne, it seems likely the genesis of this enchanted stone seat will remain a mystery.

Histokle's Company

Many powerful mages don't seek out the manor to gain treasure, but rather to survive an hour on the throne Histokle guards, keeping the demi-lich's attacks at bay by giving interesting answers to the questions it asks (primarily about recent events in the Realms). The lonely undead mage retains more awareness and sanity than most liches who have degenerated to its floating skull state, and can carry on long conversations, appreciate jokes and well-told anecdotes, and exhibit curiosity and even envy. Histokle is quite willing to hear alternative information offered by an intruder in lieu of an answer the intruder doesn't know, provided it is interesting.

Sometimes (such as when those openly purporting to be priests visit) Histokle delights in destroying visitors, and on other occasions he seems merely to want to talk. Wherever his lair truly is, teleport spells can safely return intruders from it to intended destinations in Faerûn, but dimension door and passwall spells that breach its "walls" cause vortices of wild magic that separate casters from all clothing and gear before whirling them off to random locales in the Realms, often badly injured (bludgeoning damage, from violent random impacts with surroundings).

A few mages have so impressed or befriended Histokle that he's freely given them a spell or implanted a particular boon in their minds: a single-use summoning of one of Histokle's guardian beasts (typically a gargoyle, gauth, or death kiss) to fight for or aid the summoner, serving even to the point of unhesitatingly performing suicidal acts.

One such visitor was the sorceress Harathralee of Calimport. She agreed to provide Histokle with a child of her own birthing for him to raise and train as his heir. If the demi-lich's plan proceeds as he envisions it, he'll pass on all of his knowledge mind-to-mind to his heir, then pass on into eternal sleep.

Hawkgarth's Hill

Though wooded, the resting place of the dead founder of Hawkgarth is readily identifiable by the stone doors on its southeastern face, graven with the device of a crown transfixed by a vertical, point-down sword. Hawkgarth's barrow-tomb is, of course, said to hold treasure—a cursed, floating, magical long sword of powerful abilities that can be borne off by anyone who defeats its guardian ghost, but must soon be returned to the tomb. If not returned, it will emit new ghosts to attack and slay its wielder before eventually finding its own way back to its hovering place above Hawkgarth's casket.

One wizard's chapbook (*A Life of Wonders* by Harluth the Mighty, pub. 1342 DR) recounts the writer's examination of this blade after it was brought to him by an adventurer. Harluth identified the sword from Hawkgarth's tomb as the Aershivar Blackblade, a long sword that does no damage at all to undead but strikes the living at +2 to hit for 2d8 (Medium-sized or smaller) or 2d12 (Large-sized and bigger) slicing and chilling damage. Once per day, when grasped and ordered to do so, it can deliver a shrewd strike (a +5 attack that deals 4d12 damage to a foe). It can also, with the same preconditions, also defend its wearer with spell turning (against one magical attack only, chosen by the sword wielder rather than automatic; the bearer feels tingling from incoming magic, strong if magic is powerful; the sword turns away 100% of the magic, reflecting it at any target of the wielder's choosing, including the source).

The Countryside

Travelers will find Hawkgarth a beautiful land of prosperous cherry and apple farms, many woodlots, and winding lanes stretching along the southern bank of the River Scelptar for some distance. However, settlements of the sort travelers usually find are unknown in Hawkgarth; buildings are spread out. Most travelers eventually find their ways to one or both of two crossroads: Ingletar at the west end of the realm, or Ambrees at the east end.

Ingletar offers a horsepond; a blacksmith ("Suther Harlagus, Shoes & Froes/Four Generations of Harlagus Smiths"); the Firefly Down inn (Good/Moderate); Three Sheaves Tower, a shrine to Chauntea; and a farm market that gathers once a tenday, where



travelers can buy all the wares Hawkgarth produces and more (from traveling wagon-merchants).

Ambrees is home to Jalagar the Wheelwright, famous for his fine-quality wagon wheels, and great-grandson of the founder of the business, "Old Jalagar," who perished at a ripe old age in 1402 DR; the Old Pipe and Pearls inn (Excellent/Moderate); and the cozy, superior Laughing Unicorn tavern, which is known for the dancing, glowing white unicorn illusion that appears briefly every midnight (thanks to a spell cast long ago by a Harper sorceress to give a sign to a friend she could wait no longer for). The Unicorn is a favorite of many traveling minstrels of Faerûn, and there's even a ballad about the welcoming sight of its flickering window-candles at the end of a long and dangerous ride.

The song's not all that fanciful, for the one thing Hawkgarth can boast for its farmers is that some of them are accomplished brigands. Their favored tactic is to lean down from overhanging tree-boughs to slice straps and lift away baggage or even cut a horse away from a team when the coachman is asleep—or has been carried from his seat by a swinging, cloak-wielding bravo who swoops out of the trees, wraps the man's head in a smothering cloak, and carries him to the ground and a stunned slumber. In some cases, coaches or goods-wagons have crashed down into ravines or into trees after brigands removed the coachman. The injured or dead occupants are dealt with at leisure by the cutpurses, who are then free to loot the goods or even right the wagon and drive it off to a remote barn for stripping. There's an old Hawkgarthan tall tale about one brigand band doing this and then being attacked by a second band who mistook them for merchants. So few folk survived this clash in the darkness that only two bravos were left to take the wagon home, pulled by a single horse. Whereupon they were, of course, ambushed by a third cutpurse band.

In recent years, battlewise traveling mages have evened the score with some of the more notorious brigands, but the survivors have become wily; now, before attacking, they often observe travelers throughout several inn-stops along the road to learn their targets thoroughly. As always, travelers are cautioned to hide finery and keep boasting to a minimum, or they'll attract rough and ready attention they might prefer to avoid.

Not all Hawkgarthan farmers, of course, are the sort who'll stick a blade in a throat when night falls. Even those who prowl the forest lanes and high roads by night tend to be genuinely friendly and easy-going around the tavern-hearth during daylight.

All of this creeping about after dark can make Hawkgarth a busy place for lovers seeking seclusion, tramps seeking a quiet haystack to sleep in, and travelers on foot cutting cross-country to avoid unpleasantness (or at least most unpleasantness). Many farmers have well-trained guard dogs that can growl and even bay but not bark, that tend to approach and spring silently, giving tongue only after striking. The spell known as Darvo's dancing dogs, which lofts multiple canines of all sorts into the air to "dance" helplessly on nothing, for hours, is said to have been born out of the warrior-mage Darvo's strong desire to enjoy an uninterrupted haystack slumber one hot, summer night in deepest Hawkgarth.

Hawkgarthan Governance

Hawkgarthans are quite content with their present system of government: all landowners in Hawkgarth

nominate and vote for certain elders among them to be Speakers. To be named so, a candidate must get a thousand votes out of a population of not quite four thousand voting farmers. Speakers propose laws and policies for the land in short, pithy speeches at twice-yearly meetings called moots. These are held atop Hawkgarth's Hill. Speakers call for votes, and the Senior Speaker (currently an always-calm and unruffled wrinkled old female human matron by the name of Haldaree Tornreth, who farms just down the road from the Floating Shadow Bog at Twotrees Bridge) tallies all "close counts." Enforcement of laws and the putting down of lawlessness is handled by the Striking Hawks, some thirty local lads (all LN male human fighters) who dwell on family farms near Wrinkled Hill.

Local Lore and History

Most local legends center on the "terrible haunted floating manor" ("With these eyes, I've seen the bodies of dead adventurers falling from it many a night!") or concern the ghost of Hawkgarth striding forth from his tomb to right some wrong. Typical day-to-day Hawkgarthan rumors concern the latest dark plot of this or that nearby ruler who wants (again) to conquer Hawkgarth. These rumors are based on many previous attempts by various petty rulers in the Border Kingdoms to seize this region of rich, "unprotected" farmland. Hawkgarth himself slaughtered a dozen would-be usurpers, and died of the wounds he took hewing down most of the forces of the thirteenth pretender. After his bodyguard was ambushed and died to the last man and woman defending their king, Hawkgarth alone held a covered bridge over the River Mauraurin (today little more than a dry creekbed save during spring run-off) against the invaders. He killed over sixty enemy knights before dusk came and he threatened to call up the dead to fight with him, whereupon the pretender's forces fled. Hard-riding knights found Hawkgarth a few hours later, leaning against one rail of the bridge, sword in hand and white as a ghost—stone dead, all his lifeblood in a deep pool around him. One of them put on the King's armor, and the others mounted a guard around him. The invaders made one cautious foray in the new day, saw the King standing on the bridge with ready swords all around him, and decided to seek easier lands to rule.

The spot is still known as the Ghost Bridge. Hawkgarthans believe loyal subjects who were born in the realm can receive guidance there, if they go to the bridge by night and humbly offer their sword to the King, it's said they will see the phantom of Hawkgarth the Mighty in his plate armor, sword in hand, and hear him whisper words of wisdom before he fades away.

The Book of Beasts

There is also a persistent local rumor that some anonymous farmer of Hawkgarth keeps a precious treasure hidden somewhere in the land: a Book of Beasts. This large, ancient tome is said to have been stolen from Histokle long ago. Bound about with lockable clasps, its pages display vivid paintings of monsters—beasts that can be called forth from the book by those who touch a page and speak the proper phrase. Unfortunately, local belief holds (correctly) that the monsters that appear are in no way subject to the command of their summoner and typically attack everything in sight (except the book they came from). Such tomes were quite fashionable in Unther and Mulhorand centuries ago, and a few were made in the waning days of Netheril and the early days of Halruaa, but few survive into recent years.

The Treasury of Houlongh Szoul

Hawkgarth is widely (and correctly) rumored to be the place where the thieves who stole the treasury of the vizar Houlongh Szoul of Calimport fled to, and perished, decades ago. There were six thieves, and each stole an elegantly-carved ivory coffer of gems not knowing that Szoul had hired a mage to enchant each coffer with a tracer spell. Houlongh couldn't find the written instructions for activating the tracer for almost a tenday, which gave the thieves time to reach their homes in Hawkgarth and take their finds to a local mage, Dhalberstant Hurthurimm for examination. In exchange for a tenth of the gems, Dhalberstant agreed to break any enchantments or curses laid on the stones, remove any poisons or traps, and forget all about ever having done so. He performed his part of the deal, reported the tracers to the thieves, and collected his payment. It is recorded by his apprentice, Shalara of the Streams, as being twenty-six rubies, "none smaller than my thumb"; forty-one sapphires "of like size"; and seventeen emeralds "a shade smaller than the other sorts of gems." Dhalberstant promptly ordered Shalara to undertake a long journey to Neverwinter, to search there for a certain magical substance he required. He then vanished "on a tour of the planes" (from which he never returned). Shalara suspected her master was fleeing any doom the satrap might send his way.

All six of the thieves were slain in Hawkgarth by invisible stalkers within a tenday of Dhalberstant's disappearance, but no trace of the coffers or the gems they held was ever found. It is certain that Houlongh never recovered them, for he came seeking them with a large band of hired warriors and wizards and was slain with all his forces in

Dhalberstant's mansion by Shalara when she returned from her mission (largely through her use of traps and magic items prepared by Dhalberstant for use in defending his mansion). She later perished in the Spellplague, when the mansion exploded in bursts of violent and colorful magic.

Hawkgarth Today and Tomorrow

Still bearing a reputation of being largely a wild wood roamed by monsters and inhabited by brigands who pounce on every visitor daring to venture along its roads, Hawkgarth is avoided by most outlanders (except those hungry for treasure, who often find, once there, that many lesser-known tales of smaller treasures and secrets await the patiently inquisitive visitor.) Yet Hawkgarth remains largely a pastoral backwater, which suits most of its inhabitants just fine. Its location nigh the confluence of the Rivers Rith and Scelptar (where a port on the south bank of the Scelptar could dominate all upriver shipping) and between other restless realms make its future quite likely to feature other would-be conquerors. It remains to be seen just how much success any invader can have in this realm of strong, independent local inhabitants.

High Emmerock

Realm

High Emmerock is, as its name suggests, a region of high, grassy meadows suited for grazing livestock. One of the more prosperous Border Kingdoms, it is unusually verdant. (A property born of magical causes, some locals believe. That belief has persisted, it should be noted, down many centuries.) As a result, it has always provided ample grazing, and so has teemed with wild beasts.

What's known today as High Emmerock was formerly part of the land known as the Sward (see "The Sward" entry for the area's early history). In the days when there was a large meadowland realm known as the Sward, priests of Helm were encouraged to settle there and guard its borders. They in turn welcomed adventurers who wanted a safe haven to dwell in (provided they agreed to submit to the instruction of the Helmite clergy). The famous Company of Sun Knights adventuring band did so, retiring to the Sward at the end of a long and colorful career to found the now equally famous Sunbright Lances, today the backbone of High Emmerock.

The Lances are heavily armored men of great height and strength. Their massed charge can



smash aside and trample most foes, and their almost fanatical commanders train the Lances in fighting in swamps, rainstorms, thick forest, blizzards, and mud while both mounted and afoot. They become adept at shedding armor while in battle or on the move if need be and in anticipating and reacting to enemy tricks. After a century of such training and victory after victory in battle against various ambitious neighbors, the Lances are widely feared in the Border realms. Very few folk dare to trifle with the laws and peace of High Emmerock.

The Emmerock Dynasty

The present name of the realm comes from one of its most famous kings, a man from somewhere in the Shining South (possibly Var the Golden) hight Emmerock the Goblinbane, who hunted orcs, goblins, and their kin as some men hunt stags in the forest, until the enraged goblins mustered an army from their usually-feuding tribes (who dwelt in the land that today is Thuntar) and invaded the Sward. They chased Swardar patrols who "fled" into the deep ravine at the heart of the realm, leading the goblin army into a waiting trap. There, with the Lake in the Cleft glimmering before them, the goblins died in their thousands, beset from all sides by the rolled rocks, hurled lances, and fired arrows of the Swardar.

A day after the goblin army was eradicated, the Swardar charged down into the goblin lands to the southwest. Goblin warrens were surrounded, haycarts set ablaze and pushed into the tunnels, and the goblins were smoked out to their deaths in the face of withering arrow-volleys. When all of the goblinkin had been hunted down, the King declared that the Sward would henceforth be known as High Emmerock and the goblin lands as Low Emmerock.

Emmerock then sired three sons, all as hard-driving and ambitious as their sire. Almost thirty summers later, the eldest murdered him for the crown, and was executed by the shocked younger brothers—who then promptly went to war with each other over who should rule the realm. The son known as Esbolder prevailed, proclaiming himself King and banishing his younger brother, Nothlan, to everlasting exile.

Nothlan went straight to Calimshan and offered certain horse-breeding families there a chance to own part of the fabled Land of Horses again if they'd back him in a bid to regain the throne. They did.

Nothlan's forces landed in Low Emmerock only to find the Emmeran armies waiting for them. The struggle that followed ravaged both armies and went on until a harsh winter forced the survivors to stop fighting and scrabble to survive. Sometime during the dark, chilly depths of that cold season, Nothlan vanished. Some say he was murdered by his brother (or an adventuring band hired by the King), others that he simply froze to death and was devoured by wolves before his body could be found and identified. Still other folk whispered that he blundered through a magical portal into "another place," never to return. Minstrels sing of the day when a son of Nothlan, "the rightful king of all Emmerock," will come "striding out of nowhere" to reclaim his realm. A few folk insist Nothlan sickened of the whole affair and went away to take up a life of devotion to a peaceful god, or to study at Candlekeep.

Whatever Nothlan's true fate, spring found his army reduced to handfuls of scattered, fleeing warriors and Low Emmerock a lawless, ravaged land. The surviving warriors of High Emmerock were unable to hold it. All their attention was needed to defend the original meadowland realm against wave after wave of opportunistic invaders.

It was then that the Company of Sun Knights, who'd been landholders in the realm for more than a decade but spent most of their time off adventuring, came to home to stay. Under their competent leadership, High Emmerock survived, but its forces were never able to retake their former sister realm (which is today the land of Thuntar). The best they could manage was holding this or that small piece of it for scattered days or months at a time.

The last King of the Emmerock dynasty, Belder the Sly, perished in 1344 DR of a bloating plague while wenching in the port cities of the Lake of Steam. After his death, High Emmerock slid peacefully under the rule of a council of seven warrior lords (the descendants of the Sun Knights). Their policies ensured that Emmerans would stop trying to regain Low Emmerock and instead concentrate on improving their homeland.

They succeeded. Today, High Emmerock is a well-ordered, heavily-policed land that resembles nothing so much as a huge farm in which stock is reared, lands are carefully irrigated and trimmed, and patrols are frequent and vigilant. The towers of the Lords of the Lances ring the land (visitors seeking accommodation or trade are advised to go to the markets, taverns, shops, and inns that cluster about each tower), and its interior consists of rolling, open grasslands still known as the Sward.

Leaders and Domains

High Emmerock, a region of high, grassy meadows suited for grazing livestock and one of the more prosperous Border Kingdoms, is ruled by a council of seven Lords of the Lance. Present members of the council are listed below (note that regardless of gender, Council members are styled Lord):

- **Annathra Hallowhand** (a fat, food-loving, sturdy NG female Damaran human retired adventurer and "farm lass" who's an accomplished rider, horse trainer and doctor, and a veteran warrior and general), Lord of the Blue Falcon, who



dwells in Falconkeep in northwesternmost High Emmerock.

- **Larbreena Marounal** (a quiet, grim, darkly beautiful CG female Calishite human fighter and mage who collects maps and conspiracies), Lord of the Wavewatch, who lives in Wavewatch Tower on a peak, Nightwind Pinnacle, overlooking the village of Nightwind and the Lake of Steam beyond, in northern High Emmerock. She's the granddaughter of Azlurla Marounal; the lordship has been held by the Marounals for a century and a half.
- Dethran Morrowbrar (a huge-nosed, jovial male gnome who's a master of pumps, piping, and other plumbing matters, and bellows and the making and tending of forges), Lord of Oldstones, of Oldstones Hall in rocky, northeasternmost High Emmerock.
- **Archeln Harouklan** (a grim, always alert, eyepatch-sporting—he lost his left eye adventuring—and much scarred LN male Chondathan human fighter, a retired adventurer who walks with a limp, and expects the enemies he made in his adventuring career to show up for revenge someday soon—and so keeps his mansion on a war footing, with frequently-drilled guards who get a lot of practice in archery and spear-throwing, and stand sentinel in concealed watchposts all over the Lord's grounds), Lord of Eagles, who dwells in palatial Reddunsar Manor (known for its shady, wooded gardens of falling streams and pools) atop the Eaglesroost, a wooded ridge in High Emmerock.
- **Bressa Dahlhawk** (an elderly and increasingly wrinkled and frail, but still sharp-tongued and alert LG female Damaran human, a retired weaver and cloth-merchant who's correctly reputed to be fabulously wealthy), Lord of the Vale, who dwells in Silverstream Hall in Boldo's Vale at the southeastern edge of the realm. Boldo was the most crude and boisterous of the Kings of the Sward and is fondly remembered in jests and legends. Bressa doesn't sit on pots of gold, but puts her wealth to work; she has investments in Waterdeep, Baldur's Gate, and many Sword Coast settlements, often involving cold-weather and "work" clothing (heavy aprons, gloves, and boots).
- **Paersraede Mythlyn,** Hammer of Helm (a petite, raven-black-haired, pert young cleric of Helm who's far more humorous, witty, and smart than her "public face" suggests; a LN female Durpari human), Lord of the Tower of Vigil (Helmite monastery) atop Harethtoe Tor on the southern edge of High Emmerock. Paersraede's Lordship is "in the gift" of the monastery; its elders collectively select who will serve as Lord, and have selected someone young, low-ranking in the priesthood and therefore biddable to their commands, who's also diligent, swift-witted, and interested in the wooder world; Paersraede is always thinking like a guardian of High Emmerock and then the wider Border Kingdoms, and will often hold feasts for, and provide the hospitality of her Tower to, wayfarers so she can pump them for what they've seen and the latest gossip, to update her overall view of the military and political situation in the region. She's not above manipulating adventurers or rival factions into actions that will blunt threats to the Borders.
- **Xelotar Sandras** (a CN male Mulan human veteran fighter of many victories, who must have some magical means of longevity because he's been a Lord of the Council since the 1350s DR; a saturnine, sarcastic fashion plate always immersed in the gossip and politics of Calimshan, the Lake of Steam, and the Tashalar), Lord of the Crag, master of Dragonmount Crag Castle in westernmost High Emmerock. Local rumors persist that Sandras has dragon blood in his heritage, and some dragon-related magical secret hidden in caverns deep in the Crag, beneath the dungeons of his castle.

Interested travelers should know that Falconkeep towers over the small village of Irsprey, known for its smiths and woodcarvers. Amid its hillocks, shady stands of trees, and winding lanes, the only tavern is the Old Anvil (Fair/Cheap), and its sole inn is Gunderbar's Place (Fair/Moderate).

Wavewatch Tower stands on Nightwind Pinnacle above the village of Nightwind. Known for its sapphire miners and stonecutters, this spartan settlement of stone cottages and drystone-walled gardens is surrounded by quarries and boasts the Nightwind

Tavern (Excellent/Moderate) and Stand of Stones Inn (Good/Moderate).

Oldstones Hall overlooks a sheep-herding village, Ornryl, known for its smelly, long-lasting tallow candles (treated with a secret mixture of ground stone and crushed plant juices to burn slowly and hold their shape) and its smoked and jellied lamb meat (sold in tins all around the Lake of Steam). Wool is sent to the mills of Catanthar. Ornryl has two small taverns, a family place known as Stulgin's Stook (Good/Cheap) and the Happy Homonculous (Good/Moderate, named for a long-ago local mage-related event). The Happy Homonculous is a rough watering hole where ladies dance and sing for guests and outland visitors, who are directed hence.

The Eaglesroost, where Reddunsar Manor nestles in its wooded gardens, rises above the fast-growing, prosperous village of Catanthar. "The Cat" is the closest thing High Emmerock has to a craftworkers' center (and a town of any size). It's also the only settlement in High Emmerock to have named streets. Catanthar is home to carpenters, smiths, wool-millers, and makers of roof tiles and cobbles. Among its winding streets, which are constantly crowded in daylit hours, are a pair of taverns and another of inns. The Mace & Mattock (Good/Moderate) on Thurdan's Street is the older, cleaner, and quieter of the two taverns. The louder, more boisterous drinkers go to the Just As I Was Falling (Fair/Cheap) on Iythkyn Street. Both of the inns are apt to be noisy, but the more exclusive of the two is the Enchantment of Emmerock (Excellent/Expensive) on Shool Street. The busier accomodation is that afforded by the Galloping Stallion (Good/Moderate) on Sward Way.

Boldo's Vale is heavily settled, with the oldest surviving homes in the realm. Its cottages are so bedecked with flowers, ornamental ponds, and shrubbery plantings that it's sometimes called "the Hidden Garden of the Border Kingdoms." Amidst all this pastoral beauty winds Engullar's Way, the road down into the rest of the Border realms. Along it one can find all of the shops, smithies, cheesemakers, and other establishments of the Vale, including the popular the Laughing King tavern and dining hall (Excellent/Moderate), the more rustic Old Ox tavern (Good/Cheap), the Sylph and Stars festhall (visited by dancers and lovers of minstrelry from all over the Border lands), and two inns, the Bright Buckle Beds (Good/Moderate), and the more rustic Green Griffon (Good/Cheap).

The village of Harethtoe stands on the southern edge of High Emmerock, astride the road from Dunbridges. A rather spartan, no-nonsense trading center, it was founded to sell the sapphires, smoked meats, and livestock of the realm to visiting merchants and buy their finecloth and ironmongery. Both activities take place under the ever-watchful eye of the Helmite clergy. Harethtoe was built for defense, with concentric ring-walls, defensible gates and towers, wide cobbled streets, and all-stone construction with slate roofs. Nothing will readily burn, and any attackers must climb a series of rising cobbled slopes (despite anything slippery that's been poured underfoot) while the villagers fire crossbows down their throats. Harethtoe has one tavern, Obolder's Tankard (Good/Expensive), and a single (large) inn, the Southshield (Good/Expensive). Both are policed diligently by Helmite priests to keep order. Most visiting merchants chafe at the attentive watch kept over them at first but come to welcome the quiet, nearly crimeless setting.

The village of Dragonmount lies just east of Dragonmount Crag, which is topped by the Lord's castle. It is a place of woodcarvers, butchers, and shepherds famous for its spiced, smoked meats. It offers the visitor the Flying Unicorn tavern and festhall (Good/Moderate) and the Shanduth's Hall inn (Excellent/Moderate). Shanduth's Hall is popular with adventurers because its founder Shanduth was a notable adventurer. After she died, longtime guests took over the inn, and still provide the services she did: advice, gear, aid for the injured, and discreet help in shadier dealings.

The Lake in the Cleft

In the interior Sward of High Emmerock, the visitor will find wells, covered pavilions to camp at, and spartan watchtowers, but no settlements; none are permitted. Lance patrols are frequent, and mounted herders armed with wands of polymorph (and the occasional staff of the python or some means of monster summoning) keep alert watch over the stock. Hostile intruders, monsters, or stock rustlers are usually transformed into snails, collected, and imprisoned in a midden-pit at one of the seven towers, or attacked by the strangest beasts brought out of thin air. The source of these items is the Lake in the Cleft, hidden in its deep ravine at the high heart of the realm. These days, much enlarged, it is more often known as the "Haunted Lake."

A small village, Argan's Leap, grew up south of the lake, after sapphires of unusual size and quality were found in the rocky walls of the ravine. One day the Argann delvers hewed just a bit too far, and subterranean water surged forth, rapidly flooding their mines and then the village itself. Today, its cottages are little more than rings of stone under the stagnant waters. Somewhere among the drowned ruins, in a flooded cellar or cavern, dwells the dreaded "Water Witch." Local legends insist that she drags those who venture too near her lair down to watery dooms.

The Lords (and many veteran Emmeran warriors) know better. They revere tragic Scsilda Starshield (a

LN female Calishite human powerful sorceress and lich of unique—unturnable—status) who now enjoys playing the Water Witch. She crafts the wands used by the herder commanders (and the rare and highly secret rods of giant mustering that call forth imprisoned hill giants who once ruled the realm and now serve its human inhabitants with magically-enforced loyalty).

Once a Calishite sorceress of some beauty, Scsilda was disfigured by a rival's curse that makes her flesh crawl and melt away from her bones in an endless, revolting surging and flowing. At first she fled to the wilderness of the Cleft to hide and frantically try to undo her condition. Her every effort met with failure, and she tried many times to kill herself, but was always undone by her own fears or the kindness of the Emmeran shepherds. Ultimately, Scsilda came to see the curse that had twisted her life-essence as a means to achieving a strange state of lichdom, an undead state in which her body does not decay or deteriorate (beyond its current state), and she cannot be turned or disrupted. She prefers to dwell beneath the waters, though she emerges on occasion, and has modified many spells (notably lightning magics) to do widespread, far-reaching damage to those who come unwanted into the waters of the Haunted Lake.

Elminster of Shadowdale isn't one of those undesired guests. Though he's uncharacteristically coy when discussing Scsilda Starshield, it seems clear that he tried—and failed—to undo the curse on her. They became firm friends, perhaps even lovers. They remain old and affectionate allies to this day. More than one ambitious mage who considered High Emmerock ripe for transformation to his or her private realm and decided to make it so has been destroyed by the spells of a certain Old Mage while they were still reeling from the determined defense mounted by the Water Witch. This "doom count" of foolish foes is known to include at least four ambitious archwizards of Halruaa, the inevitable pair or trio of Red Wizards of Thay, and no less than a dozen Zhentarim magelings anxious to prove themselves and gain power quickly. It also includes at least one Magister, though neither Elminster nor Scsilda took up the vacated office, handing it instead to a weak but ruthless local novice wizard (who soon met his doom).

One reason mages come so eagerly to be killed is that they deem the Water Witch easy prey, a waterlogged old lich rotting away in fetid waters. Another reason is that the Haunted Lake is (correctly) reputed to conceal the main treasury of High Emmerock beneath its waters. The exact size of that hoard (even leaving out the magic that Scsilda guards for the use of Emmeran warriors and the bins upon bins of mined sapphires) is uncertain, but it must be large. Spell-images have been seen of a large, stone coffer holding five thousand gold pieces, and claims have been made that the lake hides at least sixty such coffers. That much wealth should interest dragons, brigands, and rapacious rulers everywhere, so why isn't High Emmerock trampled under the rush of ambitious, at-all-costs treasure seekers?

The answer is twofold. Widespread tales (the Water Witch has slain many adventurers, including powerful wizards, who came seeking the drowned treasury of High Emmerock, and the Haunted Lake itself: Scsilda has enchanted its waters so they act against intruders. Neither her powers nor those of the Lake are fully known to anyone but the Water Witch, but the known powers of the Haunted Lake follow.

The presence of any being in contact with the waters of the Lake for more than three continuous rounds is revealed to Scsilda, along with their race and true alignment. If contact continues for one continuous turn, the general nature and principal functions of any magic items they carry are also revealed to her.

At any time, Scsilda can cause one to three water elementals to arise and strike beings in contact with the water. She can also hurl multiple lighting bolts (a spell of her own devising allows her to unleash up to six fireball-like, spherical, underwater "lightning storms" in a round).

The Water Witch can also cause an obscuring mist to rise from the Lake and move about above the water at her bidding. She can also work extensive illusion magics under the waters.

Any being carrying memorized spells who remains in continuous contact with the waters of the Haunted Lake for six hours or more has the general nature of all of their spells (level, arcane or divine, and school) revealed to Scsilda. She can cause, at any time after six hours, to force any one spell of her choosing in the mind of an intruder to be forgotten. After the first is gone, she can cause another to go after another hour has passed, and so on.

Moreover, Scsilda can trace any being (distance, direction, plane, above or below ground) whose skin, clothes that they're still wearing, or innards have come into contact with the lake waters during the previous 24-hour period. Within the same time period, she can also cast a suggestion spell on any being who has drunk of the waters.

In short, the Water Witch of High Emmerock is not to be crossed. Even the seven Lords respect her wishes. She keeps her realm one of the safest in all the Border Kingdoms—and, if you like a good gallop (buyers are always allowed to "test out" a horse in this way), a "must visit" land.

According to Elminster, there's a forgotten, still-open sapphire mine somewhere in High Emmerock right now, just waiting for someone to stumble upon it, but he can't guarantee it will stay forgotten forever.

The arms of High Emmerock are seven sapphire (brilliant blue)-hued lances, butts to bottom left and points to upper right, arranged in parallel diagonally across (superimposed over) an iron-gray shield (of what modern heraldry calls a "classic" shape). As a simplified sleeve or breast-and-back badge, this is simplified to seven light blue parallel diagonal lines.

High Mukshar

Realm

One of three tiny realms named for their common origin (High, Middle, and Nether), High Mukshar is a land of rocky outcrops, high, rolling meadows, and rubblestone walls between fields, where sheep ranching predominates. Many a traveler has become lost in its winding lanes and dense woodlots and heartily cursed the place. More than a few outlanders have gone astray, been forced to camp in the uplands when darkness came, and vanished forever.

Border wisdom says able and well-armed brigands shelter in old, played-out gold and copper mines in the mountains along the realm's western border. The human, gnome, halfling, and half-elven inhabitants of High Mukshar know this to be true, except for the "played-out" part. Despite the presence of murderous outlaws dwelling in some of the old mines and preying on passersby, many High Muksharran would take up their picks to mine mule-loads of gold but for the deadly presence of mysterious monsters High Muksharran call "the Others," that hunt constantly in the highlands and long ago forced abandonment of all three villages in the realm. Despite this, more gold and copper still come out of High Mukshar than out of all the western Heartlands, but in a slow trickle of muleloads, not by gangs of slaves or near-slaves, mages blasting the rocks with spells, and lines of wagons waiting to take the ore away.

The overgrown ruins of the three villages still provide shelter and good wells to any daring to camp there. They are Tleska, at the mouth of the Tumblestone River, where the crumbling Battleshield Bridge carries the coastal road across its waters; Longsword, where three trails meet and a lone, fortified inn and smithy (Thorn's Smithy) still operates; and Ramshead, high in the mountains at the foot of the distinctive peak known as the Broken Helm.

Most High Muksharran avoid the mountains, and spend their nights in fortified caves and old cellars with barricaded entrances and armed men standing watch, their spears and crossbow bolts coated with drow poison, or with pitch for fiery use. They know many of the Others are man-eating creatures that can assume the shapes of friends and loved ones, so travelers asking for night shelter are always very closely watched by numerous well-armed warriors.

Though there are many wild and contradictory tales about the Others, most of them are actually "druuth" (bands of four to six doppelgangers, each led by a lone illithid). Elminster of Shadowdale has called druuth "the rising scourge of the Realms," and warned they are all too common in the lands south of the Shaar and the Dustwall.

At least four druuth uneasily share High Mukshar, raiding stealthily into nearby realms (employing disguises and striking seldom, to escape as much notice as possible). They forage independently, but will work together against intruding adventuring bands, and have struck and slain far afield in other Border lands, preying on High Muksharran as little as possible (as "nearby cattle are easy meat"). In their view, Muksharrans should be saved for bad weather, hard winters, and other times when hunting is difficult, uncomfortable, or dangerous.

The current working truce was arrived at after a series of bloody battles destroyed at least another three druuth. (One of the now-active druuth was formed from the remnants of shattered groups). When adventuring bands intrude into the monster-haunted mines or the high meadows, two or more druuth often combine to attack them, sometimes wearing them down until they can slaughter survivors who are too tired to fight on and haven't the numbers left to mount a proper watch while the rest of the band sleeps. Druuth are usually named for their leaders; of the bands infesting High Mukshar, the names "Sshreea" and "Oinuth" (probably illithid nicknames) are known.

High Mukshar was not always thus. In the 1330s DR, it was ruled by a Lord of the Realm in Tleska and two High Knights (one in each of the two upland villages), three men who were all retired adventurers or warriors from Tethyr who liked to wear splendid armor and canter fine horses along the trails of the realm with boarspear-wielding riders as escorts. The druuth made sure they died first, slain in their beds, lords and then their armsmen, until no one who'd ever fought for a living was still alive in the land. (The body count to reach that undefended state was less than thirty.)

A company of adventurers arrived soon after that, but once stripped of their mage and priests (a task involving one night's work by dopplegangers shifted into the shapes of attractive women backed by strangling tentacles), the dozen swords mustered by the Brave and Bold of Bedorn didn't last long.

The Company of the Tristar Lance out of Baldur's Gate and thirsty for "the gold and gems that spill out of every cupboard and cottage in the Border Kingdoms" was next to arrive—and perish. When a caravan of ironmongery subsequently disappeared, every last merchant and wagoneer, word of "the fell doings in High Muk" finally began to spread around the Border Kingdoms. After that, new arrivals became few and far between.

The druuth decided more subtlety was in order, and began the careful series of expeditions they continue to this day. They've struck and slain as far afield as Oparl and the Duskwood and even spent almost an entire year hunting in Jundarwood. During this time they left the High Muksharran alone to gain false hope and resume hunting for gold and grazing their flocks on the highest meadows.

Yet fear and sorrow ride the Muksharran. Their tales recall Lord Baelim, "the Laughing Lord," and his three fair ladies with the long, streaming hair. Local lore remembers the tall and noble Athkontan, High Knight of Longsword, and the short, stout, lusty Baerben "Three Tankards" Nuim, High Knight of Ramshead. They whisper of the Others that slew them and lurk even now in their land, able to "wear the masks" of folk and so get close enough to rend with claws and thrust with spikes of bone. They wonder who these Others are, why they came to High Mukshar, and who might be powerful enough to destroy them.

Five Harper bands have now tried and failed to cleanse the realm, and more than a dozen bands of adventurers—and the druuth have appropriated their magic and weaponry, devising traps they lure strong foes into.

The closest thing High Mukshar has to a ruler today is Arennethra Thorn (LN female Illuskan human fighter and smith, the granddaughter of Draldimor Thorn, the founder) of Thorn's Smithy. Young but wealthy thanks to her grandsire's smithing success and finding and shrewdly selling gold nuggets, "Arenna" is smart and stern, and despite her tender years and the presence of a trio of aging, gossiping aunts, is the matriarch of the energetic Thorn family. The Thorns can muster eleven strapping, muscular males for a brawl, wagon assembling session, barn-raising, swift massed smiths-task—or policing, though they restrict themselves to keeping order along the roads and roadside buildings and fields, not in the mountains or deep woods.

Wayfarers in High Mukshar can get provender (cheese, bread, small beer, and stew) at two farms near Tleska and at Thorn's Smithy in Longsword, and at the inn and tavern that face each other across the coastal road east of the Tumblestone, close enough to Middle Mukshar that the river is a silver ribbon in the distance. They are the Wailing Wolf tavern (Fair/Cheap) and Anglabur's Haven inn (Good/Moderate). Both have castle-like walls, ditch-and-moat-bolstered fenced lands, and more than a score of wary guards, each. The druuth have long tried to prune these guards of their best warriors by catching men alone and using the guises of their comrades, so they are always wary (even at the approach of someone familiar), stand watch over each other when sleeping, and always have weapons to hand.



What Meets the Eye in High Mukshar

The landscape is rugged, with little level ground, small cliffs everywhere, rivulets that rarely grow larger than streams, and scrub forest overgrowing field after meadow and the ruins of farmsteads. The realm has few landmarks beyond the aforementioned Broken Helm (a riven mountain whose north flank is rounded and conical, except on its south face, which falls away in asheer cliff) and the Rise, an isolated hill traversed on three sides by the meandering Tumblestone River. Its crest sports an ancient, ring-shaped fort (the base of a long-fallen tower), and from its stones one can look clear across neighboring Nether Mukshar.

Unless one enjoys battling monsters (they swarm in some of the mines almost as thickly as folk tales say they do) or thinks that easy gold can be had by anyone daring enough to ride in and scoop it up (false, unless "scoop it up" refers to tons of raw ore), there's little reason to visit High Mukshar now. At least one of its mines (Ilthamar's Delve, in the heart of the southernmost mountains of the realm) descends to meet passages in the Underdark,

which ultimately link up with the Deep Realm of the dwarves. As the ballad says, "There are faster and easier ways to meet one's doom" than descending a mine in the backlands of High Mukshar.

Adventurers who enter High Mukshar will find welcomes—of sorts—from the Muksharran . . . and the Others.

High Mukshar has no blazon nor badge; anyone claiming otherwise is a deceiver.

Irl, the Jewelers' Paradise

Village

Nestled into a sheltering crescent of hills (the Crumblerock Crags, named for the treacherously soft rocks that adorn their weathered faces—climbers beware) is the quiet village of Irl. Its tile- and slate-roofed cottages squat in hollows amid woodlots and hedgerows that often crown knolls; a traveler can be forgiven for thinking the entire settlement is somehow trying to hide from passersby. Irl lies just west of the River Rith, due north of the Realm of the Mount. It boasts an inn as superb as any in haughty Sembia or cosmopolitan Waterdeep, "without the crowding but with the prices" (as the merchant Ithyngo of Athkatla put it). A traveler can't miss the large, three-story, half-timbered mansion of many chimneys ("a hearth in every room") that houses the Bold Ki-rin.

The "Rin" (Excellent/Expensive) boasts stables second to none (its horsemaster, Telrorn, a LN male half-elven fighter, is one of a long line of Rin stable bosses who've been trained by their predecessors to identify and treat equine ailments, as well as how to train, calm and befriend any horse). Its dining room is famous for roasts, wines, and succulent sauces. The owner and keeper of the Rin is the gentle, good-natured ex-adventurer Erendarra Chassel (CG female Illuskan human ranger).

Such luxury awaits visitors in a quiet village thanks to Irl's main claim to fame: gems. The jewelers of Irl are reputed to be among the richest and most powerful humans in all Faerûn. They're a secretive, reclusive lot of hunched old men whose behind-the-scenes influence can move merchants of Sembia, Zulkirs of Thay, and nobles of Waterdeep alike to do things they'd rather not do. However, a wayfarer visiting Irl (and there have been many, some coming to plunder, and others to kidnap) will find a shortage of impressively sinister, finely-robed esthetes; the jewelers of Irl have survived down the decades by living simply.

As the veteran adventurer Torbras of Westgate put it, "If you accost a barefoot laborer digging in the mud of a turnip field and stained-glass golems suddenly lurch out of nearby sheds or the columns of a barn come to life, and gemstones float out of the man's pockets to circle his head and spit lightning at you—well, you've found one of those fabled jewelers of Irl, and likely a swift end to your life, too!"

It's certain that many of the larger and wealthier Irlian families do have golems, shield guardians, and various animated objects (in the Monster Manual sense) at their command, and descendants of apprentices of the mage Calagrath Halirl (from whose name Irl is derived) may carry gems that store attacking magics which animate when activated. Irlians won't willingly speak of such things; anyone asking to buy magical gems will be firmly shown the door of any shop in Irl, by shopkeepers who'll insist

Live Cargo

Many peddlers, wayfaring citizens, and caravan merchants in the Borders carry along living creatures as wares to sell, as well as food and water to keep them hale.

The DM should re-roll if a result doesn't fit a situation in play.

d20	Live Cargo
1	Trained songbirds, individually caged (1d4 birds)
2	Mules (pack animals), pair or trio
3	1d4 sheep, in harness and with lead-reins
4	1d6 turtles (in a "damp-basket" covered with wet towels, with more towels as bedding)
5	1d12 frogs (in a "damp-basket" covered with wet towels, with more towels as bedding)
6	(Freshwater) eels in buckets of water, 1d4 per bucket
7–9	Chickens (in carry-cages), 1d6 per cage
10–12	2d6 rabbits (in individual carry-cages)
13–14	Ducks (1 or 2 to a carry-cage), 1d8 cages
15	2d6 geese (in individual carry-cages)
16	1d4 snakes (edible, non-poisonous, sold as food or for rodent control), 1 per lidded earthen jar
17	3d6 bats (each in a "bat home" box, inside a close-barred cage (sold to eat stinging insects infesting the grounds of an estate, or a village or town near a swamp)
18	1d4 goats, in harness and with lead-reins
19	One pair of oxen (used as relief team for oxen pulling a cart, and will be yoked and on a lead-rein)
20	Trained sheep-herding dog (in awning-covered basket, on stay-leash), never more than one

that tales of enchantments on gems are "nonsense" or "wild fancies" when such gems are linked to Irl. "What wizards do elsewhere in Faerûn is their business—and their folly. Here, the wonders of properly finished gemstones are quite enough!"

Most Irlian shops feature jewelry (mainly earrings, pendants, anklets, and rings) set with rubies, emeralds, and moonstones (usually crown-cut, the local fashion). Azurite (a striated, blue-green stone, abundant locally) is also sold carved into smooth "swirl-spiral" candle-holders, napkin rings, and "thumb-boxes" (named for their sliding lids, which are usually opened with the thumb while the fingers of the same hand grasp the rounded container; these are often used to carry small quantities of powders).

Where the muddy village main street curves around the thrusting front of the Bold Ki-rin, a row of six well-established jewelry shops stands. Less famous establishments (whose proprietors may agree to buy stones of uncertain origin or even sell raw or unset gems, things most Irlians utterly refuse to do) are to be found in their owners' cottages, along winding back lanes among orchards and sheep-paddocks. The names Ormlam Durth and Sashanna Belrost circulate among merchants interested in fencing shady gems or getting raw gemstone material. Gentle caution must be used while inquiring after these individuals, or exaggerated false descriptions of their recent sad demises is likely to be gained rather than clear directions to reaching them.

The six "old family" Irlian gemshops are:

- **The Black Bracelet,** a pricey establishment with a blink dog guardian, run by the Ephrost family (Tethyrian humans);
- **The Moon in the Window,** a shop reputed to have magical guardians and a watchful resident ghost run by the soft-spoken Shabadather clan (a large Illuskan human family that includes members of all the major factions);
- **A Handful of Diamonds,** the carving-house of the only Irlian family to specialize in diamonds and avoid working local gems, the proud rock gnome Fendoun clan;
- **Felderstone's Five Rings,** a shop founded by the wizard and infamous ringmaker Eddoun Felderstone, who went mad and perished in the Spellplague, that still specializes in making rings, but not magical ones, and is now run by a retired adventuring band, the all-female elven Loarelar's Lash (locally known as "Loarelar's Lovelies," but only behind their backs);
- **Galabather's Rain of Gold,** a "height of fashion" store that displays glittering gold-set pectorals, masks, rings and bracelets in the latest styles, and now (long after the death of its founder, Irpar Galabather) reputed locally (and correctly) to be a shop run by the Zhentarim that also serves as a message drop, resupply center, and "safe house" for Zhents (its urbane, well-armed, watchful staff are headed by a Zhentarim wizard known only as "Coldhand");
- **The Serpent Biting His Tail,** a small, dim shop divided diagonally by many blue beaded curtains, where children and elders of the Tamuraleon (Illuskan human) family bring buyers trays of samples and serve herbal teas that bring on visions.



Who's Who in Irl

The most powerful Irlian families are the Belingrosts and the Mammantals. The Ephrost, Gultulbar, Shabadather and Tamurleon clans are the second-rank houses, with the Irlingars rising and the once-proud Relingasters reduced to a few low-profile individuals (who will work with almost anyone they see as a road back to prosperity and power). Their investments and influence reach as far as the ballads and tales claim, but Irlians seldom issue orders or otherwise inconvenience their debtors—except when wars or other major crises seem imminent. (What tales? Harken to these still-true words, from Halgolyn Wraithblade, Knight of the Three Trees, writing to his son almost a century and a half ago: "Spend carefully, son . . . or all too soon, your life, your future, and the very damnable air you breathe will belong to the jewelers of Irl.")

To illustrate the power and influence of the Irlian "highcoin" families, consider Prester Mammantal (the fifth successive family patriarch to bear the same name). He employs dozens of traveling merchants (who come through Irl twice or thrice a year) as messengers and carriers-of-items to his hundreds of trading contacts. As most of these

contacts owe Prester large amounts of money, he has great influence over them, and they are numerous enough that when they obey his commands to raise prices or cause shortages by refusing to deal in particular goods, their cumulative effect is great. This in turn allows the Mammantals to invest with foreknowledge of coming market trends, and various Mammantal family members "on the ground" all over the Realms can make deals that win handsome profits. They often use these profits to purchase ships or caravans and get word and profits back to Prester by literally sending their purchases home or swapping them for land (usually in cities, and with buildings on it). The Mamantals and the second-rank Irlian families are landlords all over urban Faerûn, earning a huge stream of coins from rents.

By way of contrast, the Belingrosts and the Relingasters have always been primarily sponsors of business ventures or coin-short nobles, gaining large but sporadic windfall profits amid many losses. These ventures also grant them much political influence, which is why Belingrosts are high-salary courtiers in many of the wealthiest lands in the Realms. (Relingasters always preferred to operate behind closed doors, and continue to do so. "We have little love for fame; famous folk are targets," to quote a family saying.)

Governance in Irl

Ruling decisions in Irl aren't a matter of courts and grand buildings; they're made in secret by the Eight-Sided Stone, a covert council whose members are elders of the eight "highcoin" families. An outsider will find no way to contact them. The Stone employ a Master of the Mace (always a loyal, competent veteran fighter) who commands eight Swords of Justice, "armsmen" (police) who are battle-hardened former adventurers that patrol Irl observing attentively; little escapes their notice. They hate strife and tend to be bad-tempered if they must give battle. The village jail consists of two smelly cells beneath a stable.

At the eastern edge of Irl is the Falcon's Leaning Watchpost, a bakery by day and tavern by night notable for its blackberry wine, gooseberry and spiceapple tarts, and for bread shot through with melted cheese. Some merchants detour through Irl just to dine at the Watchpost, never darkening the doors of any gemshop. Its beloved and widely-trusted wise old founder and proprietress, the "Old Post" Numbalaera Shuldasharee, died some years ago, but her staff still run the place collectively. They breed and rear the offspring of the flying snakes that served Shuldasharee, and like she did, go about with these loyal pets concealed under their clothing—and apt to burst out and attack anyone menacing them!

Irl also has a pond, Umathar's Water, where all are welcome to bathe or sprawl on the banks to chat, snooze, or laze. Years ago, dying Umathar decreed all could freely use his horsepond, as his last horse had died ten summers before he took to his deathbed.

Minstrels and talkative Border tavern lads spin tales of labyrinthine storage tunnels underlying the gardens, cellars, and orchards of Irl, so vast and old that no one alive knows where all of them lead and so crumbling that not a season passes without the ground near this or that cottage collapsing suddenly into a grave-like opening. Legend insists that the jewelers of Irl all have secret storage caches behind false walls in these passages and hidden ways out that surface in stables, thickets, or via the gem-mines in the Crags behind Irl. (Legend exaggerates only slightly: not all Irlian jewelers store their wealth in the passages; just most of them.) Legend usually speaks of grisly undead wandering these passages but neglects to mention the real guardians, "loyal sentinels" that stand in the treasure caverns, ready to attack all intruders except specific, approved family members. These sentinels are now all newly-made shield guardians (wealth can be useful at times).



The most colorful local legend tells of the lost tomb of Calagrath Halirl, somewhere beneath Irl (perhaps deep beneath the front yard of the Bold Ki-Rin itself or the main street nearby). The Wizard of the Gems is said to float forever on his back in glowing, enchanted air above a sparkling bed of gems he enspelled before his death to preserve and defend his body for all time. How long "for all time" will last in this case, and just how the gems protect Calagrath, are both unknown, though there are wild tavern tales about Calagrath awakening and hurling his own head at intruders. This grisly missile becomes a howling, flame-eyed skull the moment it is out of the glowing shaft of air above the gems—according to legend, of course. Other tales tell of the jewels under the mage emitting rays that wither, disintegrate, or incinerate.

Bards and adventurers take note: the underlying tales are true. There are gem-caches a-plenty under Irl, and somewhere Calagrath Halirl does lie entombed in light above a bed of gems. Adventurers haven't found him and emerged to tell the tale, but as the years pass, they still come looking.

Jundarwood (Old Shadow)

A stony peninsula, "the Dragonback," thrusts out into the Shining Sea south of Yallasch and north of the River Scelptar. It's all that remains of the worn-down Mount Garaunt, but few alive in Faerûn these days know that, because what's left of the ancient mountain is entirely cloaked in the deep, brooding hot forest known as Jundarwood. Almost every sort of tree not restricted to cold, dry terrain grows thickly in "Old Shadow" (as Jundarwood is also called). So dense is the growth that no known track crosses Jundarwood, and only the countless streams and three rivers (Caldarth, the River Racing; the River Balaerit; and the River Glarth) that rise in the depths of this wild wood offer any sort of landmarks or navigable "trails" at all. As a result of its nigh-impassability, Jundarwood stands like a vast shield separating the realms of Adaerglast, The Realm of the Mount, and Suldamma. Only the most intrepid hunters venture into its leafy depths, and far more beasts prowl forth from it, to do some hunting of their own.

The wood is named for Jundar of Silvanus, a mage-tumed-priest who in 1012 DR or so set about finding and breeding threatened beasts ("monsters" who couldn't comfortably dwell alongside advancing civilization) in the heart of the forest. Jundar is assumed to have died somewhere in Jundarwood several centuries ago, but the beasts he gathered flourish, despite ceaseless hunting.

Many worshipers of Malar consider all Jundarwood a sacred site, and often ambush or stalk non-believers they find hunting there. The exalted status of Jundarwood in the eyes of Malarites is curious, because something in Jundarwood does not love Malar. Followers of the Beast Lord who venture too far into Jundarwood are always torn apart, and their remains scattered outside the forest as bloody warnings to others (or, perhaps, as trophies). Down the centuries, many folk have reported seeing a stag-headed man standing silent and upright among the trees watching intruders. If approached, he vanishes. Who or what this entity is remains a matter of speculation; most non-Malarite Borderers think this apparition is Silvanus or a servitor of the Forest Father.

Plants and beasts alike grow very swiftly in Old Shadow, tiny rivulets of running water are everywhere, many "stream-hollow" caves underlie the trees, and Jundar cast many permanent dimension door and plant growth magics scattered across the forest (so some trees grow at fantastic speeds, and that passing between two trees, or over a certain stump, might mean an abrupt "jump" to elsewhere in the forest).

The druuth of High Mukshar (fighting bands of doppelgangers led by illithids) are now hunting in Jundarwood, adopting various beast shapes to do so.

Jundarwood of Old

Once, when woods cloaked all of what is now the Border Kingdoms, Mount Goraunt was the much-tunnelled abode of a squalling family of green dragons. They tumbled, hissed, and spat at each other around its heights daily, flapping off into the verdant wood around to feed when hungry. Feuds and kin-slaughterings were frequent, and ultimately one dragon used a found magic item on another—provoking a brief, awesome struggle as all other wyrms who'd gained and hidden magic items used them on each other. The top of Mount Goraunt was blown to the skies that day, and for hours it rained stones and still-warm dragon blood. Other dragons were swift to arrive and examine this possible territory, but a Calishite mage who'd farseen the battle decided this was a perfect opportunity to try out some dragon taming spells he'd found in an old grimoire. His attempts to ensnare a dragon steed enraged the arriving wyrms—and they descended on him in a swarm too numerous and sudden for his spells to withstand. His ribs were crushed against a tree, and while still staggering in pain, he was snatched up and devoured. His death was in turn farseen by other mages, who feared an attack on their rich Calishite cities by a gathered swarm of dragons. Several of them swiftly hurled various spells at the dragons roaming the Border shore, and when the maddened wyrms flew west, seeking the source of the hostile magics, the rest of the mages, fearful that doom



had indeed come, let fly with everything they could muster. When they were done, the Border Kingdoms were dragonless, and the blasted and smoking ruin of Mount Goraunt lay deserted. Treasure-seekers scouted it, but found little beyond hungry beasts who considered them treasure. Forays into the woods around the shattered mountain soon ceased.

As the rest of the Border lands were settled, Jundarwood's seemingly endless monsters kept it largely untouched. Then, as now, even the most skilled rangers found that game-trails seemed to shift positions from day to day, and trees used as landmarks moved about.

Jundarwood Today

Reliable landmarks in this everchanging wood are few. Volcanic activity is absent from Jundarwood (though some, with undoubted accuracy, say the volcanic wooded ridge known as "the Mount," to the east of Old Shadow, was once part of it and should yet be considered part of its essential nature), as are bare crags or other features visible from afar.

Treants seem absent from present-day Jundarwood, but the forest may hold them (or similar intelligent, mobile plant creatures) that humans don't recognize. Or a deeper, darker magic may be at work, something perhaps linked to the Stagman—or not. All that's certain is that the moving trails, abundant monsters, and other mysteries of the wood preceded Jundar, and that he alone (so far as Borderers know) dwelt in peace in the wood (something not even elves and many forest fey have managed).

Various theories have been advanced about Jundarwood, from "It's a mythal gone mad" (perhaps mere fancy, but not yet proven wrong) to "It's the home of a colony of beholders or drow or hags or Phaerimm (or state your own fearsome monster) who work all this weirdness to keep folk away." This view is very popular in the Borders, and many sages across Faerûn have agreed with it and restated it down the centuries—but if it's true, it's a wonder indeed that there isn't a beholder, drow band, or Phaerimm under every stone and bush on Toril. (The truth is yet to be uncovered.)

The Rivers of Jundarwood

Only on maps do the rivers that rise in Jundarwood seem clear and unconfusing. To those deep in the forest, these waters snake about, plunge underground, and re-emerge in a highly confusing manner. Elsewhere, they may bear other names, but the old names (used in the upland hamlets that cling to the fringes of Jundarwood) are the River Glarth (for the dark, placid and chill river that flows to the sea through Thuntar); Caldarth, the River Racing (for the rapids-studded, fast-rushing river southeast of Yallasch, that runs southeasterly into the sea); and the River Balaerit (for the two-branched, largest Jundar river that forms the westerly boundary of Suldamma). The Glarth's waters are as dark as tea, and said to make plants that grow in gloom (such as mushrooms) thrive at an astonishing pace, but to give those who drink of it "dark dreams." The Caldarth was once known as "Stag Race" because daring Calishite sailors caught and killed deer along its banks. Its waters flow with punishing speed over a succession of jagged rock rapids, piling up deadfall forest trees like heaps of straw, forming strange walls of tangled wood that the waters endlessly rush around and through. The Balaerit is named for a famous priestess of Eldath who disappeared up it a century ago, hoping to meet and dwell with the many nymphs reputed to inhabit its headwaters, and who can say if she succeeded or not? That echoes the most frequent Border saying concerning almost anything to do with Jundarwood: "Who can say?"

Who Rules in Jundarwood

The Stagman holds sway in Old Shadow—perhaps. No settlements exist in Jundarwood, and it's claimed by no realm, and ruled by no known entity (though in the 1340s DR, the sly trader Sammereza Sulphontis of Waterdeep was wont to sell ambitious merchants

the title of "Baron of Jundarwood," presenting them with an impressive map of the "greatest uncut stand of timber remaining in Faerûn today." The descendants of fourteen such barons walk Faerûn today, and claim Jundarwood, though none of them have done more than talk of it. (In the past, three such Barons briefly visited the vast forest and sought to claim its riches, only to flee.) Even the self-styled Lord High Mages of Adaerglast retreated from plans to conquer Jundarwood after something therein disliked their scrying and caused a succession of scrying items used by the Adaern rulers to scream and explode. One such blast shook the very castle the two mages shared, and they abandoned all thought of holding sway in Old Shadow. "Wise of them" was Elminster's comment.

The Land of Two Princes

Realm

Nestled between the River Scelptar and the northern edge of the Shaar, this land is home to the grasping, bustling walled town of Gallard, whose merchants are as sharp and as busy making coins as those of Waterdeep or any Sembian city. Pleasant rolling country of orchards, good roads, small but prosperous farms, and ruined keeps (known locally as "strongholds," though elsewhere they'd likely be called "follies"), The Land of Two Princes is now a fallen realm, a mere name on a map still applied by Borderers to the wilderlands and unruled farms around Gallard.

If the realm is seen as a broad shield with the river as its top edge and Gallard at its point, its other two features of note are the castles of the two princes it's named for: Corthgrolt sits at the western top corner of the shield, and Revelrar rests at the eastern. Both castles stand on bluffs overlooking the river. Both were as tall-spired, ornate and beautiful as any fancy nobles' castle in or around Waterdeep—but are now burnt-out, monster-haunted ruins.

The main road (linking the land with Bedorn to the west, and Blackbarn and Hawkgarth to the east) runs diagonally south to Gallard and then back up to the river again, in a giant "V," and the hamlets of the realm all lie along it, almost all of them at crossroads where minor farm lanes link up, after crossing the central gulf of the "V." On the western arm of the road, these hamlets (from Corthgrolt at the western border of the realm, going southeast to Gallard) are: Runcerin; Sholbrut's Gard, Umble, and Dlackbridge. On the eastern arm (from Revelrar at the eastern border, heading southwest to Gallard), these hamlets are Bucklegrim, Starshroud, Appletree, and Ornar's Belt.

The History of the Two Princes

The realm was founded by two rival knights of Cormyr (exiled together for rebellion against the ruling House of Obarskyr). They worked together to slay or drive out the petty lordlings who ruled the territory they fancied, assisted each other in building castles at either end of the verdant realm, and then promptly quarreled, unable to agree on which of them should rule or even what the land should be called. Their temporary Hall of Two Thrones, erected at the midpoint of the realm, was abandoned after barely a summer, and has since vanished completely. The two knights were Sir Galdarr Amcorth (who styled himself "Prince Amrath," taking his middle name, and lording it over the western end of the realm) and Sir Dorvon Meldrist (who took the title "Prince Balard," after the most popular name in use in his family, and ruled the eastern end of the realm). They issued conflicting decrees, and armsmen loyal to each of them skirmished up and down the realm throughout one long and bloody year, until each of them declared himself sole Prince, and ordered the other butchered. The rivals finally met and slew each other at a crossroads, Appletree, as winter came on; one employing a beast-tamer and his trained monsters, the other a "small-spells" mageling. When both men had been buried, the most capable of the warriors who'd come from Cormyr with them, one Flaerth Beltrusk, attempted to rule—but was murdered at his first council meeting, by the kin of the two dead Princes.

At that same cold and sinister council, the rival families of Amcorth and Meldrist agreed to contest rulership of the realm under certain strict conditions (agreed to by both, and enforced by a spell that promised to consume them all "by wildfire of the blood in the veins" if they broke any part of the agreement). Its terms can be summarized as follows: no family member shall draw weapon or cast spell against a member of the rival family; poison and all sorts of bows shall not be used; magic of any sport shall not be wielded against any rival, or either of the two home castles or folk within their walls, by any family member; and the strife between the two houses shall be decided solely by contest between hired warriors, not to exceed three persons per living family member. To win the realm, these hired combatants must control every part of the land save the rival castle and Gallard, and have captive at least two members of the rival family, of either or both of its eldest two living generations. The losers are to have safe conduct to flee the land; the winners gain its rule outright.

It is an offense punishable by instant execution to travel or act in the Land of Two Princes as a

committed hireling of either side without clearly bearing the badge of the family one is acting for. A large golden lion's-head, face on and in a golden circle enclosing a brown field, is the symbol for the Amcorths. A purple-antlered, white-skinned stag with a silver dagger clenched in its teeth, facing to the viewer's right, inside a white circle enclosing a field of blue, is the device of the Meldrists. Inevitably the rival forces have become known as "the House of the Lion" and "the House of the Stag."

Generations of Amcorths and Meldrists came and went, as the endless battle raged, becoming a gallant contest of gleaming armored knights on horseback thundering through the trees, and acquiring some unwritten additional rules: crops and property are to be despoiled as little as possible, and no danger is to be offered to those not in the hunt for the crown. In other words, knights hacking at each other will pause to ride around an old farm-woman with a handcart of apples, and then continue with their deadly fray. The farmers of the realm regarded this craziness with a certain cynical fondness. They were used to it, it made their land special, and it confirmed the prevalent local opinion that nobility are all unworthy of their powers and unsound of mind.

The Amcorths and Meldrists both maintained investments in Gallard, other Border lands, and elsewhere in Faerûn. They even nodded to each other civilly when they met, but their armsmen raged up and down the realm in an endless game of bloodshed, while the grasping Galardian merchants paid no attention at all, and visiting travelers gaped in bemusement. Some younger members of both families were wont to train themselves in arms and try their hands at devising strategies to win the endless struggle, but most Amcorths and Meldrists were content to sip wine, play at cards or board games, and leave the battles to their hirelings, often watching the "evening fun" of gore and violent striving through various enchanted scrying devices.

Young and restless would-be knights, and armsmen wanting to gain experience in frays free from deadly magic, came to the Land of Two Princes from all over Faerûn to hire on with the Lions or the Stags. Bribery (to join the service of a House, to look the other way at crucial moments, or to change sides) became accepted in the struggle. Desertion was quite possible, given the small size of the land. "The Hunt" seemed to have its own alluring magic; many who survived a season or more as hirelings of the Lion or the Stag became deeply loyal to one family or the other, and devoted the balance of their lives to the struggle). Hired-on warriors could win wealth and reputation, gaining the mounts, armor, and weaponry of fallen comrades or foes, or receiving relics of the slain from their employers; and both families handed out knighthoods like weekly sugar-offerings to faithful horses.

For centuries, visitors to the Land of Two Princes would often see bands of armed and armored men racing past, and swordplay occurring within the approved follies that dot the realm.

The Spellplague made only minor changes to this strife (the few enchanted weapons crumbled, and a spell-augmented castle wall here and there slumped), but the years that followed ended the Hunt and drove the dwindling ranks of the Amcorths and Meldrists into hiding in safer places, elsewhere in Faerûn, as wild surges of magic made the battle-dead rise as undead, brought floods of frightened, hungry, and aggressive monsters to the countryside, and doppelgangers started to impersonate Amcorths, Meldrists, and their senior champions—causing the handful of real Amcorths and Meldrists to flee for their lives, and never return.

The inns and taverns of the realm saw their business shrink to nothing and themselves besieged by constant monster attacks, and one by one were abandoned, or those running them were devoured; none still operate today. The hamlets all dwindled to a few fortified houses, where hardy folk farm in armed groups, equipped with spears, knives, cudgels, and crossbows that deliver serpent-venom-tipped bolts. Many encounters with doppelgangers have made them wary of everyone; they want nothing to do with strangers, beyond throwing food and drink over their walls in return for coins thrown in (first!).

Wherefore no one rules or keeps order in the Land of Two Princes now, outside of Gallard; it is verdant farmland slowly being reclaimed by the wild as monsters roam and hunt, and the folk who still farm do so warily and heavily armed. There are the inevitable rumors of treasure hidden and left behind in the two castles, and in all of the small strongholds, too, and some of these may be true—but anyone seeking such riches now will find themselves under frequent attack by the many hungry monsters who still infest the fallen realm.

One unique feature of the land "went wild" during the Spellplague but seems to have regained its former powers. In a dell near the hamlet of Starshroud, the mist has returned: a permanent, all-magics-and-weather-withstanding smoky gray mist fills the hollow, reducing visibility to little more than a spear-length (and hiding the stars; hence its name, which also clings to the hamlet). Said by some to have been created by Mystra herself, it causes dying, near-dead, and recently dead creatures brought within it to float in midair, in the spots (and body positions) in which they're left. They don't decay, bleed further, or waste away. Diseases, curses, and even magics cast on them are all halted, suspended until they are physically taken out—so the dell is used as it's always been: keep the dying or dead stored until healing or life-restoring magics can be obtained. Lightly-wounded or fit beings who enter the mists

can't fall asleep within them, and will feel restless if they tarry; there are rumors that the magic of the mists saps the minds of all hale creatures, slowly driving them to drooling insanity if they don't depart.

The strongholds of the Realm are all haunted by undead, or roamed by monsters, with perhaps a single hand-count being free of such perils—and those few are brigand lairs. None of which stops local lore from claiming they are all crammed with treasure. These ruined towers crown nigh every height of land all across the realm, and most of them bear several names each. Two landmark strongholds are Ghoound Castle, which looks like a large and impressive castle when viewed from the south (Gallard), but is revealed from all other directions to have been built as little more than an empty shell; and Blackstone Hall, a turret that stands dramatically on a promontory jutting out into Swordpoint Pond just north of Dlackbridge.

Perhaps the best "proof" that treasure does exist are persistent efforts by shadowy, well-hidden (and distant, often in Waterdeep or Baldur's Gate) Amcorths and Meldrists to send hired adventuring bands (with maps and detailed warnings) to glean such riches for them (in return for shares of the loot).

Luthbaern, the Fat Sty

Small Town

Also known as the Sty of Fat Merchants, the high-walled stone town of Luthbaern (pronounced "LOOTH-bayer-nn") stands on the Westwater Way trade road northeast of the Barony of Blacksaddle. Tall stone buildings with steep slate roofs crowd wall-to-wall along its cobbled streets, with no gardens or public open space to be seen (in the deeply-rooted opinion of other Borderers, that's because no Luthbaernar would waste space on a blade of grass growing, when that fingertip-sized patch of land could be instead devoted to making money). Walls of adjacent buildings touch, and roof-edges and balconies almost touch. There are many local tales of thieves or conspirators strolling from roof to roof across town. Luthland interiors are dominated by dark and ornate wood paneling adorned by portraits of successful owners, or by tapestries. Almost every Luthlander lives above their business, or in rented rooms above shops and offices.

No one wants to contribute a single coin to building new walls to enlarge the town, so any work that requires a lot of space or that doesn't bring top coin (to afford the ever-rising rents and costs of buying buildings) has been pushed outside the walls, into the verdant farms immediately around the walls, which have become known (rather mockingly) as "Luthland."

Luthland consists of farms that are kept busy feeding the ever-hungry townsfolk, specializing in tuber crops (and other foods), and keeping goats, pigs, and some cattle. A Luthland speciality is a fiery cheese (of blended goat and cow milk) known as "sharpsair." It's white, crumbly, and as hot-tasting as "flame mustard" or the hottest radishes; most Luthbaernar love it, and gobble cubes of it doused in mustard to work up drink-thirsts at highsun and of evenings.

Within the farms, all around the walls of Luthbaern, is the bustling "Muddy Ring" of stockyards, market stalls, and paddocks for visiting caravans to load, unload, and assemble.

Thanks to its high prices and relentless drive to make coin, Borderers don't consider Luthbaern welcoming, and long ago dubbed the town "the Sty of Fat Merchants." The name has stuck; elsewhere in Faerûn, folk associate fat, gaudily successful merchants with the land of Sembia; in the Borders, fat merchants are assumed to hail from Luthbaern.

Luthbaernar work hard and play hard. They consume kegs of drink and wagons of meat nightly, and so do tend to be fat, large-bellied, florid folk of prodigious appetites and capacity (often plagued by gout and heartstop).

Most Luthbaernar merchants are successful and pompous to boot, and go about in finery: fashionable gilded-piping tunics trimmed with lace at cuffs and collars. Many wear Luthland-made rings bearing cantrips that make the rings and specific adornments on the ring-wearer's garments and person wink, sparkle, or glow to impress the eye.

Luthlanders are never far from food or drink if they can manage it, habitually wearing belt flasks and drinking-flagons, on belts or baldrics fitted with pouches of cheese, sausages, and fried bread "ready rolls" (not to mention oiled and leaf-lined "fingerdip" small pouches of olives or oysters).

Many Luthbaernar talk swiftly while waving their arms expressively, and when trading gets intense, will try to shout each other down (a visiting Waterdhavian trader once described arguing Luthlander merchants as "roosters strutting up belly to belly and shrieking insults at each other").

Luthbaernar tend to be suspicious of strangers (assuming everyone in Faerûn is after their personal, precious coins), and so take elaborate precautions against thieves and swindlers in their shop procedures and home defenses (false coin safes full of worthless counterfeit coins, traps and snares linked to loud exterior bell-alarms, guard dogs that can plunge down on intruders' heads through overhead trapdoors, and the like).

Luthbaernar are justly proud of the goods they produce, often employing the town saying "swift and fine" to refer to the manner in which they make things, and the quality of what they make. In the early 1300s DR the town was known for fine

furniture and cabinet-work, and by mid-century Luthbaern was also turning out superb tapestries, rugs, earthenware, and glass-glazed crockery. And the range of what's made in the Fat Sty is constantly expanding; Luthbaernar seldom travel because they're too busy working at home, but often hire passing traders to report back to them on new trends, goods, and shortages or demands upon their next stopover in town—and promptly act on those reports, making new wares for export. Custom orders are seen as welcome challenges to be fulfilled, not irksome wastes of time or "extra effort."

Seeing costs, consequences, and ways to do things better seem to be inborn Luthlander traits; Khelben Arunsun and others long ago wrote (repeating a traders' saying) that Luthbaernar seemed "ordained by the gods to be merchants." Even the lowliest crafters of the town invest coins in a variety of concerns; collectively, Luthlanders sponsor more new businesses and caravans and shares in caravan-wagons across Faerûn than any other citizenery, even Sembians. In part, this was because Luthbaernar didn't see the need to "keep a little by" for hard times, or worry about defending against brigand raids or attacking armies, nor thieving magic.



This was because of the Belted Mage. Before the Spellplague brought about his demise, Luthbaern had a habitually-disguised guardian wizard, a renegade Red Wizard of Thay known locally only as "the Belted Mage" because of the magical belt of spells he always wore (that in part helped him to stay hidden in plain sight, in a variety of magical disguises).

After the Spellplague, an unknown someone (or someones) has renewed and maintained the Belted Mage's legacy: the wards he created to protect Luthbaern. Nowadays, just as it was before the chaos of the Spellplague, fires can ignite in Luthbaern only in specified workshop areas (to allow for cooking, and the use of forges and crucibles in making things; as a result, few Luthbaernar cook at home, and bakeries and cook-shops are outside the town walls), few creatures can fly over the town, most rain and lightning bolts veer to fall "outwall," and shapeshifting and illusions are short-lived (or fail entirely) within Luthbaern.

No one knows (yet) who this mysterious benefactor is, or why he, she, or it wants Luthbaern to remain protected—and few Luthbaernar think much about it. They're too busy making more coin.

Manywaters

Small Town

The old stone town of Manywaters lies east of the River Rith and just southwest of the Grand Duchy of Shantal, whose battered stone post stands two hundred and forty paces outside its north gates. Inside its low, tumbledown stone walls, Manywaters would be little more than a waystop village were it not for the Riven Healing House (a small temple of Ilmater), the wagonworks of Prezgulder Eeirin, and the Riven Rock from which flow the famous hot "healing" springs that give Manywaters its name.

In 1302 DR, two adventuring bands decided to dwell by the restorative waters they'd heard about (unaware that many Borderers were spreading word of the springs to lure adventurers thence to dispatch the Rock's ruler). They found Manywaters to be it monster-haunted ruin—under the control of a beholder.

A long and bitter battle ensued, ending in death for the eye tyrant, its prowling servitor monsters), and most of the two adventurer bands. One of the sorely-wounded survivors collapsed in the pool formed by the walers flowing out of the Rock. In

the morning she awakened whole, having not only failed to drown, but having regained a missing arm and the flesh down one side of her body. Her enchanted armor had crumbled away to nothing, apparently dissolving in the waters. Thus Arlia Emmerlil stumbled onto the key to using the magic of Manywaters: it thoroughly heals those who enter the water, banishing insanity, diseases, curses, and parasitic infestations, while restoring lost, withered, or shattered body parts. It only accomplishes this miraculous healing by draining the stored magic of enchanted items worn or attached to a stricken being. More than half a day's immersion is needed for most injuries, but creatures near death when put in to the pool are kept alive even when their injuries (for example, a slit throat, or an inability to float) would ordinarily bring swift doom. The pool won't affect more magic than it needs for a healing. Someone immersed in it with several magic items on their person will forever lose a random item—dissolved away—to heal anything from a minor cut or cold, up to a severe laceration and broken bones. Additional items will be dissolved to deal with greater damage, but sometimes enchanted items are immersed in the pool and not altered in any way. Oddly, functioning magic items are often dredged up from the muck bottom of the pool.

Riven Rock's powers are of unknown origin. Some say Ilmater causes its healing, but others believe ancient wizardry gave the waters their powers long before the Broken God was heard of in Faerûn. The waters lose all efficacy the instant they're removed from the pool, and have been proven to lack all healing properties while rising through the Underdark to the surface; the Rock itself seems to grant the healing powers. (Priests forbid chipping at the Rock, but beings who've done so discover its smooth black rock crumbles to dust when fragmented, and that no fragment or dust of it retains the slightest magical aura or powers). At the time of Arlia's healing, a priest of Ilmater (come to aid any of these latest adventurers who might have escaped the beholder deathtrap of Manywaters) declared the site holy to the Broken God. The weary (but by now, healed) adventurers didn't argue. Instead, they struck a deal with the Ilmatari: a temple of Ilmater would be built on the spot, they'd see to its defenses against brigands, beasts, and the would-be tyrants who'd surely arrive once word spread of the true powers of the Rock—and in return, the priests would feed, clothe, house, and nurse the adventurers to their dying days. The deal was faithfully followed and the Riven Healing House founded (and vigorously defended, many times down the years).

Old Wynterlorn of the Serpents and then Arlia, hardiest of the Falcons, finally died in great old age, a tenday apart, in 1345 DR. Of all the adventurers, only one couple had offspring: a boy, Ilgirt Rhaulmallow, who could heal himself—slowly—at will, without the waters of Riven Rock Pool. Ilgirt left Manywaters to make his own life in the Realms in the 1320s DR, and his fate is unknown.

As the temple's size and reputation grew, the ruined houses of the old town (its origins and nature forgotten) were rebuilt by devout Ilmatari and a few farmers (ong, narrow stripfarms still fan out west and south from Manywaters). Today, the Riven Healing House is a high-pillared hall whose clergy heal anyone in return for fees. They use the coin for the betterment of the sick and maimed who dwell in several interconnected buildings behind the temple—grateful folk who will fiercely defend the priests without thought for their own lives. Animals with various hurts lope or stagger around as pets, and the whole religious compound is enclosed in a tree-girt wall that takes in (from front to rear) the temple, the "hurt houses," the Riven Rock with its pool, a small orchard and overgrown garden, and the abandoned adventurers' mansion. The priests sometimes rent the mansion by the month or tenday to adventurers or others desiring seclusion. Only guests deemed acceptable are allowed; brigands are unwelcome.

Any creature is allowed access to the pool—but those of known evil nature, such as beholders or drow, do so under the leveled menace of six staves of swarming insects, wielded by the most able members of "the Hurt." The staves were taken from the tower of a mad Calishite mage by Arlia's band on their last adventuring expedition, and at least two of their Hurt wielders are wizards of middling power who came to enjoy life in the temple, and didn't want to be healed enough to have to leave (both always carry personal offensive magic items; types unknown). For particularly dangerous users of the waters, the old, shuffling House groundsman will unobtrusively attend, wearing one of the last treasures of the Serpents: a ring that stores four blade barrier spells he can call forth by silent act of will.

Riven Rock itself is a scalloped dome of smooth black rock, like an upturned bowl, about the size of a small cottage. Many fissures in its surface radiate outwards like the spokes of a wheel; out of these spring forth the rivulets of enchanted water. There arc twenty-one streams, some about as large around as a burly man's arm, that recede to as few as seventeen in the hottest days of dry summers. The Rock juts out into a pool that surrounds half of it, is about two hundred paces long on its Rockward shore, and forms a fairly regular semicircle from one corner of that shore to the other (at both corners flights of stone steps descend into the pool, which is four to five feet deep, but eight feet in the center). At its widest, the pool is forty feet across.

The waters of Riven Rock Pool resist all natural and magical attempts to part it, boil, drain, or pump it out. Small amounts can be removed in containers,



on objects immersed in it, and in cupped hands. Many mages have carried off pool waters in enchanted containers. But these waters never retain their healing powers, no matter what precautions are taken or enchantments are cast on the container.

Across the road from the temple gates stands Manywheels, a wagonmakers' shop (founded by the fondly-remembered Prezgulder Eeirin) where six or more new wagons are always standing ready for purchase, along with about forty spare axles, tonguebars, and quartets of wheels in an array of sizes. Sets of harness are also available; the current owner, Durathna Longaxe (a LN dwarf female of good humor and swift laughter) caters not just to wagon buyers, but to passing travelers who need wagon repairs; she'll modify parts with speed and expertise, no matter what the hour. The stock and skills available at Manywheels have saved many a trader from having to buy a train of pack animals and abandon a broken wagon somewhere in the Border Kingdoms; prices are high, but most clients are happy to pay. Those who aren't seldom argue loudly, because sixteen brawny wagonbuilders (human, dwarven, and two halflings) work at Manywheels. Eight are usually on duty at a time, and all keep cocked and loaded crossbows within reach.

Manywaters also has a farmers' market, a scribe, carpenter, butcher, blacksmith, and corvisor (shoemaker). A mile down an uphill-and-down lane is a tanner, the taciturn and grizzled Thirldan Lhoamrund; the tannery reeks about as badly as most.

Folk desiring to stop over in Manywaters can stay at the local inn and tavern, the Rock in the Water (Good/Cheap), run by the amiable and gossipy Haransra family (plump and bustling Calishite humans of all ages).

Middle Mukshar, the Land of Slaughtered Knights

Realm

A land of rolling meadows and stony soil, Middle Mukshar is home to many small, family-held steads (marked by field walls of heaped stone rubble), given over to the growing of parsnips, potatoes and other root crops, and to sheep ranching. Many small woodlots and gardens can be found along its winding lanes (which are entirely bereft of signposts), and a visitor will search in vain forany proper settlements, or even an inn.

Thanks to the strife that holds sway in the land, Mid-Muksharran (in the main, these folk are sturdy, capable humans and halflings, with a smattering of gnomes and half-elves) avoid building clusters of homes around mills and markets. Instead, they gather wherever lanes meet, and from there go to the "forebarn" of the nearest steading whose inhabitants are willing to let them in, to transact business (or exchange gossip). Most steads make a steady income selling cheese, bread, beer and sleeping-space to passersby—as well as arms, armor, and gear salvaged from fallen adventurers.

Each year, hundreds of new adventurers come riding into Middle Mukshar, lured by the tales of the Treasures of Tiirglaros (what treasure, and who? See hereafter). Their swords and spells aren't, however, the only peril of the realm—which largely lacks the exposed rockfaces, caverns, and mineral wealth of High Mukshar, but unfortunately doesn't largely lack the attentions of the druuth (hunting bands of four to six doppelgangers, each led by a mind flayer), at least four of which roam over emptied, shattered High Mulshar, and often raid down into Middle Mukshar, employing disguises so to remain as unidentified as possible.

Middle Mukshar's History

"The Middle Realm" is one of three adjacent realms formed out of a shared ancestor kingdom, the farmland realm of Mukshar, founded centuries ago (accounts differ as to just when, but range from the 1080s DR through about 1120 DR) by the Tashlutan adventurer Myrammanas Mukshar. At its height, the sage Goldoanas of Anabar described it as "rolling hills of sheep and goats beyond counting, guarded by thunderously-galloping knights grander and better armored than the best Cormyr can boast."

A just and stern man, Myrammanas was beloved by the warriors who'd adventured with him. Many settled in Mukshar and became his "knights," patrolling its borders ceaselessly to defend its oasis of plenty from rapacious adventurers and marauding predators. Borderers called the realm "the Favored

Hills" in those days, and looked to its cheeses, meat, and vegetables to feed them, and its wool to keep them warm.

This bright state of affairs ended when King Myrammanas the Mighty died, leaving behind a decree that divided Mukshar into three lands, one for each of his sons. Only High Mukshar was ever ruled by one of them (the sly coward Rhalovar Mukshar, who was mysteriously stabbed to death at a party in Suldolphor during one of his debauched "trading trips" to Calishite lands; Rhalovar reigned for seven years, truly ruled for perhaps forty days of that time, and died childless). The other two fledgling realms, Middle Mukshar and Nether Mukshar, were conquered by adventuring bands within a month of their birth—and those usurpers were as promptly exterminated by the next would-be tyrant. All three Mukshars saw a bewildering succession of rulers thereafter; Middle Mukshar was the first to know an empty throne and long years of utter lawlessness. Only from the 1320s through the 1360s DR did it feel anything like a strong ruling hand, when the hardy, battle-shrewd adventurer Clevdoarran lharlmiir (a Waterdhavian commoner and former warehouse guardsman turned adventurer-warrior) toured the Border Kingdoms after winning a modest fortune with his wits and sword. He chose to make Middle Mukshar his home, defending its farmers as their Lord Protector, at the head of an ever-growing band of warriors and "low-spells" mages. Clevdoarran disposed of countless monsters, several rival rulers, and a score of raiding adventuring bands, and in time the farmers he defended came to regard him as their rightful ruler. His badge was the Black Falcon In Flight, and dark-hued raptors are still seen as tokens of good luck in the land. Farmers in the Lord Protector's day kept bonfires ready to light, to signal they needed his aid—and still do, though who might come when they saw such flames these days is a grim question (most likely druuth raiding out of High Mukshar).

The Lord Protector was slain at the height of the Spellplague when Middle Mukshar's mad resident mage, the wizard Baldrimar, turned on him (and perished for that treachery), and the orcs and wolves overwhelmed what was left of his battered following. This gave rise to a ballad that's made Middle Mukshar infamous as "the Land of Slaughtered Knights." Most folk across Faerûn have heard that haunting song, but think it mere legend or bardic fancy, or a tale of a place swept away long ago.

Borders and Perils

Middle Mukshar is separated from druuth-haunted High Mukshar by the Tumblestone River, and from Nether Muluhar by the Vigilant, a dozen border-patrolling ghosts that are normally invisible save for the scavenged helms and gauntlets they wear (which appear to float in midair). They battle large predators and challenge all armed bands, turning back groups of more than a dozen, and individuals they've recently observed as members of such groups. In life, the Vigilant were loyal knights of Myrammanas. They were poisoned by the elven trader Ilrylym Isprathas within days of the "Sundering into Three," along with the infant Gaeraland Mukshar, Lord of Middle Mukshar, whom they were guarding.

Adventurers who battle the druuth or rival adventurers in Middle Mukshar soon discover another important feature of the realm: Middle Mukshar is studded with many small, invisible, stationary wild magic areas (possibly the origin of the widespread belief that the Border Kingdoms are rife with wild magic born of a struggle between the gods Azuth and Savras). These areas have "sharp" borders; a single step can take a mage from chaos into normal spellcasting. Their presence has led both temple-building clergy and wizards seeking places to live to shun Middle Mukshar; any clerics and wizards encountered in the land tend to be adventurers.

The Treasures of Tiirglaros

Through ballads like "The Last Ride of Roelvelar Windgauntlet" and the rollicking favorite "Helms Full of Blood," folk of Faerûn know Middle Mukshar as a pastrol battlefield where hundreds of adventuring bands come to seize the fabled Treasures of Tiirglaros (flying gems a-glow with mighty magic, that hover above a vast sea of gold coins), fight each other to the death—and are feasted on by the guardians of the treasure: scores of will-o'-wisps. The truth is less grand than many bards paint it.

Tiirglaros was a sly half-elven mercenary leader who enjoyed success in Calishite employ some centuries back. Left to guard too much wealth of a gold-rich satrap, Tiirglaros succumbed to the temptation to vanish with it. He perished as a twisted, transformed victim of the satrap's spells, turned from afar into a grotesque beast of mismatched limbs, hooves, and jaws. His treasure (really nothing more than thousands upon thousands of gold coins) lies strewn along the ground in the refuge he reached before he died: a narrow cleft amid the highest hills of Middle Mukshar. Wind often moans eerily in Tiirglarod Vale—but the sixteen will o' wisps who dwell there—how Elminster knows their number is another of the many mysteries that cling to him like an ever-lengthening cloak—don't seem to mind.

The Middle Realm Today

Adventurers still come to Middle Mukshar in droves, even if they don't believe in the flying-gem fortune of Tiirglaros, because they're drawn by smaller and usually true stories: a lot of adventurers' treasure is hidden in Middle Mukshar (usually buried in cooking-pots or the like), within one wild magic

area or another. Those who leave it tend to think such areas prevent others from using magic to find and steal hidden wealth, but cynical folk (such as Elminster) have been heard to observe that such precautions matter little when treasure-buriers so seldom survive more than a season or so at most; dead men spend few coins. The steadings of Middle Mukshar, of course, hide many smaller amounts of coinage gleaned from fallen adventurers—but also hold a surprising range of deadly weaponry (often stored in nasty waiting traps).

Middle Mukshar today is bereft of any inns or taverns, but many steads rent out rooms, and feed guests (small beer can often be had, too, but it tends to be weak or strong-and-sleeping-herbs-laced, to keep the farmers from having to deal with belligerent drunken guests.

The realm lacks any formal ruler, or blazon (beyond the black falcon badge of the long-fallen Lord Protector). However, all Mid-Muksharran will firmly insist that they dwell in a "kingdom," and if pressed, will say that the "land awaits its king." No armsmen keep law; the steaders cling to the old rules of the Lord Protector, and go armed (and know how to use their weapons) and maintain traps because they see a daily need for armed vigilance, with no lawkeepers, lord, not soldiery. Adventurers be warned: every summer, new adventuring bands arrive, claim the lordship, and try to keep order—and the druuth or rival adventurers or the will-o'-wisps or lurking monsters kill them well before winter.

Myrinjar, the Seat of Might

Small City

Clean and well-ordered, the Seat of Might is a city of fear, thanks to its undead ruling mages (see "Adaerglast"). It stands at the heart of the pastoral Land of Mages, surrounded by farms that are among the most prosperous and productive in all Faerûn. Visitors will find Myrinjar to be a collection of narrow four-story timbered houses set shoulder to shoulder along cobbled streets that are always a-groan with moving wagons of provender, day and night.

The city looks fortified from a distance, but its roughly oval outer wall lacks crenelations or a wall-walk or buttresses; it's really just the joined back walls of hundreds of granaries, and so upon close examination can be seen to be a patchwork of joined, differing styles of stone-laying. It's pierced by four gates, the north and south carrying the main overland trade-road into and out of Myrinjar, and the east and west serving drovers bringing beasts to market, and mounted pallols sent out by the Hands (the Mailed Hands of the Lords, officious but thankfully few—in part due to "accidents" that keep befalling them, thanks to the hatred of the populace—soldiers of the Lord High Mages; the Hands seem to be everywhere in Myrinjar, spying and firmly keeping the peace in a city already fervently and carefully law-abiding).

Myrinjar never sleeps. Its shops make sausages, pickled vegetables, and relishes of all sorts; sell fresh produce; and bottle fruit in wines and sherries (most famous being cherries in Myrin sherry—a local spirit flavored with both raspberries and cranberries from the bogs east of the city). Stinking tanneries in the western reaches of the city once produced thousands of cured hides each month, but the Lord High Mages, their noses offended by the reek, relocated these establishments south, forcibly scattering them along the road to Yallasch.

Food-work shares Myrinjar with only one other important, long-established local industry: the making of jars and bottles. Thanks to large quantities of fine sand (dug where the city now stands; in the confused labyrinth of storage cellars that underlie Myrinjar, shiftings and collapses are still all too common, despite many forcebindinq spells applied by the Lord High Mages), glassblowers have always worked in Mvrinjar.

They fashion a wide variety of flaring-mouthed jars (often re-used elsewhere in Faerûn as cheap, sturdy drinking flagons) and tall, slender wine bottles. A Myrin bottle can readily be recognized by the marks on its bottom. One will be a glass flagon (representing the city) enclosing a simplified badge of Adaerglast: a "pinwheel ring" of outward-stabbing zigzag lightning bolts encircling a basket of three rounded fruits; the other will be a maker's mark, of which the most popular are the arching dolphin of the Peldran family, and the tusked, facing-to-the-viewer's-right boar-head of the Bright Hands collective.

The local bottling industry supports two rival purveyors of tinted and scented waxes (for use in sealing), and imports wagonloads of cork (for bottle-plugs) from the Tashalar. The "Wax Houses," named for their owning families, are Olamandar and the smaller Joloradim. The largest cork importer (among a crowded field of small-cart competitors, whose conveyances are often searched by the Hands due to their tendency to smuggle spices and other goods banned by the Lord High Mages for their known usefulness as spell components) is the firm known as the Wheels of Teldarusk, founded by a retired shipcaptain of that name, but now owned and run by descendants of his factors (trade agents), a gnome family hight Harbordrift, and a half-elf clan, the Tsandarmars.

Buyers from other Border realms, Calimshan, the Tashalar, Tharsult, and even the lands about the Sea of Fallen Stars come to Myrinjar's three open marketplaces: Manymelons (small stalls selling fruits and vegetables) in northeastern Myrinjar;

Sharngult's in the southeastern part of the city (livestock and derivative goods, such as tallow candles and hoof glue); and Eldynklarn in the southwest (largest, newest, and most wide-ranging in wares, offering fresh produce, grain and milled flours, bottles and bottled goods, eggs, poultry, harness, and farming tools and wagons).

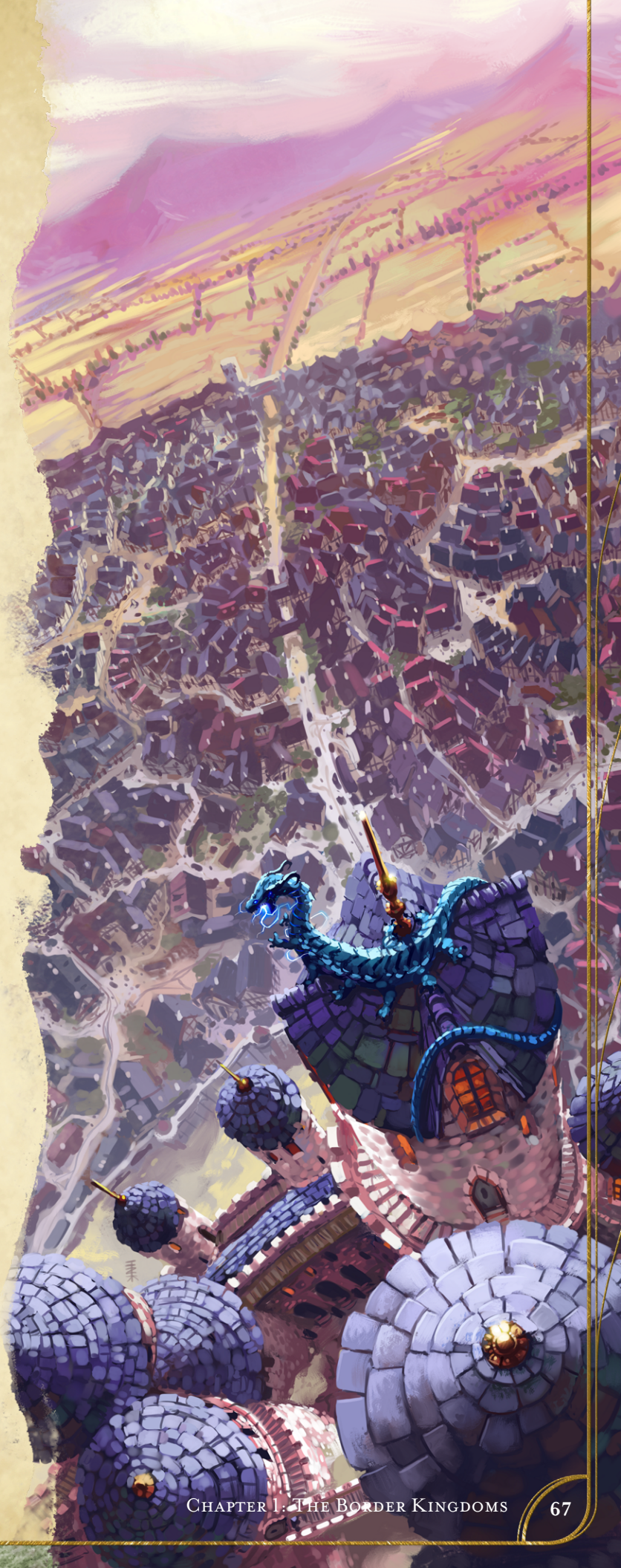
Wizards and magically protected beings aren't welcome in the city (upon discovery, they'll be attacked with head-exploding spells, or if need be by a charging patrol of Hands), nor are citizens or visitors allowed to possess scrolls or other magic items, to try to work their own magics, or even to own substances used in the casting of popular spells or in the making of spell inks. Inks and parchment are hard to find in Myrinjar, and few native Myrin (as opposed to citizens who've settled here from other lands) are literate.

The many hungry mouths of Calimshan ensure that a steady stream of buyers comes to Myrinjar in all save the coldest winter months—and the efficiency and fertility of the bustling farms of Adaerglast keep greedy Calishite satraps busy trying to seize control of the realm or covertly take over Myrin businesses through a variety of swindles, agents, and hireling adventurers (including, in at least one instance, doppelgangers hired to slay and impersonate).

Most buyers visiting Myrinjar stay in one of the inns just inside each city gate, or in rooming houses located between the markets in the central city district known as Keepshadow (because it stands "in the shadow of" the Castle). Keepshadow is the approved area for outlanders, and simply bristles with watchers who report back to the Castle; seasoned visitors say it's safest to assume every servant or resident in Keepshadow is a spy.

Even casual visitors to Myrinjar can't help but notice the abode of the Lord High Mages. The frowning castle at the center of the city is officially known as the Seat of Might (a term also applied to the city around it, but never used without sarcasm by outlanders or Myrin who believe they're out of earshot of authority), but is better known as "the Castle of Dark Dreams" because the Lord High Mages first announced their right to rule Adaerglast by sending forth dream-visions to all Adaern folk from within its walls.

The Castle of Dark Dreams is guarded by scores of animated armors, shield guardians, helmed horrors and mightier constructs. The Hands and other humans who serve the Two are seldom permitted to enter its gloomy halls. Many Myrin believe the tyrants (who are only seen rarely in public these days, and then usually as projected images) spend long hours lying helpless on couches as they weave dream-vision spells or scry events across the realm and even farther afield. It's a rueful Myrin joke to





urge others, even in the most private moments oflovemaking or personal hygiene, to remember to "smile for the audience" (that is, the spying tyrants).

The Castle is said to be full of seized spellbooks and enchanted items, many linked by enchantments that cause one magic to erupt against anyone disturbing another, and this was true before the Spellplague. Now, the gloomy fortress is plagued by drifting wild magic areas, and full of the decaying, fitfully-active riven shards of twisted-awry magic items. Lord Iraun and lord Srivven are always surrounded by helmed horror bodyguards, and suspect treachery from everyone—so no living being is allowed to approach them too closely). The decrees of the Two are absolute; folk who defy them are torn apart by their magic. The property of traitors is forfeit to the Castle; their kin and servants are often sold into slavery. Some adventurers, however, are transformed into beasts by the Two, to serve as prowling guardian monsters whose behavior is secured with the (false) promise that they'll be freed someday (if their performance and obedience pleases). Elminster believes the Wizard-Kings came from a mage-school in easternmost Murghôm, seized much magic from tombs and mages all over Faerûn, have crafted many new magics (such as the dream-vision enchantments), and in particular have so mastered spell-webs (the linkage of one spell to another, so triggering one causes multiple reactions), that they're extremely dangerous within Myrinjar.

The Two endlessly thirst after more magic, and strive ever to force their subjects to farm more profitably (taxes are levied on all sales in Myrinjar, and farmers may sell elsewhere only if they purchase very expensive licenses; these can only be obtained in Myrinjar, and the Two are known to mind-scry persons applying for them).

Rebuffed in earlier attempts to openly seize power in Yallasch, no Myrin doubts that the Lord High Mages are still plotting to win control of that city. They have many agents in Yallasch, orders are sent there almost daily via caravans, and past events make it clear that the Two often farscry streets and private rooms in Yallasch. Not for nothing has it become known in recent seasons as "the City Where One feels Watched," or more simply, "The Watched City."

The Neth Stand

The high and rocky northwesternmost corner of the Border Kingdoms has always been filled with a vast, dense, untamed wild forest standing like a wall preventing Calimshan from expanding east across the Suldolph Strait to swallow the Border Realms. The beasts of this dark wood have taken an impressive toll of Calishite hunters and prospectors down the passing centuries. Much of the forest consists of tall duskwood and shadowtop trees growing close together, their enmeshed foliage creating a constant gloom, and the rest is scrub woodlands cloaking a crescent of limestone crags, the Neth Peaks, that form a north-south "spine of the forest." The few trails are short, none penetrating far into the forest depths, and most folk stay well away.

Neth Lore

Most Borderers believe the forest is named for the widespread local belief that folk fleeing shattered Netheril in ancient days came to its tree-cloaked peaks and there "took a stand." (On the other hand, most sages believe the "stand" part of the name refers to a "stand of trees," and came into use because the wood consists of clumps or stands of the same sort of tree growing close together.) Borderer lore says the Netherese refused to run farther from the chaos Netheril had descended into, and settled in the Neth Peaks, raising fortresses on the most stable of the rock pinnacles. For years, sages across Faerûn dismissed such tales as mere bardic fancy, but recently, ruins have been spotted crowning some of the wyvern- and peryton-infested (scores of the creatures; so many that dragons have been known

to fly long distances to feast on them) peaks: shattered stone towers that were once slender, beautiful tapering stone needles soaring into the sky.

Reaching the ruins isn't just a matter of braving wyvern and peryton attacks. The nameless Neth Peaks are soft, unstable, crumbling stone; entire rock faces often break free and slide down into rubble far below, in avalanches that carry trees, creatures, and all with them. Moreover, both wild magic and dead magic areas overlie certain peaks, making reliance on magic chancy. The sage Amonthalas of Tashluta wrote in the 1340s DR of amassing "no less than twenty" adventurers' accounts that all suggested at least one of the dead magic zones drifts up and down the line of peaks like some sort of invisible tethered cloud following a route or circuit.

The Red Wizards of Thay led or sponsored so many expeditions into the peaks in the decades before the Spellplague put an end to such strivings that it seems inevitable that someone of no lesser rank than a zulkir or tharchion believed desirable mighty magic was somewhere in the ruins for the taking. However, so far as is known, all the Thayvian searchers ever found were their own deaths.

Venturing into the Forest

Woodcutters, adventurers seeking treasure or a place to hide or lair, or hunters seeking stags, boars, and orest cats have found the Stand to be dangerous indeed. Around the limestone peaks, the rest of the forest consists of gently rolling hills entirely cloaked in soaring straight trees, their trunks growing so close together that the wayfarer must almost hack a way forward. The everpresent gloom is so deep that phosphorescent fungi occur in profusion, some ambulatory and perhaps sentient—and there are reports of myconids normally encountered only in the Underdark.

No reliable maps exist of the handful of forest trails; hunters who've tried to use the same routes season after season report that the tracks seem to move about, and often unexpectedly fade away where once they offered a clear way on.

The fringes of the Neth Stand are dominated by thornbush thickets, carnivorous plants, and several sorts of small monsters (such as meenlocks, quicklings, and redcaps), some of whom use extensive burrow networks to stealthily surround intruder, strike at them from all sides, then vanish again before the travelers can strike back.

Deeper into the forest is an extensive region dominated by spiders—all sorts of spiders, in seemingly unnatural profusion, some of them webspinners, some of them venomous hunters with barbs and stingers, and some that resemble branches or fungi enough to fool the eye.

Beyond the spiderhaunted reaches of the Stand, near the rising rocky roots of the Neth Peaks where narrow ravines, clefts, and caverns are plentiful, the intruder finds a strange variety of beasts, in seemingly inexhaustible profusion. Many speculative explanations for this "riot of monsters" have been advanced, from mad mages (or hermit-priests of Malar, or renegade Thayvian wizards, or exiled mages from Halruaa, or sorcerers from "other than Toril," or a hobgoblin or oni clan, or a beholder hive or illithid colony, or a coven of hags) dwelling at the heart of the Stand who are breeding, constructing, or magically multiplying the myriad monsters, to the presence of the fabled endless-monster-disgorging "deepspawn" monsters, or the presence of magical portals through which many hungry monsters are streaming from elsewhere.

At least one abandoned village is known to lie, overgrown and monster-infested, within the Stand: Yurbrithee, northwest of Themasulter. Settled by half-orcs fleeing an orc war in the Shieldmaidens, the village flourished for more than seventy years, until it was suddenly abandoned. The Yurbrithan loggers cut many trees, making the village a reliable source of mast spars for ships in the Lake of Steam and the Shining Sea alike, and somehow got these timbers out of the forest while fighting off the forest monsters. Why they suddenly fled, and what they may have left behind, remain mysteries.

The Neth Rivers

Two rivers rise in the Stand. The cold, fast-rushing Sarradra is born in a spectacular waterfall down the flank of a sheer cliff in the Neth Peaks, and empties to the west, into the Suldolph Strait north of Theymarsh. Ranrath's Run is the longer, wider, and deeper river, and has two sources deep in the Stand, that join and run northeast through the forest ere hooking into the Lake of Steam north of Themasulter.

The Sarradra is named for a long-ago lady pirate who used to moor her slender raiding caravel in its mouth, and glide forth by night to raid shore camps and anchored vessels within reach. Her legendary treasure has never been found, and is commonly thought to lie buried somewhere in the forest within sight of the river, near landmarks of Sarradra's time, that may no longer exist, or stand out among later growth.

The mouth of the Sarradra is a haunt of abundant giant turtles, and plentiful wild rice, but anyone who tries to harvest either should beware scrags, who rise from underwater to drag down living creatures who come within reach.

Ranrath's Run is named after an adventurer who fled up it, never to be seen again, in the 1200s DR, when cornered by agents of a Tethyrian king (or duke; the tales differ) he'd stolen a crown and much gold from (like Ranrath, these treasures have never been found).

"The Run" is a river in which many fish spawn; it has been successfully fished with long spears from the banks, and with purse nets by those strong enough to stand in its fast and chilling flow.

The Princess Amriliira of High Mukshar, who ruled that realm for four golden years of good governance and relative peace in the midst of its long line of male human warrior rulers, died in the run when her warcaptain, Irbrand Thullusk (seeing himself better suited to the throne) turned traitor. He lashed the ruling princess to her favorite traveling throne and cast her into one of the deep pools in the midst of the Run. Presumably she's down there still, her bones slumped over a stone seat that was studded with emeralds and sapphires in more profusion than good taste—and that had some sort of magic stored under its seat that could be triggered by the Princess to lash out at persons standing before the throne . . . a magic that somehow failed to protect her against the traitor.

King Thullusk is remembered as "the Tentacled" because of the spell that slew him: a curse that made greenish, many-suckered tentacles burst forth all over his body, sapping his blood and vitality until he became a weak, wrinkled thing able only to crawl and slither. The wizard who cast this curse had no desire to rule, and history has forgotten his name, but he brought doom to Thullusk—who died when his revolted courtiers used halberds to thrust the crawling king into his own kitchen hearthfire—only months after the Princess drowned.

The Fall

A terrified woodcutter recently arrived in Theymarsh babbling of "the forest dropping away, trees and all!" somewhere along the eastern edge of the Stand. Apparently he'd been scouting the fringes of the wood for good-looking timber that could be cut without venturing into the tree-gloom at all, when suddenly a stretch of the woods "as large as the biggest sheep ranch I've ever beheld" gave way with a nigh-deafening rumbling groan, descending out of sight amid clouds of hurled-up leaves and dust.

It seems a large area of forest collapsed into caverns below. The woodcutter saw "many beasts fleeing and swarming through the trees," but himself fled before the dust cleared and he could see what—if anything—had been revealed. There's much interest in the Theymart taverns; caverns that extensive hint at more caverns, perhaps subterranean watercourses . . . offering access to lodes of ore? Gems? Who knows? A fortune could lie waiting, for the taking. . . .

Needless to say, the Neth Stand has never had a ruler, a blazon, an inn or tavern, or any human settlements at all. Nor does it seem likely that any of those lacks will be addressed any time soon.

Nether Mukshar

Realm

Traditionally the most prosperous of the three Mukshar realms, Nether Mukshar is a small, shield-shaped land of rolling hills. In the 1100s and 1200s DR, it was logged over completely twice, but by the time of the Spellplague was a land of small farms, many woodlots, and a few sprawling "high meadow" wilderlands.

Nether Mukshar has known many decades-long times of lawlessness, broken only by a few strong rulers, notably High Duke Davert Flameblood, a Tethyrian warrior who built a competent army that ended up fighting among itself for the dukedom after Flameblood's death, and who built a small but impressive fortress in the northwestern tip of the realm, Dalonstal Keep, and expanded and refortified the duchal castle, Castle Torn, that stands at the northeastern corner of the land.

Nether Mukshar has the shape of a flat-topped shield (its northern border), with edges that curve down to a southern top, Hareph's Tor, crowned by Edgestone House, a ruined and abandoned fortress-monastery to Gond.

In the High Duke's time, the soaring towers of brand-new Dalonstal Keep (atop a crag surrounded on three sides by a marsh), commanded a view—and a field of fire for its turret-top ballistae and catapults—far across Middle Mukshar. Castle Torn was a vast fortress of many linked keeps and enclosed courtyards that housed a village; it climbed a ridge like a gigantic stony dragon, and was a prosperous and growing place known for its duchal-sponsored community of skilled healers.

Today, both castles are as deserted as Edgestone House, and are monster-infested lures for many an adventuring band seeking the wealth of dead or fled Netherans. Castle Torn is a vast warren of riven buildings and tunnels linking storage cellars that have been largely unexplored since the chaos of the Spellplague—and may hold almost anything, but certainly hold monsters that prowl forth often enough to keep most folk away.

At the center of the shield of land that is Nether Mukshar stands the village of Clovarren, where a few hardy farmers have fortified their homes and still cling to a living around the mill, the Duke's Fall tavern, and the Nine Horses inn (the name commemorates a vanished horse-breeding and -training business that was flourishing and famous across the Borders in its day). They pay a semi-retired adventuring band, Roval Dree's Ready Swords (formerly of Beregost) to defend them against prowling monsters and to keep order when drunken or aggressive visitors come to town. One of the horse-ponds in Clovarren is reputedly the home of some sort of water-monster that emerges only at night to drag down, drown, and devour folk and small beasts, but various

Netheran rulers have scoured all of the ponds in search of it, down the centuries, and it's never been found. Folk and beasts still disappear from time to time—but these days, in the increasingly wild land, such disappearances happen everywhere, and all too often.

In short, Nether Mukshar is now a verdant but fallen land, where the orchards and gone-to-wild farms are still verdant and provide much ready food for foragers—but monsters prowl, emboldened by the preoccupation of the few surviving Netherans with the druuth who from time to time raid down out of High Mukshar. Though these dangerous reavers will rob and slay anyone who gets in their way, they seem most interested in exploring the fallen temple of Gond.

It's likely they're seeking wealth and ingenious devices—for there are many Netheran tales of wealth and fantastic "devices and mechanisms" that the temple housed in gleaming plenty before it was shattered by explosions caused by the coming of the Spellplague, and much of its roof fell in on the clergy of Gond laboring below.



Many crafters and inventors dwelt in Nether Mukshar before that dark day, but they died or fled; their influence, and that of the ruined temple, is evident by the many small, practical innovations the surviving Netherans use and repair and value, from treadle-pumps and hat-lanterns to cattle-gates and grain chutes that dispense measured amounts from hoppers. There are even wheeled "reapers" that cut crops when towed by oxen or horses, and horse-powered threshers. The surviving farmers have more of these than they can use, and although they like to keep the best for their own use (and some extras, for spare parts), they will sell these devices to interested traders, from time to time.

A good road—three-wagons-wide, flat, and cobbled, with deep drainage ditches on both sides—still runs from Castle Torn to Clovarren, and from Clovarren through the now-deserted hamlets of Barnhallow and Phendree to Edgestone House, but wayfarers are warned that hungry beasts watch the road, and attack anything on it by night. From time to time, brigands also lurk in Nether Mukshar, and may well be desperate enough to attack travelers by day.

Nether Mukshar is a well-watered land, with many former farm ponds, rills, and one narrow river (the Tumblestone River, which rises in the hills north of the village of Arnglar and flows northeast through the realms of Middle Mukshar and Nether Mukshar on its way to the Lake of Steam).

Oeble

Large Town

Straddling the River Scelptar at the Great Ford, not far west of the Qurth Forest and nigh the center of the Border Kingdoms (where its three more-or-less-ruined bridges cross the flow and are repaired every summer only to be swept away in every spring flood), Oeble-town has been a trading center for centuries.

Home to all manner of rogues, outlaws, and folk unwelcome elsewhere, Oeble is a maze of walled courtyards, rambling alleys, and lodgings stacked three or four stories high above street-level businesses that change with bewildering rapidity. From its leaning towers and the loftiest of its many balconies one can see the lands of Talduth Vale, Owlhold, the Barony of Great Oak, and the more distant Grand Duchy of Shantal and the Sword-point Streams.

"All rogues meet in Oeble," asserts an old saying. Oeble is home to kidnappers, smugglers, fences, dealers in illicit goods, outlaws and bounty hunters seeking them, and folk unwelcome elsewhere because of who they are.

Although the town today boasts a ruler and laws of sorts, and enough policing to keep open street

warfare to a minimum by day, it's still not a place for the faint of heart, the innocent, or the unwary. Knife throwing is a local sport, and so is creeping about on rooftops, leaping from one high place to another, skulking, and spying. Citizens are found dead of violent causes most mornings; most days corpses are burning in the garbage-middens southeast of town.

Three wagon-bridges and countless catwalks and rope bridges cross the Scelptar in Oeble, which has grown over the centuries until about eighty or so buildings stand on each side of the river, with caravan and livestock-sales paddocks beyond.

The Underways

Even more of Oeble lies unseen beneath the ground in the notorious Underways, passages damp with river seepage that underlie the town. These stone-lined, mold-thick tunnels link cellars and wells in a labyrinth that boasts at least one inn and two taverns the sun never sees. Most obvious "monsters" among Oeblar (such as the resident yuan-ti) keep to this underground neighborhood. Many cellars connect with the Underways, but few surface buildings have publicly known links to the "Lawless Below" (in daily Oeblan parlance, simply "below," whereas one's own cellars are "downstairs"). Access to the ever-growing (and unmapped) network of passages under Oeble is gained down narrow unmarked stairs at the ends of many alleys. Spilled blood and refuse often make these slippery, and the authorities and various spies keep watch over them; no one enters or departs the Underways unnoticed, and no large armed force can converge there without raising an alarm.

Down below, a visitor will find few lights and no signs. It's a tunnel-maze neighborhood that never sleeps but seems half-deserted, a surprisingly quiet corner of lawlessness where important and upstanding folk are sometimes seen in the company of outlaws or out-and-out monsters.

The Underways are home to one inn of note: Melder's Door, a dank and gloomy stone pile where screams in the halls aren't unknown. It has at least one minotaur guard, and is either owned or run by neogi. The Lawless Below also offers two taverns: The Talondance, a wild place named for the claws sported by many patrons (slip-on clawed weapons used in several games), and the Hungry Haunting, a drab eatery of plain, sturdy, but rather battered furnishings that features hot stews of mysterious origins alongside spicy cheese. All three establishments are favored meeting-places for those desiring to conduct illicit business, or hire others to do shady, dangerous, or merely unsavory things for them.



The Rainspans

Folk who find the Underways or the streets not to their liking can move about between a few Oeblaun buildings along the "Rainspans," a network of crumbling bridges that leap from rooftops to balconies and even right into the upper floors of such structures as Griffingate House, the large, ornate old inn that stands in the center of Oeble. (Expensive and luxuriously-furnished, "the Old House" boasts many secret passages and spyholes, a staff of discreet servants who missing noticing nothing, and a house guard expert in hurling knives and clubs to hit precise targets.)

It's illegal to leap or cause another being to fall from the Rainspans, or to drop or throw any object from them—but that doesn't stop darts, rocks, and (of course) knives from being hurled down from the heights with deadly accuracy.

Oeble's Place in the Border Kingdoms

A haven for fugitives, brigands, and smugglers, Oeble remains a thorn in the side of many Border rulers, and is an ever-present "doorstop danger" to the realms around it. However, many find it useful as a hiring center or a neutral ground meeting place where one can expect to unearth outlaws on the run, misfits, monsters, and a market for rare and unusual items.

"Too useful to destroy," the deceased High Duke of Nether Mukshar once described Oeble, and his words remain true today. That's not to say some outside force desiring a seat of power in the Borders won't try to scour out Oeble from within and touch off a local war that destroys the town or reduces it to a mere shell. Yet this peril has hung over the town for a century or more, and hasn't befallen the town yet.

Oeble has long survived balanced at the heart of an uneasy ring of all-too-ready weapons. A Border prophecy insists Oeble-town is the site where a dragon shall in time to come reveal the whereabouts of a truly mighty treasure of the Forgotten Realms. Though some folk dismiss this prophecy as mere invention devised to slow greedy Border rulers from giving orders to mount, ride, and burn out "the lawless river-straddling pestilence" once and for all, the ballad in which the prophecy is preserved is very old. So Oeble survives as a dangerous but very interesting place to visit and shop, fitting the image many outlanders have the Border Kingdoms—and minding its reputation not a whit.

Oeble is known to be home to humans, half-elves, half-orcs, orcs, goblins, drow, handfuls of halflings, gnomes, kenku, dwarves—and all manner of malformed outcasts.

Law and Order

"Everyone knows" Oeble is ruled by the Faceless Master, a fat, short, raspy-voiced, always-masked man whose hands bristle with rings said to harbor fell magic. The Master is assisted by an advisory Council of Nine Merchants (a bickering, money-grubbing bunch whom the Faceless Master always politely listens to and then largely ignores) and a force of thirty-plus Gray Blades, a human and half-elven police force. Most Blades are outlaws from elsewhere who enjoy the good pay, chances to swagger, and the fringe benefits of good food, wine, and ardent companionship laid on by their Master. Like law enforcement in other corrupt cities, the majority of Oeblar cordially dislikes the Blades. Their employer may indulge the Gray Blades, but they are very good at their jobs, including spying at lofty windows, doing acrobatics, firing and catching hostile crossbow bolts as if with magic-aided deftness, and anticipating trouble before it actually erupts.

The count of passing years makes it obvious to anyone that the Faceless Master is either dead or has become a title held by a succession of individuals. The truth—known to very few—is that the Master always seems to be a fat and rather short man with a raspy voice, but only the original unsavory Master really was; his four successors since have all been women impersonating him. The first was the Master's chamber slave, a skillful ruler who chose and trained her own successor from among the young female street thieves of Oeble—a woman wise enough to do the same thing when advancing age enfeebled her. Most of the Master's rings are now fakes, not valuable, or have lost their magic—but not all of them.

The current and fifth Master is Jhorunla Nalavurn (CN Illuskan human female, a mastermind rogue), who is devoted to Oeble, and maintaining its independence and lawless "crossroads for all" nature; like all of her predecessors, she is always on watch for plots by other Border realms to raid or conquer the town. She spends a lot of time and energy manipulating mercenary bands and competent adventures to be nearby and ready to defend Oeble—without actually being paid to do so until they're truly needed. The Master accomplishes this by endless rumors, offers of "little deals" that can be made only in Oeble, and so on. She's very good at this sort of intrigue, and always has dozens of "plays" (by which she means little gambits of intrigue, not stage performances) going on at once. Previous Masters were forced to play one Border realm against another to prevent intended conquests of Oeble, but this threat has faded in recent years, as nearby realms weakened or turned their attention to more pressing concerns. Nalavurn's hobby is learning all she can about all, powerful Oeblar—just in case the knowledge might come in useful someday.

She often gives adventurers small spying missions to confirm or uncover just one thing, but report back on all they see and overhear.

Nalavurn inherited a means of profit from her predecessors: the Paeraddyn, a "safe" inn on the southern edge of Oeble that sports a stable, bathing house, gardens, minstrels' bower, and a heavily-policed market all within its own walled compound. Bodyguards can be hired from the management by the hour, day, or night, and come in an impressive array of deadly looking, over-equipped brutes, most of them nigh eight feet tall and all of them bristling with weapons. Some folks stay at "the Paer" out of fear, some just to say they've been to Oeble, and some (the best fences for any stolen jewels the good citizens of Oeble just might have grown tired of, for instance) for the extra measure of security it provides. It's also the handiest accommodations and drinking-spot for livestock buyers and sellers and caravan-masters making use of the largest, newest paddocks. All profits from the Paer go into the Faceless Master's purse.

The Yuan-ti of Oeble

In the Underways of Oeble dwell a handful of yuan-ti (serpentfolk) of a ssrath or lesser tribe of House Eselemas. Over the last century their numbers have dwindled thanks to the violence of rival serpentfolk, and some unwise conflicts with other Oeblar who proved more resourceful than the yuan-ti thought they were.

The surviving serpentfolk have learned to keep very low profiles, operating through human, half-orc, and other intermediaries as much as they can. They still traffic in slaves, shipping such "walking meat" south to the Eselemas tribal lands in the southern Black Jungles via Lushpool. They also deal in mordayn powder, shipping it to agents across Faerûn to further the schemes of House Eselemas.

The yuan-ti have been in Oeble for a century and a half because of a two-way magical portal linking a cul-de-sac of the Underways near the Talondance (that they guard constantly) with the catacombs under Adderposts, an infamous junk and pawnshop in the town of Essembra in northern Battledale, that stands just a few hundred feet south of the central Battle Court (marshaling ground). Adderposts is named for its odd and unmistakable spiral-serpentine-carved door pillars. This vast, dimly-lit establishment is crammed with secondhand goods, many of them stolen property, and is a regular stop for peddlers and traders from northern Sembia looking for unusual goods (or to unload "hot" property), and to buy mordayn powder with which to make the drug known as dreammist.

Long before the founding of Essembra, Adderposts was the site of a minor sarrukh temple of Sss'thasine'ss, and the catacombs beneath it still hold several relics of that dark deity. After the fall of Myth Drannor, a chance discovery of the long-buried sarrukh ruins led to the open establishment of a surface temple of Sss'thasine'ss, in which the long-forgotten deity was venerated as a totem of venomous creatures, including scorpions, snakes, spiders, and the like. (Talona, the Lady of Poison, secretly granted spells and guidance to this cult.) The temple's motto, "The Serpent Never Sleeps," is still uttered in Battledale, though its meaning has been lost; it's now understood to mean "the forces of evil never rest." The cult of Sss'thasine'ss faded away within a few decades of its establishment, but the temple, which had acquired its name of Adderposts, was used for a succession of businesses (lumber storage, trading in "forest beast" pelts and meats, and a wagon-works) until it became the shady many-goods shop it is been for more than a century now.

The yuan-ti of Oeble are led by five elders who hide behind the collective name of "the Cold Eyes." They agree on most things but carry on friendly rivalries. One of the matters they agree upon is that any adventurers co-opted by the Faceless Master should be manipulated into thwarting what the Master wants, and enriching the yuan-ti.

The Dead Cart

This massive, battered old conveyance carries corpses, dung, and daily household rotting refuse out of town for dumping in downwind middens. It's been owned and run by a succession of dirty and usually ugly "gnarlbones" men, who have inherited the "Treasure of Hulm." Hulm Draeridge, founder of the first, much smaller, and long-gone Dead Cart, was wont to keep a finger, toe, or ear of each corpse he "carted to the vultures: (or sold, no questions asked, to necromancers, cultists, hags, or the truly hungry), mummifying them in a cellar in case passing wizards or priests wanted to buy such trophies. Whenever Hulm knew what person a remnant belonged to, he labeled it accordingly. Such purchases have been few, and Hulm's successors have continued the practice, so the collection has grown. The current Gnarlbone is a hulking, misshapen, extremely strong half-orc named Halargh Orlum, who keeps thieves away from his cellar by spreading grisly (but entirely fanciful—or are they?) tales of the Thumb Golem that guards it, and can turn the thumbs of the living against their owners, usually making them gouge out their own eyes! Halargh can keep severed limbs from decaying through a secret magical process he mastered from old grimoires, and will attach them to himself as replacements whenever he loses a limb. (Stored in oil, they are animated, and behave like crawling claws if disturbed; if he's near, he can command them as deftly as if they were attached to him.)

He long ago, as a precaution, plucked out one of his own eyes (replacing it with a working but

mismatched eye from a man he murdered) and set it into the head of a preserved-in-a-vat-of-oil human body, to keep some of his life-force hidden away so he'll live on if ever slain—and this has happened twice now, and worked each time: his sentience awakens the body, he goes and retrieves whatever's left of himself, and anything intact enough to retain, he grafts onto the preserved body so as to salvage as much of Halargh Orlum as he can . . . and then he sets about strangling someone so as to get a new "backup body" for his oil vat.

In this manner, Halargh Orlum has become a persistent fixture around Oeble, and a quiet, behind-the-scenes foe to anyone he feels has wronged him. He makes steady coin hiding valuables (gems, deeds and contracts, magic, and the like) in return for rental fees, in among his animated spare limbs.

Ondeeme

Realm

Once a coastal land of small homesteads carved laboriously out of a lush forest, Ondeeme was transformed forever when the mage whose name it bears founded his own kingdom there. Ondeeme was a successful but restless wool-merchant (and secret wizard) of Schamedar who in 1360 DR descended without warning on Phaeradur (as the land was then called), and viciously blasted everyone to ashes. Everyone.

When there was no one left alive, he departed to recruit his own servants as well as younglings in Calimshan who desired magic and power of their own, returning to found his new kingdom of Ondeeme.

Under his iron rule (and the everpresent threat of his magic), the forest was cleared with astonishing speed and many sheep-farms established. As would-be mages and malcontents from all over Calimshan began to arrive, Ondeeme lost no time in adopting Calishite airs and fashions so his realm would lure the restless, lawless, and unwanted of Calimshan and the Shining Sea coasts.

He succeeded in this all too well, finding his busy hands full of an endless succession of deceitful mages, doppelgangers, cruel slavers, smugglers, and thieves looking to establish new thieving-guild chapters in his "Echo of Calimshan." Vicious street-battles and covert murders occurred daily, chaos reigned—and Ondeeme went into hiding to modify an ancient spell he had found (that he had planned to work on leisurely for years). It became his bloodmage charm spell, enabling the caster to mentally control any creature whose blood could be procured for the casting: a spell that could be combined with multiple castings of itself to form a large web of control over a dozen or more beings, if the caster could withstand the mental strain. Ondeeme successfully used the spell to control eleven human mages. Treated well and ruled lightly, they became his nobility and war-officers, as he moved ruthlessly (late in 1362 DR) to reestablish his rule over the battleground of thugs Ondeeme had become.

Ondeeme's controlled Calishite wizards were called "the Slee" by Ondeemans (derived from a merchant's bitter observation that they were "the darkness in Ondeeme's sleeves"). In descending rank, they included three Samphanars (masters of castles or towns); four Oedellars (roving "spell-captains"), and four Nictars (expendable servitor mages, crawlingly ambitious and endlessly energetic; many of these were killed and replaced in the struggle to control Ondeeme).

Under the Slee-reinforced rule of Ondeeme the Mage-King, open lawlessness came to a swift end. Stability brought trade and increased prosperity. As the influence of the young, haughty realm of Ondeeme spread, distant eyes and ears turned its way, and agents of sinister cabals hungry for power began to appear in the streets of Blackalblade, its capitol (see the "Blackalblade" entry). This interest caught fire in 1368 DR when the Mage-King announced the creation of his own school of wizardry, Tethtannar, atop the craggy hill of that name north of BlackalbIade.

Someone or something of great magical power attacked in the winter of early 1369 DR, destroying Tethtannar in nightlong spellbattle that set the sky afire. The blazing beams of the shattered school had barely tumbled to earth before rumors swept the realm that the Mage-King was dead, and all his students with him. Some said the Slee had also perished, but others insisted they had rebelled against their master, subverted by Red Wizards of Thay or other, unknown powers—or acting on their own behalf for the first time after breaking Ondeeme's spell-thrall. The "Night of Doom" has been blamed on something dark and mysterious known as the Night Parade, on various powerful Calishite wizards, and even on various offended gods.

All that's certain is that Tethtannar remains in ruins, King Ondeeme has not been seen since, and all of the Slee vanished that night and stayed unseen for months. During the "Months Without Magic," emboldened merchants of Blackalblade hired mercenaries to keep order, and managed to cow the surviving Swords into obedience. Power struggles began, but the realm remained surprisingly calm. Courted by the ruling merchants, other wizards began to settle in Ondeeme. Two of these were Jarorthlan of Sheirtalar and Ondalus of Calimport, both of whom took houses in Blackalblade provided by the merchants' council and were named Lords of the Empty Throne. Much to their discomfort, the Slee reappeared before the year was half over, simply striding into Ondeemans' and the other

Swords' holds of the realm one morning as if they had never been away.

The realm was abuzz. Were these truly the Slee . . . or disguised Red Wizards or Zhentarim (or . . . ?) who'd taken the shapes of the Slee? If so, why?

And what of the Mage-King? Was he dead? Who ruled the Slee? Or had Tethtannar been a ploy to lure wizards so Ondeeme could easily destroy them, and the Months Without Magic a way to get prominent Ondeemans to step forward so they could be easily identified and slain or magically controlled?

The Slee killed any who dared to ask them about the Mage-King or Tethtannar or their absence, the Lords of the Empty Throne didn't dare emerge from their palatial homes, and Ondeeme held its collective breath, watching and waiting for magical doom—and worse.

The Slee seemed stronger in their magic, as if changed. They sent swords racing around the land as if invasions were imminent, and seemed driven by a dark and onrushing fate only they could see, as at the heart of it all, Blackalblade sat in a tense calm, mirroring the decadent fashions of Calimshan. Adventuring bands began to sidle into Blackalblade, and rumors flew like storm-driven dragons. Then came news of the discovery of an extensive ancient underground tomb a-crawl with magically animated guardians on a southern Ondeeman sheep farm; had the Mage-King founded his realm here because of this great buried power—and possibly more magic Ondeemans knew nothing of? Fear could almost be smelled in Ondeeme as everyone awaited answers.

That never came. One morning the Slee simply vanished again, and so did the Lords of the Empty Throne, no one seeing them depart. They left the sheep farm tomb unexplored and the realm ungoverned.

And so it has remained, avoided by many mages down the years since for fear they'll be set upon by angry Ondeemans, or by the Slee coming suddenly out of hiding again—or by whatever destroyed the Slee and the Lords of the Empty Throne.

And if any Ondeeman knows what that mageslaying force or being is, they're not saying.

Oparl

Small Town

Oparl was once a town in the heart of Bedorn consisting of sixty large walled Calishite mansions with private stables and gardens, all clustered atop four high hills, and so commanding good views of the rest of Bedorn—and anyone approaching Oparl. It was the private country retreat of the Mighty High of Oparl, wealthy Calishites with private armies of guards, who kept to themselves and wanted no visitors.

Nowaways, Oparl is far more ramshackle. The mansions were always of dubious construction, sagging or shedding stone adornments or even collapsing in places, but the strife following the tumult of the coming of the Spellplague drove many of their owners to relocate, taking their bodyguards with them, and lawlessness came to Oparl.

Many of the departing Mighty High saw taking their charmed or trained guardian monsters with them as far too much trouble, and simply loosed the beasts to prowl for food, creating local mayhem.

Most of the remaining Oparlans were carpenters, waterjacks (plumbers), roofers, and gardeners who'd been kept busy expanding and rebuilding the mansions, both to effect necessary repairs and into make the structures ever grander and gaudier. When the exodus of wealthy mansion owners gathered speed, some of these remaining inhabitants seized the abandoned private palaces and turned them into rooming houses, with themselves as landlords. Disputes led to some houses being torn down, and the materials reused to make far more modest "cottars" (cottages or shacks) downslope (that is, on the lower ground between the hills).

There are the inevitable local tales of treasure left behind by the departing wealthy, but these seem more wishful thinking than likely reality—though there are mansion cellars still held by monsters and thus unexplored, and some of the outcasts and fugitives from elsewhere who've come to Oparl to rent accommodations may well have brought treasures, and hidden them near where they now dwell.

Oparl never had a lord, a Watch, nor an inn, tavern, eatery or shop. Now it has one sprawling establishment that does all of those things: a half-ruined mansion (with many roofless, abandoned wings, but a front core of repaired and inhabited rooms) known as Flandarr's Fair Prospect; Flandarr has dubbed himself "Lord of Oparl" as a sort of joke, because he runs the Prospect as an inn, eatery with ale and a smattering of wines available, makes the rules, and has outfitted three men with weapons and armor to keep the peace; they mainly police the Prospect, its stables, and the yard around, but they are all the law there is in Oparl.

Although nature is reclaiming many of the gardens, meadows, and abandoned mansions, everything in the old, grand Oparl of a century ago was reshaped from nature; no matter how "ruined" a feature may have appeared back then, it had been built that way, with many "wild" shrubberies concealing pumphouses or privies; almost every tall tree back then was planted, moved, or left where it had grown so as to frame, rather than block, a pleasing window-view. There were service tunnels to link mansions with trash-storage cellars or pits, to spare the Mighty High from seeing servants carrying refuse; some of these cellars likely still contain marred

or broken once-fine furnishings. There was also a common sewer network (streams were pumped to fountains and bathing-pools in each house, before being used to flush garderobes away); in its dark, wet reek are still a few functioning float alarms (string-tethered bladders suspended below the water surface, in patterns intruders can't help but disturb, causing alarm-gongs to chime that sound off eerily from time to time.

Many mansions had guardian monsters, and it's been said at MageFairs that Oparl in the 1350s DR probably contained more animated guardians and magic items than any other settlement in all of Faerûn. Some mansions had private chapels with resident clergy, and some were adorned with gargoyles of the monstrous sort, that she sent flying to tear apart unwanted intruders. Powerful spells inhibited fires in many mansions, and the outer fringes of most mansion grounds were liberally furnished with alarms, traps, or both. A few mansion owners collected dangerous beasts and thought it sporting to let them prowl the grounds, devouring intruders. At least one Oparlan mansion had a spell-confined vampire roaming its gardens, who liked to seduce handsome intruders before she slew them, and over time built herself a small legion of vampire spawn who do her bidding. The grounds of another house contain unmarked, one-way portals to various unsavory "elsewheres," awaiting the unwary who lack protective finger-rings that prevent the portals from functioning. Many of these features may yet survive.

To avoid prowling monsters, some wayfarers have taken to camping not in Oparl, but in the first hollow along the lane north out of town, where there's a stream of drinkable water.

Persistent Border rumors concern this or that fugitive from justice, kidnapped individual, or someone pursued by foes fleeing to Oparl and hiding out in its ruined and abandoned mansions. If all these tales were true, Oparl would be a sizeable city, not a dwindling town, but then, all those monsters have to eat something.

Owlhold

Realm

Since the loss of Bloutar to the neighboring Barony of Blacksaddle, there's been nothing approaching even a hamlet in the little-known land of Owlhold. Almost as thickly wooded as the Qurth Forest it was once part of, Owlhold is a rolling, many-ridged land of hedges, vines, hanging moss, and ever-present shade. The air is damp, and nameless lanes twist and turn, leading the traveler astray. Tales are told of caravans swallowed and lost forever in the green, tangled heart of Owlhold—and at least two such tales are true; bogs and brigands are the real perils of Owlhold.





The Owlen

The Owlen are quiet folk who live with the land rather than endlessly striving to conquer it. They are adept at melting away from needless trouble. Many an aggressive band of outlanders has entered an Owlen home in search of food, shelter, or directions—only to find it deserted, snuffed candles still smoldering and back door standing open. The homesteaders haven't gone far; anyone foolish enough to pillage, vandalize, or set fires will taste swift, plentiful, and deadly arrows from the trees.

Elves, half-elves, and outlaws are plentiful in Owlhold—as are owls, who hunt small scurrying creatures that are locally very plentiful because Owlen don't kill them to protect farm crops. "Farming" to Owlen is gathering medicinal mosses and herbs, and berries for the making of throat-scorching wines, and selling the results to the few traders who venture into Owlhold.

Owlen History

Thousands of years ago, Owlhold was the heart of Oelerhode, a gnome kingdom that grew proud and foolish. Domed stone houses were built and rebuilt, rising aver higher above conical stone waymarkers and walled gardens. The Oeler gnomes pushed back the forest with almost as much vigor as they tunneled the earth after plentiful gems. Then orcs came, roaring south in an endless flood of blood-drenched blades and roaring cruelty. They swept over Oelerhode and left it a shattered, plundered open grave, abandoned to vultures and carrion-beasts. The forest swiftly reclaimed it, burying shattered domes and fallen waycones as it cloaked everything in green growing things, obliterating proud gnome-work (and hiding cellars full of Oeler riches—some of which are known to Owlen as safe hiding or storage places, or see use as playgrounds for their children) with seeming eagerness.

Powerful Inhabitants

Brigand and adventurer intrusions stir Owlen to call on the mightiest among them: outlawed adventurers; a handful of renegade wizards who dwell here in seclusion to study and experiment (often using roofless gnome granary-caverns as spell-hurling chambers), and undead (such as Ongolym Nlerreth, a disintegrating archlich driven mad by the Spellplague who commands unique and mighty spells, flying golems, and a four-person Netherese airship; and Baeremyl Clathaderra, a watchghost who owns nine magic swords forged for the heroes of long-fallen Helbrester (a city that once flourished, rich and proud, before the Nelanther was pirate-infested, and now lies beneath the waves of the Sea of Swords) she likes to see used in battle from time to time. She'll lend them to adventurers for use in a specific combat, but can animate any of the blades to fly by itself, and threaten anyone who fails to return a blade she has lent. Magic rings and rods float inside her ghostly body, flickering and pulsing when awakened to fill her with swirling sparks, and by some eldritch magic she can cause their powers to flow to her fingertips and mouth, to burst forth at her command.

For the Wayfarer

Maps of the Border Kingdoms show the major roads crossing Owlhold, but these are wildly inaccurate, often omitting the twists and even crossing-themselves loops the real routes make. Owlhold is unknown territory; even most lifelong Owlen know only a small area intimately, and the courses of a few streams and rivers (which are the trails one can't get lost on) well.

The road between Oeble and Bloutar (known locally as the Green Road) skirts Owlhold proper, and it is readily and openly traveled. The perilous winding way on which travelers can too easily get lost is the Bowshot, linking the midpoint of the Green Road with Longcrag Ride, the route between Talduth Vale and Beldargan. Proper inns stand at both ends of the Bowshot, where it meets the other roads.

At its north end is the Four Stags (Good/Expensive), a bustling place (with sizzling,

spits-of-meat-crowded hearths at either end of a long and usually crowded common room, and sheds where secure "long stalls" can be rented for an intact team and eagon to be driven into, settled for the night, then driven out the other end of, come morning) where Owlen come to trade goods with passing merchants, hire companionship, and see all they desire of the wider world.

Owlen seeking to meet not outlanders but each other seek the Griffon Aflame at the south end of the Bowshot (for details of it and locales along the Bowshot, see the Bowshot entry}.

Owlhold today lacks a ruler, a blazon, formal laws, or anyone to keep law and order; Owlen look after themselves, and tend to simply melt away into the forest when faced with armed aggression. As one adventurer once put it, "There's nothing to invade there, let alone conquer or stay for—except seclusion and privacy."

Waystones

At every locale in the Border Kingdoms where roads and trails meet in the countryside, and in many such moots in villages, towns, and cities, too, standing stones (huge local boulders, always bulking taller and wider than an adult human; most weigh more than four wagons) have been set up at the waymoot, and deeply graven with arrows and place names to direct wayfarers "This way to X."

In many places, someone who moves, removes, or defaces (altering its directions) a waystone will be sentenced to death. No Borderer born would dream of doing such things; to them, waystones are reliable anchors no one could or should mess with.

However, there's no prohibition against adding things to a waystone, and a tradition has grown up over the centuries of scratching or marking (often with pitch, or the soot from an ashen firestick) messages on waystones. Sometimes these are warnings, but more often they are cryptic private messages, there for all to see, but readily intelligible only by intended recipients.

Often they take the form of a rune or glyph denoting either the message-writer or who it's intended for, and then a word or two (such as "Found It" or "Blue Door" or "Black Helm Hunting Me" or "Use the Danger Plan").

Veteran adventurers agree that one can learn a lot from waystones—if one's not careful.

Qurth Forest

The second largest wood in the Border Kingdoms (after the Duskwood), Qurth Forest is known to be a place where more than a few adventurers and avid stag-hunters have ventured into . . . and never come out of. The gloomy, unmapped depths of its duskwoods, oaks, and shadowtops guard secrets—and dangers—whispered of throughout the Borders.

Outlanders who try to find their own ways though Qurth often become lost; the use of local guides is essential. A few paths wander from Bloutar (see the "Bloutar" entry) into the heart of Qurth Forest through reaches roamed by korred and intelligent fungi; it's said these trails end at ruined, overgrown cities. Bloutarran guides do a brisk trade accompanying wise adventurers, hunters, and gleaners of rare woods into "Old Gloom." Borderers have long suspected Bloutarrans put traps on the trails and allow certain monsters to flourish—perhaps including the fabled deepspawn, disgorging an endless flood of stags so every Bloutarran stag-hunt can be a success. Bloutarran foresters do a brisk trade in Qurth pelts, antlers, hide, and smoked "forest beast meats" year-round.

Qurth is old and thickly grown, its deep stands cloaking hills and deep gullies in an endless damp shade where fungi glow and flicker, unseen things watch and slither, and owlbears, furtive myconids, and aggressive wild boar lurk. Its outer verges are choked with trap-webs spun by many spiders, some led by ettercaps. In its seldom-seen depths, giant slugs roam at least one overgrown, abandoned keep and two lost cities. One of the ruined cities must be the once-proud and wealthy Hawklyn (once a city of arms, armorers, and mercenaries, where the King of Battles, Aramaun Klelder, once held court; now, monsters—including nagas—are said to roam its deep cellars and crumbling halls). The keep might be Starth Keep, where many gems cut by the fabled Starth family may lie strewn and long-forgotten under tree-roots.

The Spellplague brought with it a prolonged drought, and parts of the forest dried out, died, and burned in lightning-caused fires, until they became near-desert, but after several decades, the customary wet weather returned, bolstering the two rivers (the Scelptar and the Starth) that rise in the depths of the Qurth. These days, much of Qurth Forest is again so thick as to be nigh impassable.

It's said around the Borders that a Calishite sorcerer long ago cursed a ruler in the Qurth that monsters would overrun his realm, which is why dangerous beasts are so plentiful as to make hunting dangerous, and woodcutting so perilous that no one dares to hew new farms out of the edges of this wild woodland.

Raundawn Hills

An unmapped area of low, grass-covered hills northwest of Blackalblade, "the Raundawn" are the source of much of that city's prosperity. The hills are of soft and varied rocks overlaid by thick topsoil, and are now tunneled with old mine-workings and pits due to the many veins of gem-bearing rock that run

from near the surface down into the deeper Underdark, most of them curving from northerly runs around to northeasternly as they descend.

The hills are home to some stubborn prospectors (who've had to become hardened fighters who make daily use of concealed dwellings and traps, and in most cases become brigands preying on anyone happening by or coming to seek the fabled gems) just to survive. Over the years, leucrotta and other opportunistic monsters have come to the hills, and still do from time to time, and the meager ranks of the prospectors have been infiltrated by doppelgangers who try to slay and impersonate visiting gem-seekers.

The hills themselves have been dug over so often that the soil is unstable, much given to landslips (only in a rare handful of spots are the slopes steep and high enough for landslides to take place) and rapid, easy digging. The easily-gleaned surface gemstones are all gone, but much remains that is deeper, often accessed by extending the labyrinth of unstable (much given to cave-ins) old mining tunnels downwards. Monsters lurk in the tunnels, and are increasingly roaming up from the deeper Underdark below, in search of food (in the form of miners). Most of the gems gleaned from the Raundawn Hills these days are amethysts, agates, malachite, turquoises, and (deeper, exclusively) emeralds.

The Realm of the Mount

Realm

The wooded ridges and uplands east of Jundarwood are dominated by an actively volcanic wooded ridge known as "the Mount," tightly-patrolled highlands that have for centuries been one of the most secretive Border Kingdoms.

Though the highlands seem almost deserted wilderness—the only signs of habitation are a few muddy trails, small paddocks of sheep and goats amid the trees, and the occasional log cabin elevated on timber cribs—intruders will be challenged by patrols who savagely attack everyone except Tomb Holders (landowners of the realm); traveling merchants who keep to certain camping-places, markets, and trails; or dwarves seeking to rent forging time. Intruders bearing magic items will be attacked with particular fury; those trying to parley for admittance will be surrounded by a ring of at least three patrols (the Realm can muster more than twenty) while an Overduke is summoned to decide their fate.

A Mount patrol consists of three dragonborn: a Hawklar (leader) and two Sturklars. These officers magically command six gargoyles and two "deathwings" (undead winged owlbears animated by the Dread King), and are accompanied by one to four flying snakes as "eyes" (spies) to watch patrol encounters from afar, fleeing to summon other patrols if need be. Hawklars often carry additional flying snakes in back-pouches, for unleashing in tough fights. If all dragonborn in a patrol perish, surviving gargoyles and deathwings are freed to attack all creatures nearby.

Mount History

Thanks to its volcanism, the Realm of the Mount was in elder days nameless, monster-roamed wilderland, shunned by elves (whose arrows kept away interested dwarves and gnomes). The wizard Xavander Relurvor of Ravens Bluff found it by chance in 1319 DR, when his kin were determined to retain the sizable portion of the Bluff's treasury that Xavander's older brother, Ormalin, had managed to embezzle.

Xavander saw that the Mount's hot rifts could swiftly melt easily traced trade-bars and coins into lumps of silver and gold from which he could mint replica coins of Amn and Calimshari to secure the family fortunes and pay for his own arcane schooling. So the Relurvors "died" in a house fire and due to various diseases, in reality slipping away south, one by one, to their new realm. Ormalin and Xavander argued furiously over what this bright new land should be like—until Ormalin somehow fell into a lava rift, his desires of castles, bustling cities, pomp, and worldwide importance dying with him.

Xavander the Great ruthlessly established the realm as it is today: a seeming wilderness lacking towers, good roads, or even much cleared farmland, where secrets reign and everyone is part of a hierarchy. For fees, the Relurvors quietly sold suitable Ravenaar territory in "a hidden land," to serve as a refuge. As troubled tunes beset Ravens Bluff, word spread of "The Land of Tombs" where loved ones could be laid to rest in pastoral beauty (the Relurvor cover story), and many Ravenaar settled in the Realm. One was a wizard more powerful than Xavander, who slew "the King of the Mount" when Xavander tried to swindle him.

Xavander's son became Tholander the Mighty, First Lord-Emperor of the Mount. Tholander was a magnificent blustering giant of a man with great charisma, a mellifluous voice, and just enough wits to know he was hopeless at running anything or matching wits with anyone. He hired some of the nastiest Ravenaar and gave them wealth and titles (such as "Grand Duke Most Awesome Belborst of the Gilded Banners"), in return for ruling the Mount from behind the scenes and preparing Helemvo, his most promising son, for rule. They did—and that keen-witted, cruel lad rewarded them by poisoning them and most of his siblings when Tholander took to his deathbed. Upon his ascension, Helemvo the Peerless coldly and calmly set about improving the security of his kingdom.

First, the "Dread King" murdered several wealthy Tomb Holders. With their wealth he bought minor

items of magic, and with these lured dragonborn to his service, using powerful spells to bind and empower them to command gargoyles and undead owlbears of his making. He set patrols of these minions to guarding the Mount, and made a handful of weak but shrewd underlings into "Overdukes of the Mount." There are usually seven Overdukes; Helemvo elevates replacements whenever treachery or incompetence force him to slaughter one. The Overdukes are served by Harcounts, who do any real work (fetching, delivering messages, signing documents, retrieving and keeping records) in addition to keeping watch over each Overduke for the Dread King. Most Overdukes and Harcounts cordially hate each other; and the Dread King often shuffles them into different pairings to prevent friendships from developing. The King usually has nine or so Harcounts and two Bannerlords (his personal messengers, who outrank Harcounts and Hawklars, but not Overdukes).

Helemvo's kingdom is a storage cache for Ravenaar wealth (especially things its Tomb Holders don't want publicly seen, such as stolen goods, kidnapped rivals, or family members hiding from justice or foes). Tomb Holders pay six thousand gold pieces annually per "tomb" (storage cairn) they possess, toward the common guardianship of the realm. Mount cairns are usually covered with overgrowth to escape notice from afar. Their concealed tunnel entrances lead to a few rough living or storage rooms, and sometimes an emergency crawl-tunnel "back way" entrance. Every Holder is free to furnish and use their cairn however they see fit, establishing their own traps, staff, and guardians (golems, crawling claws, dread warriors, and monster skeletons are popular).

Local volcanism hasn't included any recent eruptions, though "grumble-thunder" earth tremors are common. Visitors will notice that homes are elevated (caves and cellars are almost unknown), the air often stinks of sulfur, and in many hollows hot springs bubble or steaming vapors rise from fissures. (Locations of rifts suitable for melting or forging are kept secret.)

The Way of Screaming Swords

The Dread King maintains firm personal control over "the Way of Screaming Swords," the one-user-at-a-time portal link between the Realm of the Mount and Ravens Bluff. The Mount end is at Hool, in the Founder's (Xavander's) ruined mansion, and functions automatically, transporting any creature stepping on a particular stone. The ruin is crowded with stone golems and other constructs that obey the Dread King; unless activated, they look like broken stone pillars or heaps of stone. Five large, floating disembodied eyes (human-seeming, but as large as wagons) fly about the ruins, gazing and moving wherever Helemvo directs and transmitting what they see to him. They can emit spells he casts into them from afar. In Ravens Bluff, the Way opens into a back alley behind a disused, rotting rooming house in Bitterstone in the Harbor District. Its precise location is the second (when moving north) diamond-shaped flagstone amid the weeds and rubble, in the lee of an old coaching shed; it functions only for beings standing on this stone while saying "All Praise Xavander."

Magic cast on either portal terminus will cause it to emit the Screaming Swords, four sword-shaped "flying needles" of magical force (and this will also occur ig any being whom Helemvo has previously touched and designated a "foe" approathes within 120 feet of either portal). These flying needles give off a pale white glow, swoop with great alacrity (speed fly 80 ft. with deft maneuverability), strike once per round: ranged weapon +12 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target, hit: melee touch, 2d4 force damage); they "fade away" the moment they have struck the same target twice, or when there's no longer a foe within 120 feet of the portal that spawned them. Anyone "successfully" grappling or trying to grasp a screaming sword takes damage as if successfully attacked by the blade, as it passes "through" them and retains its freedom.

These flying blades are known as "screaming swords" for the high-pitched wailing sound they generate. Their attacks affect only flesh and life force, not clothing, armor, or items. Any foe ducking through the portal to escape them will suffer damage from the portal itself equal to two full-damage screaming sword attacks in the instant of traversing the Way. (The Way will successfully detect designated foes even if shapechanged or disguised.)

The Dread King

In life, Helemvo Relurvor was a NE male Damaran human wizard, a small, balding, dour and paranoid man with glittering black eyes. The Spellplague transformed him horribly into a sort of "living spell" undead; he persists as a gray, smokelike mist that can only solidify into hovering human-like form to speak and cast spells for 4d4 minutes a day (and only 2d4 minutes at a time), though he can shape his mist-form sufficiently to form limbs and gesture, all the time.

Helemvo now trusts no living creature, and has contact with as few of them as he can manage. He spends most of his time in hiding near his lofty personal throne room where his Bannerlords hasten to find him. He often magically spies on, or into the mind of, anyone in his realm; his chief fears are of illithids or powerful wizards destroying overthrowing him, and he'll move swiftly to use contact poisons, "accidents," and massed patrol attacks to eliminate

all such threats. He never forgets anyone who's crossed him, but nowadays never reaches out beyond the borders of his realm to do anything to foes.

The Dread King dislikes face-to-face combat or even confrontation, preferring to work obliquely or through underlings whenever possible. He's adept at vanishing when foes seek him, and if hunted, will magically transform innocent humans into false duplicates of himself, to die in his place. Helemvo is currently seeking magic items that will allow him to scry wider Faerûn often. He spends much of his time scheming to acquire ever more magic and riches, in ways that won't attract too much attention to his realm's existence.

Quurlanxlam (see "The Night Arrow" in chapter 2) keeps watch over the Dread King, but he is thus far unaware of its existence—both thanks to spells it's devised that subvert the minds of flying snakes to its command whenever they get too close.

Particulars of the Realm

The Realm of the Mount has never had any inns or taverns, and welcomes no visitors. Merchants and dwarves seeking access to forging vents are tolerated, and given the temporary use of market stalls and camping-caverns; it's understood they will be spied upon at all times, and they are sternly told to keep to the trails and "not to wander" upon pain of death.

The Realm wants fresh foods, small sundries (tools, crockery, clothing, and other everyday items), and pays for them with the coins merchants and dwarves pay their rents with; it exports nothing in reliable quantities. It can muster an army of some ninety armed and trained dragonborn, has a resident population of several hundred farmers (who are employed on a casual-task basis for servant-work to Tomb holders, and on road and bridge maintenance), and rarely uses its blazon, which is the badge of the Relurvor family: a black diamond, navette or marquise-cut and displayed with long points horizontal, above a tied sheaf of golden wheat, stalks to the viewer's left and heads facing to the viewer's right.

Realm of the Ready Sword

Realm

Lying like a long, meandering swordbelt along the southern edge of the dense forest of Duskwood, this land is one of the most lawless and chaotic territories anywhere in Faerûn. Long kingless, this realm is home to brigands, misfits, and monsters of all sorts.

Caravans still use the Realm of the Ready Sword as a preferred fast route between the Shining Sea and the Golden Road thanks to the Crown Blades, whose parents were once the armored knights of the last king, Harlakh Doroaver, the King of Swords. Now, they hire themselves out as mounted escorts to any caravan-master prudent enough to engage them, riding in full plate from their bases, the "castles" (small, defensible stone fortresses) of the Keep of the Crows in the west, Aldersund in the east, and Graaltower near the midpoint of the trade-road.

The Realm of the Ready Sword is a long, pleasant valley between the cliffs that form the edge of the high plateau ofthe Shaar on the south and Duskwood to the north. It has always been enriched by caravans traversing the region—and has always suffered fierce raids from the nomads of the Shaar. This strife gave the realm its name and winnowed its folk to the hardy few willing and able to defend themselves, such as semi-retired mercenaries and outlaws, particularly orcs, half-orcs, ettins, hobgoblins, gnolls, flind, and others not welcome elsewhere. Ready Sworders are always ready for war.

The realm holds no cities or towns, but has many small streams and ponds, a few caves and simple stone cottages (most are abandoned, and were built with sod roofs and dug into hillsides for concealment; now overgrown, they can be difficult to spot) and many small, fortified keeps. These fortress homes lack low windows or doors (ladders are often required for access, with portcullis-gates guarding wagon- or horse-entrances). Most have turrets, and all have stone walls enclosing a garden or orchard, a stone smokehouse or barn, and a stable (often with guest rooms above the stalls). All of these little fortresses are built over wells, most are home to several families, and a few also function as inns.

"Upland" from (north of) the trade-road are secretive dells outlanders seldom see, winding trails leading to quarried, woodcutting groves, and granary-caverns, where the fiery drink called "smokewine" is made and boar herds are slaughtered and smoked. Travelers are warned that many deadly traps surround the boar fields because traditionally raids from the Shaar headed straight for them.

The closest thing this realm has to an army is the Crown Blades, who dispense justice as they see fit and largely ignore anything not occurring on or near the trade-road. It has no written laws, and Ready Sworders understand they must fend for themselves; since the death of the King of Swords, who watched over his populace as if they were all his own cherished children, there's been no one to rule—but thankfully, no rivals have fought each other or despiled the kingdom vying to be king, either.

Roadside taverns are wagons that move about often, sometimes accompanying caravans on the move, inns are few and far between and most travelers camp out through necessity, and the only amenities are camping clearings with latrines, and covered-with-sheds wells, maintained at regular intervals along the trade-road.

The blazon of the realm is a vertical drawn silver-gray longsword, point uppermost, bisecting a brown side-on, eight-spoke wagon wheel (depicted so no spokes are vertical and thus hidden behind the sword).

Realm of the Smoking Star

Realm

Crossed by a good, broad coastal wagon-road, this bucolic forest kingdom is a-crawl with wild magic, which keeps wizards away and has probably kept the Star Throne from serious challenges down the years. (Large and numerous invisible "clouds" of wild magic seem to drift restlessly back and forth through the coastal farms of the realm. No one knows where they came from, or why they persist; within them, magic always goes wildly awry.)

Named for a "star that fell out of the skies" (a meteor) in the early 1100s DR, trailing smoke across the daytime sky ere it crashed to earth, tore a huge furrow, and ignited a forest fire, the Realm of the Smoking Star consists of lightly-wooded coastal farms and ranches. It has no major settlements, but plentiful steadings and wayside inns and taverns; the only named place is the small town of Estelker (see the "Estelker" entry), which probably became a market center because of the wild rock crabs that were once so plentiful that they could easily be gathered for a meal. Now the crabs are all gone, and only the rocklhar (crayfish) remain.



Starrans are easygoing, hospitable farming folk who grow herbs and vegetables to feed themselves and keep goats and sheep. Oddly (given the drifting wild magic areas) or perhaps because of them, they all seem to have the Gift of wielding magic, or at least some sensitivity to it (they can sense its use, or the presence of powerful enchantments, or have limited personal immunities to certain sorts of magic). Many Starrans are sorcerers, spontaneously developing ways of making magic on their own, but most of them are placid, unambitious folk who use magic to soothe farm animals or do other farm tasks, not for battle or dominance.

"Rural contentment" seems to be the rule in this land, not any struggle for coin or power or pride. Many Starrans travel to Derlusk to buy books for pleasure reading once a year, if they crave adventure, or peruse the wagons of passing merchants for books to buy if they don't.

Folk dress simply and live simply, with few fads, fashions, or worldly wants, and the realm lacks an army. It does have a mounted Watch of sturdy police; older farmers of all genders hand the daily farm-work to their children and resident farm-partners (fellow farmers they share their farm with, but aren't related to) and take turns "riding Watch" up and down the realm.

Justice is dispensed by the reigning Star King or Queen, who reigns for life or until abdication (or the Watch deems them senile); many have retired gracefully, for abdication isn't seen as any shame. Currently, the Star Throne (located in a tiny roadside stone former chapel of Chauntea in the "middle of nowhere" just south off the coastal road about midway between Yththym and Alamontyr) is held by a Star Queen, Imdarra Harauntan, a LG Illuskan human female sorceress of soft voice, nondescript looks, incredible calm, and the short stature and fine bones of a young girl, though she's actually seen more than forty summers. She rules on all matters, wearing the enchanted Star crown (a plain circlet with a single central forehead upspike that has magical powers that are known to include those of a *ring of mind shielding,* and to confer immunity to all *suggestion* spells).

Harpers believe the first Star King received throne, crown, and title from one of their senior members in the early 1200s DR, while other tales credit a wandering Halruaan as the bestower—on a surprised but willing local farmer who spent more time rearing sheep than being king. There has always been a Star King or Queen, but it's the monarchs of the realm have all enjoyed an unpaid, less than grand office. (Some sort of secret pact exists between senior members of the Harpers, the Lords' Alliance, the Order of the Gauntlet, and the Emerald

Enclave regarding the Realm of the Smoking Star; whenever it's invaded, or adventurers or anyone else tries to seize power there, various members of these factions show up and despose or destroy the would-be usurper, then depart to leave the Starrans to their own governance again.)

The Realm of the Smoking Star rarely uses its blazon, which is a black four-pointed star (vertical rays twice the length of the horiztonal ones) upon a puffy cloud of white smoke, with an open human eye (black pupil and iris, long black lashes, usually depicted as calmly regarding rather than sternly staring) at the center of the star. It appears on the tall back of the Star Throne, on the front door of the Royal House (the former chapel), and on stone boundary-posts flanking the road on either side at the borders of the realm. Elsewhere, the badge of Estelker is seen more often in daily use.

Rymdyl

Thorp

Today, Rymdyl consists of an inn, the Gryphon's Head (Good/Moderate), flanked by a spring-fed pond useful for watering mounts and draft beasts, all surrounded by a few sheep steadings and radish and turnip farms. On a knoll north of the inn stand the haunted and overgrown ruins of a burnt-out stone keep that never had a moat or surrounding wall, only a dry ditch and earthen rampart. Rymdyl Keep was built in the 1320s DR as the seat of the self-styled Lord of Rymdyl, a warrior who died of winter fever in the 1340s. Later, it was a brigand hold, but they were all slain by monsters in the 1390s. The beasts may or may not still lair in the place; Rymdans shun it because they've seen "skeletons that walk, and wraiths that glide" there by day, and eerie moving lights by night.

The community's name comes from its founder, an adventurer, the half-elf female wizard Elaztara Rymdyl, who died in a spell-duel circa 1296 DR in her keep, which stood about where the inn does now—and that collapsed at the height of the magical fight. She was said to have a small fortune in coins and gems, and a spellbook, that have never been found; most Rymdar think they're still hidden somewhere in the cellars of her keep—which are either buried, or are part of the inn cellars now.

Selpt

Hamlet

This is now the only settlement left in the fallen realm of Suldamma; the rest were razed and abandoned during the years of fierce fighting. Selpt serves wayfarers and the surrounding farms of the former Suldamma, offering an inn, Tattercloaks (Good/Cheap); a tavern, the Bucket and Basilisk (Fair/Cheap); a busy wagonmakers and wagon repair shop (Trauneth's Conveyances); a blacksmith of crude skills but much energy, low prices, and jovial enthusiasm (Maurdren Brulhelm); and a manygoods trader (Delvar Yuncharr, a stout, talkative and tall-tale teller who keeps a cluttered, labyrinthine shop of both new and used goods crammed together, Yuncharr's Usefuls). Much shrunken from its past days as a small town, "Scelptar," between by two castles (both now toppled ruins robbed of almost all their building stones). Scelptans firmly (and correctly) believe the dungeons and cellars of these castles are monster-infested, extensive, and open into natural caverns and fissures of the Underdark. There are local legends of successive High Dukes of Scelptar fleeing with their riches down into these underways, never to be seen again, when would-be assassins among their household staff, or invading usurpers, sought to murder them. So presumably, unless the High Dukes survived the Underdark to emerge elsewhere with their wealth, their treasures still lie somewhere beneath Selpt.

Shandolphyn's Reach

Realm

Once a well-policed, verdant farmland realm of winding lanes, many ponds, and small freehold farms separated by stump and boulder hedges, "the Reach" (despite tales to the contrary) was founded by the adventurer Raedrarra Shandolphyn, and its name referred to the reach of her justice, policed by the remnants of her adventuring band, who became the Riders of the Reach, or police of the realm.

That was a little less than two centuries ago, and for the last sixty years there have been no Riders, or any ruler at all. The Reach was one of the lands



devastated in the Sundering; all sorts of hungry, frightened, aggressive monsters roamed the land in great numbers, and all farmers who couldn't or wouldn't flee in time perished.

Yet so lush were the crops of the Reach, even untended, that when the Sundering was over folk came looking to see if anything could be salvaged from the orchards, and found the overgrown farms so choked with edibles (and small edible creatures feasting on them) that they resettled farm after farm, fought the beasts, and refounded the Reach. Today, this is a land awash in food and exporting wagonloads of it to the hungry mouths of Derlusk. Granaries and pickling cellars have been dug into hillsides and kept full, nigh every farm is prosperous, and the only wants are for new tools and wagons to replace those that wear away through overuse.

An informal council of a dozen of the wealthiest farmers hires adventuring bands in Derlusk whenever defenders are needed, always in pairs: one band to be the muscle, and a second band to make sure the first band doesn't decide to stay in the Reach and try to establish themselves as rulers. The farmers want no overlords.

Over the years, they've developed friendships and a measure of trust in some of the bands they've hired, whose members buy shares in the farms of the Reach and sometimes retire there; these "friendly" bands include the Six Sisters in Steel (not blood-sisters, but all human women in full plate armor); Bruckshaw's Blades; and the all-halfling Brendigo's Sharp-Bladed Tricks.

The long-dead Raedrarra Shandolphyn never used a title or had a throne room or castle, but the Reach (rarely; usually on way-markers) still uses her personal badge: a falcon perched on a bared human forefinger, bird facing, and finger pointing to, the viewer's right.

The Shieldmaidens

This wall of small hills at the western end of the Firesteap Mountains, just east of the Duskwood, got their names for their border position and the fact that, when viewed from afar from the west, they look uncannily like a group of people standing with only their long-haired heads showing above their shields.

Rocky and rather desolate, they were thoroughly dug over in the 1100s and 1200s DR by humans seeking their once-plentiful surface deposits of copper. These miners often fought with orcs that lived in the hills, until the orcs were finally wiped out, around 1276 DR or so, but the easily-found copper was all gone twenty years later (dwarves arrived and tunneled until they found no more ore, and the hills were honeycombed by their delvings; unstable, prone-to-collapse tunnels and underground chambers used as lairs by lurking monsters these days).

Outlaws and merchants caught traveling by early winter storms sometimes take refuge in some of these delvings, and there are many tales of treasure hastily hidden in them, that was never reclaimed by folk who perished before they could return—but then, such tales cling to many places across Faerûn, and are often overblown fancies.

During the Sundering, "the Shieldmaidens shook" according to many local tales, and some of them now insist that the delvings collapsed down into the Underdark in several places—and that the monsters that dwell in the Realms Below are now slowly exploring up into the Shieldmaidens, soon to grow bolder and fare forth.

Sorndorn

Village

A prosperous and growing village that serves a score of "breadbasket" farms to the west and northwest that grow produce enough to feed many Borderers, Sorndorn has never been part of any realm, and isn't adorned with ruins or tales of hauntings. Over the past century, many outlaws, exiled nobles, and fallen-into-disfavor wealthy individuals fled here from elsewhere in Faerun, and formed a community interested in politics, culture, and investments afar.

Sorndorn has an inn, Sarkyn's Silk Banners (Excellent/Expensive), named for its haughty founder and his sense of décor (the place is festooned with tapestries, making it dusty in summer but warm in winter, and is now run by Sarkyn's adult grandchildren); a tavern, The Bonesetter's Arms (Good/Moderate), named for a long ago "physic" (healer), that rents out a few spartan upstairs rooms as a cheaper alternative to the inn; a festhall, the Knight on a Dolphin (Good/Moderate) that puts on nightly plays and at least six daily performances by minstrels, choral groups, or jesters as well as offering massages, scented baths with attendants, and the expected "ladies and saers of pleasure"; a carpenter/roofer (Havarask Varenneth, a terse no-nonsense but competent worker who keeps three well-trained crews busy under his watchful eye), a wheelwright (Onstul Ulbrook, a calm, quiet man whose expert crew "makes wheels round, that go around, and axles that stay true"), a blacksmith (Tarth Dundrake, an amiable blond giant who specializes in making fishhooks and other hooks of all sizes, thanks to his past training in Saerloon), and a manygoods shop (Telcandle's Treasures, where the bustling, huffing, pot-bellied Rold Telcandle sells new and used wares from "all over Faerûn, and worlds beyond!").

There are some rumors among Sorn of shapeshifters in their midst. (These tales are true: there are a few doppelgangers who keep their natures well-hidden, and are content to dwell here in relative safety and prosperity. They will kill without hesitation to keep their identities secret.)

Sorndorn is known among Borderers as a place where backers (investors) and "safe storage" (that is, folk who will hide valuable, dangerous, or distinctive things for them, in return for fees) can readily be found.

Splondar

Village

This small place of many trees and gardens stands in the heart of a cluster of goat and sheep farms. It is easily recognized by an earthmote floating about forty feet off the ground amid a tangled stand of trees just west of the village.

The mote is honeycombed with rooms and passages, and crowned with the ruins of a small stone keep. It's currently the lair of a growing family of often-hungry perytons, but still contains, in certain inner rooms (the chambers not crushed to rubble by the fall of the keep's main tower), the decaying furnishings and wealth of previous human occupants. Ropes and nailed-on rungs on some of the trees suggest that humanoids have sought to access the mote in recent decades. Splondarren believe the mote came from elsewhere, over a century ago, and the ruins atop it are what's left of "some mad wizard's tower." They're right; the mote came from Halruaa, and by the time it reached Splondar, the wizards in it had been driven raving mad by the Spellplague—and soon died, after casting a wild flurry of spells that shattered the keep's main tower) leaving the keep for successive adventurers to seize and inhabit until a hungry wyvern decided to pounce on the handy meals and make its lair there. It perished some years later in a severe winter, and was eaten by scavengers; since then the keep has fallen into ruin, the broken tower toppling in a fierce storm, and seen a long succession of monstrous occupants.

Splondar offers an inn, the Dragondown (Good/Cheap), named for local tales—entirely fanciful—that the earthmote was brought low by the death of a dragon crashing into it high aloft, and bearing it nigh the ground with its dead weight; a tavern, the Wizards' Weird (Fair/Cheap), a dim and well-worn "rustic wood" drinking-hole where the grayhairs of the village sit all day gossiping and telling tales of their old and better days; a ramshackle brewery, manygoods shop, and repair-all works called Brundra's Chance (run by the cheerful, endlessly-energetic, and strong-as-an-ox Brundra Immerhond, who lacks the bulging muscles her strength might lead an observer to expect); and not much else.

Suldamma

Realm

Now little more than a name on maps, the fallen realm of Suldamma formerly stretched from the River Balaerit on the west to a height of land southwest of Burntbridges on the east, and from



the lowlands below and south of the Realm of the Mount to the north, and the broadening River Scelptar to the south.

Today, the hamlet of Selpt (see the "Selpt" entry) is the only surviving settlement of Suldamma, and the land is a patchwork of farms, ranches, a mill or two, and abandoned and overgrown steadings being reclaimed by the forest. It's good game hunting country, but increasingly dangerous, especially in the north, as monsters and brigands grow bolder. Smugglers and pirates have both begun using the coves east of the Balaerit-mouth to land cargoes (and, some say, bury them in prearranged spots in the backbeach sands, to hide them until buyers or agents can come along and dig them up).

Suldamma's History

Of old, Suldamma was "Suldammar," named for its founder, Suldammar the Savage, a corsair who raided many coastal cities around the Shining Sea and Lake of Steam, slaughtering without hesitation when any resisted his seizures of cargo from ships, wharves, and warehouses. Suldammar fled to the Border Kingdoms when he lost a naval battle against Calishites, and they were foolish enough to come after him—and perish to a man as Suldammar and his reavers retreated into deep cover and picked them off, one by one, in traps and with arrows out of the trees and in night ambushes. Suldammar seized their ships (which had been left with skeleton crews) and resumed his freebooting, but sailed around Chult to do it, preying on shipping in the Great Sea and the Golden Water and sailing home to Suldammar before every storm season.

Until, of course, the year he waited too long, and his fleet disappeared in a fierce gale near the Beacon Rocks. The small settlements he'd established (of retired crew, their families and wider kin, and some camp followers) hung on as subsistence farmers, seeing more and more traffic as roads improved and other nearby Border lands grew more populous. More settlers came, including adventurers who built keeps and dubbed themselves "lords" and fought each other until rival Lords of Suldamma arose, fought a vicious war—and laid waste to Suldamma but ended with just one surviving Lord, who crowned himself King (King Haldar the First), and set about establishing Watch riders (patrolling police) and Dukes to command those riders and build their own keeps. Haldar started taxing but built roads and bridges and established a royal work gang that raised barns and homes for those who lost all in fires, and the grudging citizens were won over. Haldar was a strict father, and his daughter Brindra succeeded him as ruling Queen, took a consort, and had three sons, Haldar, Rogaer, and Thaelon. Sickly Thaelon soon died, but Haldar became King Haldar the Just, and Prince Rogaer became Warlord of the realm and set about establishing a disciplined army, a militia, good patrols and better roads to patrol on, and a system of everyone watching everyone else to prevent corruption and bullying, and Suldamma grew great.

Unfortunately, as is the way of so many lands, later kings were lazier, lesser kings, and Suldamma was too wealthy a prize to go unseized. Adventurers sponsored by greedy Calishite satraps invaded repeatedly, and one band of them prevailed, butchering the royal family and burning the royal palace. Only to be slaughtered by opportunistic pirates, who were in turn slain by adventurers coming down the Scelptar from other Border lands. Suldamma dissolved in bloodshed as would-be usurper after would-be usurper invaded, sworded each other and everyone else within reach—and the surviving farmers fled, leaving the last survivors ruling an emptied and ruined land. A harsh winter and hungry wolves put paid to them, and the next spring Suldamma was an empty, broken land.

It has remained that way, more or less, ever since, the good conditions making for successful farming but folk mistrusting armies and rulers, and every time any self-styled "lord" sought to grow in reach and wealth, the next pirates or smugglers coming ashore would break him. For more than a century Suldamma has been lordless, farms and ranches owned by steaders who defend themselves and see to the roads and trust nor pay taxes to no king. There are a few fortified farms that offer beds and meals for the night, or sell meals to travelers camped nearby, and there are overgrown ruins here and there. The blazon of Suldamma was a side-on gold three-pointed crown above three topsail-ketch-rigged ships (Suldammar's lost fleet) sailing to the viewer's left (and overlapping each other, the largest and right-most in front), but it's not been displayed on anything but moss-covered rocks in old ruins for several generations now.

There are tales of rich treasure lying unfound somewhere in Suldamma: the lost regalia of the last king, Baerhlon. When he was slain, only the finery on his body and in the throne room were seized—which means someone hid away his best crown, his magical armor, many gem-festooned gowns and scepters, and the royal treasury (said to be many, many gold bars and coins). As no one escaped the palace fire and the swords of the reavers rising everyone down after, that treasure must still lie somewhere near or beneath the site of the palace (never rebuilt, and today mere blackened stones in the forest). Adventurers have searched, but found nothing—though attacks on them, over the years, suggests someone keeps watch over all treasure-seekers, hoping to snatch what others find.

The Sward

Realm

A name that survives today because it so aptly describes the great expanse of lush meadows that was once most of it, the Sward is now the land of High Emmerock (see the "High Emmerock" entry). It seems this area has always been open grassland, supporting many grazing beasts, and has always been verdant; for centuries there have been rumors that this is due to magic, perhaps ancient draconic spells.

The History of the Sward

After the dragons that ruled it in ancient times perished battling each other, the lesser beasts they fed upon flourished. Giants moved in to rule and defend this gigantic "food pen" against goblins, orcs, and other predators. Under their husbandry, the edible grazing animals grew even more numerous. Some three centuries ago, Calishite adventurers came exploring. Finding wild horses of superb quality in the high meadows, the humans set about exterminating the giants.



They succeeded, and from that time on, the Sward (as those explorers called the meadows) has served certain Calishite horse-dealers as a secret breeding ground. Both to camouflage their best stock and to use every inch of grazing land, the breeders hunted down as many predators as they could and put in their place horned cattle, sheep, and goats. These swiftly multiplied, and their increasing numbers led to a proliferation of rustlers, monsters—and mercenary guards hired by the distant Calishite stock-owners to deal with both sorts of raiders.

The loyalty of such hirelings in turn became a problem. After several minor defiances, there came outright rebellion; the leader of the Unsleeping Eye Guardians, the warrior Ithkyl Halgart, decided to declare the Sward his own kingdom. So began the Tyrant Rule. Halgart was an experienced and well-prepared warrior who employed pitfall traps (and, some say, mysterious magical aid) to advantage, won a series of bitter battles with forces sent by Calishite satraps every summer who disagreed with the notion of paying for beasts that they considered their own. The armies came in earnest for three seasons and were followed by sporadic expeditions of hired mages and renowned adventuring bands in the decade that followed, but Halgart prevailed, retreating into the nearby woods and using the cover to enable his numerically inferior forces to whittle away the strength and resolve of pursuers.

His end came after seventeen summers of ruling his realm from a cave stronghold (today a monster-haunted labyrinth of chambers and natural caverns known as "the Ghostways"). A rapacious blue dragon descended on the realm, dining at will on the Sward's best horseflesh. The Lord of the Sward rode out to do battle with it and was torn limb from limb for his troubles. The wyrm died under repeated volleys of fire arrows at the hands of Halgart's men and was cooked and eaten at the Lord's funeral feast.

After the Lord's death, the watching Calishites expected the fledgling realm to fall apart in the inevitable struggle for the throne among Halgart's underlings. But a warrior named Maeradyn swiftly and ruthlessly took power, and the Sward survived.

So the Calishites watched and waited for the new Lord's rule to fail. When instead it persisted, and the land flourished, they sent more hired armies to smash Maeradyn's troops. The fast-riding Swardar met them with deadly arrow-volleys, striking swiftly and racing on before the larger, better-equipped Calishite forces could strike camp and respond. Whenever the Swardar were brought to bay, giants appeared out of thin air, as if by magic (that mysterious aid again), to pounce on the Calishite forces. Soon the satraps grew tired of throwing away money on armed hosts whose few survivors brought back only news of futility. They abandoned their efforts to reconquer the Sward.

Over the years that followed, a succession of fiercely independent local rulers kept the realm strong. They used the money gained from the sale of their famous horses and lesser livestock to carefully build, equip, and train an elite force of mounted crossbowmen and lancers to guard the herds and horse-meadows. Which was a good thing, because the strength of nearby goblin tribes was rising, too.

And then came Emmerock the Goblinbane (see the "High Emmerock" entry).

The Drifting Portal

Of old, a gate to elsewhere in the Realms was located in the front door of Glethsheven Rimmisk, a warrior Lord of the Sward. Crafted for Rimmisk to weed out evil beings seeking to enter his abode, it was known as "the Drifting Portal" because it sent those passing through it to eight different destinations. However, it malfunctioned from the outset, and when Rimmisk's fortified home was destroyed in the 1380s during a battle between rival replacement Lords (some months after Rimmisk's mysterious disappearance), the Drifting Portal went wilder. Now it drifts in the open, moving about at seeming random in the open grassland along the north edge of the Sward.

Visible as a flickering upright two-tall-man-height oval of fitful light mauve radiance shot through with winking green sparks, that waxes and wanes in brightness, this gate might transport someone passing through it to just about anywhere on Toril—or it might instead transform them magically, as if just about any spell has been cast on them, with effects that might last days, tendays, or even months.

Lurking Magic

Many Borderers believe someone or something magical, or having mighty magical powers, still watches over the grasslands, and works magic from time to time, seemingly upon whims. Travelers in the Sward have spoken of awakening when encamped as transformative magic washed over them in the night, "seemingly out of nowhere." Magic sometimes erupts unlooked for during skirmishes in the meadows, or plays about at the heights of storms. Yet no one knows who or what the source of this magic is, though it does seem guided by sentience, rather than truly random or "leaking mindlessly from something," in the words of one long-dead sage of Derlusk.

The Swordpoint Streams

Realm

Named for the many streams that rise seemingly everwhere in the gently rolling farms and woodlots of this land, to flow via ponds down to the Scelptar and power many mills in the doing, the Swordpoint Streams has always been a land of independents, a rival to neighboring Talduth Vale inhabited by those who want light rule, with few laws and low taxes. The other part of its name arose out of the frequent violence here, as adventuring bands vied to rule or fought off invasions (usually from Talduth Vale).

As a result of these seemingly-endless skirmishes, the Swordpoint Streams has had more Lords, ruling Barons (sometimes councils of four or five equal Barons), Dukes and High Dukes, and at least four Kings. The chaos of the Sundering brought earthquakes and floods of monsters to the land, opening rifts and toppling keeps, and in the process swept away the rule of the last monarch, along with almost all of his nobles. In the seasons since, Swordpointers have resisted anyone seeking to crown themselves or tax them heavily, but have tolerated the rise of Lords and Ladies (usually the heads of adventuring bands who come to the realm to "retire") who patrol the roads in an area with armed riders, fight off brigands and monsters and raids from Talduth Vale, and enforce a "common sense" justice that involves exiling troublemakers and those who seek to promote feuds rather than quelling them.

Right now, there are five Ladies (most of them wise, many-scarred older women, veterans of adventuring) and two Lords, each of them maintaining a small keep and watching over small territories. They work together—which is why the realm works—seeing Talduth Vale as a threat, good lives for all as a goal, subsistence farming, and the strategic funding of crafters to produce what's most needed in the Borders, and in Ormpur and Sheirtalar, as the key to stability and prosperity. (Just now, that seems to be wire, chain, cord and rope, waxed thread, needles and buttons and fasteners, and waterproofing "goo" of various secret recipes for brushing into fabric.) Textiles, leather, dyes, and horses are the most needed imports, and the Streams earns a lot of coin from surrounding Borderers who bring their grain to its mills for grinding.

Thanks to the presence of the seven Lords and Ladies, anyone who steals, seizes by force, or marauds in the Streams can expect a swift and ungentle response from the armed and armored Riders of the nearest Lord (and these petty rulers often lead their riders, and work with each other, never disputing borders or authority and having firm standing orders in place to keep their Riders from doing so). Every one of the seven petty rulers can field around thirty Riders, and another two dozen or so guards and warriors who lack good mounts or the ability to fight from horseback, but can guard doors, stand sentinel, and swing a sword just fine.

The Lords and Ladies of the Realm

The seven are:

- **Lady Ildarra Chalcent** (LN Damaran human female ranger, a fiery-eyed and -tempered, fearless and wrinkled old hardy hunter, a woman of wild white hair and worn old leather armor, whose keep is Oaktower, and who was head of the Blazing Buckler adventuring band (who flourished as caravan escorts in the Heartlands, and now form the heart of her Riders). Her badge is a white eaglehead facing to the viewer's right, beak closed and eyes golden.
- **Lady Lauril Drantar** (CG Illuskan human female fighter, a graceful and merry but quite plain, thin woman of mature years, a tough "hard rider" and horsetamer (trainer), whose keep is Threestreams Gard, and who's the senior surviving member of the Lash of Gorgons adventuring band (who served as merchant bodyguards in the Great Dale and Impiltur, and went adventuring in Ashanath and Narfell, and now lead her Riders). Her badge is three crimson teardrops of blood (center lower than the flanking drops) on a round white buckler shield with a gray rim.
- **Lady Mezmra Irondrake** (NG Chondathan human female rogue, a skilled actress and swift-smart calculating strategist who is dark, petite, and makes much use of cosmetics and clothing and mannerisms to make herself alluring, so as to better manipulate men, whose keep is the Drakefang, and who co-led Whardren's Windnaga adventuring band, who adventured in Sespech and Chondath, dabbling in the intrigue of cities and mercantile shipping in the Vilhon, and now form the heart of her Riders, though her onetime consort Whardren perished while adventuring years ago). Her badge is a copper-hued ring seen side-on (a thick circle) that has three fangs depending from its upper inner arc halfway down its interior, that interior being flame-orange, and also surrounding the ring with jagged tongues of flame-orange fire.
- **Lord Tarlon Jarlglaeth** (LN Illuskan human male wizard, an aging but once strikingly handsome tall, thin man of few words who's increasingly wary and paranoid, and so has plans ready to deal with many imagined calamities, whose keep is Wyvernwatch Tower, and who's the only surviving founding member of the Reth's Dagger adventuring band, who adventured in coastal Chult, the Tashalar, and Calimshan, were briefly freebooters, and fought pirates on behalf of various shipcaptains, as "onboard surprise" ship defenders; the junior members now lead his Riders). His badge is a bright purple four-pointed star, its rays in the positions of the four cardinal compass points, those rays ending in forefinger-pointing human hands
- **Lady Dazmra Phelflask** (NG Damaran human female cleric of Helm, a burly, hook-nosed, large-emerald-eyed, hard-drinking, lusty, always-alert woman of long, thick auburn hair, whose keep is Forlorn Gard, and who was head of the Forlorn Gauntlet adventuring band (who adventured up and down the Sword Coast North, and now form the heart of her Riders). Her badge is a silver diamond, long axis vertical, on a deep purple "classic-shape" shield.
- **Lord Immurt Sabrastar** (CG Chondathan human male ranger, a moustachioed, raven-haired but



now going white at his temples, handsome man of aquiline features and butter-hued eyes and a grand, deep, resonant voice, whose keep is Starturrets, and who was a senior member of the Amber Salamander adventuring band (who flourished as caravan escorts and "settlers of scores for hire" by disgruntled merchants all over the Shining South; its surviving junior members now form the heart of his Riders). His badge is a horizontal row of three amber-orange flames (diamonds with wavy tongues-of-flame tops) ranged across ("fess wise") a royal blue classic-shape shield.

- **Lady Vantavice Durouth** (LN Damaran human female sorcerer, a vivacious, curvaceous, short-of-stature blonde with very large, dark eyes and an impish smile/leer, who's an accomplished mimic and superb "smoky alto" singer and lutemaker, whose keep is High Rivergates, and who headed the Saltro's Spurndragon adventuring band (who served as caravan escorts in the Heartlands, then guards-for-hire in Sembia, and now form the heart of her Riders). Her badge is a vertical point-down, side-on silver dagger with large quillons and a short grip (so it looks very like a capital "T") on an oval scarlet field that has three teardrops (representing blood) dangling from its lower edge. Just above this lower edge (filling the bottom of the oval across what heraldry calls "the middle base" when it's a shield) is a curved-to-fit-the-oval-bottomed, horizontal-straight-topped patch of green scales, that the point of the dagger is buried in, representing a dragon.

Heraldry

The overall blazon of the Swordpoint Streams is seen painted on roadside boundary stones and at roadside signposts (pointing directions and distances where ways meet), not on Riders, who bear the badges of "their" Lord or Lady. The arms of the realm are an upright oval of gold with three wavy blue lines diverging from a single point at the inside center of the oval, and running down to the inside center bottom, the inside "eight o'clock" mark, and the inside "four o'clock" mark.

Amenities

Every keep of a Lord or Lady has an inn and tavern standing beside it or across from it, all of them Good/Moderate, and they are:

Oaktower: the Dragon with Two Tails (inn), Alaskar's Boot (tavern)

Threestreams Gard: the Ghost Ship Inn (inn), the Tipsy Tressym (tavern)

The Drakefang: the Black Dagger (inn), the Headless Hippocampus (tavern)

Wyvernwatch Tower: the Mighty Mandragon (inn), the Sack of Swords (tavern)

Forlorn Gard: the Burnished Blade (inn), the Laughing Ghost (tavern)

Starturrets: the Sleepers' Vaults (inn), the Dancing Witch (tavern)

High Rivergates: the Seven Silver Swords (inn), the Moon and Mythal (tavern)

Of Interest to Adventurers

There are more tales of adventuring bands hiding their treasure in the Swordpoint Streams than in any other Border land—and that's saying something. Hundreds of such caches were established, and although most of them were later moved, called upon and spent, or stolen, at least a score—and probably more than twice that number—were never found after those who hid them perished. Moreover, the tavern names "the Sack of Swords," "the Laughing Ghost," "the Dancing Witch," and "the Moon and Mythal" all refer to stories about treasure guardians (the laughing ghost, that lures intruders into traps), the enchanted places treasure was hidden in around the realm (a moon-activated mythal), or the treasures themselves (the sack full of magical blades). Several tales speak of strings of underground caverns carved out by streams, that they flow through and eventually out of, and only someone who has means of breathing water or large lungs and a precise knowledge of where to swim underwater can reach the unflooded corners of, where treasure lies hidden. From time to time, the drowned bodies of adventurers float down some of the streams, attesting to someone's dialed attempt to reach a hoard. Sometimes, only pieces of half-eaten or hacked-apart bodies ride the streamflows.

The Laughing Ghost and the Dancing Witch are both said to be wraith-like undead who flit about the land spying by night, who can aid as well as harm, and who act to protect the realm from invaders and traitors. They confer dream-visions, appear as silently-gesturing phantoms to draw attention to cryptic written warnings or advice, and sometimes act as guides—though they lead some to safety, and others to disaster.

Syrnt

Small Town

A strategically-located "crossroads" settlement that has seen much fighting in its past. Syrnt today has no lord nor keeps, though the foundations (all the rest has been salvaged for other buildings) of no less than four castles can be seen locally. There are the inevitable local legends of monster-haunted, treasure-filled dungeons beneath the keeps, but only one entrance to such underways is known to most Syrar today. (Governance is by a council of the local business owners, who also pay and equip a militia, and two "constables" to—rather loosely—keep order.)

Syrnt has an inn, The Three Goats (Excellent/Moderate), a sprawling, many-winged converted mansion with many nice private hedged "bower" gardens between the wings, and superior food and a superb cellar, which is named for three long-dead brothers who rebuilt it, whose surname was Goatlar (today, the innkeeper is the pleasant and smart halfling matron Marue Harbuck); a tavern, Klarvor's Bench (Good/Moderate), named for its long-dead founder, and known to brew very good sour ale; a blacksmith/farrier (Elvur Ironhorn, a gentle bearded young giant of a man with monstrously large shoulders and arms, whose parlor trick is to pick up horses and oxen; in battles, he's been known to grab and hurl galloping horses ridden by brigands, spilling their riders in the process); and a glass-blower/glassmaker ("Lady Glass" Chantathra Uildur, skilled at making oval windows and exquisite small glass ornaments and vials), who makes use of local sandpits northeast of town, which yield "fine" sand.

Of old, Syrnt had a weapons shop, now abandoned (and said by Syrar to house hidden treasure) but guarded by flying swords that attack anyone entering the place.

Syrnt hosts a once-a-tenday farmers' market, except in the coldest months. One end of town reeks because a tanner (Bleys Haunskoan, a retired adventurer who can hurl axes and swords accurately enough to bring down doves and even raptors on the wing) dwells there, turning hides into leather and curing fur pelts; his family makes and sells crude cloaks, coats, and caps.

Taermbold

Thorp

Once a larger place, but raided so often in the past by goblins emerging from a local mine that only a few hardy folk still live here, amid many empty, abandoned (and stripped by scavengers) houses. The mine yielded much iron in the past, but is worked out—and some forty summers ago, the raiding goblins abruptly stopped coming; Taermar (correctly) believe that some dire monster "down below" slaughtered and ate them all, and now makes its lair in the mine. They're correct: Maurigla, a night hag (who is served by hobgoblins and a handful of imps, and has somehow mastered magic that confines or goads a gibbering mouther to serve her as a guardian or "attack beast"), now dwells in the Taerm mines. The Taermar miners long ago dug down into the Underdark, into a cluster of caverns rich in gems, that the hag now controls. She releases uncut gems to certain unscrupulous human traders when they stop by, in return for goods she wants and message-running. Maurigla is seeking to build a network of traders working for her, so she can increase her reach across Faerun. Her initial reaction to adventurers will be to seek to recruit them to work with her, not fight them, but she'll slay ruthlessly if she must, and if they do agree to work with her, the hag will set an imp to spy on them to learn all she can about them, to eventually establish a hold over them (so she can blackmail them to compel their continued obedience). She has no interest in terrorizing the locals or anyone nearby, but rather in "living low" but extending her reach far across Faerûn.

Taermbold offers a wayside inn, Tuller's Rest (Fair/Cheap) that's still run by the Tuller family, who believe in simple fare and furnishings, but have a clearwater spring in the basement, make small beer of passable quality, and provide ample firewood on cold nights.

There's also an abandoned, roofless temple to Chauntea (still used as a shrine for worship by Taermar, and slowly turning itself into a walled wild tangle-garden). Local blacksmith (Larl Hantrith, a taciturn, scarred man of simple skills, but a good farrier) has a foundry right beside the wheelwright (Borlyn Farsharr, who keeps a ready stock of matched quintets of sturdy wagon wheels of all sizes, and has several times made "big coin" when a passing caravan wanted to buy them all).

All around Taermbold's paltry cluster of inhabited buildings and the larger array of overgrown and abandoned "dark houses" are small local farms dominated by stump hedges and a labyrinth of narrow, muddy lanes.

Talduth Vale

Realm

To most Borderers, Talduth Vale is where aggressive "folk who love war, and will raid and pillage without hesitation" dwell—and they're right. The Vale is warlike, and is a longtime rival of the neighboring land of the Swordpoint Streams (see "The Swordpoint Streams" entry). Taldans have often raided the Streams, and frequently attempted (unsuccessful) conquests of the Streams, though in recent years the hunger for tangling with their detested rival seems to have abated in the face of Taldan cabals and families sponsoring or mounting their own military expeditions and business ventures all over Faerûn (particularly in the Shining South).

One of the reasons they have the time and coin to pursue such interests is that the town of Emrys (see the "Emrys") dominates Talduth Vale and patrols it (policing it), though it isn't officially part of Talduth Vale. With that said, it is in daily working truth the capitol of the Vale, providing Taldans with justice and keeping order and protection against invaders—but not taxing them directly, and Taldans will tell any outlander that they need protection from no one; they can handle any matter of arms themselves just

fine, thanks. Most Taldans are proficient archers or slingers, hunt for the family kitchen pot, and practice with—or use in earnest—melee weapons daily. They tend to collect shields, helms, and armor lifelong, hire themselves out as mercenaries all over Faerûn whenever they or their families need coin, and keep abreast of news about brewing conflicts, wars, and who's hiring swords or may soon be.

As a result, the Vale is home to busy, wealthy folk, and although the bulk of any family's or individual's wealth will be invested in various ventures and properties all over Faerûn, every Taldan caches "spending coin" and "sword day coin" (emergency funds) wherever they deem best. Thieves hoping to find such coin are warned that the Vale is full of watchful, suspicious, armed people who will challenge anyone unfamiliar or anyone who seems to be searching for something—in a hurry.

Some of the oldest Taldan families brought back riches from their adventuring and raiding centuries ago that can't be easily spent (magic items, crowns and gilded thrones and coaches), and some of these are displayed in their homes as trophies, while others are buried or hidden away in deep cellars, awaiting future inspiration on how best to exploit them.

Talduth Vale has no blazon (every family and cabal preferring their own), but when Taldans assemble a military expedition to invade somewhere else and need to know who's on their side in a fray, they use sashes, armbands, shield-wrappings (hide covers, buckled over and around their shields) and banners of gold with a black border, with a single charge on that gold field of a red diamond (all four sides equal) bordered in black.

Taldans settle trade disputes by negotations between delegations, with the heads of families or business cabals have final approval/vetoes. Legal disputes they settle by duels, but anything that looks to others (neighbors and business partners) to be turning into a feud gets reported to the Imperial Overduke of Emrys, who calls the Grand Merchant Dukes of Emrys together to rule on the matter; they back up their judgments with heavy fines and threats of confiscations should said fines not be paid (and have the Eagles to enact such seizures). Taldans are so afraid of their land erupting into head-for-a-head strife that they've forcibly exiled fellow Taldans who defied the rulings of the Dukes. Taldan families, down the years, have often dealt with troublesome family members by drugging their food or wine and bundling them out of the realm into the hands of slavers while they're still asleep, and this has become accepted local custom, though slavers are fewer and farther between in recent years, and some Taldans end up handed to pirates who simply make the lowliest members of the crew—so there have been a few instances of Taldans coming back for revenge on their kin, decades after being "disappeared from the Vale."

Talduth Vale has an endless appetite for weapons, armor, trained warhorses, arrows and croosbow bolts, and maps. Outlanders who can give (militarily) good descriptions of faraway places will be paid for what they can tell; most Taldan families and business cabals have scribes who can take rapid dictation, and Taldans are by longstanding custom very precise in wordings, never rephrasing what someone says.

The Vale is self-sufficient in food production, every family growing vegetables and fruits and keeping chickens and hoats or hogs, with many small farms and ranches run as businesses. Taldans often hire themselves out elsewhere as guards, weapons trainers, and mercenaries, and because they invest coins all over Faerûn in ventures and property, are in the habit of keeping exacting records.

The Vale has good wagon-roads and bridges, but no signposts; Taldans know where they're going, and don't want strangers to know where they are without asking. The Vale isn't all that hospitable, so inns are few, and taverns are by firm tradition places where weary folk eat and drink, not brawl (loud or belligerent drunkards are removed to outlying sheds and shelters to drink where they won't bother others). Many Taldans gave guestrooms they'll rent out to travelers they like the look of, but large or aggressive armed parties had better get used to camping out, and being watched suspiciously.

The best inns in the Vale double as taverns, are all (Good/Expensive), and are Wyvernfyres ("Warmfires" to locals; it stands in the western Vale, near Hawkgarth); the Crowns in Flame (in the north, nearest Oeble; the name commemorates invasions, usurpations, and occupations of foreign realms that Taldan mercenaries had a hand in); the Three Goblins (in the east, nigh Owlhold; the name recalls three local goblin scamps who met grisly ends at Taldan hands, long ago); and the House of Hammers (in the center of the Vale; "Hammers" was a long-ago infamously successful Taldan mercenary, given to indulging in atrocities).

There are about a dozen more local lane-side taverns scattered across the Vale; of these, the traveler is most likely to find (thanks to where they're located) the Fox's Finger, Harker's Cleaver, the Hanged Huntsman, and the Flying Fish.

There is one known treasure of great value hidden somewhere in (or likely under) the Vale, but no one knows where it is. In 1377 DR, a life-sized (that is, 18 feet tall) and very realistic statue of a handsome stone giant made of solid gold disappeared from the courtyard of a wealthy Taldan just before someone he owed a large debt to arrived to seize it. The owner had no access to magic, was elderly and had already lost their oxen and horses to other

creditors, and had no time to transport the statue out of the Vale—so they must have hidden it on their own land (probably buried.) It's never been found, though many have searched, and that Taldan debtor died shortly after the statue went missing, so folk in the Vale firmly believe it's somewhere near.

Telcharn

Small Town

This unwalled place of modest shake-roofed stone and timber buildings has wide though winding streets thanks to all the livestock.

Telcharn is home to Hundrar Thornspur, a noted cobbler and corviser who makes fine sturdy boots that are much in demand throughout the Borders and abroad (so much so that he's now opened a "boot barn" where a score of trained Telchar turn out an ever-increasing supply of strong, everyday, unstylish boots for export), and Ildarra Riverwood, a "healer" and trainer for horses and oxen, who nurses sick beasts, breeds beasts, and sells trained and ready mounts and draft beasts. Thanks to her increasing fame, Telcharn hosts a monthly "horse fair" in which all manner of livestock are bought, sold, and traded. Caravan outfitters often come here to replenish their beasts, and peddlers buy a few animals to sell here and there as they travel the Border Kingdoms.

Telchar no longer think of themselves as a beleaguered armed encampment defending themselves and all the Border Kingdoms "behind" them against monsters raiding out of the Shaar, but they still have weapons-sellers (rivals Narl Redurund and Lesklun Traunch), a rather unskilled armorer (Belmur Grandaxe; armor fastenings are his weak point, and more than a few of his suits of armor have clangingly shed plates without warning in the midst of a fray), and an outfitter (the flamboyant braggart and liar Abrant Zunderscales) who from a sprawling compound of three joined houses sells harness, pots and pans, tents, strongchests and carry-nets, water kegs, rope, coffers, braziers and lanterns, and all manner of "wares for the wayfarer."

Telcharn also has a fortified stone inn that looks like just what it is: an old, half-finished keep (the Weary Warrior; Good/Moderate), a rambling, outside galleries (running porches, with exterior stairs) all-timber boarding-house with a board roof and many firequenching spells cast on it, so cooking has to be done in a cookhouse across the yard (Laskalor's Haven; Fair/Cheap), two taverns (a "family" place serving full meals at all hours, the Queen's Boots (Good/Moderate), and a dive known for brawls and shady transactions and cheap ale quaffed in dim surroundings, the Skull and Scythe (Poor/Cheap), a stockyards, and a surprisingly well stocked manygoods shop that sells beds and other furniture and an array of lamps and oils, not to mention much rope and chain. There's also a good chandlery (making candles, soap, and selling blocks of wax as axle lubricant, sealant, and for use in molds), and a muddy horsepond that reeks from all the refuse that's been tossed into it over the years. Local tales claim it's full of lost treasure, too, but most Telchar don't believe them.

Of old, Telcharn was home to a small temple of Tempus the Wargod, whose priests "did something magical" to the small stone-and-slate structure to somehow make it vanish, when mages of the Cult of the Dragon, the Red Wizards, and the Zhentarim started hurling spells at each other in a wild spell-duel that devastated the southern end of town. That was over a century ago, and neither the temple nor its clergy have ever been seen again, but Telchar believe it "can be brought back" by someone who "does the right magic." They believe the temple clergy haven't brought it back themselves because some "lurking monster or other" already hiding in the temple when they "took it away" has devoured them all. Who knows? They may be right.

The badge of Telcharn is a tall, simple sturdy (large toed and hobnailed) boot, depicted upright and side-on with the toe pointing to the viewer's left, surrounded by a circle of nine horseshoes (all curve uppermost and "open side" downwards). If painted, all of these elements will be in brown, on a circular white field.

Themasulter

Village

This dwindling-numbers settlement was once a busy fishing-port, but its cove has silted up over the last century and is now a quicksand and tidal-flat "soup" that swallows the living, is festooned with the protruding masts of sunken ships, and can only safely be crossed on a rickety boardwalk of rafts supported on timber pilings that Themmar have to keep augmenting to stop the rafts from slipping under the mud. Increasingly, they don't bother.

What Themasulter has become is "the end of the road," a backwater where the misshapen, desperate fugitives from justice, and others wanting near-solitude can come and live unseen or forgotten by most of Faerûn. Lycanthropes and lepers live in Themasulter, as do a handful of doppelgangers, who work with a few kidnappers (the kidnapped are brought here and live in manacles inside some of the older and sturdier houses, while the doppelgangers take their places out in society). At least one of the walled compounds west of the village is occupied by slavers, the Mulukhor gang. Themasulter has always been home to skilled counterfeiters (of coins of all sorts), fake-gem-making jewelers, and makers of lockpicks and skeleton keys; some of the current Themmar masters of these trades include Borl Shantyn and Gither Tarlock.

Themasulter looks like a poor, rundown fishing village clinging to the steep slopes of the hills descending to the harbor, and is a windy, overgrown place. Most of its homes are better built than their ramshackle exteriors suggest, and are fitted with traps (trapdoors over spiked pits, boxes of rocks that plummet down on chains from overhead, and the like) to blunt the effectiveness of unwanted intruders. Themasulter lacks a ruler (here, it's "might makes right," which in practice means whenever there are disputes, or something must be done, the Mulukhor gang decides what happens unless the Potion Hag disagrees).

The Potion Hag, Tesma Suljark, is an always-veiled old woman who sells potions, medicines, wines, poisons, and chests and coffers with false bottoms (and sometimes, hiding-places or venomed daggers in the handles). She's really a night hag whose home has many hidden doors, and everyday doors that open into closets where she keeps hungry chokers imprisoned who'll pounce on anyone opening their door. She makes a lot of coin by guarding valuables certain clients want kept hidden but safe, for monthly fees.

Themasulter is named for a long-ago local adventurer-hero; he died young and his kin died out almost a century ago. The village has never been part of a realm, nor had a blazon. It exports only slaves and fish, these days, and not many of either, and imports only household goods (such as needles, thread, hand-mirrors, pots and pans, and the like) that peddlers bring.

Of old, Themasulter offered a small but snug harbor, much used by smugglers because it was close to the Lake of Steam ports and its harbormouth could be so easily seen from afar at sea (thanks to shoreline pillars of white rock that still survive, despite the harbor being ruined). A handful of Themmar fishing boats are anchored precariously offshore.

Two centuries ago, smugglers made use of several chains of shore-caves as warehouses. One chain collapsed many years ago, though someone digging down in the right place might be able to penetrate some of the innermost caverns, but the other survives, just east of the village, now monster-haunted and shunned. There are, of course, many tales of treasure hidden therein by smugglers and pirates, and never reclaimed—and some of them may even be true.

Themasulter offers no inns nor taverns, but garrulous, one-eyed old Grusk Delstaunt, the local netmaker, rents out rooms in his dimly-lit, rambling, none-too-clean cottage to wayfarers and cooks them odd-tasting (but safe) stews and plies them with horrible ale and his own fiery-strong version of zzar as he gossips, delighting in telling old tales of the Borders. The cottage swarms with rats, but Delstaunt regards them as pets.

Theymarsh

Thorp

This tiny fishing settlement is a mere shadow of its former self, because more than half of it has fallen into the sea in a series of landslides before and during the Sundering. Nowadays, it's a smugglers' haven and a place where Lake of Steam cities dump their insane, diseased, and political undesirables (whose limbs they've broken or hands and feet they've chopped off, on the trip). The inhabitants tend to be surly loners, bitter and not eager to have anything to do with strangers—because strangers so often mean "trouble."

Lacking a ruler, lawkeepers, a blazon, any sort of accommodations (except abandoned cottages a wayfarer can camp in) or amenities except a good well and two rivulets of drinkable water, Theymarsh isn't even worth the bother of traveling to it for most peddlers, or any other sort of merchant. The only people who do visit often are smugglers wanting to store goods or hide things they need kept secret—and Theymarsh does store many secrets, both lore and items. Including magic, and treasures of great wealth. The trick is finding them, and defeating the guardians (deadly spiders and swarms of crawling claws shut up inside treasure storage chests are said to be local favorites).



Thort

Hamlet

Little more than a name on a map, Thort serves a scattered handful of farms and ranches in overgrown wilderlands that were once a string of small grand duchies (so long ago that all trace of them, even the names, are utterly gone—except Thort itself, which is all that survives of "Amantarthortarl," a half-elven tree village that once stood where Thorl is today, and a haunted hill; see hereafter). Thorl consists of six homes (small cottages with gardens and tethered goats) and a lonely wayside inn, The Sevenstrung Harp (Good/Cheap), which is run by Ansharla Imurstrand (a gentle, aging CG human female sorcerer who's assisted by elderly semi-retired bards and rangers. As its name suggests, the inn is a haven for Harpers, and also doubles as the local tavern. A surly old drunkard who downs ales there every night, Gelth Marbanner, is a smith of sorts who's actually a Zhentarim spy, a rogue with deadly knife-throwing skills, and not nearly ever as drunk or half-asleep as he acts.

Confused and contradictory Border legends refer to a "treasure of great magic" buried somewhere near Thort, and Elminster of Shadowdale believes this refers to an artifact of some sort that lies in a cavern under Thort, and was hidden there by the half-elves of Amantarthortarl—but just what it is, and even if it still survives, he has no idea; the Weave in Thort's vicinity is an "echoing tangle" that causes pain and confusion even to Weave-masters.

The "haunted hill" comes from one of those vanished duchies, in a time when "Amantarthortarl" had been corrupted into "Orthortalar," and what is now Thort was larger, and dominated by the now-vanished castle of a self-styled Prince of Orthortalar, a wealthy retired adventurer who wore splendid shining coat-of-plate armor and rode a pegasus or a gorgon into battle, depending on his mood or the nature of the foe. The Prince and his beasts are long gone, and the site of his castle, the crown of a hill above the mill (a spring rises out of the hill, to tumble down it, power the mill, form a pond, and run on and away to vanish down a nearby sinkhole), is said by Thortar to be haunted by "those who dance" (eerie flying creatures, not human), and eerie lights (will o' wisps?) can be seen there on many nights. Locals shun the hilltop, as anyone who approaches it has a feeling of being watched by someone or something unseen but hostile. There are local tales of the hill being "hollow," containing both the castle dungeons and natural grottoes where "something sinister lairs," but the tales disagree wildly on what.

Thuntar

Realm

This realm has moved thrice because its notoriously greedy and belligerent folk (a characterization of Thuntarrans held all across the Borders that of course fails when applied to individuals, but the elders who make decisions for the land are grasping and aggressive in their deals with each other and moreso with outlanders) were driven out by magic-using neighbors they couldn't stop raiding or trying to conquer. Of old, the land that is now Thuntar was goblin territory (see the "High Emmerock" entry), but it's now one of the few places in the Borders that's almost entirely human; Thuntarrans are xenophobes who detest elves, dwarves, halflings, gnomes, and "monsters" (by which they mean not just tentacled things, but all half-breeds, including half-elves) and don't want them even to visit Thuntar briefly.

Most Thuntarrans will be coldly precise, and unhelpful (volunteering nothing, and wanting payment for all services offered, like giving directions) when dealing with elves, half-elves, dwarves, halflings, and gnomes, though if in an obviously mixed band, a human speaks for the group, they'll treat the human more cordially. Younger Thuntarrans, eager to see the wider world and "live life," will be far less rude and intolerant.

Thuntar is named for the long-dead Baradur Thuntar, an adventurer from the Tashalar who stood "half again as tall as most men," and called himself the King of Adventurers. He had few descendants, and his line died out by the 1330s DR.

A small but populous land of cottages with walled gardens and workshop sheds (barns), that uses the placid River Glarth running through it for barge transport and to power mills, Thuntar is prosperous, flourishing, and full of as much ambition as ever.

Every decade or so Thuntarrans muster military expeditions, bolster them with hired mercenaries, and invade someone else to the east or northeast (usually Dunbridges, Irl, or the Grand Duchy of Shantal) to once more attempt to expand into the "Thunt Empire" Thuntarrans have long dreamed of. They lack the numbers, wealth, magic, and military discipline to achieve much, so these expeditions have been a series of failures—but nothing seems to stop them trying.

In business dealings and everything else, Thuntarrans are "pushy," and when they're not contemplating conquests, they're seeking ways of making coin here, there, and everywhere across Faerûn, trying to insert themselves as "middlemen" in chains of shipping, and subverting local tax collectors and civic officials everywhere with bribery and blackmail, to get preferential prices or treatment or both.

Elminster of Shadowdale and some others have in the past described Thuntarrans as "unsubtle

echoes of Zhentarim or Thayans in their trade dealings and business habits," and this has been noticed by others, notably the Zhentarim, who often manipulate traders of Thuntar to do dirty or abrasive work for them, or to serve as scapegoats for what the Zhents do.

What Meets the Eye in Thuntar

The blazon of Thuntar is on "stone needle" roadside boundary-posts, and on the doors and high on the walls of all Thuntarran citadels (the usually modest fortified stone buildings that serve as barracks for Thuntar's soldiery, the Sentinels of Thuntar, as jails, and as banks; moneykeeping and changing is run by Thuntar's civic officials, the Hands of the Council, and done exclusively out of citadels so the Sentinels can provide on-the-spot security). That blazon is a black eagle "displayed" (open beak pointing to the viewer's left, wings displayed and elevated, symmetrical tail straight below it), with its legs outstretched and clutching a horizontal drawn/naked, scabbardless long sword (point to the viewer's left, hilt to the viewer's right), on a gold keystone (wedge, wider at top)-shaped field. The eagle has a red pupil, and its eye is always depicted as staring straight out at the viewer. This is also used as a badge on the breasts and backs of Sentinel surcoats, and is drawn on all posted proclamations (usually prohibitions against doing something at the posted site, like "leave no wagons standing here").

Roads throughout Thuntar are good, often cobbled, and always wide enough for two wagons to pass comfortably, with crowns and drainage ditches. They are neither lit nor signposted (except for oil-lanterns high on poles, and raised and lowered for refilling by means of chains and pulleys, outside the front doors of every citadel), and the roadside ditches are often full of rotting refuse and broken items because that's the cheapest, handiest disposal, and "Thuntarrans pinch coins until they yelp." However, Thuntarran homes and businesses are generally neat, clean, and efficient; Thuntarrans are industrious, energetic workers—they just see no point in spending time or coin on anything they consider "someone else's problem" (so if a ditch becomes so choked that it can't drain, and rainwater or floodwater inundates the road, they'll clear the blockage or loudly demand the Hands pay someone less busy to do so).

There are no named or built-up settlements in Thuntar; instead, the whole country is a patchwork of family homes with their walled gardens (vegetables; flowers are a waste of coin), their barns or workshop sheds, and larger farm fields. Woodlots are unknown, but field boundaries are often long but narrow "wild" lines of trees, weeds, and brush. Inns are unknown, but taverns (always standing across the road from a citadel, facing them directly) rent upstairs rooms to travelers (and report all such rentals to the Sentinels). Currently-flourishing Thuntarran taverns are all Good/Expensive, and include the Twelve Dukes (referring to "decadent" dukes of other Border realms slain long ago in separate duels with Thuntarrans); the Sun Smiles on Thuntar; and the Triumph (of Thuntar).

Governance in Thuntar

Policy decisions are made by a voting Council of twenty-three heads of certain senior (the oldest wealthy) Thuntarran families, who meet in private because most decisions involve cold-blooded scratch-my-back-I'll-scratch-yours horsetrading that they don't want other Thuntarrans hearing. These family patriarchs and matriarchs are all selfish, busy people, and meet only once a month if they can get away with it, so in daily life, countless smaller decisions are made by the Hands. Hands dispense justice in court hearings, Hands apply Council decrees, set the agenda of decisions for the Council to make ("hear"), collect taxes and fees, and contract out all civic work (often to kin, though shoddy work is tolerated from no one). A few Council members are interfering busybodies who watch over the Hands and try to instruct them, but most don't care, so long as their own business interests and daily lives aren't harmed by decisions, Hands doings, and unfolding events. (Typical Council decisions are reached by majority vote after modifications have been made to gain the votes of whichever Councillors think they can get something—sometimes a direct but small personal payment—in return for their support.)

The Sentinels of Thuntar were formerly so much the tools of individual Council members that public outcry (involving several Councillors being killed in the streets, and many others "bloodied") eventually forced them to adopt a "we mever speak with the Council, except as suspects or witnesses" policy and a diligent attention to legal details. They are vigilant and suspicious by training, but tolerant of small offenses, even by outlanders (first transgressions of minor things will result in a "but if I catch you again doing . . ." warning), and have worked with the Hands who dispense justice to simplify and minimize laws, so aside from theft and property damage, only crimes of violence tend to be prosecuted, everything else resulting in small pay-now-and-it's-forgotten fines. The head of any Thuntarran family can demand justice from the Council if they dislike a Hand's ruling, but this really applies only to wealthy, powerful families, because anyone else coming before Council will be verbally spanked by the Councillors and told to obey the Hand's decision or a worse one will be "enacted upon their head."

Wealth in Thuntar

Thuntar is one of the most prosperous lands in the Borders, or anywhere, though it's far from ostentatious. Thuntarrans tend to always have coin on them, and to have even more hidden away on their own property for emergencies, but the majority of their wealth is in banks or invested all over Faerûn. Any tales of lost or stolen wealth are investigated by greedily hopeful Thuntarrans without hesitation, so Thuntar has no "treasure tales" of note. With that said, citizens are always trying to slide out of paying taxes by doing under-the-table deals and understating or outright hiding income, so caches of trade-bars, coin, and gems in small safekeeping-coffers may be found anywhere. (Wealthy Councillors like to purchase golems or other magically animated objects to serve as guardians, and stash their caches in or on these guards.)

As busy traders, Thuntarrans import and export just about everything in small daily quantities, and do much "combining several objects together to make something that can be sold at a profit" work in their workshops, but aside from firewood in winter, their large-bulk imports of any one good are few.

Thuntarrans are always interested in news and rumors, so as to keep abreast of current and future business opportunities. They will watch and listen to outlanders not just out of suspicion, but because travelers are "bringers of opportunities."

Thur

City

After Derlusk, Thur is the busiest Border Kingdoms port, serving as a gateway to the western Border realms and funneling a steady flow of goods to and from prosperous Blackalblade, inland to the southeast (see the "Blackalblade" entry). Long ago, when the Sward was a realm, Thur was briefly under its way, but it has been independent for centuries. For much of that time, thanks to its very red soil that tells any wise eye there's much iron to be had locally, dwarves and gnomes have dwelt in Thur, and now are the eldest Thurar families, and firmly hold onto their titles as "Lords of Thur."

The dwarves and gnomes came to mine and work the iron (and the copper found in abundance, too), making alloys, fashioning armor for sale, and perfecting molds so they could cast pipes and pulleys and hinges and wagon-axle-sockets and all manner of small, useful monger. Their forges and foundries belch out smoke and enrich Thur to this day, even though the surface iron deposits were worked out long ago, and the dwarves now hire human adventurers to guard them against monsters as they delve deeper and deeper into the wild Underdark, by means of tunnels beneath their foundries that descend into the linked caverns and fissures and even underground lakes of the vast Realms Below.

Prominent local dwarven families include the Arkarkurs, the Firefists, and the Kalglonts, and gnome families of local importance are the Dleezrin, the Minstrelwishes, the Nolnur, and the Sarrack. The visitor should be aware that the ancestors of many Thurar dwarves were outcasts or "Clanless," and these families consider themselves independent of dwarf clans elsewhere in Faerûn—fiercely so.

Over time, humans looking to make coin came to Thur in numbers, and have long dominated Thur in sheer headcount, though the resident dwarves and gnomes have been careful to cling to political power, by keeping a majority of the lordships. So many of them have come to Thur to take part in its bustling prosperity that Thur has recently grown from large town to city, and shows no sign of this growth slowing.

The Lords of Thur

The city is governed by nine Lords, who meet together on a circle of thrones (identical plain, highbacked stone seats) to make laws and hammer out decrees and decide military policy. They are not supposed to directly meet otherwise (to cut down on "back room deals"). Individual Lords sit as judges (daily) to hear citizen pleas, complaints and suggestions, and to settle criminal matters and civil disputes (but their judgments can be appealed to a trio of Lords sitting as "high court," who very rarely reverse judgments of a lone Lord, but often expand or refine them, often lessening them if a miscreant agrees to do Thur a service such as investing in this or stepping back from participation in that or going adventuring on yon specific mission).

Two Lords may be human, three are dwarves, and four are gnomes. Until a family lineage dies out (none has, as yet), the dwarf and gnome seats remain in the hands of particular houses (the aforementioned prominent families). The sitting Lords vote among themselves to fill any throne vacancies, or to dismiss individual Lords, though the dwarf and gnome families who hold the dwarf and gnome seats retain the right to fill them with another of their family if one is dismissed; in practice, the "may be human" seats are held for a few years at a time, but the rest of the lordships are held by the same individuals until they grow too ill or aged to continue, and resign.

Right now, one of the two "may be human" seats is held by a fifth gnome, and this is a source of some friction, because the dwarf Lord of the strongest ambitions and character, Teland Arkarkur, is a less-than-friendly rival of this fifth gnome Lord, Sabryn Launtaun, who's of similar character ("two stubborn but very loud stones," one Thurran merchant described them)—though neither would ever knowingly

harm or betray Thur to "do" the other. They merely clash often as to the best way forward for Thur, and on how best to achieve aims they agree upon.

The Lords are primarily concerned with safeguarding the independence of Thur (by eliminating resident doppelgangers and any other known shapeshifters, by firmly curbing the influence of anyone who tries to buy Thurran property or become a creditor of Thurran merchants to the extent that they can dictate or nudge those traders into certain actions—the Zhentarim, the Red Wizards of Thay, and various Calishite satraps are known to have repeatedly tried such "slidings in" to Thurran politics—and militarily).

The sole current human Lord, Onstul Gaeraudren, is a LN Chondathan human male fighter who formerly headed his own mercenary company; he was named Lord to improve the city's soldiery, in training, equipage, and numbers, and is busily doing so; the soldiers also serve as police, are known as the Shields of Thur, and are currently almost three hundred strong.

Thur has the largest and most numerous docks of any port on the Lake of Steam, and straddles the coastal trade-road west of the realm of Ondeeme; the Lords keep an open area dockside for wagons to turn, assemble teams, and easily load and unload, and ring this open area with warehouses, so (as opposed to, say, Derlusk) trade goods can quickly flow in and out. There are tolls on Thur's gates (it has a low stone wall, thrice rebuilt as the city has expanded) of a copper piece a wagon or laden packbeast), and the amount is kept this low to encourage everyone to use Thur. Aside from caravan paddocks, for camping, the Lord prohibit erecting buildings outside the walls, within a ten-minute ride of the city gates (aside from a few farmhouses that predated this decree).

Adult citizens are charged a 5 gp tax annually if they don't own property, and a 10 gp tax if they do, and there's little grumbling or tax evasion because what the coins are spent on is made very clear by the Lords, and because Thur has the best plumbing (piped clean water in, wastes out), paving (cobbles with tiled spillways, and smart drainage everywhere), building standards, street lighting (hooded oil lamps up on tall poles by means of chains and pulleys), and civic planning (tiny parks, with public benches!) of anywhere in the Borders—and better than most cities anywhere in Faerûn.

Recent Troubles

That's not to say life in Thur is unbroken brightness and gaiety. The years of mining have brought about many recent collapses; sinkholes have been opening up here and there in the city without warning, plummeting buildings down into unexplored subterranean depths—and in at least one instance, rousing



monsters from the Realms Below to swarm up into the city, attacking all citizens within reach. More than a score of such precipitous subsidences have befallen over the last year, and the frequency of these collapses seems to be increasing, not falling off.

Amenities

Thur is one of the few Border settlements to have a full range of temples—but the Lords have firmly decreed that these must all be of the same size and very similar external architecture; this has been adhered to (not without several demolitions in the past, to make their determination clear) so that the holy houses differ only in the holy symbols above their front doors (deity statues must be inside, never outside). There are even painted signboards inside the four city gates (Shoremeads, east onto the coastal headlands; Easting, carrying the coastal trade-road into Ondeeme and beyond; Southwind, opening due south into the farmland that serves Thur; and Westing, carrying the coastal trade-road west to Waernd and beyond) showing visitors, by means of a simplified "main streets only" map, where all the holy houses are.

Healing for coin is an important and expected local temple service, as is delivering (to temples in distant locales) or holding for safekeeping messages and documents.

Inns and rooming-houses are abundant in Thur; there are at least two inns just inside each city gate, the Shoremeads pair serving as portside accommodations for sailors on shore leave. All are Good/Expensive, and they are: Shoremeads: the Merfolks' Tails and Ilkur's Stormhaven; Easting: Sonder's Warm Welcome and Forgefires High; Southwind: the Hearth of Vuraxrus and the Wyvernstar; and Westing: Basurk's Rest and Delmuth's Doors. The Lords send Shields regularly to inspect all inns, to make sure they adhere to strict standards regarding cleanliness, services (full dining, at all hours; hot baths, at all hours), and overcrowding (none unless a fire or collapse causes the Shields to order additional guests be sheltered).

The taverns of Thur vary from nigh-hushed "clubs" to raucous, but are clean, well-lit, and have watchful Shields keeping order in quartets at all times, relieving each other in shifts and having the ability to summon reinforcements from the street patrols by blowing distinctive "two-note" (two tones at once) belt horns. So the taverns in Thur tend to be safe and to be free of brawling (though arguments and cursing may erupt; the Shields don't mind manners, just violence). There's never a tavern far away, anywhere in Thur, but the traveler should be aware that by tradition (not Lords' decree) the Axehaven (in the center of Thur) is dwarves only, and Brelder's (by the docks) is gnome-only (anyone can drink or meet there, and will be served with careful respect, but non-dwarves or non-gnomes will be ignored by other patrons unless asking the way to another tavern, and will likely feel very uncomfortable).

There's a tavern handy to every city gate, too, and over the years these have grown to become the largest and most popular. They are (Shoremeads) the Old Man's Fist; (Easting) the Slaked Sword; (Southwind) the Dun Dragon; and (Westing) Trontur's Tankard.

Another tavern is notorious for flirtation, debauchery, and saucy entertainment (bards telling lewd jokes and singing off-color songs, as well as scantily-clothed dancers and actors doing short scenes). It's Bellara's, on Shondle Street, near the center of the city. The Shields turn a blind eye to behavior in Bellara's that they'd quell elsewhere. (Bellara's has an upstairs where adventurers and others are hired for missions their patrons don't want talked about publicly, and where merchants meet to transact deals they don't want competitors to be forewarned of. The Shields do make sure the upstairs isn't used for anything else.)

Businesses

Thur offers everything a city can be expected to hold, from gambling clubs and organizations devoted to sports and hobbies to the full range of what can possibly be bought. Notable Thurran establishments include:

- **Rondalakur's Fine Mongery,** where bulk purchases can be made of nails, hooks, hinges, pipes (and turnwheel valves, and pipe elbows), cauldrons, stoves, shields, porthole frames, iron wheels, lanterns, pots, and just about any sort of metal toll, implement, weapon, fastening, or piece of armor one can think of. In its window are beautiful articulated gowns made of overlapping sliding plates that fetchingly cover shapely wooden mannekins, and while these can be purchased, few have need of such garments, so they persist from year to year as eye-catching displays.
- **Tuttar's Trophies,** where the preserved and mounted heads, paws, tails, wings, and scales of fearsome monsters can be purchased for the finishing touch to discerning décor. Dragon heads (small ones), beholder eyestalks, and gorgon horns are among the larger and more expensive offerings; many purchasers pick up smaller doorknockers and conversation pieces.
- **Urthuk's Golemworks,** where the aging dwarf artisan Olum Urthuk and his associates (clerics and wizards) will produce a golem to order, if one of the in-stock iron, stone, or clay golems won't suffice. The prices for the store stock models are ruinous enough; as Elminster put it, "custom orders are for the stupidly wealthy only." (Will

ship all over Faerûn; with armed adventurer escorts, to boot.)

- **Xarander's Transportations,** a house where the handsome half-elf Raes Xarander (who has the misfortune to look as if he has partial drow heritage; he well may) offers transport for individuals, packages, written messages, or verbal messages "by trusted courier" on the next flying ship that will dock at his roof-mast. His fees are very high, and only one ship a tenday or so arrives, but he also offers "safe house" accommodations for patrons waiting for a docking to whisk them away. Personal goods carried for extra fees, but not large and heavy cargoes (if a patron and Xarander between them can carry bags aboard in one trip, that's "personal goods;" dead bodies in bags cost another full passage fee, as if they were a living passenger). Xarander won't deal in slavery. He says.
- **Zaratha's Beautiful Guises,** a luxuriously-appointed mansion where all manner of beautification treatments can be had, and (at even higher prices!) "any disguise short of magical" can be applied upstairs behind closed doors, swiftly and discreetly, including garments, dirt, false documents, and appropriate gear and smells. Zaratha prefers to specialize in beautifying with cosmetics, but her staff is skilled in making patrons seem uglier, older, of a different race, and (with the use of dyes, lenses, and prosthetics) of a gender, eye and hair hues they didn't come in the doors with.
- **Zuulantha's Wisdom,** a nondescript house where an aging, wrinkled woman rumored (correctly, Elminster says) to have yuan-ti blood sells local lore to wayfarers, such as the names of fences for stolen goods in distant cities and trade-way towns, the locations of the sellers of poisons, or professionals who can quickly and silently make a dead body disappear for you in a city; how to safely contact certain cults or secret societies or thieves' guilds . . . and so on. Elminster deems her information "almost always accurate, and fairly up to date," and she won't deceive; if she doesn't know, she doesn't invent answers just to collect coin.

Thurran Heraldry

The blazon of Thur can be seen on pennants on its catapult- and beacon-equipped harborwatch towers, the city gates, and on the shields borne by, and the backs and breasts of the plate armor worn by, the Shields, as well as on the front doors of the simple stone keep that serves as a city hall (and Shields headquarters): the Seventower (long ago there were only seven Lords, and despite the expansion in numbers, the older name stuck; there are, however, nine thrones inside). That blazon is an gray anvil, seen side-on with its tongue to the viewer's left, on a copper-hued shield-shaped ("classic" or "heater" shape) field. Floating above the center of the anvil, vertical with clenched fist uppermost, fingers and thumb towards the viewer, is a gray right-handed gauntlet.

Urspreth

Thorp

A farm-market community on the road between Thort and Thuntar, in the "middle of nowhere" (in a dell in the heart of hilly wilderlands broken by a few ranches and farms), Ursrpeth has an inn (that doubles as the local tavern), a wagonworks and carpentry shop, a smith, an oxen-powered grist mill, and a bakery. The owners of these businesses collectively sponsor four retired adventurers to serve as local keep-order Constables, who spend most of their time seeking strayed sheep and goats and hunting down wolves and other "vermin."

Named for the long-dead woman, Ilmra Urspreth, who built and ran the mill (she was a respected and successful dyer and weaver who shipped many blankets and hooded weathercloaks all over the Borders, and beyond), Urspreth today is a sparsely-inhabited, sleepy place. The baker recently started buying and selling horses as remounts for travelers, but business has been less than brisk.

The inn is the Green Falcon (Good/Moderate), and its proprietors, Lhaera and Imbrar Narwood (CG human rogues retired from a short adventuring career and longer drudgery as painters and coopers) are secretly Emerald Enclave members and will assist Enclave members by letting them use the inn or the back rooms of their own home as a "safe house" (the two buildings are linked underground by a low-ceilinged, stone-lined root cellar crowded with turnips, apples, and kegs of beer).

The wagonworks and carpentry shop is the large, busy, and cluttered with lumber and half-finished projects Martur's Wagons, proprietor the stout, wheezing, always sarcastically calm grizzled old Helmur Martur (NG Chondathan human male), who commands a large staff of willing and capable apprentices (only used wagons for sale, but a large selection of new wheels and axles always on offer), the smith is the not-finework-skilled but a capable ferrier Hanstalan Narbroodur (CG Damaran human male), the mill is run by the jovial but utterly nondescript Urhanz Zurth (LN Chondathan human male), and the baker is the merry, ruddy-faced, large and aging Avorna Tarthglass (CG Illuskan human female; the bakery is her home, and signless, but is readily found by the smells and the locals trudging to and from it for daily bread or tarts).

The most intriguing treasure tale Urspreth offers is that an entire caravan, of six laden wagons crammed with both wares and coin, vanished

entirely on a misty morning in 1477 DR, somewhere on the road just east of the "last house east" in Urspreth—without a sound or trace. People, horses, wagons; nothing has ever been found.

So they may have been magically or by dragon-snatch carried off, or may have ended up hidden locally, and dispersed from hiding. Or just might still be hidden, somewhere near. . . . (There are caves "a good way" north of Urspreth, where the land starts to rise to the Neth Stand, that serve bears, owlbears, and wolves as lairs, and so are avoided by locals, but they've long since been searched for wagons or anything else of value, fruitlessly.)

Of old (most Ursp believe—correctly—that in this instance, "old" means the 1330s DR), their picturesque wooded dell was home to the self-styled "Witches of Urspreth," an all-female human and half-elven adventuring band of wizards and sorcerers who fiercely defended their home against all would-be conquerors, when they weren't off adventuring. However, they departed on expeditions often enough that they had to several times retake Urspreth by force from someone who'd seized it during their absence. Until the day came when they never returned, having met with fatal misfortune somewhere far away in Faerûn.

The cluster of homes belonging to their retainers, extended families, and a few friends remained, as a self-sufficient hunting, fishing, and farming (edible forest fungi, mainly) community isolated in the then-deep forest (farm clearances have since left the lands around more lightly wooded). Urspreth has survived to this day, though increasingly as a farming center and less a "forest hold." Ursp tell many inevitable tales of the riches the Witches died and never returned to reclaim—and it is certainly true that the adventuring band was wealthy and successful, and did vanish on an adventuring foray upon which they apparently set out with no more than the usual weaponry, provisions, and traveling gear. So perhaps the dell does still hold their wealth. Some of the tales say the Witches brought back a "weird monster" as an ally or pet or captive from an early expedition, and it still guards their treasure, well over a century and a half later.

Waernd

Hamlet

A wayside farming community on the coast trade-road between the Mukshars and Ondeeme, Waernd is a place few Borderers have heard of, or recall if they've been through it, unless they particularly liked their meals. Two trade-roads meet in Waernd, so it has a large and good inn (in the southeastern corner where the roads meet) and tavern (facing it across the road, from the northern or Lake of Steam side), as well as a cavernous farmers' market (an old warehouse) where wagons can be taken in for a night out of the cold and wet for modest fees. There's also a waystables, that offers stabling, horse-doctoring, and buys and sells horses and oxen.

The two-floor, rambling inn is the Welcoming Wizard (Good/Moderate), and has a carved life-sized wooden wizard statue out front that gets vandalized or has indignities (feminine garments over its head, dumped head-first in horsetroughs, has rotting road-kill put in his outstretched hand, and so on) heaped upon him often. The name and statue commemorate a wizard who befriended someone who stopped by his campfire here in the early 1100s DR; his name and the circumstances have been forgotten down the passing years, and it's something of a local sport to invent new colorful tales about who the wizard really was, and what he was up to in Waernd. The Wizard serves good, filling food in its dining room at all hours, and is run by three large families of motherly women and girls (gnomes of the surname Ormsaw, halflings of the Ingleheart clan, and humans hight Rocklamb; the efficient, no-nonsense, and brisk "Mother" Mornra Rocklamb is the real leader of it all, whenever she's awake), who employ several retired adventurers (dwarven and human males) as bouncers, porters, and handymen. The Wizard is a friendly place where folk of the hamlet gather of evenings to play at cards, dice, and board games, trade gossip with wayfarers, and to hire folk for small "odd jobs."

The tavern, The Rolling Wheel (Fair/Cheap), is a darker place where the gamblers and drinkers assemble to play high-stakes games, talk plainly, make shady deals, and do "serious business" with travelers and each other. Old retired men come here to sit and nurse their tankards, not to the noisier Wizard, where children can be seen and heard.

The waystables is Horstal's Fine Beasts, though Horstal died sixty summers ago, and the strong-smelling but well-run establishment is now in the capable hands of Elornra Behaernard (NG Illuskan human female fighter), who is good at tending sick or injured horses, mules, and oxen.

Three centuries ago, this part of the Borders was home to many tiny realms, most ruled by self-styled High Dukes or Dread Barons, and although they destroyed each other in wars and were long ago forgotten, they've left a few traces behind. Their easily-dismantled castles were long ago robbed of every last building stone, leaving behind only the deep pits of their onetime dungeons, but on rock crags southeast of Waernd stand the crumbling shells of two keeps too difficult to reach with carts; no roads lead to them. Betimes the haunt of brigands, they have fallen into ruin, and are the lairs of monsters, so Waerndar shun them. But they say both of these surviving keeps—Shalla's Fang farther south and

west, and Irongates more east and north (and long lacking gates) stand atop tunnels that descend deep, through the crags they crown and down into the Underdark beneath. And down there, among more fearsome monsters than have ever emerged to prowl Waernd, lie the riches left behind when these dukes and barons fell in battle, and came not back to claim their own. There's a suit of armor that flies, and a helm that talks, and more gems and gold coins than one man can count in a long summer. Or so the tales say.

As recently as the 1320s DR, Waernd was home to a self-styled "Lord Waerndrivarr" who lacked a castle, and was in truth a brigand who busily raided surrounding places until someone grew tired of this and slew him and his band of ruffians, and burned their palisaded log home to stop any successor robber baron from getting established.

Waer tell tales of Lord Waerndrivarr's never-found treasure, and the ghosts of him and his men haunting the vicinity, but although many sightings down the years suggest there are lurking undead, no trace of any treasure has ever been found. Many folk searched after the demise of the Lord, as it was commonly believed that he was amassing coin, gems, and trade-bars to pay for the construction of a stone keep when he died.

Something about Waernd—no human knows just what—makes the place attractive to wyverns, who often appear out of the skies to circle and roost here until other wyverns snow up, whereupon they mate noisily, and then depart again. In the summer of 1462 DR, a local earned the name "Wyvernslayer" when he managed to kill a wyvern, but he was hunted and down and torn apart for his pains by wyverns who arrived later. And were aided by humans wearing wyvern masks, though who those folk were, where they came from, and if they live yet are all mysteries.

Yallasch

Small City

A stone-walled port that clings to the seacliffs and descends them on steep, winding cobbled streets often slick with sea-mists to a tiny but cliff-sheltered harbor, Yallasch is an old city, built in the early 1100s DR by exiled Calishites and those unwelcome in Ormpur, Sheirtalar, and around the Tashalar. Many of them were wealthy, or became so through smuggling or the transfers of the treasuries of fearful Calishite families to their isolated abode. The rocky terrain and the thick living green wall of Jundarwood has always isolated Yallasch from the wars and tumult of the Borders, and its very steep, rocky locale made it difficult indeed to storm from the sea—for almost before its first buildings went up, the Yallaschans built huge counterweight trebuchets that could hurl boulders large enough to sink even large ships with ease—which they did whenever pirates or unfriendly Calishite naval vessels approached. The harbor-mouth was narrow enough to block with chains, and these days is defended by several successive curtains of chains, so behind these defenses Yallasch survived and grew.

Over time, its wealth and isolation attracted sages, exiled nobles and royalty, and malcontents from dozens of countries and independent cities all over Faerûn, and it became a place of learning and innovation, new ideas and sponsorship of new ventures. As its tall and narrow slate-roofed stone houses went up, the builders also tunneled down, hollowing out cellars that by means of tunnels dug so as to run inland had a lot of room to expand. Over time these landward tunnels in the bedrock were enlarged into ideal vaults in which to store riches.

And Yallasch stores riches enough to make many kings envious, to this day.

The Lord High Mages of Adaerglast, from their fortress abode in Myrinjar (see the "Adaerglast" and "Myrinjar" entries) have long coveted Yallasch. These days, the Two magically spy on the city, watching even private moments in the inner rooms of Yallaschan houses—and peddlers and traders have informed Yallaschans of this, creating an everpresent tension in the city and a local hatred of the rulers of Adaerglast. Citizens as well as other Borderers refer to Yallasch as "the City Where One Feels Watched," or just "The Watched City."

Yallasch has never been a busy port, but it has long been, despite the lack of space, a busy shipbuilding center—for small fishing sloops and coastal boats only, because the hulls to be small enough to be built inside cantilevered-out from the bedrock-on-massive-pilings sheds ("the shipworks") halfway up the cliff, then lowered vertically through the floors of the shipworks in chain-cradles, down into the inner berths of the harbor for finishing (decks, masts, and rigging). Three master shipbuilders share work crews, hoists, and rope- and sail-makers: Terth Tannorthyn, a grizzled, one-eyed retired pirate (CN Illuskan human male rogue); Zharra Larathtal (CG Illuskan human female sorcerer; she hails from Ulgarth and does a brisk business in selling detailed nautical charts); and Bowryn "Broadaxe" (LN dwarf male fighter; a bald, profane dwarf who considers himself clanless, and curtly refuses to say why or name his clan).

Yallasch offers all the wares and services found in most cities. Aside from the "shipworks," notable city businesses are moneychanging and coin storage (Ildrath Norbold on Windfalcon Street and Breth

Damchar on Luthtail Lane are the largest, and bitter rivals), jewelry, and finesmithing (which includes counterfeiting, especially of coins; the finest work is arguably that of Suldur Arhabur on Stormcandle Street, but the best forger is generally agreed to be Ulst "Red" Reddaryn, of Smokesails Lane).

Yallasch has for years been governed by a one-seat-one-vote Council that elects a Speaker from among its number. The Speaker makes public pronouncements and chairs Council meetings (calling votes and setting forth motions), but is prohibited from voting on the budgets of, or giving any direct commands to, the Watch of Yallasch, who are gray-tabard-wearing city police, armed with maces, belt knives, and "buffet-poles" (bucklers welded on the end of spears, in place of the usual blades), or the city militia (all property owners in the city must participate, either personally or by sending a family member or employee) in arms training and defense drills, operating in dozens as "patrols" under the command of a Shieldsar (captain) and First Blade (sergeant), so a patrol consists of fourteen citizens. Horns sounded from the city wall watchtowers call out the militia when needed. Currently there are over four thousand militia "trusties," and two hundred and twenty-six sworn Watch.

There are forty-three seats on Council, thirty held by the heads (or in a few cases their designated representatives, usually a younger and more vigorous family member) of senior wealthy Yallaschan families, and thirteen filled annually by other nominated and populace-elected citizens who may not be members of the families of other seat holders, nor ever serve consecutive terms.

The Speaker can serve an unlimited number of consecutive terms, and retains his or her Council seat while doing so (no one else fills it for them while they're being Speaker). The current Speaker is the wise, grave, and prudent Tasharra Velsoond (LN Illuskan human female wizard), who devotes herself to thoroughly understanding all issues and planning for the future, involving as many Council members as she can in her researches and debates in an effort to maximize consensus before votes are called. She is so respected and relied upon that she's served four consecutive terms already, and may go on serving until she dies. Seeking to prepare replacements, Velsoond often lets other Council members lead debates. (It's widely rumored in the city that if the mages who rule Adaerglast didn't know she was a wizard, they'd have invaded long ago—and this may be true. Velshoond keeps secret her apprentices, if any, and her own level of mastery of the Art.) Although Yallasch views Adaerglast as an enemy for obvious reasons, Velsoond has been careful to maintain a civic policy of friendly neutrality to all others. The city remains largely isolated from the rest of the Borders, but most Calishites no longer view it as a "pirate hold" but merely another independent trading-port, albeit one with not much to offer, so from the Yallaschan viewpoint, this policy has been a success.

The blazon of Yallasch is seen only on its landward wall gates and wall-top banners (the city walls are of massive talus construction, sloping steeply up to their vertical rise, except on the seaward side, where they rise vertically from the sheer shore cliffs). It is a black hammer diagonally overlapping a black needle of the same size as the hammer, to form a cross, the eye-end of the needle at viewer's upper left and the head of the hammer to the viewer's upper right, all on an upright oval field of blue, the bottom half being royal blue (waves), and the upper half being turquoise (the sky). It's displayed as a badge on the breast and back of Watch tabards, and on militia bicep-bands.

Notable inns in Yallasch include the luxurious and friendly Harvandrur's Bell on Strantur Street (Excellent/Expensive); the large, busy, and often noisy Phelmur's Feast (Good/Moderate) on Downdolphin Street; the correctly-reputed-to-be-haunted, and so, often nigh-empty Antravel's Roof (Good/Moderate) on Tholurr Lane; and the often-stinking-of-fish due to being almost at water level the Ship Asail (Good/Cheap) on Arnsarth Lane.

Yallasch doesn't have many taverns, and all they're quieter, more orderly drinking-places than found in most other places, given to talk and board game playing rather than brawling; the Bronze Door on Mauravur Street (Excellent/Moderate) caters to adventurers (and the Watch!); the Unfurled Map (Good/Moderate) on Sashrent Lane is popular with merchants and folk seeking sponsorships; and the Black Ship (Poor/Cheap) on Spitadder Lane is where sailors go to drink, wench, grumble, and sometimes snore.

Notable businesses in Yallasch include Ils Yondur, Fine Ropemaker, on Arnsarth Lane; Duthchanther's (oddments shop, including magical ingredients, curios, and rarities from all over Faerûn) on Longdagger Lane; and the Rung Shield (arms and armor shop, offering a huge array of weapons and armor, including horse barding, exotic shields; the works) on Downdolphin Street.

Yallasch is a damp place; when it's not actually raining (or sleeting or snowing), sea-mists often cling to the city like a drenching-wet fog, cutting visibility to as little as a dozen paces away. Sounds carry oddly in wet air, over or near water, and when echoing off lots of hard stone surfaces, so Yallaschans have learned to murmur quietly unless they want to be overheard. Wayfarers often learn this the hard way.

Ythtym

Village

In recent years, this former waystop (as recently as 1471 DR, it was little more than an inn, a horse-pond, and a few farmhouses) has been bustling and growing as folk came to the Borders from the Vilhon in increasing numbers to settle in this good coastal farming country, clearing what had been a monster-infested forest.

In the 1200s DR, the area was thickly forested, and several human Barons with grand self-bestowed titles inhabited small keeps or palisaded timber halls in its depths, feuding and skirmishing with each other as they lorded it over a few families of farmers and woodcutters, but over the next two decades they fell, one by one, to the sword of one baron, who in 1249 DR, when he'd bloodily become the last baron left, styled himself "Duke of Ythtar" and started building a grand stone castle. It was vast and rambling but incomplete when he died of winter fever, and his infant son became the second Duke—and was murderered by a visiting merchant who wanted the dukedom for himself. That touched off a dark time of slayings until only a handful of folk were left, and they fled to safer places, leaving the unfinished castle empty. In the 1270s, adventurers scoured out the monsters who'd come to lair there, but found nothing of value and departed again, and so began a century of monsters dwelling in the castle until adventurers cleaned them out, then left and new beasts came, whereupon adventurers arrived and fought those monsters—and so on.

That went on until the Sundering ravaged this area, but in its wake the coastal road was improved, and the castle was rediscovered and inhabited by several farming families. After they built their own farmhouses in the 1460s DR, they rented out the castle to immigrant after immigrant, room by room. Today, Ythtym Hall, as it's now known, is the shared abode of over seventy folk, families taking individual rooms and unrelated folk sharing others.

Ythtymmur have their tales of hauntings, mainly about sinister silent wraiths that follow folk in the woods and make anyone who tries to sleep in the forest disappear, but there are also stories of apparitions in the castle—gliding, gesturing phantoms that beckon the living to follow them, and then always head down into the castle cellars, only to vanish through the solid stone walls. The doors from the cellars in use down into the deeper dungeons were bricked up a decade ago, but the castle is said to have secret doors and passages aplenty, and to connect to the Underdark beneath—though why the Duke of Ythtar would have wanted to imperil his home with such a connection is anyone's guess. The Duke was paying many workers when he fell ill, and those riches must lie somewhere in the castle or near at hand (in a secret room?). There are other tales of treasure, too: the rival barons defeated by the Duke all had their own treasuries, large or small, and these were never recovered when they were slain. Some coins may have been carried off by fleeing servants, but most stories agree that "chests of coins and gems" were buried in the woods, and presumably still lie beneath the roots and soil, to be found.

Ythtym's inn, the Soaring Dragon (Excellent/Moderate), is a large, bustling, prosperous place, thanks to its large dining room that's crowded at all hours with local families eating and gossiping. Travelers desiring peace and quiet are directed to the Old Wing, running out back, where the local children aren't allowed and a succession of three heavy doors walls away all the hubbub. The food is good (if simple; soups, stews, and roast fowl on skewers predominate) and the staff friendly, swift, and efficient. It's run by an old woman, Chaereth Traegeth (NG Chondathan human female fighter), and her female staff (unruly guests are warned that the cook, hostler, and chatelaine are all retired veteran fighters).

Ythtym is governed by an elected Castellan, who serves as judge (along with a rotating trio of local elders), and who leads the five village Constables (leather-clad, lightly-armed lantern-bearing law-keepers). The administration is lenient, keeping order and no more; the current Castellan is the terse, scarred and moustachioed Vorm Nanthar (LN Damaran human male wizard).

Some Hauntings of Ythtym

Beyond the common apparitions everyone in Ythtym knows about, there are some rare and more unusual hauntings seen recently in the castle by adventurers. All are intangible. They include a pair of bleeding human eyes that fly about followed by an eyeless, silently-howling face accompanied by hands that grab blindly at the air; a lone lit candle that floats about, its flame unaffected by drafts or breezes, until it turns into a globe of flame and bursts; flying rings of keys, and flying black fangs that bite savagely at nothing.


Dean Spencer

Chapter 2: Campaigns in the Border Kingdoms

As a social backwater of Faerûn for centuries, where fugitives from justice, adventurers seeking a land to call their own, and misfits from many elsewheres all fetch up from time to time, the Border Kingdoms has accumulated a wide variety of secrets, mysteries, treasure, and oddities from afar. Many come with feuds attached.

Hunt for the Mighty

During the Sundering, one of the reasons High Prince Telamont Tanthul of Thultanthar wanted Myth Drannor conquered was to seize the power of its manyfold mythals, or failing that destroy them and take possession of the magic items he was certain were anchoring them.

In ancient times, several cultures (including those of Jhaamdath, Mir, and Imaskar) separately developed a habit of investing enchanted items with power upon power, and eventually magically linking such "mighty" items to lesser enchanted items or ongoing magical effects (such as "fields" or "wards") and using them as what we real-world moderns might refer to as both a "control switch" and a "battery" for the entire network.

A few such items, notably from the Jhaamdathan city of Corrant, have long lain scattered and hidden across what is now the Border Kingdoms.

In the 1330s DR, the Wearers of the Purple (Cult of the Dragon) became aware of this through perusal of crumbling diaries from mages' tombs they plundered, and started hunting these items. All of the searchers perished before finding much of anything, but some of their records fell into the hands of certain mages, and thence by misadventure into the grasp of some renegade Zhentarim—and now, the hunt is on anew, by certain agents of the Zhentarim, the Lords' Alliance, and the Order of the Gauntlet, who are scouring the Border Kingdom for hints of the whereabouts and natures of these mighty items, but keeping what they're doing secret even from many fellows in their factions. Both the Harpers and the Emerald Enclave know something is afoot, and are trying to capture and interrogate, or better yet overhear unguarded converse of, various hunters, so as to find out what's going on.

The precise form, means of wielding, and powers of these "mighty" items—which may well be damaged or failing, after so much time and mistreatment, and the ravages of the Spellplague—are unknown, but popular forms Jhaamdathan enchanted items took included bracers and what later observers sometimes called "stars" (that is, floating metal items that had projecting-in-many-directions spikes). Old and confused legends yield these names for mighty items: the Targe of Eidolons, the Oroandar, and the Vorlstar.

Whatever item hidden in (or under) the Grand Duchy of Shantal, that powers its gone-wild wards, might well be one of these "Mighty." Or, something else entirely. . . .

Usurpers in the Making

Azoun IV of Cormyr was notorious in his younger days for fathering many bastards, and more than a few of them found their ways to new lives in obscurity all over Faerûn, including in the Border Kingdoms. Where a handful of their descendants have now been traced by the offspring of disgraced and exiled Cormyrean nobles, notably Alaskar Goldsword and Arphoind "Swordscar" Bleth and his sister Anamarra Bleth, who are preparing these "rightful Obarskyr claimants" for various bids to seize the Dragon Throne, covertly seeking support among disaffected nobles resident in Cormyr as they locate and judge suitable mercenary troops, and amass coin enough to engage them.

All of the five major factions are aware of some of these schemes; the Zhentarim want them to succeed (their thinking being: it doesn't matter who prevails, so long as Cormyr is shattered in the strife), and the other factions want them to fail for a variety of reasons, so nipping such bids in the bud right now, in the Border Kingdoms, is something being ferociously but covertly pursued.

Right now, Alaskar Goldsword is backing two claimants (without telling either about the existence of the other), Arphoind is readying one claimant with the knowledge and assistance of his sister, and Anamarra has three more claimants up her sleeve but hasn't enlightened her brother or any of the claimants about her schemes.

Alaskar has—by means of trusted go-betweens (veteran traveling merchants who know very well which side of their loaves are buttered)—contacted Sedmond Scoril, Vhondyn Braerwinter, and Balontar Calantar, the patriarchs of their houses, to see if they'll support Dazark Malanchar, a great-grandson of Azoun IV, in a bid for the throne. It is understood that the three patriarchs would personally gain dukedoms, with much land and coin to go with them, become the privy council advising (controlling) the installed King Dazark, and that various Scorils,

Braerwinters, and Calantars would gain offices (paid positions of authority) at Court.

Arphoind is offering very much the same sort of arrangement to Flondar Tavernant and Houl Illance on behalf of his claimant, Trest Sandrannar (a grandson of Azoun IV and a man of advanced years whom Arphoind is promising would marry one of the Tavernant daughters and make her his queen). It is understood that the Bleths would be restored to their lands, properties, and good standing, their exile rescinded, and that Arphoind would become Lord of the Treasury. Houl Illance would be named Lord High Marshal of the Realm, and given control of the Purple Dragons and all Obarskyr-owned ships to use for his own trading-enrichment. The new king, marshal, and treasury lord would work together to swiftly and ruthlessly execute all War Wizards not willing to swear personal loyalty to all three. However, Tavernant and IIllance are wary of Westgate (still ruled by the patriarch of the Bleth family, Jaundamicar), and of the Fire Knives thieves' guild whom the First Lord of Westgate controls, gaining influence in Cormyr, and are proceeding with Arphoind's scheme very slowly.

Anamarra has made common cause with two great-granddaughters of Azoun, Ilandra Maraster and Lalyra Prendrar, and one great-great-grandson, Brace Farandar, without proceeding beyond the "I'm gathering support for you, but you must keep very quiet, as Cormyr has sent out assassins to find and dispose of possible threats to the Crown" stage.

All of these claimants are living in the Border Kingdoms under various assumed names, under the protection (and watchful scrutiny) of Alaskar, Arphoind, and Anamarra respectively; they have been moved about, are guarded, and can be whisked hurriedly away to other strongholds and hideholds if need be.

The Night Arrow

Thus far unbeknownst to the Border Kingdoms and other realms of Faerûn, a Halruaan skyship of maverick design sits hidden in the Realm of the Mount; it resembles a weather-mottled stone keep tower and stands within the crumbling stone walls of Launshar, a onetime baronial castle and later wizard's stronghold whose central buildings were so magically altered that they exploded during the onset of the Spellplague—so to most scrutiny, today, the skyship is simply part of a long-abandoned castle.

In the air, the Night Arrow looks like a cylinder of stone torn up from its foundations—jagged lower end and all—and given the magical power of silent flight (which can be horizontal, vertical, inclined in a diagonal manner, end-first, side-first, rolling, tumbling, or hovering in place, as its helm desires). The long-dead Halruaan eccentric who designed and crafted this flying home for himself fashioned it to look like a tower; despite its dilapidated appearance, its enchantments remain strong.

Inside, the ship has been hollowed out by its current owner, a death tyrant known as Quurlanxlam ("Koo-url-ANGS-lam"), to be its lair. There, surrounded by four devoted mindwitnesses (altered beholders mind-linked to their undead beholder "lord") and served by a handful of flind and living gnolls and a small army of gnoll witherlings, it plots world domination, intending to fly and conquer fortresses and towns around the Sea of Fallen Stars. To accomplish this, Quurlanxlam sees the need for armed hosts to fight on its behalf, and intends to get them by offering goblins of the Underdark, who have been cautiously exploring up through the dungeons of Launshar to raid the surface world, with an eye to eventually plundering the Bright Realms Above in earnest, transport to raid and then conquer target after coastal target; a few villages and keeps at first, and then perhaps the city of Westgate.

Quurlanxlam has heard (false) rumors that Westgate is home to some beholder cults (of the urban sort: secret societies that each worship a lone beholder hidden somewhere in or under a city; there are such beholder cults in certain Chessentan and Sembian cities, and a distorted description of the Xanathar in Waterdeep might lead a hearer to think it was the center of yet another beholder cult, but to Quurlanxlam, "the Xanathar" is a title once held by a beholder it knows was killed, long ago). So the lord and helm of the Night Arrow wants Westgate conquered and the beholder there found and destroyed; thereafter, it intends to hire the best human adventurers it can to hunt down all other beholders they may hear of, so the armies of Quurlanxlam can rend them, too.

Quurlanxlam is as paranoid as any other beholder; the mere existence of beholder rivals make it restless, and it aches for them all to be found and destroyed. It has a whimsical sense of humor (hence the name it bestowed on its skyship home) and a particular brilliance for devising magical rituals by observation, deduction, and experimentation—which is how it managed to acquire its mindwitness servitors and create so many gnoll witherlings.

Right now, Quurlanxlam needs human adventurers to act as go-betweens, contacting the goblins and bringing them to it for negotiations (it will promise both the adventurers and the goblins just about anything to get their cooperation, as it has no intention of ultimately being bound to any bargains it makes), and also as scouts to glean intelligence about how best to assault its targets around the Inner Sea. (Quurlanxlam sees wealth as merely a tool to move

lesser creatures to do its bidding, and will be quite content to pay or bribe anyone handsomely to carry out missions for it, or refrain from doing certain things. And where offers of payment fail, perhaps fear or blackmail will succeed.)

So any adventurers exploring the Night Arrow will be lured by "fleeing" gnoll witherlings into the presence of the death tyrant, surrounded by a protective ring of mindwitnesses (who float above plenty of melted-together, wagon- to warchest-sized "big spiky balls" of melted-together metal javelins, spears, swords, axes, and spikes they can telekinese at or to drop atop intruders), for a parley. As adventurers approach the open heart of the ship, where Quurlanxlam floats, the death tyrant will helm the skyship to gently rise up out of the castle ruins to hover 200 feet or so in the air (so fleeing PCs will face a long, long drop). If negotiations go well, the ship will gently return whence it came; adventurers may never even know it moved at all.

Adventurers who learn too much of what the death tyrant wants of them and then refuse to work with it must be destroyed before they can warn anyone, or spread damaging rumors (that rival beholders may hear). Adventurers who play along may earn handsome pay for scouting or envoy missions—but may well learn the hard way that Quurlanxlam, like all beholders, believes in setting layers of spies to watch over its underlings.

Rise of the Sword King

Right now, all Jureth Malantar has is a cave home in the wild southern fringes of Qurth Forest, a small fortune that he's spending fast, and grand dreams.

Specifically, he dreams of conquering many realms—the Border Kingdoms first (yes, all of them), and then as much as he can of the lands around (starting with the cities of Ormpur and Sheirtalar). However, he's not as crazed as most "everything shall be mine!" folk. Rather, he's sly and shrewd. Knowing full well he hasn't coin enough to assemble, feed and house a large enough mercenary army, without forewarning all Borderers with the mustering, he's hit upon the notion of hiring bands of adventurers to conquer hamlet, thorp, village, city, and land after Border land by stealth and storm, using the resources of what's been taken against the next target. He's assembled four adventuring bands already, but is looking to recruit more, as they begin with a covert sidle-and-murder-by-night assault on Syrnt. His strategy is to "take" weak places all over the Borders, not conquer one and then assault the place next door in a predictable manner. And his takeovers are going to be quiet, with conquering adventurers setting themselves up as replacement "barons" of each place, not announcing a new kingdom or their allegiance to it. With Malantar having holds over them with fictitious poisons and antidotes (as in, "I've already poisoned you; you're doomed if you don't obey me, because I'll stop giving you tiny doses of antidote"), and equally fictitious (for new) spying mages.

The Emerald Hand

One of the secrets of the Emerald Enclave faction is that they've come to view the Border Kingdoms as a vital battleground where the infiltration and increasing influences of other factions must be thwarted (a "line in the sand" they will defend). In particular, attempts by agents of the Zhentarim, the Lords' Alliance, and even the Order of the Gauntlet to improve roads, lawkeeping and surveillance, and settlement, at the expense of the wilderness and wild beasts ("monsters"), must be thwarted.

The clearing and taming of Border Kingdoms lands must be slowed, by keeping local Border rulers feuding and opposed to each other if need be—and, as the Harpers have traditionally sought to do, to keep rulers weak and small in reach rather than allowing large kingdoms or empires to arise, which the Zhentarim can more easily corrupt, and the Lords' Alliance co-opt.

Agents of the Enclave are numerous and energetic in the Borders, working constantly (often in small, subtle ways) to slow power gains among local rulers, to "balance out" skirmishes and prevent clear victors and especially one land conquering another. In the Border Kingdoms, Enclave agents will ruthlessly eliminate known agents of other factions if it seems best to their goals. In the Borders, aid from another Enclave agent is never far away—and deeply-undercover Enclave spies watch everyone, including fellow Enclave agents, for signs of treachery or imminent failure, so they can send in unlooked-for assistance and "save the day" for the Emerald Enclave.

The Harpers are collectively aware of these efforts, but the other factions have been slow to realize it; the Zhentarim, the Lords' Alliance, and the Order of the Gauntlet are still at the "individual members starting to realize something's going on, without yet quite grasping what it is" stage.

Chapter 3: Character Backgrounds for the Border Kingdoms

Literally just about any sort of being, from anywhere on Toril (or even left behind from Abeir, at the end of the Second Sundering) can be found in the Border Kingdoms. This region is where folk go to hide, misfits fetch up, and adventurers come to hide fortunes, find fortunes, or track down individuals they're interested in or have been sent behind. Yet some traits and commonalities are frequently found among Borderers, and we look at them here.

Druuthguard

You are a descendant of someone—likely in or near the Border Kingdom known as High Mukshar—who came into intimate personal contact with a member of a druuth (a band of doppelgangers led by an mind flayer) and survived.

Skill Proficiencies: Choose two from among Arcana, Investigation, Religion, or Survival
Languages: Choose one language from the following list: Abyssal, Celestial, Deep Speech, Draconic, Infernal, Primordial, Sylvan, or Undercommon
Tool Proficiencies: One musical instrument of your choice
Equipment: An explorer's pack, a set of common clothes, and a pouch containing 15 gp

Feature: Changeling Resistance

As a result of your hereditary exposure to such creatures, whenever you're in the company of a shapeshifter (doppelganger, lycanthrope, etc.) you sense that something is "odd" about them. You can't tell precisely what kind of shapeshifter they are, but you know they are one.

Suggested Characteristics

Druuthguard tend to be suspicious of strangers and generally distrustful. However, once they have decided someone is true and reliable, they are usually staunch friends and allies. They generally carry an "us vs. them" mentality due to their family's past. Druuthguard tend to examine strangers critically assessing whether or not they represent an immediate threat or are hiding something sinister or dangerous.

Use the tables below, either making specific selections or rolling randomly, as the basis for your traits and motivations, modifying the entries when appropriate to suit your identity.

d8	Personality Trait
1	You stink of evil. I can smell it on you.
2	I dream of a world safe from hidden threats and betrayal.
3	I know betrayal is coming, so I live life to its fullest every minute of every day.
4	I will find the betrayer, if it is the last thing that I ever do.
5	I don't talk about the source of my suspicions. That is my burden to bear.
6	I expect betrayal at every moment.
7	I will not give in to my fears. I will face the hidden menace among us and expose them.
8	I put no trust in the smoother talkers of this world. They are almost always false.

d6	Ideal
1	**Endurance.** I will find the hidden evil among us, no matter what the personal cost. (Good)
2	**Alertness.** I will never let down my guard. Vigilance always and forever. (Any)
3	**Diligence.** Those that hide in order to prey on the innocent must be exposed and stopped. (Good)
4	**Defiance.** I will not let legal niceties stop me from unmasking the deceitful. (Chaotic)
5	**Vigilance.** Hidden threats are the most basic danger to organized society. (Lawful)
6	**Steadfastness.** If innocents die as a result of exposing the false, so be it. (Evil)

d6	Bond
1	I maintain a journal detailing a roster of those who have aroused my suspicions.
2	I would sacrifice everything to protect the innocent.
3	I drove away all my friends and loved ones because of my single-minded pursuit of the hidden.
4	I failed to act on my suspicions once long ago. The memory of the costs of my inaction haunts me everyday.
5	I do my best to conceal a deep and abiding rage.
6	My niece is my only living relative. I would do anything to protect her.

d6	Flaw
1	I can't stand being dirty. I must be perfectly clean, always.
2	I assume the worst in people and am usually right.
3	Everyone is a threat. It is merely a question of degree.
4	I am afraid of the dark.
5	I am unrelentingly negative.
6	I talk to myself constantly. I am the only one that I fully trust.

Duskwood Forester

You have become one of the rare few who have walked the trails and trackless tangles of the largest and wildest forest in the Border Kingdoms, and survived its plentiful monsters long enough to gain not just woodcraft, but a mastery of the secrets unique to the Duskwood, its waterflows and prevalent breezes, its topography and hidden caverns (all of them beast-lairs, these days), and the habitual hunting ranges of its most formidable monstrous inhabitants. You can hunt, guide, trap and find your way through the Duskwood with a far lower chance of getting lost than others, and you know where specific beasts (and types of flora) are most likely to be found; enough to make a living from this.

Skill Proficiencies: Nature, Survival
Tool Proficiencies: Woodcarvers tools
Languages: One of your choice
Equipment: A forester's axe, a hunting trap, a journal containing notes on specific locations of rare and sought-after flora and fauna, a set of forester's clothes, and a pouch containing 10 gp

Woodsage

As a Duskwood forester, you are a woodcutter who within the canopy of the Duskwood, knows the properties of types of woods, and how to correctly identify trees, vines, berries, bushes, and herbs; can recognize most plant blights and what creatures left what marks when feeding, claw-sharpening, or passing; knows the trails and sites of the Duskwood (including routes to the magical pools of the Deep Duskwood); is familiar with the perils of the Vauntagar; has some mastery of what in the forest is poisonous and what antidotes and remedies the Duskwood holds; and knows something of the magic of the forest's fabled enchanted pools.

Feature: Naturalist Guide

You have spent most of your adult life under the broadleaf canopies of the great and wild forests of the Border Kingdoms. As a result, you are extremely familiar with the terrain, inhabitants, and hazards found in these untamed and vast woods. You can always find game, edible plants and berries, and fresh water for yourself and up to five other people each day while in the forest

Suggested Characteristics

The life of a duskwood forester tends to be a solitary one. As a result, many duskwood foresters tend to be reserved in demeanor, given to silences, and are blunt and gruff in speech. Foresters are not ones for many of the refinements prized by urban society, and are more comfortable sleeping out of doors than in a bed.

Use the tables below, either making specific selections or rolling randomly, as the basis for your traits and motivations, modifying the entries when appropriate to suit your identity.

d8	Personality Trait
1	I tend to talk to myself when I am alone and walking through the forest.
2	I can stare at a gently flowing stream for hours.
3	I can be extremely impatient with tinhorns not experienced with the ways of the forest.
4	I don't react well when someone tries to order me around.
5	I am as grumpy as a badger when I wake up each morning.
6	I am uncomfortable and feel out of place around large groups of people.
7	I am slow to trust, but loyal to a fault.
8	I rather sleep in a tree than in a bed.

Secrets Duskwood Foresters Know

Long ago, the Duskwood hosted a ferocious magical battle. Mighty spells were hurled and magic items exploded, scattering raw magical energies. Some sank into leaves, bark, and roots. Most of the trees, shrubs, and vines radiate no magic today, but can have strange properties.

d6	Ideal
1	**Seasons.** The only thing that is permanent in life is change. We all must accept that everything changes eventually. (Chaotic)
2	**Beauty.** Revel in the beauty of nature and share its gifts with those around you. (Good)
3	**Protection.** It is my duty to protect those who cannot protect themselves from the dangers of the forest. (Lawful)
4	**Strength.** As in nature, the strong rule the weak. It is the only way. (Evil)
5	**Nature.** The natural world offers the purest way of life. The trappings of civilization are nothing more than a burden. (Neutral)
6	**Reason.** Every question in life should be answered by reasoned inquiry so that we may arrive at the truth. (Any)

d6	Bond
1	The forest is my home and I am its protector.
2	I am fascinated by the beauty and grandeur of the forest.
3	It is my mission to share the wonders of nature with unfortunate and ignorant city folk.
4	When I am hired as a guide, I will lay down my life to protect my clients if need be.
5	All hunting should be for sustenance only. Killing animals is not a sport.
6	It is my duty to protect visitors to the forest.

d6	Flaw
1	I am not impressed by fancy folk and high manners. None of that will save you from a hungry owlbear.
2	Bathing is for dandies and soft city folk.
3	I don't give a damn about what anyone thinks about me.
4	I loathe cheese and cannot stand to be near it.
5	I truly think that the trees are smarter than most people.
6	I don't forgive a slight, ever.



Griffon Knight

You are, or were, a member of the Griffon Knights, the lawkeepers of the town of Alamontyr and its patrolled territory. Not only have you been highly trained to an elite fighting standard, and through familiarty with the Shield Duke become familiar with what superb, even-handed, and far-sighted leadership is, you have gained experience in the use of magic items (mostly wands provided by the Duke for lancetip deployment) in combat.

Skill Proficiencies: Arcana, Investigation
Tool Proficiencies: One type of gaming set or musical instrument
Languages: One of your choice
Equipment: A set of fine clothes, your badge of office, a handwritten notebook filled with notations about magic items found/experienced, a set of manacles, and a purse containing 25 gp

Elite Lawkeeper of Alamontyr

Disciplined in combat and personal deportment and speech, practised in co-ordinated (group formation) combat, searches, and alertness at all times of surroundings, and sufficiently familiar with the wares made by the crafters of Alamontyr to readily find and identify tiny makers' marks and judge if a particular item is counterfeit or really the work of the crafter it purports to be. Familiar with the details (pitfalls, side effects, and strengths) of the use in battle of a range of magic items.

Feature: Nose for Trouble

Your experience in finding and punishing counterfeits, and dealing with lawbreakers generally, gives you a feel for the criminal element in Alamontyr. You can adeptly pick out members of the local thieves' guild or criminal front, and are likely to spot hired spies at work. You also have an affinity for local law enforcement and can quickly locate members of the local watch or constabulary. Your background also affords you with much higher credibility when interacting with other law enforcement.

Suggested Characteristics

Griffon Knights are known for their dedication to their order as well as their high level of training.

Use the tables below, either making specific selections or rolling randomly, as the basis for your traits and motivations, modifying the entries when appropriate to suit your identity.

d8	Personality Trait
1	I am polite to the point of absurdity.
2	I have lost too many fellow service members to trust others too easily.
3	I am disgusted by the petty criminal activity I see everywhere.
4	I have a story from my past service analogous to every situation imaginable.
5	Nothing scares me, not even cold porridge.
6	I like being in control and issuing orders.
7	I have a crude sense of humor.
8	Direct and simple action is always the right path.

d6	Ideal
1	**Protection.** My oath was to protect the innocent. (Good)
2	**Law.** Rules, ordinances, and laws must be followed absolutely. (Lawful)
3	**Free Thinking.** The letter of the law is not important, it is the intent behind the law. (Chaotic)
4	**Strength.** Might makes right. (Evil)
5	**Impartiality.** Your guilt or innocence is not for me to decide. (Neutral)
6	**Duty.** Not on my watch. (Any)

d6	Bond
1	No one left behind, ever.
2	Only the smart survive. Discretion is the better part of valor.
3	Honor is everything.
4	I'll never forget being betrayed by that sweet face.
5	I will lay down my life for my fellows.
6	I will protect those who cannot protect themselves.

d6	Flaw
1	I am quick to judgment and too stubborn to admit it.
2	I quietly despise the weak.
3	I really hate cats.
4	I frequently lose my temper.
5	I blindly obey the law, even if doing so does harm.
6	I am haunted by a poor decision I made that cost the lives of fellow service members.

Highcoin Blackalan

As a current or sometime well-to-do resident of Blackalblade, you have lived that haughty, loftier-than- many-nobles-of-Faerûn lifestyle, are aware of the shifts in its etiquette, and know how to act and speak so as to pass for a member of the idle rich of high station anywhere up and down the Sword Coast, the Border Kingdoms, and (you believe) anywhere else. Controlling your voice and face, spotting even veiled slights and implied criticisms, and swiftly grasping the social standing and importance of strangers has become constant second nature to you, and you are at ease—or can act so, superbly—in "highborn" society and at social functions, with no awkwardness or hesitations.

Skill Proficiencies: History, Persuasion
Tool Proficiencies: One type of gaming set or one musical instrument
Languages: One of your choice
Equipment: A set of fine clothes, a signet ring or brooch, a scroll of pedigree, three silken cravats, and a purse containing 20 gp

Feature: High Roller

Glib of tongue and a master actor, skilled in insults and acting "haughtier than thou," and being a shrewd judge of the wealth of individuals and how to goad, stingingly insult, or impress them or make common cause with them, you have gained not just familiarity with how to spend money, but how to handle it, from profit margins to sly contract pitfalls (from either being a "coinlord" of Blackalblade, investing, lending, and banking, or from dealing extensively with coinlords). You've developed a wide network of contacts within the citizenry of Blackalblade, and through your lived experience in that city become familiar with expensive luxury goods (including wines and cheeses), and with gems and gemcutting (so you can readily identify even rare gems, and other substances dyed, heat-treated, and otherwise altered so as to be passed off as fine gemstones).

Suggested Characteristics

As is common with most nobles, you were born and raised in a different stratum of society than the vast majority of the populace. Your life is defined by wealth, opulence, and privilege.

Use the tables below, either making specific selections or rolling randomly, as the basis for your traits and motivations, modifying the entries when appropriate to suit your identity.

d8	Personality Trait
1	My refined approach to everything that I do is a gift to the rest of the world.
2	I am well known among the hoi polloi for my kindness and generosity.
3	I always look my best no matter how trying the circumstances.
4	It is difficult to be among the lowborn, but it is a fact of life that must be endured.
5	Only the best for me, always.
6	We are all equals, despite my elevated birth and status.
7	Do not ever betray me, for you will never find a more implacable adversary.
8	As a highborn, it is my duty to try to set an example of proper behavior for the rest of society.

d6	Ideal
1	**Deference.** Because of my birth, a certain amount of respect is due. However, that respect can only be maintained by decent and proper behavior. (Good)
2	**Duty.** In all things there is a ladder of authority. It is important to recognize upon which rung you perch and to act accordingly. (Lawful)
3	**Free Spirit.** Just because I was born into a certain caste does not mean I have to act as such or remain there at all. (Chaotic)
4	**Power.** Wealth and influence are weapons to be used against all but our closest allies. (Evil)
5	**Loyalty.** My first and last duties are to my family. Family is everything. (Any)
6	**Noble Obligation.** My duty as a noble requires me to protect, aid, and show generosity to those around me. (Good)

d6	Bond
1	Glory and honor to my house and family defines everything I do.
2	A deal is a deal and must be honored no matter the cost.
3	I must be adored and revered by the common people.
4	My obligations to my family leave no room for frivolity or whimsy.
5	My loyalty to my liege lord is absolute.
6	I must set an example of proper behavior for the sake of others.

d6	Flaw
1	I openly loathe the unwashed commoners.
2	I made a grievous mistake which if discovered could ruin me and my family.
3	I am paranoid to the point of distraction.
4	Pleasures of the flesh are the only thing really worth living for.
5	No one is smarter, more refined, and more gracious than me.
6	I am an embarrassment to my family, although I would never admit that.

Skulls Hollow Seer

You have personally been "passed through" (by their choice, not any deliberate act of yours) by one or more of the flying, glowing human skull apparitions of Skulls Hollow on the Green Road, and as a result you not only received the usual vivid visions of incidents from the past lifetimes of the Skulls, but you now often receive inside your head cryptic whispered messages from the Skulls, that only you hear, usually relating to something that happens in the future. These visions and messages come at random, and may or may not ever make sense to you or be useful to you, but seers who've paid attention to them have noticed they sometimes can be of aid in deciding what to do in the immediate future, in particular when magic or the undead are involved.

Skill Proficiencies: Insight, Perception
Languages: One of your choice
Tool Proficiencies: One gaming set of your choice
Equipment: A gaming set of your choice, a set of common clothes, and a pouch containing 15 gp

Feature: Glimpses of the Past and Future

As a result of this strange experience with the apparition of Skulls Hallow, you are an unwilling seer, of sorts. Visions of the past and messages about the future come to you unbidden and for no apparent reason. More frustrating than that is trying to figure out what these glimpses from other times and places mean. Occasionally, these visions and messages are easy to understand and can be quite helpful. However, more commonly, these random insights are inscrutable and confusing. Your DM may privately impart Skull messages to you from time to time.



Suggested Characteristics

Skulls Hollow Seer are often a harried and frustrated lot. Having enigmatic visions of the past and unfathomable whispered messages of the future arrive unbidden at random times is generally not a positive for one's mental health. Some embrace this "gift" and seek to share or profit from this knowledge, while others suppress and ignore the undesired insights they receive. However, they feel about it, Skulls Hollow Seers have no choice in the matter and will continue to receive these insights be they welcome or not.

Use the tables below, either making specific selections or rolling randomly, as the basis for your traits and motivations, modifying the entries when appropriate to suit your identity.

d8	Personality Trait
1	I feel anxious and on edge almost all the time.
2	I am almost never surprised by anything.
3	I only speak if spoken to, and answer with as few words as possible.
4	I make sure to loudly and broadly proclaim any bit of insight or wisdom that comes to me.
5	I try to find the positive in any experience, no matter how terrible it might seem at the time.
6	I am suspicious of just about everyone as I feel that everyone wants to use me for their own purposes.
7	I am a real talker. In fact, I really never stop talking.
8	I am a dour person, sulky and sour about the circumstances of my life.

d6	Ideal
1	**Aspiration.** I've seen a hint of greatness in my future, and I work hard to achieve it. (Any)
2	**Manipulation.** My gifts give me the perfect leverage to move others to my tune. (Evil)
3	**Freedom.** Knowledge of what may come allows for greater choice. (Chaotic)
4	**Serenity.** I seek fulfillment with whatever I see in the future. (Neutral)
5	**Truth.** I am a servant of the truth, and I will share it for good or ill. (Lawful)
6	**Compassion.** My gifts can bring comfort to the suffering and peace to the troubled. (Good)

d6	Bond
1	I told the fortune of the man who then destroyed my family, but I ignored the warning. I must find him and put it right.
2	My grandmother passed a token to me when she explained our gift of the Sight. It's my most prized possession.
3	I told one fortune whose meaning I still don't understand, but I know it has great importance.
4	My family travels the land, and I send most of the money I earn to them.
5	I told the fortune of the person I loved, and that led them to the arms of another.
6	I'm driven to read the fortune of powerful people.

d6	Flaw
1	I saw a truth once that I refused to speak, and tragedy was the result. It haunts me to this day.
2	I have terrible nightmares about the dark futures I've glimpsed.
3	No matter how I try, very few ever believe my fortunes.
4	I can't resist embellishing a fortune to try to earn a few more coins.
5	I loathe charlatans and tricksters who take advantage of those who seek their fortunes, and I do what I can to discredit them.
6	I'm terribly jealous of any positive fortune I read, since I can read any palm but my own.

Jundarl

You are of the bloodline of a family who lived for generations in the hot forest of Jundarwood (also known as "Old Shadow") in the western Border Kingdoms, and through drinking its waters and eating its fast-growing plants and small animals, gained the trait of healing swiftly and even regenerating lost organs, limbs, and other body parts. Like other Jundarls, your hair and nails grow with astonishing speed, so if you don't trim often, you're always shaggy, and if you "let yourself go" can become as hairy as a bear (concealing your facial features and hiding tattoos and scars), with nails like (brittle, low- strength) bear-claws.

Skill Proficiencies: Medicine, Religion
Tool Proficiencies: Herbalism kit
Languages: One of your choice
Equipment: A well-worn animal pelt you use as both clothing and blanket, an herbalism kit, and 5 gp

Feature: Fast Healing

While the rapid growth of your hair and nails may have their drawbacks in civilized society, your body's rapid healing makes getting over life's everyday bumps and bruises a bit easier. At the end of a long rest, the jundarl gains a number of temporary hit points equal to their proficiency bonus. Given enough time, this unusual healing ability can actually regenerate lost digits or even whole body parts. However, this process is slow. The jundarl can regenerate approximately one pound of lost body parts/material for each month spent resting.

Suggested Characteristics

Jundarl tend to be on the reclusive side simply as a function of their appearance. However, they are certainly not solitary individuals by default. Given assiduous and daily grooming, one would never be able to tell a Jundarl apart from any other Borderer. Those Jundarl who weary from the necessary trimming and cutting that is required to blend into "normal" society tend to be loners who live in isolation. Because of their obvious physical differences from the rest of society, Jundarl are often wrongly accused of beastly behaviour, not unlike the bias faced by lycanthropes.

Use the tables below, either making specific selections or rolling randomly, as the basis for your traits and motivations, modifying the entries when appropriate to suit your identity.

d8	Personality Trait
1	I've have been accused of so many things I did not do based on my appearance, that I am very slow to judge others.
2	I always root for the underdog and go out of my way to help those less fortunate than myself.
3	I am quite convinced that I have the right answer for every question, every time.
4	I can't stand dairy in any form.
5	I'm above such concepts as etiquette and social expectations.
6	I'm very easily distracted and struggle to stay on any task.
7	All we need is love.
8	I am impatient with people the are less intelligent than me, which means just about everyone.

d6	Ideal
1	**A Better World.** My life is dedicated to uplifting those around me. (Good)
2	**Order.** Without structure, all is lost. We must follow the rules! (Lawful)
3	**Whatever.** Everyone needs to, like, chill, man. (Chaotic)
4	**Pain.** Only through a measure of suffering can one find the truth. (Evil)
5	**Respect Others.** There is no absolute truth. Each must find their own path. (Neutral)
6	**Respect Life.** We all have a role to play in this universe and should be allowed to play it. (Any)



d6	Bond
1	Because of persecution suffered as a child, I am dedicated to building a more inclusive world.
2	I am driven by my fear of failure.
3	I lost someone very close to me long ago. Everything I do is dedicated to their memory.
4	I am focused on revenge. Revenge against those who killed my family long ago.
5	My only source of peace is unspoiled nature. Iwill do anything to preserve it.
6	Striving for justice in an unjust world is my burden to bear.

d6	Flaw
1	My fear of being accepted makes me quiet and withdrawn.
2	I deeply resent people who talk too much.
3	I am extremely self conscious about my bad breath, so keep others at least arms' length away.
4	I simply cannot abide losing an argument, so I never acknowledge defeat.
5	I am greedy, like really greedy. Where is my precious?!
6	I can't stand high society types or any form of foppery.

Monster Hunter

You are an experienced hunter of monsters in the Border Kingdoms, both to eliminate and to capture for clients. You have become familiar with their favored lairs, feeding and watering areas, habits, and territories, and so have a good idea of where to find them. Many Borderers know and repeat tavern- tales about the maraudings and cunning of monsters; you have learned what is truth and what is exaggeration in most of these tellings, and the precautions to take if success—and your survival of a hunt—is to be likely.

Skill Proficiencies: Nature, Stealth
Tool Proficiencies: Herbalism kit
Languages: One of your choice
Equipment: Herbalism kit, hunting trap, a set of traveler's clothes, and a pouch containing 5 gp

The Hunt

You have spent your days mastering the craft of hunting animals and monsters, or pursuing or tracking them with the intent of doing so. Most of your hunting has been for procuring food or to remove predators in your community in which you live. You also have been hired as a guide to track and help kill some of the most dangerous monsters in the Border Kingdoms.

Feature: Tracker/Hunter

You are extremely familiar with the flora, fauna, and terrain of the Border Kingdoms. While in the Border Kingdoms, you can automatically identify the tracks of any beasts native to that region; similarly, you can know what foliage is safe to eat in the Border Kingdoms. Finally, given at least an hour in any wilderness setting in the Border Kingdoms, you can complete a successful hunt producing enough to eat for up to five other people each day.

Suggested Characteristics

Monster hunters are a diverse and colorful group who are experts on the flora and fauna of the wilds of the Border Kingdoms. They tend to be solitary, but not universally so. Their individual motivations can range from conservation to trophy hunting. All Monster Hunters are self reliant and very capable naturalists.

Use the tables below, either making specific selections or rolling randomly, as the basis for your traits and motivations, modifying the entries when appropriate to suit your identity.

d6	Personality Trait
1	I will pursue and catch my quarry no matter the cost.
2	I am privileged to be able to share the beauty of the Border Kingdoms with my clients.
3	I will not rest until each and every monster in the Border Kingdoms is eliminated.
4	I love the thrill of the hunt.
5	I am not one to let property rights and other legalities get in the way of a good hunt.
6	I am all about getting paid. If you pay me enough, I will get you a kill.

d6	Ideal
1	**Independence.** I am a free spirit—no one tells me how to run a hunt. (Chaotic)
2	**Order.** Monsters are a scourge upon us all and must be destroyed. (Lawful)
3	**Safety.** Protecting the innocent from the depredations of monsters is the highest calling. (Good)
4	**Pragmatism.** When it comes to a hunt, by any means necessary is the only rule. (Chaotic)
5	**Friendship.** Material goods come and go. Bonds of friendship last forever. (Good)
6	**Glory.** I'm determined to be known as the foremost hunter in the Border Kingdoms (Any)

d6	Bond
1	A close call with an owlbear taught me early on the importance of respecting the dangers in nature.
2	I was taught everything I know by a salty old trapper and everything I do now honors his memory.
3	The beauty of the natural world informs everything that I do, and I want to share this understanding with as many folk as possible.
4	I grew up in a city, but that was not the life for me. Wilderness and the thrill of the hunt is everything to me.
5	I lost someone very close to me at the claws of a troll. I will do everything in my power to see that this never happens to anyone else.
6	I made a mistake while taking a client on a hunt resulting in her death. It was my fault and the memory of my failure haunts me everyday.

d6	Flaw
1	Once started, I cannot stop a hunt.
2	I am not interested in coddling anyone's feelings. When on a hunt, my way is the only way.
3	I am convinced that I am the best, and am not interested in hearing anyone else's views of tactics, techniques, or locales when it comes to a hunt.
4	I often take unnecessary and foolish risks when on a hunt.
5	When pursuing a monster, laws were meant to be broken.
6	Animals and monsters are beneath our deepest contempt and are meant to be killed.

Oeblar

You grew up in the "lawless" town of Oeble, and so are personally familiar with large numbers of thieves, brigands, smugglers, poisoners, outlaws, bounty hunters, fences of stolen goods—and many of the ruses, swindles, and dodges they employ. You also know of some "safe houses" in Oeble where you can hide—if you can pay their stiff fees—and where to procure good disguises and to hire bodyguards or actors to portray roles for you (such as fictitious family members, business compatriots, slaves, and sages).

Skill Proficiencies: Deception, Stealth
Tool Proficiencies: One type of gaming set, thieves' tools
Equipment: A poisoner's kit, a set of dark common clothes including a hood, and a pouch containing 5 gp

Feature: Poison Expert

You can recognize many poisons and sleep-draughts by taste, smell, and hue, and know where to go to obtain such (and other illicit or contraband) substances. Because so many of these noxious substances originate in the Underdark, you are also resistant to Drow Poison.

Suggested Characteristics

While not necessarily hardened criminals themselves, Oeblar are certainly not put off by criminal activity or lawlessness. Activities such as smuggling, kidnapping, and theft are all functions of normal life for the Oeblar. As such, Oeblar can adopt just about any wider world view, as long as trust in or respect for law or authority is not part of its basic makeup.

Use the tables below, either making specific selections or rolling randomly, as the basis for your traits and motivations, modifying the entries when appropriate to suit your identity.

d8	Personality Trait
1	I am pretty sure that your stuff should be my stuff.
2	I am afraid of the dark.
3	I am not a morning person. Do not bother me with anything before highsun (noon).
4	I have a compulsive sweet tooth.
5	I don't cotton to strangers. You must earn my trust.
6	I am terribly insecure so always act tough and never admit to being wrong.
7	I am incredibly goal-oriented. I will let nothing stop me when I have set a goal.
8	I am fragile and will cry in the face of any cruel insult or jibe.

d6	Ideal
1	**Property.** You are entitled to your things for exactly as long as you are strong enough to protect them. (Chaotic)
2	**Freedom.** No thinking being should ever be caged. Jails and prisons are for the morally bankrupt. (Chaotic)
3	**Charity.** There is enough wealth in this world in order to share a measure of it with all. (Good)
4	**Greed.** Mine! It will all be mine! (Evil)
5	**People.** I can take or leave just about anyone. If you are right by me, you can expect the same in return. (Neutral)
6	**Restitution.** Everyone makes mistakes. So, everyone should be afforded the chance to make things right. (Good)

d6	Bond
1	I owe some money to some bad people. I need to pay them back soon or it will be bad, very bad.
2	I have a little sister that relies on me. I must make money one way or the other.
3	My family's business was forced to close because of outrageous "protection" fees. I will make the local crime boss responsible pay.
4	I will build a vast criminal empire.
5	I have done some things that I am not proud of. I hope to do enough to balance the ledger out.
6	I watched someone I cared very much about die because of a mistake that I made. I will carry that burden with me for the rest of my days.

d6	Flaw
1	When the going gets tough, I get going.
2	All I care about is money.
3	I don't work well with others.
4	I really like pie. I don't allow bakeries to be closed (and keeping me from sampling their wares).
5	I will betray anyone and anything for enough money.
6	I saw a valuable thing years ago. I constantly dream of stealing it and making it mine.

Scholar of Derlusk

You have lived in, or visited, the city of Derlusk often enough to have learned something of all of the varied skills, tasks, and knowledge that go into making and interpreting written records. You value books, scrolls, ledgers, heraldry, glyphs, and the need to keep records, and have kept current on changing fashions and habits in written communications within the Border Kingdoms.

Skill Proficiencies: Arcana, History
Languages: Two of your choice
Equipment: A bottle of black ink, an ink pen, 10 sheets of parchment, a map of unknown origin roughly depicting a long-forgotten dungeon in an unknown location, a set of common clothes, and a pouch containing 10 gp

Lore Savant

A scholar of Derlusk can bind books, can make several sorts of paper and ink, is an expert calligrapher and often a reasonable counterfeiter, can make engravings and make, repair, and work a printing press; knows something of the historic and current heraldry of the Borders, and is familiar with most trail-runes and boundary marks in the Border Kingdoms. If a book was produced in Derlusk, a Scholar can tell roughly when—or how old the counterfeiter who crafted it wanted others to think it is; you are likely to know when you're examining a counterfeited book or one that's been altered from its original contents.

Derlusk Lore Scholars Know

Long, long ago, some of the text of the fabled Nether Scrolls was copied by an amanuensis who brought her copies to Derlusk, and recopied paragraphs or lone sentences into blank areas on the pages of existing tomes. Her writings have no magical power whatsoever, but share some of the mighty magical knowledge preserved on the famous Scrolls.

In the early 1300s DR, a monk of Candlekeep made what we might call "backup copies" of some important texts, and smuggled them into Derlusk's libraries.

Specialty

To determine the nature of your scholarly training, roll a d8 or choose from the options in the table below.

d8	Specialty	d8	Specialty
1	Arithmetic	5	Logic
2	Astronomy	6	Rhetoric
3	Alchemy	7	Esotericism
4	Librarian	8	Scribe

Feature: Lore Investigator

Derlusk contains some of the greatest libraries in the Realms. As a professional researcher, if you do not immediately recall the information surrounding a piece of lore, you know where you can likely find it. After years of study in Derlusk, you have established a network of contacts in the libraries, scriptoriums, and universities of Derlusk. If you are researching a piece of lore that is specific to the Border Kingdoms, with the guidance of your DM, you likely will know where to find the answer to your question within one of the many athenaeums in Derlusk.

Suggested Characteristics

Scholars of Derlusk are defined by their dedication to their studies, and their characteristics reflect this life of study. Devoted to scholarly pursuits, a Scholar of Derlusk values erudition above all other things. As a result, their love of scholasticism is usually their most forward-facing characteristic.

Use the tables below, either making specific selections or rolling randomly, as the basis for your traits and motivations, modifying the entries when appropriate to suit your identity.

d8	Personality Trait
1	I use polysyllabic words even when I don't have to.
2	I've read every book in the greatest Derluskan libraries—or I like to boast that I have.
3	I appreciate that most aren't as smart as I am. I do my best to help them by patiently explaining anything and everything to them.
4	I love nothing more than finding a new book, especially an ancient one.
5	I'm willing to listen to every side of an argument before I make my own judgment.
6	I have a hard time with those that are not as smart as I and I struggle to keep my frustration with them from showing.
7	I am not comfortable in most social settings and I do not enjoy crowds.
8	I have been forced to realize that not everyone appreciates my brilliance.

d6	Ideal
1	**Science.** The answer to everything is out there given enough sober study and diligence. (Neutral)
2	**Grace.** Simple elegance in thought or refinement in thinking is the surest path to truth. (Good)
3	**Logic.** All opinions are not equal. Some are a very great deal more robust, sophisticated and well supported in sound argument than others. (Lawful)
4	**Infinity.** Any outcome is possible so one should not be foreclosed against any eventuality. (Chaotic)
5	**Authority.** The intelligentsia have a duty to rule over the lesser among us. (Evil)
6	**Knowledge.** The pursuit of knowledge is the surest path to self improvement. (Any)

d6	Bond
1	I am driven by a nagging question and am certain that the answer is out there somewhere.
2	The body of knowledge I have accumulated must be used for the good of society.
3	The location and preservation of ancient writings and works is my life's purpose.
4	I have dedicated my life to this one specific area of study.
5	Knowledge should be available to all. I work to see that education is available to all.
6	My unhealthy thirst for knowledge caused me to dig too deeply into things best left hidden. I will bear the cost of this folly for the rest of my life.

d6	Flaw
1	I will do anything to get the answer to my question.
2	I know that I should use my knowledge for good, but I struggle with the concept of selflessness.
3	Inductive inference is the only true path to enlightenment. Ignore those hidebound deductive golems.
4	I often come up with overly complex explanations for things when a far simpler one would suffice.
5	I always speak my mind. I care not what others think or how my words might affect them.
6	I get so nervous around other people that sometimes I find that I cannot speak at all.

Scofflaw of Blacksaddle

You are from the Talduth Vale. What was once a series of independent towns and municipalities has now come under the hegemony of the Barony of Blacksaddle. The Barony rules the Vale with a heavy hand, which has stirred deep resentment against the Barony. For a folk used to freedom and independence, the taxes and administration for many have become an unacceptable burden. You have taken to a life of crime as a result. But you are no common brigand. You are focused on fomenting rebellion, stealing from those in positions of wealth and power, and then distributing this bounty to those most affected by the capricious rule of the Barony. As such, you are skilled at tactical planning, ambushes, and getaways (navigating the outdoors).

You might be a classic Robin Hood who steals from the rich and gives to the poor, or you might be a rabble-rouser making trouble against any sort of authority. Whatever path you choose, you have contempt for law and order, and any form of governmental authority.

Skill Proficiencies: Choose two from among Deception, Survival, Persuasion, and Stealth
Tool Proficiencies: One type of gaming set and one set of tools
Equipment: A set of traveler's clothes and a pouch containing 20 gp

Feature: Ingenious

You frequently find yourself in tough spots so can be creative on the fly with whatever materials you have on hand. Being ingenious requires a pressing need; an inspiration other than boredom or curiosity. Such an attempt succeeds or fails based on the available materials, the situation, and the nature of the desired creation. Success requires both a successful Intelligence (Investigation) check and a successful tool check. The Investigation portion contemplates assembling the materials and their nature, and the tool check is necessary to actually accomplish the build.

Suggested Characteristics

Scofflaws of Blacksaddle have one common feature, and that is contempt for governmental authority. They are usually outspoken about this fact and tend to surround themselves with like-minded people. Whether involved in grand plots to topple regional powers or simply trying to dodge the tax assessor, Scofflaws of Blacksaddle are consistent in their desire to foil governmental efforts.

d8	Personality Trait
1	I know what is best for you and I am not shy about sharing this fact with you.
2	While I have many strongly-held beliefs, I am reluctant to share them with others.
3	Is that the sheriff? Hide!
4	While everyone is entitled to their opinion, it is very difficult to change mine.
5	Government eyes and ears are everywhere, so I am very slow to trust.
6	I have a big heart and go out of my way to help anyone in need.
7	I am supremely goal oriented and nothing will dissuade me from accomplishing something once I have put my mind to it.
8	I am insecure so am easily insulted.

d6	Ideal
1	**Liberty.** I will not abide an unjust ruler no matter the personal cost. (Chaotic)
2	**Freedom.** I will strive to my last breath to free my unjustly imprisoned brothers and sisters. (Chaotic)
3	**Independence.** The rights of the individual always supersede the rights of society. (Chaotic)
4	**Largesse.** I steal from the rich and give to the poor. (Good)
5	**Family.** I'm loyal to my family and friends, not to any nation or government. (Neutral)
6	**Progress.** We must all work together to make the world a better place. (Good)

d6	Bond
1	My family lost their lands to the Barony, and I mean to make the Barony pay!
2	My exploits will make me a folk hero.
3	The suffering of my people drives me to lead them to a brighter future.
4	I have done some things I am not proud of, but such is the cost of closely-held ideals.
5	A family member was unjustly imprisoned. I will free them or die trying.
6	The people must know the truth. No matter the personal cost to me, I will spread the word.

d6	Flaw
1	I simply cannot make myself be respectful to authority.
2	Seeing soldiers of the Barony sets me off into a barely controllable rage.
3	I drink too much.
4	I really don't care about anyone else, but do my best to hide it.
5	I am a know-it-all.
6	I laugh loudly at the misfortunes of others.



Yallaschan

You grew up in the city of Yallasch, and so are personally trained in the making and repair of ropes and cables of all sizes, and/or of chains of all sizes, or of (canvas) sails, or shipbuilding (the construction, repair, sealing and resealing of hulls, and the making, seating, and repair of masts). Regardless of what you've been trained in, you are skilled in the erection of scaffolding, in the placement, construction, repair, and use of pulleys and guidelines—and so can readily load or unload cargoes to and from

ship- holds or up and down great heights (castle walls or cliffs). You can roughly estimate breaking strains, load limits, weights, stresses, and the "sway" effects of winds or wind gusts of a given force.

Skill Proficiencies: History, Perception
Tool Proficiencies: Carpenter's tools, vehicles (water)
Equipment: A set of carpenter's tools including a longshoreman's hook, a blank book, 1 ounce of ink, an ink (quill) pen, a set of traveler's clothes, and a leather pouch with 10 gp

Contacts in Port

Your work on the docks and piers of Yallasch have brought you in contact with many colorful and interesting individuals. Roll on the following table to establish your "go to" contact in Yallasch for help, advice, or general information about Yallasch and the surrounding region.

d6	Contacts
1	A veteran sea captain of many voyages in the Sea of Swords and the Shinning Sea.
2	A local noble of Yallasch who "owes you one" for assisting her on a past project.
3	A fellow dockhand (stevedore) whom you trust and who has a large family in Yallasch.
4	A shopkeeper in Yallasch who runs an alchemical shop.
5	A thug who is associated with the local guild, who owes you a favor.
6	A former lover who is an acolyte in the temple of Lathander.

Feature: Stevedore Engineering

Provided you have the tools and materials necessary (cables/rope/chains), you can create a plan involving scaffolding, rigging, or block and tackle, to perform just about any conceivable task (e.g. moving something heavy; lifting something high in the air; creating a rope based trap; building a suspension bridge, etc.).

Suggested Characteristics

Yallasch stevedores are resourceful carpenters and designers. They are well known in the region for their abilities, and are often sought out to consult on a wide array of engineering projects, not limited to shipwright projects in port.

d8	Personality Trait
1	I am really good at what I do and take every opportunity to tell everyone just that.
2	I am afraid of the water.
3	I am very laidback, to the point of being laconic.
4	I love designing and sketching all manner of things. I am always drawing.
5	While I don't mind hard work, I prefer great pay.
6	I always root for the underdog.
7	I am often too proud to admit that I don't know what I am talking about.
8	I always do the right thing.

d6	Ideal
1	**Kindness.** It is amazing how much morale is improved by small acts of kindness. (Good)
2	**Teamwork.** Any complicated job can be accomplished if everyone works together. (Lawful)
3	**Visionary.** Don't ever let those who are lesser suppress your ideas. (Chaotic)
4	**Achievement.** The goal is all that matter. The means are irrelevant. (Evil)
5	**Cheer.** Life should never get too busy to keep us from enjoying ourselves. (Any)
6	**Wealth.** It is all about the gold pieces. (Any)

d6	Bond
1	I must be recognized as one of the great artisans of my age.
2	I will be successful and use that success to improve the lives of those around me.
3	When I succeed, I cannot wait to rub it in the faces of those who doubted me!
4	Keeping my hands busy distracts me from dwelling on my painful past.
5	I am tired of living up to the expectations of others. I will forge my own path.
6	This world has given me exactly nothing. I owe it the same.

d6	Flaw
1	I am too proud to learn from my mistakes.
2	I don't take direction well.
3	I cannot stand know-it-alls.
4	I am jealous of those more talented than I.
5	I have no time for those who disagree with me.
6	I have an addictive personality.

Chapter 4: Hidden and Found Items

Use these tables for random fallen items as opposed to real (placed by the DM) treasures.

Hidden Items

Unusual objects are sometimes found in attics, cellars, secret rooms, under floorboards, and behind panels—tucked away, perhaps, by an long-dead inhabitant.

The DM should re-roll if duplicate results aren't desired, or pick to best suit the PC or the scenario rather than determining randomly.

d20	Item	d20	Item
1	Vial of mysterious red liquid	11	Rolled-up parchment
2	Frog statuette	12	Wyvern figurine
3	Tarnished tin tray	13	Iron birdcage
4	Jar of strange paste	14	Strange smelling vial
5	Blood-stained knife	15	Preserved tentacle
6	Old coins	16	4 doorknobs
7	Inscribed hand mirror	17	Dhain of 12 keys
8	Mummified hand	18	Painted gorget
9	Thigh garter	19	Toy swordsman
10	Intruiging note	20	Vial inside a jar

Vial of mysterious red liquid. An adult-human hand-sized rectangular wooden box containing an irregular-shaped, human-chest-sized scrap of black linen (as wadding) around a cork-stoppered, wax-sealed, unlabeled glass vial of some scarlet colored liquid of unknown origin which is not magical.

Frog statuette. An ugly ceramic frog statuette, about the size of an adult human fist. A cork is jammed into a hole in its base leading into a cavity where a scrap of coarse-woven hempen cloth is wrapped around four fine-quality around four steel coins, each hailing from a nearby kingdom that was conquered four hundred years prior. They are in pristine condition.

Tarnished tin tray. A tarnished old tin serving tray. Affixed to the bottom side of it with glue is a folded rectangle of Canvas (forming a protective envelope around four old but still and unfortunately invalid property deeds to plots of land in the vicinity, including the building it's found in).

Jar of strange paste. A crumbling-rusty (reddish-brown, extremely fragile) sallet helm, containing a wadded-up old dun-colored tunic, wrapped as wadding around a 3-inch-diameter ("hockey puck"-shaped) glass jar of some unknown paste that smells faintly of honey.

Blood-stained knife. A blood-stained knife of fine make. It's not really bloodstained; the dried, flaking crimson coating that looks like dried old blood is actually a protective tarnish-not paint intended to keep the knife's silver coating from tarnishing; it has worked perfectly, keeping the blade like new.

Old coins. A rotting, filthy old leather pouch (that may split if given rough handling) that clinks if moved; it contains unworn old coins of old Sheirtalan and Tashalan minting.

Inscribed hand mirror. A silvered metal hand mirror as large as an adult human hand, rectangular but with rounded corners; on the non-reflective back surface words have been scratched: "Belongs to Damra Lathlo/Under the third tree/Beware: the nail is poisoned"

Mummified hand. A small leather bag with a leather-thong drawstring (tied tightly); inside is a mummified human left-hand forefinger, in "straight" pose, with a six-pointed star tattoo on the fingertip; around it is wrapped a scrap of old parchment bearing the words, in Common: "Finger of the wizard Nlandar/Needed for the Spell-Locked Door."

Thigh garter. An adjustable (buckle and row of tang-holes) thigh-garter (black leather strap with black lace trim) that has an empty row that looks like it could hold lockpicks, but does hold 2 skeleton keys, and 3 small keys (to coffers?) in sewn-on sheaths on its inside surface.

Intruiging note. A rolled-up cutting of fine leather, about a foot square, one side unfinished and blank, but on the "dressed" side is burned a drawing of a distinctive door (row of three small panels top and bottom, with a lone large oval panel in the center, beside the pull-ring handle) and the words, in Common: "Seek ye this door, but mind the traps."

Rolled-up parchment . A large, hollow, dried-out thighbone (from an ox or large horse) with a rolled-up parchment inside it: a well-done painting of an attractive brunette woman in full coat-of-plate armor with the side-on, looking to her right head of a unicorn painted on the breastplate; the painting bears minor enchantments that protect its surface from crazing or cracking and from stains if something strongly hued is splashed over it, and that make the eyes of the painted woman seem to follow anything that moves from side to side of the front of the painting, within 10 feet of it.

Wyvern figurine. A roughly-carved, figurine of a rampant, jaws agape and claws raised and open to

menace, snarling Wyvern, made of soapstone, about as large and tall as two adult human fists stacked atop each other.

Iron birdcage. A birdcage made of black-anti-rust-painted strap Iron with a ring on one end by which it's affixed to 60 running feet of finely-made swivel-jointed chain. The birdcage appears to have been retrofitted to function like a makeshift lantern. The birdcage has a thumb-latch door-shutter closed on black canvas that's been wrapped around its light-source (to shroud all radiance); the other end of the chain ends in a small but sturdy hook.

Strange smelling vial. A small black (opaque) glass vial, glass stoppered and wax sealed; contains the sour smelling remnant of some thick and viscous liquid.

Preserved tentacle. A cylindrical glass vial about 2 feet long and 3 inches in diameter, with thick glass stoppers at both ends sealed in place with copious black wax; the vial contains a murky greenish liquid with much sediment in it, and what appears to be a severed tentacle (it is: a marinated Octopus Tentacle stolen from a fine eatery in Ormpur in the mistaken belief that it was magical; still edible thanks to the marinade and being sealed away from the air, but is rather "gooey."

4 doorknobs. A hempen sack containing 4 scraps of old cloth, each wrapped around an ornate but well-worn, small-human-fist-sized doorknob; they were all stolen from doors elsewhere.

Chain of 12 keys. A stout iron ring on which are threaded twelve large iron keys (to cells or large doors), all unlabeled.

Painted gorget. A dull-brown-painted gorget (plate of throat armor) affixed to a leather snap-latch-fastening neckband; on the inside of the plate are two metal sheaths, one that is empty and the other holding a key (to an unknown door).

Toy swordsman. A pierced-wood-and-cord "jumping jack" toy (faux [painted on]-armored figure with a pull-cord coming out of his head; pull it and the jointed arms and legs jerk), with a toy sword (whittled wooden weapon) that fits through a "handgrip" hole in either of his hands, and a hole through the center of his body; his back-piece can be slid off, sideways, to reveal an empty cavity suitable for holding coins.

Vial inside a jar. An old, dusty green-glass jar (handblown, dark green, translucent but hard to see through) without a lid but stuffed full of an old scrap of leather, which is wadding wrapped around a cork-stoppered, wax-sealed, unlabeled, and empty glass vial.

Found Items

The DM should re-roll if duplicate results aren't desired, or pick to best suit the PC or the scenario rather than determining randomly.

Dungeons

d20	Item	d20	Item
1	Polished amber marble	11	Grapnel
2	Vial of blue liquie	12	Burnt torch
3	Large, broken candle	13	Blued steel knife
4	Inscribed wolf bone	14	Tarnished bronze coins
5	Rotting boots with boot knife	15	Ivory idol
6	Bronze whistle	16	Battered lamp
7	Small merchant's tally	17	Map fragment
8	1d6 unusual iron coins	18	Ornate iron ring
9	Leather face mask	19	Glowing fungus
10	Iron buckle	20	Oval piece of granite

Polished amber marble. A polished-smooth, rounded marble of amber with a long-dead but seemingly perfectly intact spider entombed within it, posed with legs spread, looking alive and alert.

Vial of blue liquid. A securely-wax-sealed ceramic vial of bright blue and nonmagical liquid of unknown origin, with a ceramic stopper.

Large, broken candle. A dropped and broken long-burn (thick as an adult human wrist, and as long as an adult human forearm) candle that retains its rope wick and could be salvaged into two short candles plus some extra wax, or a large amount of wax and a little more than a foot of weak hempen cord.

Inscribed wolf bone. An old, yellowing thigh-bone, from a wolf, that has a message in common, "The bread goes into the oven at midnight" carved down one side and up the other.

Rotting boots with boot knife. A pair of battered and rotten leather boots with severed, rotting human feet still in them. The heel of the right boot pulls off, becoming the hilt of a small knife, its three-inch long blue steel blade sliding out of its foresole sheath; the blade is unrusted and razor-sharp.

Bronze whistle. A whistle of cast bronze, a simple blow-through-one-end cylinder with a vibrating tang inside so it has a distinctive, shrill sound; has a ring so it can be threaded on a lanyard.

Small merchant's tally. A human-palm-sized merchant's tally (miniature abacus) of brass pierced beads sliding on brass wires set into a brass frame. One end of the tally frame has a bodkin-headed, threadable steel needle sheathed in it, that can readily be drawn forth for use.

1d6 unusual iron coins. 1d6 iron coins, dirty or scorched, of unknown old minting (stamped with a side-on 5-spired crown on one face, and the word "THAEL" on the other).

Leather face mask. An adult-human-head-sized black leather full-face mask with two eyeholes and a sturdy iron wire "head strap" that can be twisted to shorten it to tightness around a head or a helm; recently dropped and in very good condition.

Iron buckle. Torn leather strap, with a simple iron buckle sewn to one end and 10 inches of one-inch-wide run before its broken end, the last few inches having 3 evenly-spaced punched holes for the buckle-tang.

Burnt torch. Stub-end of burnt-out torch; human-hand-length piece of hemlock bough with one end ashen, the rim of that burnt end covered with pitch. Three horizontal lines have been scratched into the unburnt end, but the meaning of this (tally?) is unknown.

Blued steel knife. A knife of fine make, blued steel three-inch blade with a leather grip and pierced-brass-circle "roundel" pommel and guard; the blade has been thickly and securely-bonded coated with silver, then thinly coated in wax to inhibit tarnishing; non-magical.

Tarnished bronze coins. 1d2 bronze coins, tarnished black, of unknown old minting (stamped with a pinwheel of three curling tentacles on one face, and the word "VURM" on the other)

Ivory idol. Six-inch-tall carved (from a boar's tusk) worship "Luck Idol" of the goddess Waukeen (smiling female face behind a bowl, into which offerings are put, then a drop of oil in which guiding visions from the deity will hopefully appear).

Grapnel. A Folding Four-Talon, but broken, grapnel (an arc of three inch-thick curved steel hooks, coated with pitch to inhibit rust [and can be set afire to illuminate where it's thrown or dropped down to], facing a single opposed steel hook of the same dimensions, each hook twice as long as an average adult human hand), one of the three hooks is broken off so it might still work. The last few wispy strands of rotten rope are clinging to the tie ring but can hold nothing ere they crumble; yet the pitch has kept the grapnel in good, unrusted condition.

Battered lamp. A six inch tall battered lamp of scorched iron (repurposed armor plate) fashioned into the shape of a small sitting owl, its human-hand-length-tall hollow body holding the oil, a woven hempen wick being suspended in the oil and held upright in place by means of being threaded out of the owl's beak and then back in one eye, the other eye serving as a beam-focus for the emitted light; the lamp is found half-full of dirty but still flammable oil, and about three inches of slow-burning wick.

Map fragment. Torn corner fragment of a parchment map, showing several rooms and doors, with DM's choice of labels or lack of same; could be accurate, and related to the dungeon found in, or could depict an unknown location of treasure anywhere (perhaps a trap-lure).

Ornate iron ring. Iron finger ring worked into the likeness of a head-on dragon's head; no gems, and roughly made, but the face of the head swivels off to reveal a poison-cavity; currently empty; the poison being administered to anyone pricked by the dragon's head-horns, which retract, and can be slid in or out by the ring-wearer without danger to themselves.

Glowing fungus. A human-hand-sized patch of living glowing fungus, which feeds on decaying organic matter, is edible and even nourishing, nutty to the tastebuds, and harmless (except that those who ingest it will glow like the fungus, with a faint greenish-white radiance, for 2d4 hours).

Oval piece of granite. Cabochon (smooth-rounded)-cut oval piece of granite as long as a large adult human's hand and a trifle thicker, so crafted for an unknown purpose.

Ruins

d20	Item	d20	Item
1	Bag of coal	11	Painted skull
2	Brass bell	12	Bone button
3	Pristine black cloak	13	Crushed copper cup
4	Book coffer	14	Waxed cord
5	Toy knight figurine	15	Silver and bone scroll tube
6	Sharp piece of metal	16	Bottle of fish oil
7	Rusty key	17	Glass eye
8	Short chain	18	Strange vial of paint
9	Single earring	19	Inscribed stick
10	Small bone box	20	Mummified hand

Bag of coal. Filthy, rotting cloth bag with a stone in it, tied shut with a foot-long-length of still-sturdy cord. The stone is an apple-core-sized but worthless lump of coal.

Brass bell. Tiny cast brass bell, with clapper, suitable for ankle wear or sewn onto a garment (light, has mounting-loop at its top).

Pristine black cloak. Moldy square of old canvas sail, rolled around a pristine black cloak with attached Hood, adult human size and having two large inside patch pockets opening below belt level (both empty).

Book coffer. Hand-sized carved wooden "book" coffer (flat wooden box fashioned to look like a small book), with latching clasp (but no lock); inside are either sticks of Charcoal (for writing) or Chalk (for writing) or a pet spider (alive or dead, harmful or not; DM's choice).

Toy knight figurine. Human-hand-length toy Knight Figurine, finely carved from some white and soft stone (not gemstone) and in good condition. Has a human-little-finger-sized storage cavity inside accessed by swiveling aside a flat copper base (empty or containing some coins or a message on a scrap of parchment; DM's choice).

Sharp piece of metal. Lightly-rusted but still serviceable (and sharp) metal spike or knife (DM's choice).

Short chain. Three links (still linked together) of rusty but still strong handmade chain (heavy, large links big enough to fill a large adult human palm, and welded "shut" in continuous rings); overall length just under 1 foot.

Rusty key. Rusty but still-sturdy skeleton key, to open an unknown lock.

Single earring. Lone pendant earring (wire ear-hook that also pierces a large, smooth-polished teardrop-shaped blob of purple hued glass.

Small bone box. Human-thumb-sized bone box (short length of hollow bone sealed at both ends with a whittled wooden stopper sealed with mud; inside is a scrap of parchment bearing a cryptic message, desperate warning, love charm (fake or real magical writing), or instructions (to find a treasure or defeat a trap); DM's choice.

Painted skull. Human skull, intact with jawbone; polished but yellowing with age, and someone has painted an emerald green sigil (like two horizontal numeral 3s, touching back to back) onto its forehead (its meaning is up to the DM, or can remain unknown).

Bone button. A large oval button made of (horse) bone, for fastening shut a cloak or hide door or something else large and heavy; it's been polished smooth, and decorated with a helix-twist of criss-crossing spiral grooves or lines, all around the front of its outer edge; it's pierced twice near its center for threading (and there's no sign of whatever garment it was originally attached to or intended for).

Crushed copper cup. Crushed copper drinking cup, elegantly chased with a "female human warriors waving swords on horseback, as their mounts rear up" scene that encircles the cup; has no holes, and could with care be gently "bent back open" into usable, but valueless shape.

Waxed cord. Like-new just-over-22-foot-length of black waxed cord, knotted at its ends and at precise 1-foot intervals along its entire length; this cord is wound around a concave-sided bone (one vertebrae from a very large ox).

Silver and bone scroll tube. Tarnished (to near black) but still-sturdy silver-sheathed long bone scroll tube, with silver end caps; contains unreadable (or at DM's option, partly readable, offering a few cryptic words or symbols or both) scraps of rotted-away rolled-up parchment message.

Bottle of fish oil. Intact oiled-leather stretched over fire-seared-hollow wooden bottle, whittled-wood-stoppered and wax sealed of fish oil, an orange, translucent gummy substance that reeks of fish but is not spoiled (rancid), so it still suitable for cooking as well as a lubricant, rust retardant, or for burning in lamps; bottle holds about 10 ounces (a little more than a real-world soda can).

Glass eye. A finely-fashioned, undamaged, very realistic (for human use) glass false eye, rear-painted so as to have a white sclera and a rich royal blue iris.

Strange vial of paint. Glass vial, unbroken due to leather-thong-tied-together-halves metal "cube" casing, lined with leather, that cushions the glass and armors it with a jutting-corners frame against knocks and falls; vial is cork-stoppered and wax-sealed, unlabeled, and contains a gummy-consistency red paint made of crushed beatles (source of the scarlet hue), clay, and crushed worms (as a binder and texture-provider), this paint may glow briefly in the dark after absorbing light, or have minor magical properties, as the DM prefers).

Inscribed stick. A smooth, foot-long, symmetrically-tapering wooden stick with a crisscross-patterned carved grip that has the word "ARATHAE" graven into its butt; this is either a toy wand or storyteller's prop wand, or the never-enchanted "blank" of an unfinished wand-to-be; it looks like a wand, but has never felt the touch of any magic.

Mummified hand. Severed, mummified human right hand, of small size and pierced with a large, cauterized (burn- sealed-edges) hole at the base (wrist end) of the palm, so it can be hung on a peg or strung on a line; it's not undead, and is of unknown age, origin, and intended use.


The Border Kingdoms
N
Lake of Steam
Derlusk
Felshroun
Ythtym
The Realm of the Smoking Star
The Shieldmaidens
Alamontyr
Zarvel's Run (river)
Stormwind River
Waevendusk River
West Dusting River
The Duskwood
Shandolphyn's Reach
River Starth
Taermbold
Splondar
Thur
Ondeeme
Arthyn
Waernd
Themasulter
Ranrath's Run (river)
The Neth Stand
High Mukshar
Middle Mukshar
Nether Mukshar
Blackalblade
Qarth Forest
Luthbaern
The Westwater Way
Xammanda's Stream
Tumbleshore River
The Sward
High Emmerock
River Sarradra
Theymarsh
Dunbridges
Sorndon
The Barony of Great Oak
Syrnt
Arnglar
The Grand Duchy of Shantal
Oeble
Thort
Urspreth
River Rith
River Sculptor
The Green Road
Bloutar
The Bowshot
Beldargan
Telcharn
The Realm of the Ready Sword
The Long Trail
Thuntar
Irl
Manywaters
The Swordpoint Streams
Owlhold
Longroad Ride
The Barony of Blacksaddle
Talduth Vale
Adaerglast, The Land of Mages
Myrinjar
River Glarth
Jundarwood
Hawkgarth
Yallasch
The Realm of the Mount
Rymdyl
Emrys
Blackbarn
River Balarth
Caldarth, the River Racing
The Sculptor Road
Burntbridges
The Land of Two Princes
Suldamma
Selpt
Gallard
Sculptarmouth
Dapplegate
Bedorn
Oparl
THE SHAAR
The Shining Sea
Large City
Small City
Large Town
Small Town
Village
Hamlet
Thorp
100 Miles

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