SHANNARA Campaign Setting

- 6 ARTIFACTS
- 9 HEROES & VILLAINS
- 6 MONSTERS
- GAZETTEER of the FOUR LANDS
- ELDER DRUID PRESTIGE CLASS

MUSTER YOUR TROOPS
Painting CHAINMAIL Armies

SERVANTS of DARKNESS
The Nightcloak Prestige Class

STAKE & BAKE
FIGHT VAMPIRES AND WIN

NODWICK DESECRATES
ANOTHER CLASSIC D&D ADVENTURE
I'm always stunned by Teresa's ability to draw. She's a dream to work with because of her easy-going nature and her mastery at creating a living, breathing character. When I ask Therese for someone "interesting," dollars to donuts she'll give me much, much more. Every time.
—Peter Whitley
When I was 8 years old, I read The Sword of Shannara and immediately became enamored with the Four Lands. Terry Brooks’s tales of an everyman hero taking up the baton of light and battling the unparalleled powers of the dark appealed to me like almost no other series has done.

How many times have you read novels that feature as a protagonist some noble knight or valiant superhuman? These stories are great because they lead us into the minds of people who are nothing like us. They let us escape into the bodies of unmatched swordsmen, mighty spellcasters, or even seemingly normal people who discover some well of untapped power within them that enables them to accomplish feats undreamed of by normal folk. Imagining ourselves as these heroes gives us an escape from our normal life; it lets us pretend we don’t sit in a cubicle or classroom for 40 hours a week. There’s nothing wrong with this type of magic.

But like Tolkien’s Fellowship of the Ring, the Shannara novels often put us in the shoes of the common man. Brooks’s heroes aren’t mighty wizards. They rarely have training in any kind of weapon use, let alone stand as the pinnacle of ability as a master of the blade. Most don’t have any supernatural ability of particular note. They are farmers, innkeepers, or hunters. They are, in effect, commoners.

That said, there’s nothing common about Shean Ohmsford when he faces the Warlock Lord. There’s nothing common about Par when he and his Ohmsford kin fight the Shadowen to free the magic of the Four Lands. In the end, we find that these common characters, who are much like you and I, are not so common after all. The heroes of Shannara give us the youthful hope that we too might wake up one day and be able to change the world, to somehow find it within us to bring some magic back into our lives.

In a way, these books have more to do with my interest in role-playing games than any other fantasy series. They made me believe that I too could be a hero and save the day. More than reading about characters whose stories, although full of inspiring courage and adventure, featured their amazing prowess in some area, the tales of the Ohmsfords and their human struggle to understand an inhuman force struck a chord within me. I could more readily understand them as people. If you haven’t ever read these novels, I highly encourage you to do so. Like almost no other story can, they put you in touch with the hero you harbor within.

The new edition of D&D lets you play any kind of hero. If you enjoy fantastical, powerful heroes, you can do that; customizing your character with not only class but also with templates, feats, and skills. But if you want your character to be a little more normal, a little more “common,” you can do that too. Like the characters of the Four Lands, you can play someone of humble beginnings and heroic spirit.

So which do you prefer to play? Do you like the feeling of rising above your station from a character whose beginnings might be more like your own? Or do you prefer to immediately step away from yourself, experiencing the life and abilities of someone completely unlike yourself?

Chris Thomasson • Editor
"BALDUR'S GATE: DARK ALLIANCE IS A WATERMARK IN GAMING HISTORY..."
- GAME INFORMER

"THE MOMENT YOU START PLAYING ...
YOU REALIZE YOU'RE PLAYING SOMETHING SPECIAL."
- ELECTRONIC GAMING MONTHLY

"DARK ALLIANCE TRULY IS BEAUTIFUL."
- OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE

COMING THIS FALL ON PLAYSTATION®2 COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM.
At least two companies currently produce vinyl mats for miniatures. While the **Battlemats** by Chessex come in a wider variety of sizes, colors, and grid options, the **Combat Mats** by Crystal Caste have the advantage of printing on both sides, one in hexes, the other in squares. The largest Crystal Caste mat is 2 inches wider than the Chessex version, but the decorative border means fewer hexes. We prefer the way the erasable markers work on the Battlemats, but you can make your decision by checking out [www.chessex.com](http://www.chessex.com) or [www.crystalcastle.com](http://www.crystalcastle.com).

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**The Secret is Out**

It was with a mixture of exhilaration and trepidation that I read part of May's issue. I have used *National Geographic* as a resource for years. I thought to myself, "Oh, no! They know! Now the secret's ruined!" But then I realized that it probably wasn't all that secret in the first place.

I want to thank you for mentioning an excellent magazine with tons of useful information for games of all kinds. If I want a map of a real Egyptian tomb layout, or to see how much abuse a viking longship could take, or to design a ritual based upon real ancient cultures, I look in *National Geographic*. I then use my *Dragon* collection and core rulebooks to "put the stats to it."

I am glad that *Dragon Magazine*, by far my favorite, has found a place within its hallowed pages to recognize another magazine useful to gamers.

**Patrick Gipson • Hammond, LA**

To share your secret D&D resources with everyone, drop us a postcard with the tip for "Random Encounters."

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**Running in Circles**

I am reading issue #283, and let me say at the outset that this is a great issue. I love how easy it is to create deities in the new edition! Also, I think the artwork and layout are astounding.

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**The Secret is Out**

I was reading the fleet runner of Ehlonna Prestige Class on page 45, and I ran into a snag. The fleet runner has a class feature called Bonus Spells. The chart says that a fleet runner should gain 1 bonus spell, but the example in the Bonus Spell feature says that, when the fleet runner gains 1st level, she receives two bonus spells: one for the highest divine level that she can cast and one for any other divine level she can cast. This sounds like two spells to me. I do not think the description of the Bonus Spells class feature on pages 44-45 is clearly written. Does the example mean that when the fleet runner advances to 2nd level she gains two spells of the highest divine level she can cast and two spells for any lower divine level she can cast? This seems like it would be four total spells, but that is not what your example implies. Please clarify the Bonus Spells class feature of the fleet runner of Ehlonna prestige class for me.

**Eric Evans • Plymouth, NH**

We consulted Boy Genius James Wyatt, author of the article in question. He points out and corrects the error:

"The table is correct, the example is incorrect. To gain a bonus spell, the cleric in the example would have to advance to an even-numbered level. The problem is that the text is based on"
Ubi Soft Entertainment introduces an incredible all new 3D role-playing adventure set in the Forgotten Realms.

The first PC game to use the latest D&D game rules.
Game Face

Name: Matthew Sernetri
Alignment: Neutral Self-Righteous
Years Gaming: 15
Favorite Race: Monkeys
Favorite Class: Rogue—You live longer
Favorite Setting: That's a tough decision, but if I had to burn my FORGOTTEN REALMS products, I'd be kept warm through a nuclear winter.

Greatest Gaming Moment: The PCs were investigating a hidden chamber beneath an English manor house. They had been trapped in the manor while someone went on a murder spree, so when they found an Egyptian sarcophagus, they were convinced that opening it would cause a murderous mummy to rise up to attack them. Needless to say, they opened it anyway and beheld a mummy clutching a jeweled staff. Instantly, supernatural darkness snuffed out the light, and they heard the mild-mannered and previously unsuspected Egyptian doctor gleefully shout; “At last I have the staff of Amon-Ra!”

With wide eyes and pale faces, all six players simultaneously said “Oh, sh—!”

Show us your game face. Send a photo and a brief description of your gaming background, including your “vital statistics” (years gaming, your “gaming alignment,” favorite race, class, and setting) and a short description of your greatest gaming moment. Keep it all under 106 words, and you might see your mug right here. Send us your game face by post or email it to: dark_nomad@hotmail.com

May Issue Issues

I don’t get the RPG Hellas’s complaints (in issue #283) vis-a-vis the rankings of Xerxes—who fought campaigns, intrigued, and used diplomacy, including a multi-year foray against the Scythians, before ever setting foot in Greece—and Leonidas, who fought in one or two battles each year and otherwise just drilled. The DD&D system rewards those who do (the PCs) well over those who drill (NPC militia).

[RPG Hellas] give Leonidas a claim for selecting the Gates as the place to fight (it is the only place for such a battle until the Isthmus) and repeat the assertion that only the Spartan warriors were present (the forces included helots and squires, as well as Boeotians, Thespieans, Plateans and a host of others). If one considers Herodotus a bit too hefty to read for confirmation, one might try Pressfield’s Gates of Fire, a readable, if not perfect, retelling of the events involved in the Persian Wars and the making of a Hoplite army, perfect for any DM looking for military material to throw the players into—or to bolster any lawful evil humanoid force.

The article on DD&D movies missed a couple that should be mentioned. The Black Swan (1942, Tyrone Power, Maureen O’Hara and a young Anthony Quinn) is the last of the A-list at-sea swashbucklers and deserves mention not only for the pirate-hunter theme but also for the politicking ashore (for the DM who wants an intrigue adventure directly hooked into the campaign, its just too good to pass up). Likewise, the last version of Scaramouche (1954, Stewart Granger) is notable for the layered history of the hero, the extensive display of the training needed to attain sword mastery, and lastly the best duel scene in Hollywood; Inigo and Westley’s clifftop one and the sadly abbreviated two-on-one sequence from the last Star Wars movie not withstanding.

D.J. Brown • dark_nomad@hotmail.com

Much as we DRAGON goobs love history, we enjoy seeing the experts duke it out even more. What’s even better are corrections to the “factual errors” in mythology. Mark Petersen takes us to task for just such a “mistake.”

DRAGON Unfair to Death Gods

In issue #283 your “Do-it-Yourself Deities” article contained a number of factual errors when it came to the alignments of various gods in the pantheons you gave as examples. By far the most glaring misstep was in the Greek Pantheon. For some reason, your staff once again chose to label the Greek god of the dead, Hades, as neutral evil. Nothing could be further from the truth! This is the same kind of mistake that was made years ago in TSR’s Deities & Demigods. It’s enough to make any serious student of ancient mythology cringe. Perhaps some of your otherwise excellent DRAGON staff need to do their homework.

Hades was never viewed as evil by the Greeks, nor was death for that matter. Remember, the Greeks invented Stoicism, which made many of them
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Saving you way more than gas money.
funny (funˈe) adj. 1a. A duck.
Although this cartoon is already funny, we know you can think of a caption for it that will just put it over the top. Send it in, and should our impartial panel of scientists determine that your submission is both funny and easy to read you may be immortalized within the pages of Dragon. Heck, we might even appropriate a prize or two from someone's cubicle. Send your caption to Caption/DRAGON magazine, P.O. Box 707, Renton, WA 98057.

Mark Petersen • Prescott, AZ
As much fun as it is to tease you about arguing the "facts" of a god's alignment, Mark, we like the points you raise and share your opinion of Hades, who's not a bad bloke after all. (His big brother Zeus is a rat bastard, on the other hand.) The issue of whether a death god should be evil, neutral, or even good is a hot topic among contributors lately. Watch upcoming issues to see whether one comes to fruition.

Until then, check out these suggestions for expanding the Egyptian pantheon from one of our Italian readers:

Expanding the Pantheon
I read with much joy issue #283, especially the legendary pantheons, since I am extremely fond of ancient Egypt, and am running a campaign set in a fantasy Egypt. Therefore, I would suggest a couple of adjustments to the Egyptian pantheon, based on the myths and legends of ancient Egypt.

First, you forgot a number of important deities of ancient Egypt, while including a couple of minor ones (such as Bast and Apep, which was not even a god but a demon). The Egyptian pantheon is extremely complex, with more than a thousand deities, but you left out some of the most important:

Ptah, the Creator, god of Word and Truth. I would suggest a lawful neutral alignment and Magic, Knowledge, Sun, and Law as domains. Ptah was worshipped by practically anyone, since he was a god of immense power—according to some myths, greater than the other gods.

Sekhmet was the goddess of War and Healing. She is chaotic neutral, with War, Healing, Strength, and Fire as domains. Her priests were the true medics in Egypt, and the Pharaoh's strength in battle came from her. She is one of the most revered goddesses in ancient Egypt. Typical worshippers were warriors, healers, and the nobles.

random encounters
You might not know the name, but you know this music. You could have heard it in Excalibur, or maybe you picked out parts of it in the soundtrack from Glory, but what you heard was Carmina Burana. Composed by Carl Orff in the 1930s, the work is an adaption of the "Songs of Bueren," a series of 13th-Century poems. Carmina Burana is an operatic burlesque, but so long as no one speaks Latin, this music is perfect for all kinds of scenes. Try "Ecce Gratum" for when the PCs have seemingly saved the city. Use "Fortune Plango Vultura" when that evil cult is just around the corner, and of course play "O Fortuna" during the epic battle.
Khepri, the beetle, another Sun god. This one was important because it represented the “becoming” of all things on the Earth. Khepri is lawful good, with Sun, Fire, Law, and Protection domains. Worshippers can be scholars, astrologers, and commoners.

Khnum, the potter, god of arts and craftsmanship. He created humanity from clay. His alignment should be neutral good, with Good, Earth, Luck, and Water as domains. Artisans and commoners were his typical worshippers.

Sebek, the crocodile, god of fertility and rivers. Sebek is neutral, with the Animal, Water, Destruction, and Trickery domains. Sebek’s worshippers were men, commoners, fishermen, and boatmen.

Tefnut, goddess of humidity and water. Her alignment should be lawful good, and she should have the domains Water, Protection, Law, and Magic.

Also, I would change Horus. Horus is not at all lawful, since he often uses trickery against Set. I would say that Horus is neutral good.

I hope that these small notes may be of help to everyone interested in running a campaign in an Egyptian-style fantasy world.

Marco Signore • Napoli, Italy

We didn’t forget those important gods of the Egyptian pantheon so much as we arbitrarily ignored them to keep the lists manageably short, counting on our faithful readers for supplements.

We received some early responses to our 25th anniversary issue. Most readers loved the extra FORGOTTEN REALMS coverage, but there’s always one guy:

Elminster Extration

I have never written to you before because everything was pretty good, and I was too lazy. However, the growing volume of FORGOTTEN REALMS content has incited me to action! I’m not interested in Realms-specific material! I am especially disappointed with the forthcoming regular column about Faerunian faiths. This will be especially hard to convert to a home-brewed campaign, because new religions don’t sprout out of nowhere every month. I will read it and skim for ideas, but I won’t be getting my value out of those pages.

Can’t the published-setting people be satisfied with the setting-specific books, modules, and novels? Why must Elminster invade my precious DRAGON Magazine?

I liked “Dungeoncraft,” though I liked it less when it got specific to the author’s example world, and I really liked the article “101 Wondrous Whereabouts” because it presented a lot of little ideas that easily work themselves into any campaign.

I liked the monster creation rules (way back in issue #276) because they were useful. If you guys can get your hands on any other in-house documents or things that were cut from the core books, I’d love to see them. I liked seeing monsters like the ulgurstasta and the jawg, but an article on how to do something is a lot more interesting and useful to me than an article describing an example of something (like a pantheon or the characters from a novel).

That’s what my ideal DRAGON Magazine would look like: less setting-specific articles and more how-to articles. I urge any readers that agree with me to send a letter or email to DRAGON—it’s your magazine, too!

Chris Walsh • Rexford, NY

We support the FORGOTTEN REALMS more than other settings because so many more people play in the FORGOTTEN REALMS—twice as many as the next most popular setting, according to our last poll, and that number is growing fast with sales of the new book.

Since “Elminster’s Guide to the Realms” presents such transportable locations, we think it’s a breeze to convert them to virtually any other D&D setting. At first glance, “Faiths of Faerun” might seem a little harder to modify, but they can work in most campaigns with just a few changes.

As for more design documents, we agree that they’re enormously useful, and we’ll print more as soon as they’re available. While you wait, check out the Wizards of the Coast website for an update to the monster design guide.

Viva La Faerun!

As an avid FORGOTTEN REALMS fan and a DM of an ongoing Realms campaign, I thoroughly enjoyed issue #284! Tops on my list are “Faiths of Faerun” and “Elminster’s Guide to the Realms.” Magistrates and watchers—excellent! I can’t wait to see what multiclass options you show us next. (How about Mask, Malar, Talos, Mystra, Tymora, Selune... you get the idea.)

While I’m disappointed that the saurians aren’t featured in the FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Book, I’m sure that they’ll be covered soon. They will be covered soon, right?

Dean Siemsen • Northumberland, PA

Random Encounters

World Explorer looks more like a pulp fiction adventure magazine than a geographic journal. David Hatcher, its editor and founder, is a sort of modern Professor Challenger in both style and function. He travels the world to deliver his first-person accounts of Cargo Cults and other strange phenomenon familiar to Call of Cthulhu players and other gamers. Equal parts National Geographic and National Enquirer, WEX is the point at which geekdom collides with field science. Check out www.wexclub.com.
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To see the complete Dwarven Forge catalog and place orders, visit us at: ww.dwarvenforge.com

Add New Dimension To Your Campaign

Here’s a small selection of the fully painted orcs and skeletons The Forge has added to its miniature line!
We hope you like this month’s installment of “Faiths of Faerûn.” The RôDr team liked the first few prestige classes so much that they’ve increased the coverage of such classes in an upcoming book. Look for it next summer.

As for the saurials, we’d love to bring them back. All it takes is a good article proposal from a talented Forgotten Realms fan, then a smashing manuscript. Let’s see some soon!

The new Realms columns garnered more praise and requests than we could print, but here’s some of it:

**A Picture Worth 1,000 Words**

I am a long-time gamer and Dungeon Master, and I own pretty much every issue of Dragon after number 45. I’ve always enjoyed your magazine and rarely miss a chance to read it. This issue in particular caught my imagination, so I thought I should compliment you on it in the hopes that you’ll continue the feature you are running.

I am referring to Ed Greenwood’s excellent article in issue #284 on Mrelgaunt’s Turret. This article is well-written and imaginative, as are most all of Ed’s fine contributions, and I enjoyed it thoroughly, but what really put the article over the top in terms of excellence was the fantastic cut-away illustration of the tower itself found on pages 76 and 77. David Day has created a great image there and I really loved looking at it. That kind of attention to detail and color really made the whole thing shine.

Please feature more of Mr. Day’s wonderful art in the future, especially in conjunction with more of these descriptive articles. I am looking forward to letting my party of characters stumble across the turret in our ongoing campaign, and seeing what they think of the surprise I’m putting on the trap door at the top of the turret.

John Funk • Austin, Texas

You got it, John. David’s art and Ed’s new column have garnered a lot of praise, and we plan to keep them going strong. In fact, we’re taking requests, as Daniel Pack demonstrates next:

**Request Night at Dragon**

I was reading the 25th anniversary issue of Dragon and would like to make some suggestions as to topics Mr. Greenwood could cover in his “Elminster’s Guide to the Realms” articles. When I first picked up the Forgotten Realms Atlas, I was intrigued by some notations that I could find no information on. Of course, I could have missed them in the many supplements that have been out in the years since. Here are a few that I have always wanted to know about:

- Tulrun’s Tent (I know there are some spells by him)
- The Lonely Tower
- Dungeon of the Hark
- Beorunna’s Well
- Halls of the Four Ghosts
- Castle Perilous
- Luirbrach (any of the area around the great glacier)

Daniel J. Pack • Eugene, OR

We passed your requests along to Ed, who responded with an enthusiastic, “Right away!” Look for some of those locations to appear in future issues.

Sadly, the “Mrelgaunt’s Turret” article was not exactly flawless. Shannon Carl spotted not one but two mistakes:

**That’s Elminster to You**

On page 75, in the “Elminster’s Guide to the Realms” (confidentially, Elminster is spelled wrong in the heading), Aulstær Mrelgaunt is shown wearing three rings (a ring of protection +2, a ring of wizardry I, and a ring of wizardry III) and receiving the bonuses from all three. He can only be wearing two rings according to the Magical Items section of the DMG. I just thought I’d bring these to your attention.

Shannon Carl • State College, PA

That sneaky Elminster is always slipping a little disinformation into his reports on the lands of Faerûn. He says it’s to keep adventurers guessing, but we see now that he likes to keep gamers on their toes, too. We’ll take it up with him next time we spell his name correctly, but more importantly, we’ll be more careful when looking at characters with multiple magic rings.

Join us next month for a trip to the Outer Planes, an awesome new prestige class, some new psionics feats, and a great new story by Neal Barrett, Jr.

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but unfortunately for the barbarians, he's not
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On sale now! Look for it in your local toy, game, and hobby store.
When the numbers are totaled and the results examined, it is natural to ask whether you agree with the ratings or not, and what is the single most important element of a roleplaying game? In fact, all of the elements are critical to making a complete roleplaying game. From system to system, however, some are more critical than others. Similarly, depending on the designer’s aims and the genre of the game, various elements will be necessary, others included to broaden vistas, and some hardly included.

For example, in an action-based fantasy roleplaying game Business will likely not be included in the rules, although the DM is free to add such consideration to the campaign. In a game based on another genre, such as Victorian horror or the Wild West, it is likely that this element will play a role in the game system.

**Economics**, another rather lowly rated element in the survey, is likely a critical consideration for roleplaying games not in the fantasy genre or those based mainly on individual action-adventure. When moving from purely tactical play into higher level considerations, Economics should certainly play an important part in the game.

Although it seems likely that the vast majority of respondents were D&D players, the solid but not over-blown 6+ ratings given to **Combat** and **Exploration** gave me assurance that there is a fine understanding of how much more there is to the game than simply looking for things to kill.

That **Politics** ranked far lower with relatively new players as compared to more experienced players seemed apropos. After all, when first learning to play, the nuisances this element adds aren’t likely to have been discovered and appreciated.

**Story** rang the bell across the board. Evidently some respondents wanted to make sure that this element covered player participation. Quite a number of added comments for a 17th element had to do with this matter. Unless the players are contributing to the course of events, in effect co-creating the story through their characters’ interaction with the environment, there is no roleplaying game. Without such an affect, the players are actors following a script. In a roleplaying game, the story is fully known only after the adventure has been played out.

What surprised me greatly was the low esteem given to **Theatrics**. How can a game be animated, exciting, and entertaining without such input from the DM? The most acclaimed DMs are those able to supply a full range of voices, sound effects, and other theatrical additions to play. This is a very important element of every sort of roleplaying game, although it isn’t quantified in core rules. Perhaps had I named the element “Imagery, Visual Aids, and Theatrics” it would have conveyed the concept more clearly.

About a third of the respondents added a 17th element to the list. **Entertainment/Fun** was consistently mentioned and rated at 10; so too was **Camaraderie/Friends**. Were these elements of a roleplaying game rather than a result of playing one, both would top the list!

Most of the commonly added considerations were of like sort, or else simply additive to the group’s enjoyment of the game. **Snacks and Drinks** were popular additions. Many other suggested additions to the list dealt with the creation of adventures for the base game and the interaction between the participants when involved thus. All are valid, but only in relation to the play group, not the game form per see. Many like additions were of rather contradictory nature, such as those naming **Teamwork** opposing others calling for **Character Opposition**.

Story elements were added as factors by a considerable number of persons—**Drama, Humor, Mystery**, **Romance**, and **Tragedy**. While not separate from the **Story** element, it is worth stressing these facets. Especially noteworthy is **Humor**, as this element serves to both break from and then enhance the main aspects likely in the story. I’d like to thank all the respondents but especially those who called my attention to what I overlooked in the way of valid inclusions in the list. Here are these additions as I see them:

- **Environment** for the game that suits its genre and that includes within it both a Sense of Wonder and **Danger**. This means that the game setting is indeed a part of the core material. Using the averages for the sixteen elements originally suggested, I rate this one as a strong 7.

- **Rewards System** so that the active character advances in various ways by gaining belongings, knowledge, various increased capacities, and so forth. In a game without a winner, sans conclusion, this is certainly a key element! Again basing my rating on the averages for the 16 elements originally suggested, this one must also be a strong 7.

With 18 elements of the roleplaying game form before us, I think there’s more than enough on the plate for creators of such things to ponder.

Hopefully, the array will also enhance the understanding and enjoyment of the game’s marvelous scope and diversity for all participants. What is clear is that the roleplaying game—beloved by its millions of fans—is a multifaceted entertainment vehicle that enables people with diverse likes to enjoy the basic vehicle through its highly adaptable portions.

Concluding with this topic at last, I invite you to read next month’s column in which I take a totally new and different tack. No hints. You’ll have to discover what’s been brewed up. ☺
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Day One, Challenge One: Get through the registration line as quickly as possible.

Day Two, Challenge Two: Resist telling anyone in the dealer’s room about your latest player character for as long as you possibly can.

“Anybody that evil had to be psychotic, or a dungeon master.”

“Sororway I’m playing this half elf called Legolamb and it’s really cool ’cause he got a cross of my and then 3.6 seconds! We have a new record!”
I'm sorry, Igor. But you're being voted off...

But... but you can't! I've got the single most desired item of the show!

I'm voting you off...

Day Three, Challenge Three: Enter the "Iron Man" all-night Dungeons and Dragons marathon tournament. Through various trials and tests, establish yourself as a roleplayer of the first rank, letting others witness your leet gamer skilz and establishing yourself as a master of the craft, displaying both cunning prowess and victory!

... and that's why I think a comic strip about gamers is a good idea!

He's had too much to drink! Cut him off!

Day Four - The Final Verdict:

Well, guys, the others have voted, and the result is in this hat.

Matt, you've played a superb game. You've won every immunity challenge, you've experienced every aspect of gaming...

You're a true Gen Con Survivor!

So that means I win?

Not quite.

Now, you move on to the next round!

You've survived every monster you've encountered during Gen Con: orcs, beholders, card gamers...

... but now you must face the scariest thing we could summon...

The next round?

You are the gEEEkest link! Goodbye!

You've survived every monster you've encountered during Gen Con. But now you must face the scariest thing we could summon...

Anne Robinson. AIEEE!

You are the gEEEkest link! Goodbye!

© 2001 She Ra And Productions. John@Kovalic.com Dork Central - http://www.dorktower.com
The Four Lands are the creation of author Terry Brooks in his wildly popular Shannara novels. The setting is a Dungeon Master’s dream come true, a vast land filled with danger, magic, and adventure: a perfect backdrop for a D&D campaign.

THE WORLD OF SHANNARA

THE FOUR LANDS

BY BRIAN MURPHY WITH CHRIS THOMASSON

ILLUSTRATED BY LARRY MACDOUGALL

The Four Lands are so named due to their geographic divisions. The elves rule the Westland from the city of Arborion, the trolls lay claim to the barren and mountainous Northland, and the dwarves and gnomes battle endlessly for dominion of the Eastland. Mankind, once the globe’s dominant race, now precariously clings to the Southland.

The humans have been divided ever since the Great Wars, an apocalypse brought on over two thousand years ago by their own meddling.

The full history of the Four Lands is known only to the Druid Council, for within their keep at Paranor lies the most comprehensive library of tomes, both magical and historical, ever collected. Paranor is shrouded in mystery, and no one has yet had the courage to demand the ancient texts contained within.
Major Cities

Arborlon
The capital city of the elven kingdom, Arborlon is perhaps the most aesthetically pleasing of all the great cities in the Four Lands. Defended on the southern and eastern sides by the seemingly endless Drey Wood, the city has never fallen to invasion despite multiple sieges during the last several centuries. The age of the city is unknown, and no record of its construction exists. Many believe the foundations were grown from the earth in the days when the elves’ blood ran thick with powerful magic.

The elven nation is a monarchy ruled by the Elessedil family. The Breakline Mountains to the north, the Valley of Rhenn to the east, the Rockspur Mountains to the south, and Hoare Flats to the west mark the kingdom’s borders. Six advisors give the king or queen counsel, each of whom oversees an aspect of the nation’s welfare (military, economic, diplomatic, and so on).

Arborlon is the elves’ only true city, although there are many small towns and villages dotting the countryside.

The city is centered around the Gardens of Life where the ancient Ellyrion tree rests, warding the Four Lands against the demon hordes trapped within the Forbidding. Just outside the silver gates surrounding the garden sits the royal manor house where the monarchs reside, protected by the Home Guard.

Archers man the city walls, and a barracks hunkers near the only gate into the city. The gate is guarded by a reinforced oak door and an iron portcullis. On either side of the gate is a tower manned by five archers. The elven

Hearthstone
In the central Westland lies the home of the ancient Druid Cogline and his moor cat companion Rumor. Walker Boh also lived here for a time while trying to escape his fate as the next Druid. A haven of peace, Hearthstone was burnt to the ground by Cogline himself in a desperate attempt to fend off a shadowen attack.
infantry can be equipped at the barracks and at the gate in five minutes should the alarm be raised.

Elven hunters, a special branch of the military, are scattered throughout the Drey Wood. Their duty is to report any non-elven presence and impede any invading forces. Thanks to this tactic, all attempts to invade through the Drey Wood have failed. Armies invading through the Wood arrive at Arborlon weakened and tired, with much of their equipment and provisions destroyed.

Culhaven

The only dwarven city not underground, Culhaven lies on the Silver River at the northernmost point of the Lower Anar forests. The city lacks walls but it does not need them. No one, save the dwarves, knows the Anar Forest well enough to get through unsnatched.

A council of eight elders rules the dwarven nation. The eldest is known as the First Speaker and acts as the head of the council. The dwarven nation is not known to have other settlements above the ground, but they lay claim to the Lower Anar and the Wolfstaag Mountains, a claim that the gnome tribes dispute. Few know the exact number of dwarven settlements beneath the ground, but it is rumored that in times of need Culhaven can call enough reinforcements from below to double, and possibly triple, its military might.

Should Culhaven ever be in danger of invasion, every member of the population evacuates the city using underground tunnels. Once the hostile threat has passed through the abandoned city, the remaining dwarven army resurfaces and does what it can to break the enemy using ambushes and other guerrilla tactics. The Council of Elders never makes this decision lightly as it isn’t always successful. This tactic proved disastrous against the forces of the human Federation, which remained in Culhaven until starvation forced the dwarves out of hiding.

Culhaven is usually a peaceful place, and many of the folk who live there are hunters or farmers. Timber is their most plentiful resource, but blacksmiths also make an excellent living using iron sent to Culhaven from Capaal via the Silver River.

Culhaven is centered on the Assembly, a large hall where the Council of Elders convenes. The city’s defenders stay in two barracks, one on either side of the city. At least half of these guards are always out hunting and scouting in the Anar Forests.

Tyris

Although Tyris has not yet been founded by the beginning of the Second War of the Races, no other city played such a crucial role in what is now called the Third War of the Races. Capital of the human nation of Callahorn, Tyris stands near the center of the Four Lands. The city has never fallen in battle to an invading force, but the Federation occupied and controlled it for some time.

The Border Legion was Callahorn’s famed army, which consisted of the best-trained soldiers in the Four Lands. Callahorn took upon itself the duty of defending the Southland against invasion, a duty that many took for granted. Balinor Buckannah, the final king of Callahorn, died a few years after the Third War of the Races. He left Callahorn in the hands of nobles far less concerned with the fate of their neighbors. The Border Legion was disbanded, and an isolationist policy now means that Callahorn rarely involves itself in the problems of its once-allies.

A group of nobles rules the kingdom. They reside at the former royal palace in Tyris where anyone with enough coin can gain an audience. These nobles are more concerned with keeping their own coffers full of gold than with the well being of the Four Lands. Thanks to this new form of government, Tyris is more a merchant city than a place of great political power.

Tyris has the most impressive military defense of all the cities in the Four Lands. It is surrounded on all sides by mighty stone walls and towers. The walls of the city are twenty feet high and two and a half feet thick. There is a tower every fifty feet, each containing five footmen and five archers. Three archers patrol the battlements of each fifty-foot stretch of wall. Steel doors and an iron portcullis guard each of the gatehouses at the north and south of the city. Tyris has never fallen to invasion.

There are four barracks situated throughout the city, each housing over five hundred men. Prior to the disbandment of the Border Legion, there were an additional ten barracks in operation. These buildings have been converted into storehouses, and a few have been sold to mercenary companies seeking more luxurious accommodations. At the center of the city is the royal palace, where the four ruling nobles of Callahorn reside. Although elves and dwarves reside in Tyris, immigration is not encouraged. As a result, the racial districts of Tyris have become smaller and smaller as generations pass. The elven and dwarven districts maintain markets where exotic materials can be acquired.

**Towns and Villages**

Kern

Kern is a large town that lies upon the Mermidon River. The city’s economy is based upon the Mermidon; the town is filled with fishermen. Kern owes allegiance to Tyris and is part of the kingdom of Callahorn. The town trades with both Tyris and Leah.

Kern has been attacked just once in
the last few centuries, during the Third War of the Races. Should it ever be attacked again, the townsfolk will use the same defensive strategy as before. The town breaks several dams along the Mermidon, flooding the banks and slowing an approach to the city. While the hostile force is delayed, the town evacuates its entire population to Tyrsis.

Leah
Leah, a small city-state near the lowlands of Clete, has been independent for over two hundred years, although it was under occupation at the height of Federation power. The city is fairly small compared to Tyrsis or Arborlon, but it has a strong economy based on farming and livestock.

Leah trades with both Kern and Shady Vale, and it has close ties with both communities. The small military of Leah is nothing compared to that of Tyrsis, but the proud fighting force of men and women are gladly willing to die in defense of their homeland. The city is not walled.

Shady Vale
This small hamlet is surrounded on all sides by the Duls forest. The hamlet's primary source of income is the lumber industry, but they also hunt the forests for wild game.

Shady Vale is a proud community, and it is surprisingly well protected against invasion. After the disbanding of the Border Legion, many soldiers retired to Shady Vale and now act as hunters. In times of war, these hunters double as a militia. There are roughly fifty such men, all trained with the bow and spear. The lack of defensive walls means that should a large enough force attempt to invade the Vale, there is little the militia could do save slow them down.

Storlock
In contrast to their warlike brethren, the gnomes of Storlock have forsaken violence and are the greatest healers in the Four Lands. The fact that they will heal anyone, be he hero or villain, is likely the only reason why they have never been invaded, as the pacifists will not take up arms, even in self-defense. There are no walls around Storlock, and the entire community is based around the large infirmary at the center of the village.

Wing Hove
The elves of Wing Hove have remained isolated since they left the elven kingdom of Arborlon centuries ago. The small town is completely self-sufficient. The Blue Divide offers more than enough fish, and the nearby mountains are filled with iron. The town is also close to a series of roc caves, and many of the massive birds have been trained to carry riders. Few know the exact location of Wing Hove, but many know of their elite Wing Riders as they aided in the defense of Arborlon during the Demon Wars. Since the fall of the Federation, Wing Hove has re-aligned itself with the elven crown.

Varfleet
Located less than ten miles from Tyrsis, the large town of Varfleet is little more than an outpost, providing advanced warning of an invasion from the northeast. Varfleet is walled and has a decent force manning the walls. The town's economy is based on the silver found in the mountains of Runne. This town is also rumored to be the birthplace of Allanon. Older than Tyrsis, Varfleet now owes allegiance to Callahorn.

Other Places of Interest
Capaa
This ancient dwarven fortress sits on the Silver River, where it joins with the Cillidellan. The fortress was constructed in the time of Raybur, last of the dwarven kings. The fortress protects the dams that regulate the flow of the Silver River, preventing flooding from washing Culhaven away. The fortress is nearly a millennia old, and it is defended by 500 dwarven soldiers. The fortress also defends a fairly rich
The Hadeshorn's Waters

Contact poison, Fortitude save (DC 25); initial damage 1d4 temporary Constitution, secondary damage is death.

Undead and Constructs are immune to the Hadeshorn's deadly waters, as non-living creatures have nothing to fear from such close contact with the realm of the spirits. Other creatures that are normally immune to poison are not immune to the Hadeshorn's effects. Creatures foolishly bathing in the Hadeshorn's waters suffer a -4 circumstance penalty to their Fortitude saves against the Hadeshorn's poison.

Iron mine. Iron is ferried to Culhaven on the Silver River once a month.

Graymark
The mord wraiths used this ancient troll fortress as a base of operations during the Time of the Walkers. Since their defeat, no one has had the courage to venture into the abandoned fortress due to the dark magic that many believe still lies within. After the destruction of the Idatch, the fortress is under a permanent unhallow effect. Should the mord wraiths ever resurface, they will likely attempt to retake Graymark.

Grimpond
The Grimpond is actually a shade that inhabits an unnamed lake north of Hearthstone in the Westland. The Grimpond claims to be a creature as old as faerie, but no one truly knows. Whatever its origin, the Grimpond has the ability to divine mysteries hidden from mortals. However, the Grimpond is a malicious spirit that must be tricked into revealing useful information. It delights in tormenting those who visit it with all the powers of illusion and divination at its disposal.

Paranor
Paranor, a place filled with the knowledge of the ancients, was once the home to the Druid Council. Galaphile, an elven wizard who decided that only learning could guide the inhabitants of the Four Lands to peace and prosperity, established the Council. The Druids were well versed in both magic and the ancient sciences, and they worked to unite the five races of the Four Lands. Unfortunately, the Druids themselves were not immune to corruption, and eventually they lost interest in anything outside their keep. All but a handful of Druids were wiped out during the Second War of the Races.

The keep was destroyed, but only temporarily. During the Time of the Walkers, Allanon became aware that his death was not far off. To make certain that the multitude of magical resources in Paranor would not fall into the hands of those who would use them to subjugate the Four Lands, he activated the ancient magics at the heart of the fortress. The keep simply disappeared, until Walker Boh, the last Druid, used his magic to bring Paranor back. Any characters planning to restore the Druid Council will likely want access to Paranor itself, which presents dozens of adventure opportunities.

Pykon
This elven fortress's garrison was massacred during the Demon Wars by a particularly powerful demon, known only as the Reaper. After the Demon Wars ended, the elven crown was far more concerned with rebuilding the towns and villages that were destroyed than with replacing garrisons in far away strongholds. Thus, Pykon lay empty for several decades before being reclaimed. Pykon is an excellent base of operations for a party that is doing work for the elven crown, especially work that requires them to venture into the Wilderun.

Silver River
The Silver River is a stream of sparkling blue water that feeds Rainbow Lake. According to legend, the river is ruled by the elusive King of the Silver River, one of the few remaining faerie creatures in the Four Lands. He is said to help travelers in need, appearing to them in dreams and offering advice. The Silver River springs from Heaven's Well. It is an excellent place for any group to stop and rest, even when being pursued, as the King of the Silver River often shields people from their enemies wrath, at least temporarily. The King of the Silver River might protect good-aligned characters with spells like improved invisibility, protection from evil, and non-detection. On some occasions, the King of the Silver River will even use teleport without error to bring those in need to a safer location on the river.

Valley of Shale
The Valley of Shale is a dark valley avoided by most travelers. Although no visible dangers present themselves, many find that the place emits a disturbing aura, and those who sleep there frequently suffer terrifying dreams of death and horror. In game terms, anyone sleeping there is subject to a nightmare spell (with a DC 20 Will save) for each night they spend in the Valley of Shale.

The most remarkable and feared place in the Valley of Shale is the Hadeshorn, a body of murky green waters whose touch is poison. One droplet from the bubbling and spitting Hadeshorn can kill.

The Hadeshorn is one of the few focal points where the netherworld and the real world come into contact. Some say the dead can be contacted through the lake, provided a Scry check (DC 25) is made. Contacting the dead and understanding them, however, are two different things. The shades often speak in riddles and ominous visions that are difficult to decipher.

Wilderun
The Wilderun is a place of legend and fear. Riddled with swamps and jungles, less than a dozen hamlets and villages dot the massive region, and these small communities are filled with thieves and cutthroats. Monsters of every variety roam the area, and few people dare to travel there. For a period of two years, the brigands-turned-tyrants who operated out of Pykon forcibly united the many hamlets there, but their reign of terror ended when the elven crown retook Pykon.

At the center of the Wilderun lie the Hollows, a place where the witch sisters Morag and Mallenroh contend for supremacy. According to legend, deeper within the Hollows lies the mystical Bloodfire, a place where the Elemental Plane of Fire touches the Four Lands.

Those who sleep there frequently suffer

**TERRIFYING DREAMS of DEATH and HORROR.**
Ruins

Skull Kingdom

Skull Kingdom was the demesne of the Warlock Lord, the base of operations from where he worked to overthrow those that opposed him. At the end of the Third War of the Races, the Warlock Lord was destroyed there. No one willingly goes to the Skull Kingdom, in fear of finding creatures that might have survived their master’s destruction. The trip itself is dangerous, but the ruins of Skull Kingdom could easily contain magical wealth beyond imagining.

The Skull Kingdom is nearly impervious to occupation by an army. To the east is the Malg Swamp, which produces gases deadly to the anatomy of any living creature. The Malg feeds the River Lethe, which sweeps to the west below the intimidating Knife Edge Mountains, among whose peaks can be found Skull Mountain. To the west is the Kierlan Desert. The heat of this inhospitable land causes massive amounts of steam to rise off the lake formed by the outflow of the Lethe, cloaking this area in a toxic mist that kills creatures within seconds.

The Hall of Kings

The Hall of Kings was originally a temple created by an ancient cult of priests who worshiped the gods of death. Although classified as ruins, since the temple has remained vacant for over a millennium, the Hall of Kings is still in nearly perfect condition. There are many dangers within the Hall of Kings; most are unknown. Walker Boh was the last known individual able to traverse the Hall of Kings, though many others have tried.

Should someone successfully travel through the Hall of Kings, he will exit on the opposite side of the Dragon’s Teeth Mountains.

People of the Four Lands

Class Options

Barbarians: The gnome tribes are the only barbarians that appear in any of the Shannara novels, but others could exist in isolated regions of the Four Lands. Barbarians are frequently the survivors of communities ruined by war, or they are the ancestors of such individuals. Forced into a savage life of pillaging, these people are rarely encountered outside the Wilderun.

Bards: These characters are well known throughout the Four Lands. Many are Rovers, a people that frequently travel in large wagon trains. Rovers are seen as dishonest thieves, and few people trust them. All Rovers who can be identified as such (by their style of dress, typically) suffer a -2 circumstance penalty to all Bluff and Diplomacy skill checks. Rovers often travel alone, but they can usually count on a wagon train to shelter them and their friends.

Clerics: Clerics are quite rare in the Four Lands, as the gods do not involve themselves in the matters of the Four Lands as often as the gods of other worlds. There are very few temples as many people identify temples with places of evil, such as the Hall of Kings. The few clerics that exist are in high demand and travel from place to place healing the sick and injured.

Druids: Normal D&D druids should not be confused with Allanon and the other members of the Druid Council. Characters of the druid class are quite rare and can be found most frequently among the barbarian tribes in the Wilderun.

Fighters: Fighters are common in the Four Lands. There is never a shortage of people who know how to use a blade. The Border Legion was the best example of a force of fighters, as every member was at least a 1st-level fighter.

Monks: Martial-artists exemplify the ultimate link between body and mind. Few men or women in the Four Lands possess the stamina or mental fortitude it takes to master the body. These individuals should be extremely rare and shrouded in mystery.

Paladins: Paladins are holy warriors who fight to make certain good triumphs over evil. These individuals are rare. Few people have the honor and...
MAGr IN THE FOUR LANDS

Magic is a powerful force in the Four Lands and consequently many people fear it. It has been the tool of many evil forces, such as the Warlock Lord and the shadowen.

There are two other forms of magic in the Four Lands. The wishsong is an amazingly powerful ability, which is detailed in the "Heroes & Villains" on page 45. The other magic is the magic of old science, the last practitioner of which was believed to be Cogline, an old man who died fighting the shadowen. The ancient sciences are based on strange alchemical processes, most of which have been lost.

Under the rule of the Federation, all use of magic was explicitly outlawed. Anyone even thought to be a practitioner of magic was hunted down by the Seekers, led by Rimmer Dali. Ironically, Rimmer Dali was actually a shadowen, a creature of magic himself. The Federation still outlaws magic in any form, but their influence has diminished as their control of the Four Lands has slipped drastically since the defeat of the shadowen by Walker, Wren Elessedil, and Par and Colt Ohmsford. As a result, travelers of the Four Lands could encounter magic in one form or another, especially if they travel near any one of the more unique locations to be found in the world (see Other Places of Interest).

sense of duty necessary to take up the mantle of the paladin. Those that do exist work quietly to better the world around them, pretending to be nothing more than fighters or rangers.

Rangers: Rangers are common throughout the Four Lands, especially in elven and dwarven lands. Living in the Anar Forest makes rangers a necessity for the dwarven people. Rangers also wander the Four Lands, sometimes offering their services as trackers, at other times simply seeking a good hunt.

Rogues: Extremely common in the Four Lands, rogues are present in nearly every community. Although some rogues are mere thieves, others offer their services as spies or assassins.

Sorcerers: These arcane spellcasters should be extremely rare, as innate magic is mostly a thing of the past in the Four Lands. Those individuals who have magic in their blood are usually the children of faerie creatures or dark monstrosities. Because of their heritage, sorcerers often find themselves outcasts.

Wizards: Wizards are likewise rare. Many are feared because of the great damage dark magic has wrought on the Four Lands. Those who know how to command magic would be well advised to hide the fact unless they are powerful enough to defend themselves from a mob of terrified townspeople.

Race Options

The races of the Four Lands are similar to those presented in the Player's Handbook, with the following changes:

Humans: Humans remain unchanged. They are still a diverse people who excel at learning and specialization.

Dwarves: Dwarves are similar in most regards to their D&D counterparts; however, their life on the surface of the world has made them somewhat different from the mining folk described in the Player's Handbook. The following changes should be made:
- Stonecunning grants a +1 racial bonus, not a +2 racial bonus.
- Dwarves gain a +2 circumstance bonus to Wilderness Lore checks.
- Dwarves gain a +1 racial bonus to attack gnomes.

Elves: The elves of Shannara should remain relatively unchanged; however, the rarity of magic means their favored class should be changed from wizard to ranger.

Gnomes: Gnomes are a vastly different people from those described in the Player's Handbook. They are warlike and savage. To reflect this, their favored class should be changed from illusionist to barbarian. Also the following racial changes should be made:
- Replace their attack bonus against goblins and kobolds with a +1 racial bonus to attack dwarves, due to centuries of border wars between the two races.
- Gnomes gain the Track feat for free.
- Gnomes gain a +2 racial bonus to Wilderness Lore checks.
- Gnomes lose their innate illusion abilities.

Half-Elves: Human-elf crossbreeds should remain unchanged. They are tolerated in both human and elven communities, though they are rarely truly accepted.

Other Races: Halflings and half-orcs do not appear anywhere in the Shannara series, but that doesn't necessarily mean they can't exist in your Four Lands campaign.

Halflings could easily be inserted into remote regions of the Four Lands; the Wilderun is a perfect example of a place where these nomadic people might never be found.

During the Demon Wars, the standard, lowly demon had no magical powers, merely ferocious combat ability. Half-orcs could take the place of the monsters from the Demons Underground adventure hook.

Also, look at "The Bestiary" this month for a new character race, the rock troll.

Adventure Hooks

These ideas can be turned into a series of adventures for a campaign set in the Four Lands. With a little work, they can be adapted for other campaign settings as well.

Ancient Relic

Rumors are abroad that a powerful relic lies in the Bloodfire, where Wil Ohmsford allegedly destroyed the monstrous Reaper. According to myth, a single claw is all that remains of the beast, and whoever holds the claw gains the Reaper's killing prowess. The gnomes and the Rovers have already set out for the Wilderun, hoping to claim the artifact first.

Border Wars

The war between the dwarves and gnomes has been revived. This time the gnomes are fighting more ferociously than ever before. The dwarves are in desperate straits, and they need seasoned adventurers capable of doing some scouting behind enemy lines. The only problem bigger than getting into gnome territory is getting back out.

Bounties Offered

The moor cat population is at an all-time high, and the beasts are beginning to leave Hearthstone in search of prey. Unfortunately, the cats are starving to death and haven't been too discriminating about what they eat.
More than a dozen people are missing from the town of Rooker Line, and bounty notices have been dispatched as far as Tyrsis offering rewards for moor cat pelts.

Demons Underground
During the Demon Wars, more than one village was overrun by the horde, which rampaged through everything in its path. The women the demons allowed to live suffered greatly. Now half-breed demons reside in the sewers beneath Tyrsis, while others raid the countryside. Regardless of where they are, these monsters must be stopped before they multiply and spread their taint further throughout the Four Lands.

Return of the Legion
The Border Legion, once the proudest fighting force in the Four Lands, has decided to re-form, with thousands of old soldiers coming out of retirement. This fighting force of aged and battle-hardened veterans has already besieged Tyrsis, intent on restoring Callahorn to its former militaristic glory. Conscripted by the rulers of Tyrsis, the party is sent to destroy as much of the legion's siege equipment as they can.

PLAYING BY THE BOOK
There are four distinct eras in which to base your Shannara campaign. Although none boasts a particularly high level of magic, the differences between eras is profound and can color the tone of your campaign.

The First King of Shannara: During this period of history, characters know of the Druid Council as a group of learned individuals who reside in the mighty fortress of Paranor at the heart of the Four Lands. Magic is whispered of in taverns, but few of the ordinary folk know any who practice it. Even the Druids fear its influence, and its practice is mostly forbidden.

The elves are the only exceptions to this rule. In the Westland, magic is still practiced. This is where Bremen learns many of his arcane arts, and it could be where spellcasting characters learn theirs, as well. The Southland is composed of many human kingdoms interspersed with independent communities, and the dwarves of the Eastland carry on their traditional way of life in the Anar Forests.

The opportunity for adventure is great, however, as the Warlock Lord sits in the far north, massing his armies to strike at the unsuspecting lands to the south. The ancient Elder Druid Bremen gathers a group of steadfast individuals to battle the evil, and the PCs could easily become a part of what will become the Second War of the Races.

The Sword of Shannara, The Elf Queen of Shannara, and The Talismans of Shannara: These three books take place over roughly three human generations. Thus, the political climate stays mostly the same.

In this era, the Southland and Eastlands are relatively unchanged. The Elves to the West are still the only race who know of magic to any great extent, but much of the art has been lost, even to them. Although Callahorn is a monarchy at the beginning of this set of books, it has become a city ruled by petty nobles by its completion, making Leah the only surviving monarchy in the Southland.

The most significant change is at Paranor, where all the Elder Druids have vanished save one: Allanon. The wandering mystic travels the land recording history as it happens, and seeking signs that herald the return of the Warlock Lord.

Again, with the armies to the north about to strike, adventure is in the air. PCs might get caught up in the search for the Sword of Shannara, they might be embroiled in a war against the demons held beyond the Forbidding by the Elycrys, or they might be sent by Allanon to dispatch mord wraiths and destroy that book of dark magic: the Ildatch.

The Scions of Shannara, The Druid of Shannara, The Elf Queen of Shannara, and The Talismans of Shannara: This third period of significance heralds the high point of Federation rule. The Federation arose in the deep Southland as a unification of several independent states. It then massed an army and started a march north, ostensibly to provide protection to those uncivilized lands—but in reality to conquer them. Paranor has vanished from the face of the earth, leaving behind almost nothing to mark that it ever existed. Magic is forbidden everywhere, as the Federation, under the control of the evil shadowen, is promoting the belief that magic use causes corruption and evil to spread. All of the lands of the Southland and Eastland are under Federation control, and the elves have seemingly disappeared from the face of the earth.

Adventurers face the danger of the shadowen at every turn. They could be recruited to find the elves and bring them back to the Four Lands, solving the mystery of Paranor; or to find the Sword of Shannara, the new lost symbol of freedom in the Four Lands.

The Voyage of the Jorl Shannara, The Rie Witch and forthcoming books: The most recent era in the epic saga of the Four Lands reveals many interesting things. The Federation has lost control of the Eastland, the Westland, and nearly all of the Southland, opposed as they are by the elves, dwarves, and the Free-born.

Paranor has returned and has an occupant: the reluctant Elder Druid, Walker. Much like Allanon, Walker walks the lands recording history and watching for signs of evil. However, Walker also harbors the goal of reestablishing the legendary Druid Council. In addition, Walker learns of the ancient magic across the Blue Divide: A seemingly impassable sea off the coast of the Westland. All the while, a misguided young girl, powerful beyond her years, plots to destroy Walker and claim the magic for herself.

The Four Lands have never been more exciting. The elves and dwarves fight the tyrannical Federation, Walker races the Rie Witch to a far-off land to capture a magic that could change the world, and remarkable airships sail the skies.
Elder Druids are individuals who have been chosen to protect their world from war and darkness. Only the most knowledgeable are permitted entry into the Druid Council, and those who do must forsake all other loyalties in favor of the pursuit of peace.

The World of Shannara

ELDER DRUID

by Brian Murphy • illustrated by Jeremy Jarvis

Despite sharing a name, Elder Druids and typical D&D druids have almost nothing in common. Elder Druids are most often wizards or sorcerers, although fighters and bards occasionally take up the path. Paladins make excellent Elder Druids, but they are rare. Clerics seldom follow the path of the Elder Druid, as no Elder Druid can follow the doctrine of a particular god.

NPC Elder Druids are often wanderers, and most Elder Druids travel for long periods of time without the company of their brethren, seeking to learn more about the world at large. Almost all groups of Elder Druids obey a hierarchy, and their leaders spend most of their time focusing on avoiding major catastrophes. Elder Druids seek to maintain balance across the globe and prevent war, but they are not above fighting on the battlefield should the need arise.

Class Features

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Being an Elder Druid grants proficiency with all simple weapons, but not armor or shields.

Spells per Day: An Elder Druid continues training in magic. Thus, when a new Elder Druid level is gained, the character gains new spells per day as if he had also gained a level in a spellcasting class he belonged to before he added the prestige class. He does not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained (improved chance of controlling or rebuking undead, metamagic or item creation feats, and so on). This essentially means that he adds the level of Elder Druid to the level of some other spellcasting class the character has, then determines spells per day and caster level accordingly.

If the character had more than one spellcasting class before he became an Elder Druid, he must decide to which class he adds an Elder Druid level for purposes of determining spells per day when he adds each new level.

Communication: At 1st level, the Elder Druid can invoke tongues and comprehend languages on himself as the spells of the same name, at will. This is a spell-like ability.

Druid Fire: Once per day per two Elder Druid class levels, as a standard action, the Elder Druid can summon forth a plane of white hot flames similar to a burning hands spell. This attack takes the form of a 40-foot-long semicircular burst of fire that deals damage equal to 1d6 per Elder Druid class level plus the Elder Druid's Wisdom modifier. Creatures in the area of effect can make a Reflex save (DC 20 + the Elder Druid's Wisdom modifier) to take half damage. The fire can affect incorporeal and ethereal creatures, and spell resistance does not apply. This is a supernatural ability.

Sense Magic: At 3rd level, the Elder Druid can detect magic and read magic as the spells of the same name, at will. This is a spell-like ability.

Elder Druid Resistance: At 4th level, the Elder Druid's body becomes resistant to poison and disease. This results in a +4 resistance bonus to saving throws against poison and disease. This is an extraordinary ability.

Uncanny Dodge: At 1st level the
Elder Druid gains the extraordinary ability to react to danger before his senses would normally allow him to do so. At 1st level and above, the Elder Druid retains his Dexterity bonus to AC regardless of being caught flat-footed or being struck by an invisible attacker.

At 5th level, the Elder Druid can no longer be flanked. He can react to opponents on opposite sides of him as easily as he can react to a single opponent. The exception to this defense is that a rogue who is 4 levels higher than the character can flank him (and thus sneak attack him).

Druid Sleep: At 7th level, the Elder Druid is taught how to enter Druid sleep, a form of magical hibernation that allows him to exceed his natural lifespan. A total of twenty-eight days out of the year must be spent in hibernation (assuming your year is around 365 days; adjust this duration to about \( \frac{1}{3} \) the length of the year in your campaign). Provided this ratio is maintained, the Elder Druid adds one year to his maximum lifespan for each day spent in hibernation. If the Elder Druid does not maintain the ratio, the days spent in Elder Druid sleep provide no benefit. Druid sleep can be used to prolong
The druid sleep is a powerful tool the last Elder Druids use to extend their ability to protect the Four Lands; however, using the sleep makes the Elder Druid dependent on it. Such individuals can walk the world for only short times before their energies are exhausted, and they must sleep again for a minimum of twenty-eight days. If used too often, the druid sleep robs its user of his humanity, gradually turning him into a creature of the spirit world. Such is what happened to the rebel Elder Druid Brona.

Every twenty-eight days past the first four weeks that someone spends in druid sleep, he must make a successful Will save (DC 15) or be turned into a ghost like the Warlock Lord (see the "Heroes of Shannara" on page 44). For every twenty-eight days the sleep continues, another Will save must be made, increasing in difficulty by one (DC 16 after 84 days, 17 after 112, and so on) until the saving throw fails.

**CLASS REQUIREMENTS**

To qualify to become an Elder Druid, a character must fulfill all the following criteria:

- **Alignment:** Any nonevil.
- **Knowledge (arcana):** 10 ranks.
- **Knowledge (history):** 5 ranks.
- Feats: **Skill Focus—Knowledge (history).**
- Spellcasting: Must be able to cast spells.
- Special: Must be nominated and trained by another Elder Druid and must forsake all other allegiances to any political power, nation, or deity. Clerics who forsake their deity lose all spells and class features and cannot gain levels as clerics.
- **Incredible Memory** At 9th level, the Elder Druid gains the ability to recall any memory with surprising accuracy. This ability is also useful in combat, as it gives the Elder Druid a +2 competence bonus to attack rolls against any opponent he has fought during a prior encounter. This is an extraordinary ability.
- **Immolate Body** At 10th level, the Elder Druid can increase his abilities at the cost of his health. The Elder Druid can exceed his daily uses of the druid fire, suffering 1 point of temporary Constitution damage with each use. This can also be done for spells. Casting an extra spell causes 1 point of Constitution damage plus 1 per level of the spell. Casting an extra spell from level 5-8 also ages the Elder Druid by 1d4 years. Casting an extra 9th level spell ages the Elder Druid by 2d4+2 years and deals Constitution damage. This damage is suffered immediately after a spell is cast. This is a supernatural ability.

**DRUID SLEEP**

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**CLASS SKILLS**

**Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier**

The Elder Druid's class skills (organized by key ability) are:

- **Concentration**
- **Alchemy**
- **Appraise**
- **Craft**
- **Knowledge (any)**
- **Search**
- **Scry**
- **Spellcraft**
- **Profession**
- **Sense Motive**
- **Bluff**
- **Diplomacy**
- **Gather Information**

**Elder Druid**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Attack Bonus</th>
<th>Fort. Save</th>
<th>Ref. Save</th>
<th>Will Save</th>
<th>Special</th>
<th>Spells per Day</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>+0</td>
<td>+0</td>
<td>+0</td>
<td>+2</td>
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<td>+1 level of existing class</td>
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<td>+1</td>
<td>+0</td>
<td>+0</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>Druid fire 1/day</td>
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<td>+1</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>Sense magic</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>+4</td>
<td>Elder Druid resistance, Druid fire 2/day</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>+4</td>
<td>Uncanny dodge (can’t be flanked)</td>
<td>+1 level of existing class</td>
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<td>+3</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>+2</td>
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<td>+3</td>
<td>+2</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>+4</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>+6</td>
<td>Incredible Memory</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>+5</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>+7</td>
<td>Immolate body, Druid fire 5/day</td>
<td>+1 level of existing class</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Spells per Day**

- **Communication, Uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC)**
- **Druid fire 1/day**
- **Sense magic**
- **Elder Druid resistance, Druid fire 2/day**
- **Uncanny dodge (can’t be flanked)**
- **Druid fire 3/day**
- **Druid sleep**
- **Elder Druid blade, Druid fire 4/day**
- **Incredible Memory**
- **Immolate body, Druid fire 5/day**

**Elder Druid Blade** At 8th level, the Elder Druid learns how to temporarily infuse a weapon with magical energy. This can be done as a free action, provided the weapon is already held in hand. The Elder Druid must sacrifice a memorized spell or the use of a spell slot for the remainder of the day. In exchange, the weapon is considered to have an enhancement bonus equal to the level of the spell sacrificed for the purpose of surpassing damage reduction only. A weapon infused with a 0-level spell performs as a silver weapon for the duration of the enhancement. This temporary enhancement lasts for 1 round per class level. This is a supernatural ability.

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From an author of “Pure Magic”
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TYPICAL DRUID

Male Humans
7th-level sorcerers, 10th-level Elder Druids
Strength 10 (+0); Fort. Save +6
Dexterity 14 (+2); Ref. Save +9
Constitution 12 (+1); Will Save +15
Intelligence 19 (+4); Aligment NG
Wisdom 16 (+3); Speed 30 ft.
Charisma 18 (+4); Size M (varies)
Hit Points 66; Armor Class 12
Melee Attack +6/+3; Flat-Footed AC 12
Ranged Attack +10/+5; Touch AC 12

Special: Druid fire (cold: +2, 5 times/day); comprehend languages, detect magic, read magic, and tongues at will; +4 to saves against poison and disease; uncanny dodge (cannot be flanked); uncanny Dodge (Dex bonus to AC) +2; competence bonus on all Knowledge skill checks; +2 competence bonus on all attacks against previously battled opponents; Elder Druid blade; immolate body. (For a description of these Elder Druid abilities, see the Elder Druid prestige class on page 40.)

Skills*: Bluff +19, Concentration +21, Diplomacy +18, Knowledge (arcana) +29, Knowledge (history) +31, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +29, Scry +14, Search +19, Sense Motive +14, Spellcraft +24.

Feats: Combat Casting, Improved Initiative, Improved Unarmed Strike, Lightning Refexes, Scribe Scroll, Silent Spell, Skill Focus—Knowledge (history), Toughness.

Possessions: dark robes, dagger, traveling gear.

*The skill totals include the benefits gained from feats, synergy bonuses, and the Elder Druid class.
other races how beneficial such an organization would be to them. Walker also resents
the secrecy that the Druids maintain in keeping some knowledge to themselves, but he
has come to view it as a necessary evil of his position as guardian of the Four Lands.

The Ohmsfords
Each Ohmsford has his or her own story,
each of which is far too long to be told in
this article. If you want to know their stories,
you should look for this series of books in
your local bookstore. Generally speaking,
however, the Ohmsfords are simple,
unassuming half-elves thrust into the role
of heroes due to the circumstance of birth.
They desire to pursue their own careers
and want little to do with the adventures
thrust upon them.

Shea Ohmsford is a simple innkeeper who
was actually adopted by the Ohmsford fam-
ily. Flick Ohmsford is Shea's brother, and one
of the only Ohmsford's in the histories who
does not possess some ability to wield magic.
Wil Ohmsford is a healer who trained
with the gnomes of Storlock. Brin and Jair
Ohmsford were the first Ohmsfords to
demonstrate the power of the wishsong. Par
Ohmsford also possessed the wishsong, and
used it battle the Shadowen. Coll Ohmsford,
Par's brother, showed signs of his Shannara
heritage later than most of his relatives and
ancestors. Wren Ohmsford led the struggle
to return the elves from their exile.

The latest generation of Ohmsfords is
unlike any seen before. Bek grew up in the
care of the Leah family, never knowing his
ancestry until it was revealed to him by the
Druid, Walker. He has the power of the true
wishsong. Grianne also has use of the wish-
song, but she believes her brother dead, and
Walker responsible for his and her parents'
deaths. As a result, she is the Druid's sworn
enemy and is bent on his destruction. She
has given up her birth name and goes by
the moniker of the Ilse Witch.

Appearance: Although appearances vary,
just as in any family, there are certain traits
that seem to be prevalent. The Ohmsfords
tend to be rather slender, and they typically
have brown or blond hair. They are mostly
of average height and build (Flick and Coll
are exceptions). Sometimes their features
are more elven (Shea, Par, and Wren), while
at other times their appearances are more
representative of their human ancestors
(Flick, Will, Brin, Jair, Coll, Bek, and Grianne).

Roleplaying Notes: The Ohmsfords are
commoners with a heritage of heroism. Each
one has his or her strengths and weak-
nesses, as detailed below. One thing to

The Wishsong
The wishsong is a spell-like ability possessed only by a few Ohmsfords. Brin was the first to
have it. Jair, Par, Bek, and Grianne also have the wishsong.

The wishsong comes in two forms: the true wishsong and the illusion wishsong. Brin, Par,
Bek, and Grianne all possess the true wishsong, although Par's ability changed only from the
illusion wishsong temporarily. Jair only ever possessed the illusion wishsong. The true wish-
song allows the user to cast a wish spell once per round with only a verbal component.
The illusion wishsong allows the user to cast any one spell from the school of illusion once
per round. This spell has only a verbal component.
Shea, Half-Elf Com2/Ftr3: hp 25; AC 11; Atk +4 melee, or +5 ranged; AL NG; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +3; Str 11, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 13, Cha 12. Skills: Craft (carpentry) +6, Profession (innkeeper) +7, Swim +6. Feats: Endurance, Dodge, Run, Skill Focus—Craft (carpentry), Quick Draw.

Panamon and Padishar both suffer a -4 circumstance penalty to Climb checks due to their lack of a left hand.

Panamon Creel both have Tanned skin and dark hair. Panamon is Padishar's ancestor, and he always carries his masterwork sword of Shannara.

**Roleplaying Notes:** The Leahs are the first knights of the village. They have lost their battles against the shadows.

**Mention:** The Leah family ruled the small city of Leah for centuries before the Federation seized control and occupied the city. At that point the Leah family became little more than powerless nobles. Prior to those days, however, the men of the Leah family were heroes who fought against the forces of darkness.

**Menion, Ftr3/Rgr4:** hp 54; AC 13; Atk +9 melee, or +10 ranged; AL NG; SV Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +7; Str 15, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 8, Cha 12. Skills: Craft (carpentry) +8, Sense Motive +8, Spot +9, Wilderness Lore +7. Feats: Dodge, Endurance, Quick Draw, Toughness.

**Bek Rowe, Com3/Ftr3:** hp 17; AC 11; Atk +2 melee, or +3 ranged; AL NG; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +2; Str 10, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 13, Cha 12. Skills: Craft (carpentry), Profession (innkeeper) +7. Feats: Dodge, Skill Focus—Craft (carpentry), Toughness.

**Fionn, Ftr3:** hp 24; AC 11; Atk +5 melee, or +4 ranged; AL NG; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 11. Skills: Craft (carpentry) +7, Jump +7, Ride +5, Swim +6. Feats: Cleave, Dodge, Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (dagger), Weapon Focus (greatsword).

**Morgan, Ftr7:** hp 57; AC 13; Atk +10 melee, or +9 ranged; AL CG; SV Fort +7, Ref +4, Will +5; Str 16, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 8, Cha 12. Skills: Craft (carpentry) +13, Jump +13, Ride +12, Swim +13. Feats: Cleave, Iron Will, Great Cleave, Power Attack, Quick Draw, Sunder, Weapon Focus (greatsword), Weapon Specialization (greatsword).

**Morgan, Ftr7/Rgr4:** hp 43; AC 12; Atk +8 melee, or +8 ranged; AL CG; SV Fort +5, Ref +6, Will +6; Str 14, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 13, Wis 9, Cha 12. Skills: Craft (carpentry) +8, Improved Initiative, Quick Draw, Weapon Focus (greatsword).

**Quentin, Ftr3:** hp 24; AC 11; Atk +5 melee, or +4 ranged; AL NG; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 11. Skills: Craft (carpentry) +7, Jump +7, Ride +5, Swim +6. Feats: Cleave, Dodge, Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (greatsword).

**Padinshar/Panamon Creel**

**Appearance:** Panamon and Padishar both have tanned skin and dark hair. Panamon is Padishar's ancestor, and he has wisps of gray scattered through his hair when he meets Shea Ohmsford and helps him retrieve the Sword of Shannara from the bowels of the Shadow.
the Warlock Lord's stronghold. Padishar is a younger man when he meets Par Ohmsford and helps him escape the clutches of Rimmer Dali and his Seekers. Both of them share one distinct trait, however: They are both missing their left hand. In its place is the head of a pike.

Background: The background of the Creel family is largely unknown, although the family name was originally Screl. Urpox Screl aided the archdruid Bremen by forging the blade that was later enchanted to become the Sword of Shannara.

Panamon Creel is a highwayman who robs most anyone with more money than he has. No common brigand, he is highly adept at his trade. Although he has no real moral compunction against killing, Panamon favors robbing gnomes and other enemies of Man. He met Shea Ohmsford after killing and robbing the gnomes who had taken the Valeman hostage. Panamon was then embroiled in the Third War of the Races, and he showed a surprising amount of valor considering his career.

Padishar Creel is the head of the resistance against the Federation, and he spends much of his time planning raids and uprisings against that oppressive group. Unlike his ancestor, Padishar is more concerned with the movement than his own well being, and he would gladly die fighting for the cause.

Roleplaying Notes: Both Creels are proud men, although Panamon borders on arrogant. Both are also very charming, a skill they use to different degrees. Panamon is likely to become your best friend while picking your pocket at the same time. Padishar is far more likely to try to bring you over to the side of the resistance. Both men are extremely honorable, though, and keep their word no matter the consequences.

**Rimmer Dali**

Appearance: Rimmer Dali appears to be tall, well-built, rangy human. He has a chiseled, commanding face and a coarse, reddish half-beard. He has strange, penetrating eyes, and he can appear as friendly as a close confidant, or as menacing as a nightmare should he desire.

Background: Rimmer Dali is something of a living legend in the Four Lands. He is known as a man bent on carrying out his task of ferreting out and destroying all the magic left in the world, no matter the cost in lives or resources. Dali led the Seekers, the organization within the Federation devoted to this task, and he performed his job efficiently and ruthlessly. Thus, the First Seeker was a perfect target for the shadowen to possess.

As a shadowen, Rimmer Dali's most important task was to locate the Ohmsfords, the scions of Shannara, and either destroy them or bring them under his control. He has used his influence within the Federation to subtly and gradually extend his control beyond the Seekers, and Rimmer has become one of the driving forces behind the Federation's bid to annex all of the Four Lands.

Roleplaying Notes: Rimmer Dali is
fearing by all, for few truly know if they carry the spark of magic within. The common folk fear that the Seekers will appear on their doorstep someday under the pretense of arresting a user of magic, only to carry off an innocent who was somehow inconvenient to the Federation. Rimmer is an intimidating figure, even if his actual identity is unknown.

Dali rarely carries more than his armor and weapons, preferring to rely on his fellow Seekers to provide him with any other gear he might need. He also prefers to get his way by asserting the authority of his position and the presence of armed men at his side, using his shadowen magic or his own skill at arms as a last resort. If pressed, however, he will not hesitate to strike with all the power at his command, decimating his enemies with a blade or the dark powers at his fingertips.

**Dagda Mor**

**Appearance:** The Dagda Mor is a hideous creature straight out of a nightmare. Though roughly humanoid in shape, the demon lord has a large hump on his back that forces him to hunch over. His teeth are hooked, and tufts of greenish hair sprout from his torso. His forearms and legs are covered in reptilian scales, and his arms are longer than the average human's. The Dagda Mor's face sports a feline muzzle and shining black eyes. The demon lord wears a large, concealing black cloak to hide his physical features while traveling in the Four Lands. The Dagda Mor carries a large scepter with him, which is actually his staff of power.

**Background:** Trapped behind the Forbidding with the first planting of the Ellcrys along with the rest of demonkind, the Dagda Mor has been hungering for vengeance against the elves who imprisoned his kind. He sees any who stand in the way of the total annihilation of the races of the Four Lands as his enemies, and he will stop at nothing to achieve his goals.

**Roleplaying Notes:** The Dagda Mor is very intelligent, and he is not so obsessed with his goals that espionage and subtlety are beyond his grasp. He does not hesitate to use his staff of power in combat, since most of his innate magical abilities are not accessible while the Ellcrys stands, but he also doesn't hesitate to engage in hand-to-hand combat to defeat a difficult foe. Most of all, however, the Dagda Mor will stop at nothing to destroy the Ellcrys and let the demons through the Forbidding to ravage the land.

**The Warlock Lord**

**Appearance:** The Warlock Lord is an ethereal being with a gaunt and skeletal form. His eyes glow red, and he is always wearing a tattered black cloak.

**Background:** The Warlock Lord was once a human named Brona who was a member of the Druid Council. He was an intelligent and ambitious man, and he gained power quickly. Brona eventually gained power quickly. Brona eventually
got his hands on the Illdath, a powerful tome of dark magic scried by the ancient demons long before the birth of mankind. When the other Druids saw the hold the dark book had on him, they attempted to free him, but Brona had grown too powerful and he left Paranor with a number of supporters. Those supporters became skull bearers.

Convinced that he was meant to rule the Four Lands, Brona used the magic of the Illdath to unite the human kingdoms under his command and marched forth with a massive army. This was known as the First War of the Races, and Brona nearly accomplished his plans. The combined elven and dwarven armies managed to turn his forces back with the aid of the Druid Council.

Several centuries later Brona returned, now warped by the dark magic of the Illdath, along with abuse of the Druid Sleep (see the Elder Druid prestige class on page 40).

Humanity was still weak from the previous war, thus an army of rock trolls was the Warlock Lord’s implement of conquest. To make certain he would be unopposed, the Warlock Lord first sent several skull bearers and rock trolls to storm Paranor and eliminated all but four Druids. The Druid Council has never recovered from this slaughter. The archdruid Bremen managed to create the Sword of Shannara, which was wielded by the elven king Jerle Shannara, to dispatch the Warlock Lord. This was known as the Second War of the Races. Unfortunately Jerle Shannara faltered in his use of the blade, and the Warlock Lord managed to survive.

After taking five centuries to marshal his strength once more, the Warlock Lord returned one final time, sending forth armies of rock trolls and gnomes. Shea Ohmsford is believed to have finally destroyed him at Skull Mountain, wielding the Sword of Shannara.

Roleplaying Notes: The Warlock Lord is an extremely powerful individual who is both evil and mad. He has never been known to parley, show mercy, or even speak with anyone. Any DM who is planning to send their party against the Warlock Lord had best think twice, as he is a match for even a 20th-level group. Since he has no Constitution score he can use his immolate body ability at will. Nothing save the Sword of Shannara or a similar artifact can prevent him from rejuvenating.

**THE WARLOCK LORD**

Male Human Ghost, 10th-level sorcerer, 10th-level Elder Druid

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 (-)</td>
<td>12 (+1)</td>
<td>18 (+4)</td>
<td>18 (+4)</td>
<td>25 (+7)</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10/15</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Special:**
- Druid fire (1d8+6, 3 times/day);
- comprehend languages, detect magic, read magic, and tongues at will;
- +4 to saves against poison and disease; uncanny dodge (cannot be flanked); uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC); +5 competence bonus on all Knowledge skill checks; +2 competence bonus on all attacks against previously battled opponents;
- Elder Druid blade; immolate body; manifestation; corrupting gaze; frightful moan; horrific appearance; rejuvenation; turn resistance; undead; incorporeal.

**Skills:**
- Bluff +22, Concentration +23,
- Diplomacy +22, Hide +15,
- Knowledge (arcana) +27,
- Knowledge (history) +20,
- Knowledge (tactics) +19,Listen +9,
- Search +12, Sense Motive +16,
- Scry +14, Spellcraft +27, Spot +9

**Feats:**
- Combat Casting, Forge Ring, Iron Will, Maximize Spell, Quicken Spell, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus—Knowledge (arcana), Skill Focus—Knowledge (history).

**Possessions:**
- None.
Living in the Four Lands requires a quick wit and sharp sword, for death can come swiftly. Throughout the world of Shannara lurk exist deadly and dangerous monsters, remnants of the dark forces that once marched across the land, or savage predators that run wild throughout the countryside.

The World of Shannara

CREATURES of the Four Lands

by Brian Murphy with Chris Thomasson

illustrated by Dennis Cramer

Few have not heard of the skull bearers, monstrous beasts who served the Warlock Lord during the three Wars of the Races. Although many believe these dark figures no longer threaten the Four Lands, few are willing to enter Skull Mountain to prove the theory.

Mord wraiths are likewise notorious, having earned a reputation that strikes fear into the hearts of child and adult alike. Spawning powerful flames from their fingertips, the black walkers have left few to tell the tale of encountering them.

The moor cat is less evil than those fell creatures, but it can be just as deadly. The creature’s innate ability to camouflage itself makes it one of the Four Land’s best hunters. Be wary: If you can see one moor cat, another has already crept behind you.

The rock trolls of the Northland are among the mightiest warriors in Shannara, and their armies are truly to be feared. In the Wars of the Races, the trolls were an integral part of Brona’s plans, but at their heart they are not a wicked people. Their armies rarely venture out of the Northland, as they are content to live there in peace. Few are willing to risk war with these powerful beings, and fewer still have cause to seek it.

One of the most powerful races ever to stalk the Four Lands, the shadowen hide inside the bodies of others. Their magic and quick thinking has allowed them to easily hide among the other races, wreaking chaos wherever they go.

Finally, the mwellrets are creatures descended from the faeries of legend. Deadly shapeshifters, they believe first and foremost in their own superiority over the other races. Thankfully, they lack the numbers to cause any real harm to the other races, so instead they content themselves with the stray elf or dwarf who wanders too far into the Wildrun or the deep Eastland late at night.

These monstrosities are just a few of the creatures that roam through the Four Lands, but they are enough to get your campaign started in any time setting.
**SKULL BEARER**

Medium-Size Outsider (Evil)

Hit Dice: 10d8+40 (85 hp)
Initiative: +4 (Dex)
Speed: 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (good)
AC: 19 (+4 Dex, +5 natural)
Attacks: 2 claws +16 melee
Damage: Claws id6+7

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Qualities: Medium-Size Outsider (Evil)
Speed: 20 (+5 Dex, +5 natural)
Attacks: Longsword +16 melee
Damage: Longsword id8+6

The skull bearers were once elder druids who followed the rebel Brona. After their dark master underwent his transformation, he changed his followers into powerful creatures to serve as his elite forces.

A skull bearer stands roughly 6 feet tall and weighs approximately 320 pounds. They have hunched, muscular torsos, and their red eyes glow softly.

**Combat**

The fearsome skull bearers have sent more than one champion to her grave. A skull bearer hunts its quarry methodically, observing its prey magically before attacking.

Skull bearers usually attempt to ambush a party, trapping them with a green wall of flame if the chance presents itself. Skull bearers disdain using weapons, preferring to use their claws and spells in tandem. Spellcasting opponents are usually the first targets of the skull bearer’s eye rays.

**Eye Rays (Su):** As a standard action, a skull bearer can fire rays from its eyes at a single target. This attack follows the rules for rays covered under Aiming a Spell in Chapter 10: Magic of the Player’s Handbook. This attack has a range of 100 feet and does 6d6 points of damage.

**Wounding (Su):** Treat skull bearer claws as if they had the weapon special ability wounding described in Chapter 8: Magic Items of the Dungeon Master’s Guide.

**Frightful Presence (Su):** This ability takes effect automatically when the creature attacks, charges, or flies overhead. It affects only opponents with fewer Hit Dice or levels than the creature has, and only those within 30 feet. The affected creature must make a Will save (DC 18) or become shaken. Success indicates that the target is immune to the creature’s frightful presence for one day.

**Spells (Sp):** Skull bearers cast spells as 10th-level sorcerers (DC 13 + spell level).

**Fast Healing (Ex):** The creature regains hit points at a rate of 6 per round so long as it has 1. Fast healing does not restore hit points lost from starvation, thirst, or suffocation, and it does not allow a creature to regrow or reattach lost body parts.

**Immunities (Ex):** Skull bearers are immune to cold and electricity.

**Skull Pendant (Su):** Every skull bearers wear a pendant that appears to be a silver skull hanging on a thin silver chain. This pendant functions as an amulet of proof against detection and location and as a necklace of adaptation. A skull pendant disintegrates upon separation from its owner or its owner’s death.

**Skills:** Skull bearers receive a +4 racial bonus to Hide, Intimidate, Listen, Move Silently, and Spot checks.

**Outsider Traits:** Darkvision 60 ft.; cannot be raised or resurrected (though a wish or miracle spell can restore life).

**Skull Bearers Characters:** Skull bearers favor the sorcerer class.

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**MORD WRAITH**

Medium-Size Outsider (Evil)

Hit Dice: 12d8+36 (90 hp)
Initiative: +9 (+5 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)
Speed: 40 ft.
AC: 20 (+5 Dex, +5 natural)
Attacks: Longsword +16 melee
Damage: Longsword id8+6

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Qualities: Call Fire +17 ranged touch, frightful presence, spell-like abilities
Special Qualities: Blindsight 60 ft., damage reduction 25/3, fast healing 5, immunities, outsider traits, SR 22

Saves: Fort +11, Ref +15, Will +14
Abilities: Str 18, Dex 21, Con 16,

Skills: Bluff +11, Concentration +14, Diplomacy +7, Gather Information +9, Hide +8, Intimidate +11, Knowledge (arcana) +11, Knowledge (nature) +11, Listen +11, Move Silently +8, Read Lips +8, Scry +8, Search +9, Sense Motive +10, Spellcraft +13, Spot +11, Use Magic Device +10, Improved Critical (claw), Power Attack, Weapon Focus (claw)

Feats: Climate/Terrain: Any land or underground

Organization: Solitary, pair, or troop (3-12)

Challenge Rating: 12

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Always lawful evil

Advancement: By character class
Changed by the same dark magic that warped Brøna, the Mord Wraiths now obey the will of their master, the unholy tome known as the Ildatch.

A mord wraith stands about 5 and a half feet tall and weighs approximately 150 pounds. They have wiry frames, and thin, dark gray cloaks hide all but their hands.

**Combat**

In combat, mord wraiths strike quickly and attempt to cripple a party's defenses. Mord wraiths will usually begin a battle by unleashing a blast of green fire at the most physically impressive opponent, as they have little to fear from most spells. Should a mord wraith be reduced to less than 25% of its hit points, it usually uses its fire storm ability to cover its retreat. Mord wraiths will withdraw and gather reinforcements if necessary.

**Spell-like Abilities (Sp):** At will—greater magic weapon, fire shield, fire trap, flame blade, flaming sphere, produce flame, wall of fire; 1/day—fire storm, flame strike. These spells' fire effects are colored green. They function as if cast by a 12th-level sorcerer (save DC 14 + spell level).

**Frightful Presence (Su):** This ability takes effect automatically when the creature is seen. It affects only opponents with fewer hit dice or levels than the creature has and only those within 50 feet. The affected creature must make a successful Will save (DC 20) or become shaken. Success indicates that the target is immune to the creature's frightful presence for one day.

**Immunities (Ex):** Mord wraiths are immune to poison, electricity, and fire.

**Blindsight (Ex):** The creature maneuvers and fights as well as a sighted creature by using sound, scent, and vibration. Invisibility and darkness are irrelevant, although the creature still can't discern ethereal beings. The creature usually does not need to make Spot or Listen checks to notice creatures within range of its blindsight ability. The blindsight has a range of 60 feet.

**Fast Healing (Ex):** The creature regains hit points at a rate of 5 per round so long as it has 1. Fast healing does not restore hit points lost from starvation, thirst, or suffocation, and it does not allow a creature to regrow or reattach lost body parts.

**Outsider Traits:** Mord wraiths cannot be raised or resurrected (though a wish or miracle spell can restore life).

**Mord Wraith Characters:** Mord wraiths favor the sorcerer class.

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**MOOR CAT**

Large Magical Beast

**Hit Dice:** 8d10+24 (68 hp)

**Initiative:** +4 (+4 Dex)

**Speed:** 50 ft.

**AC:** 16 (-1 size, +4 Dex, +3 natural)

**Attacks:** 2 claws +15 melee, bite +9 melee

**Damage:** Claws id8+7, bite id10+3

**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 10 ft./5 ft.

**Special Attacks:** Improved grab, pounce, rake id8+3

**Special Qualities:** Blend, low-light vision, scent

**Saves:** Fort +9, Ref +10, Will +2

**Abilities:** Str 24, Dex 19, Con 17, Int 6, Wis 11, Cha 12

**Skills:** Hide +12, Jump +14, Move Silently +16, Wilderness Lore +5

**Feats:** Track, Weapon Focus (claw)

**Climate/Terrain:** Temperate forest, hill, plains, and marsh

**Organization:** Solitary, Pair, or Pride (3-12 moor cats)

**Challenge Rating:** 8

**Treasure:** None

**Alignment:** Always neutral

**Advancement:** 9 to 16 HD (Large); 17 to 24 (Huge)

Unmatched hunters in the wild, moor cats stalk their prey with ease. A pride of these mighty creatures can easily dominate an entire forest.

Moor cats are roughly 8 feet long, and weigh over 500 pounds. Their fur is striped black and green, allowing them to easily blend in with their forest homes.

An enigmatic old hermit named Cogline is the only person known to have trained these beasts. Even so, Cogline has said on more than one occasion that his cats only obey when they want to.

**Combat**

Moor cats prefer to hunt in pairs, following their prey by scent. The pair waits until their prey has gone to sleep before making their presence known. They then attack, killing the prey and dragging the body back to their pride's territory.
Moor cats will retreat from creatures that prove to be too powerful for them to handle, but they will fight to the death defending their mates or their young.

Pounce (Ex): If a moor cat leaps on a foe during the first round of combat, it can make a full attack action even if it has already taken a move action. If it hits, it can rake.

Improved Grab (Ex): If the creature hits with its bite attack, it can rake.

Rake (Ex): A moor cat can make rake attacks (+15 melee) against a held creature with its hind legs for 1d8+3 points of damage each.

Blend (Sp): Moor cats are difficult to see and have a supernatural ability to blur their outlines. The works exactly like the spell *blur* as though cast by a 9th-level sorcerer, and it is always active. This effect can be dispelled, but the moor cat can reactivate it as a free action.

**Low-Light Vision:** The creature can see twice as far a human in starlight, moonlight, torchlight, and similar low-light conditions.

**Scent (Ex):** The creature can detect approaching enemies, sniff out hidden foes, and track by sense of smell.

**Skills:** Moor cats receive a +6 racial bonus to Hide, Jump, and Move Silently checks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rock Troll</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Large Giant</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Hit Dice:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Initiative:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Speed:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>AC:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Attacks:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Damage:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Special Qualities:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Face/Reach:</strong></td>
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The rock trolls call the mountainous Northlands their home. They are the greatest warriors in the Four Lands, and when their armies march, the ground trembles beneath their feet.

Rock trolls are typically 8 feet tall and weigh approximately 450 pounds. They have gray skin and are considered to be rather ugly by the other races. Rock trolls often wear colorful cloaks; each color representing a different town.

**Combat**

Rock trolls are skilled combatants, using their intimidating demeanor to demoralize their opponents before wading into battle to crush them.

Rock trolls are skilled soldiers who work together in seamless, deadly combat units. When in battle, they work in twos, each pair attempting to flank an enemy. This tactic has proved devastating to the enemies of the rock trolls time and time again.

**Rock Troll Society**

Rock troll society is rather simple: A noble family rules each town. These towns are independent and have only been united by the magical might of the Warlock Lord and his skull bearer minions. The rock troll towns typically work together and often send aid to a town under attack. It is said that prior to the Second War of the Races the trolls were a united kingdom. Sadly, the Warlock Lord destroyed any semblance of a united government when he subjugated these people.

Rock trolls are concerned first and foremost with honor and fair combat; they find subterfuge and trickery distasteful. The greatest honor a rock troll can ever aspire to is a medal called the Black Irix. The bearer of a Black Irix is known to have proved his loyalty to his family and race above all else. Such a mighty warrior's word is never questioned, and he commands...
respect from even the mightiest generals and venerated elders. Few rock trolls ever receive this honor; perhaps only two or three in an entire generation will be awarded the Black Irix.

**Rock Troll Characters**

A rock troll's favored class is fighter; rock troll leaders tend to be fighters or fighter/ cleric. Rock troll clerics do not worship a god, but they do honor a code of conduct. This path, in theory, is the way to earning the Black Irix.

**SHADOAVEN**

Medium-Size Aberration (Incorporeal)

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<tr>
<th>Hit Dice:</th>
<th>4d8+0 (18 hp)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Initiative:</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Speed:</td>
<td>Fly 30 ft. (perfect)</td>
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<tr>
<td>AC:</td>
<td>13 (+3 Dex)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attacks:</td>
<td>Incorporeal touch +6 melee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Damage:</td>
<td>Incorporeal touch id6 damage and 1 point of temporary Strength</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face/Reach:</td>
<td>5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Attacks:</td>
<td>Gaze, hiss, spells, Strength damage 1, malevolence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Qualities:</td>
<td>Damage reduction 20/+2, darkvision 60 ft., fast healing 5, incorporeal subtype,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saves:</td>
<td>Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +6</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Abilities:**
- **Str** +8, **Con** 11, **Int** 19, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 21
- **Bluff** +9, **Concentration** +7, **Diplomacy** +9, **Hide** +6, **Intimidate** +9, **Knowledge** (arcana) +7, **Listen** +5, **Scry** +7, **Search** +7, **Spellcraft** +11, **Spot** +5
- **Great Fortitude**, **Silent Spell**, **Still Spell**, **Weapon Focus** (touch)

**Spells:** A shadowen casts spells as a 10th-level sorcerer.

- **Hiss (Sp):** As a full-round action, a shadowen can hiss. All opponents within 30 ft. must make a Will save (DC 17) or be subjected to a hold person spell as though cast by a 10th-level sorcerer. Note that in unusual conditions, a DM might allow opponents to make a Listen check. If they fail that check, they do not have to save to avoid the attack.

- **Strength Damage (Su):** A successful melee attack causes 1 point of temporary Strength damage, or twice that on a critical hit.

- **Malevolence (Su):** Once per round, a shadowen can merge its body with a corporeal creature. This ability is similar to magic jar as cast by a 10th-level sorcerer, except that it does not require a receptacle. If the attack succeeds, the shadowen's body vanishes into the opponent's body. The target can resist the attack with a successful Will save (DC 20). A creature that successfully saves is immune to that shadowen's malevolence for one day.

- **Energy Drain (Su):** As a standard action, the shadowen can cause a living creature that it controls with its malevolence ability to suffer two negative levels.

- **Fast Healing (Ex):** The creature regains hit points at a rate of 5 per...
round so long as it has 1. Fast healing does not restore hit points lost from starvation, thirst, or suffocation, and it does not allow a creature to regrow or reattach lost body parts.

Incorporeal Subtype: Can be harmed only by other incorporeal creatures, +1 or better magic weapons, spells, spell-like abilities, or supernatural abilities; immune to all nonmagical attack forms; 50% chance to ignore any damage from a corporeal source (except for force effects, such as magic missiles, and attacks made with ghost touch weapons); can pass through solid objects (but not force effects) at will; attacks ignore natural armor, armor, and shields (though deflection bonuses and force effects work normally); moves silently (cannot be heard with Listen checks unless desired).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ability</th>
<th>Str 16, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 12</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skills</td>
<td>Climb +6, Hide +4, Listen +2, Move Silently +4, Swim +6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feats</td>
<td>Multiattack</td>
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<tr>
<td>Climate/Terrain</td>
<td>Temperate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Gang (2-3), band (6-10 plus 1 leader of 3rd-6th level), or tribe (30-60 plus 2 lieutenants of 3rd-6th level and 1 leader of 4th-10th level)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenge Rating</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Treasure</td>
<td>50% coins; 50% goods; 50% items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alignment</td>
<td>Always chaotic evil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advancement</td>
<td>3 to 4 HD (Large); 5-6 HD (Huge)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to legend, Mwellrets are sadistic shapeshifters that originally came from the deep Eastland. However, as with many of their shapeshifting brethren, time has not been kind to this race, and only small groups of the creatures still exist in isolated communities in the Eastland and Westland.

Mwellrets are gray, scaly, lizardlike humanoids in their natural form. They have flat, lidless eyes, sharp teeth and claws, and they typically clothe themselves in garb similar to that worn by the other civilized races of the Four Lands. When venturing outside their homelands, Mwellrets almost always cloak themselves in heavy, black robes to disguise their reptilian features.

Mwellrets rarely make good mercenaries or bodyguards, as they're incredibly arrogant. Their feelings of superiority make them very unlikely to accept orders from a non-Mwellret, unless that individual has clearly demonstrated power that greatly exceeds that of themselves. Only strong commanders who demonstrate their power repeatedly and with purpose can sometimes force a group of the creatures to accept their leadership.

Combat
Mwellrets enjoy attacking from the shadows or with the benefit of their alter self power. They typically begin combat by attempting to render prey helpless with their hypnotic hiss before wading in with their weapons, both natural and otherwise.

Due to their extraordinary superiority complexes, Mwellrets nearly always avoid using their shapechanging power, choosing instead to appear in their true reptilian form, especially in a fight. Nothing is more satisfying to a mwellret than ripping out the throat of a lesser creature (which includes any creature that isn't a mwellret) with its teeth and claws.

**Alter Self (Sp):** Mwellrets can assume the shape of any Small or Medium-size creature. This works like alter self as cast by a 4th-level sorcerer. It can assume a new form or return to its own as a standard action.

**Hypnotic Hiss (Sp):** A mwoltret's hiss can have a hypnotic effect on its foes. Opponents within 20 feet of a mwellret using this ability must make a Will save (DC 12) or be hypnotized as the hypnosis spell cast by a 3rd-level sorcerer.
The World of Shannara

RELICS & ARTIFACTS

The Four Lands are filled with ancient magic, the most powerful of which is older than recorded history. Few can create items like those of old, and those who find such ancient relics are lucky indeed. In ancient history, the faerie creatures (including the elves) created artifacts of great power. Items such as the elfstones are examples of their handiwork. In more recent history, the Druid Council at Paranor was fairly well versed in the construction of magic devices, such as the Sword of Shannara or the Sword of Leah.

Dungeon Masters: Think long and hard before introducing any artifact into your campaign; these seven legendary items might be unbalancing.

MAJOR ARTIFACTS of SHANNARA

The Sword of Shannara

During the Second War of the Races, the Elder Druid Bremen forged the Sword of Shannara for the sole purpose of slaying Brona, the Warlock Lord. The weapon was then bestowed to Jerle Shannara, who had recently ascended to the elven throne. During the final battle, Brona was struck down and peace was restored to the Four Lands as the combined forces of the elves and dwarves scattered the remaining troll armies. After the war, the sword was entrusted to Bremen, and it lay untouched for centuries in the halls of Paranor before being needed again. It now lies in a vault in the city of Tyrsis.

The Sword of Shannara is a +3 keen ghost touch bastard sword that doesn’t appear to be the least bit magical under normal circumstances. In fact, the blade has sometimes been disguised with cheap gilt to make it appear less a weapon of legendary power and more a rejected piece of decorative weaponry. When its truth power is activated, however, it is covered in a golden glow that acts as a daylight spell.

The primary purpose of the Sword is to uncover deception and reveal truth. Thus, all shapeshifters or polymorphed creatures touched by the blade are forced to resume their normal form (natural lycanthropes are forced into their hybrid forms), and they cannot alter their shape again for 1 hour. As long as the blade is drawn, the wielder can discern lies at will, and is immune to all glamers, patterns, and phantasms. The wielder gains a +10 morale bonus to saves against Illusion (shadow) spells, and is immune to other spells that use lies as their foundation. For example, the wielder is immune to all charm spells, as they instill the target with a false sense of trust, but he would still be susceptible to dominate spells, as they simply seize control of the target’s body. The Sword can also dispel any figment automatically by touching it.

The most important function of the Sword of Shannara is to reveal the truth of both the wielder and the target. Undead creatures touched by the sword must make a Will save (DC 30). Undead that fail the save are permanently destroyed. If the wielder of the Sword of Shannara is unaware of this function of sword and attempts to use it as a mere magic blade instead of an implement of truth, the save DC of this ability is lowered to 20.

Drawbacks: The Sword of Shannara is an object of truth, and only someone who has accepted the truth about himself can wield it properly. When drawn, the wielder must immediately make a
Will save (DC 25). If the wielder fails the saving throw, he is stunned for 1 round. Success indicates that he has accepted the truth of himself and can wield the sword normally. The character must continue to make a saving throw each round for each point of Wisdom he has. Should he fail every saving throw, the truth has proven too difficult to bear, and the wielder goes temporarily insane and acts as though confused. Each day, the former wielder can make another Will save (DC 25) to regain his sanity. This unfortunate can never again use the Sword of Shannara to its fullest potential. In such a person's hands, the sword acts only as a masterwork bastard sword.

**The Black Elfstone**

This smooth, warm stone appears to be made of onyx. The Black Elfstone's recorded history dates back as far as the Second War of the Races, when it was first discovered by Tay Trefenwyd, a Druid who followed Bremen. After the war, the Black Elfstone disappeared until it was found again by Walker Boh almost nine hundred years later and used to bring Paran back to the land of the living. Unlike the Blue Elfstones, few scholars have ever sought to discover this dangerous artifact, and they strongly advise against anyone seeking the item.

The Black Elfstone can be used by any arcane spellcaster (who can cast at least 1st-level arcane spells), regardless of race. For some reason, elven blood is not a requirement, for the druid Allannon is known to have used it once, many ages ago. However, history has never recorded an instance when someone used the Black Elfstone without some knowledge of the arcane.

The Black Elfstone was created to destroy and devour all forms of magic. It draws its wielder to supernatural, detecting magic in a one-mile radius as the spell. It can also detect creatures of magical or faerie origin within the same area. The stone informs the user whether the magic detected is an item, creature, or effect, and the distance and direction toward the detected magical presences.

The Black Elfstone protects its owner against hostile magic. As long as the Black Elfstone is held in hand, the user is granted SR 35. Should an enemy spellcaster's level check fail by more than ten, the spell is reflected back at the caster.

The Black Elfstone's ability to devour other magic is truly awesome. The user can attempt to attack a magical creature or item once per round. The attack takes the form of ray, so the user must make a ranged touch attack to successfully strike the target. The effect of the attack is dependent upon what type of target is struck. Any creature with magical, supernatural, or spell-like abilities must make a Fortitude save (DC 30). If the saving throw fails, the target loses all spellcasting, supernatural, and spell-like abilities for one day and suffers the effects of an
devour a wand of magic missiles (3rd level) with 5 charges remaining, she could cast magic missile five times at the same caster level as that of the wand. Magic armor and weapons give their enhancement bonuses to the user's natural attacks and AC; as always, only the highest enhancement bonus is used. Permanent abilities drained in this fashion are permanently added to the Black Elfstone's user; spell effects expire after their normal duration.

**Drawbacks:** The Black Elfstone is possibly the most powerful artifact within the Four Lands, and someone who uses it in pursuit of personal power would be a force to be reckoned with, were it not for the horrendous price of each use. Although the Black Elfstone devours magic, it also corrupts the user. Each creature devoured becomes a part of whoever holds the elfstone. Thus, using it to destroy a pit fiend would grant the user incredible power, but would also bring the pit fiend's evil into the user's soul. Each time the Elfstone is used, the user must make a successful Will saving throw (DC 20). Should the saving throw fail, the strain on the wielder's mind has proven to be too much for her and she goes permanently insane per the insanity spell cast by a 20th-level spellcaster.

**The Mirrorshroud**

The Mirrorshroud is a powerful cloak woven from strands of pure darkness. The cloak is so dark, in fact, that it grants a +5 circumstance bonus on all Hide checks. Rimmer Dali, the most powerful shadowen, crafted this cloak. Little is known of the cloak's history, although Coil Ohmsford used it to escape the shadowen fortress of Southwatch while he was imprisoned there. It is believed that the Sword of Shannara destroyed the Mirrorshroud, but that has never been confirmed.

The Mirrorshroud's primary purpose was to allow shadowen to get close to a target without being detected. Thus, the Mirrorshroud automatically cloaks the wearer in an illusion (glamer), making him appear to all who view him as a trusted companion. Should more than one person be encountered, the wearer selects a target. He appears as a trusted companion of that individual. When the wearer and a target first meet, the target must make a successful Will save (DC 30) to realize the wearer is not his friend. Creatures immune to illusion are immune to this ability of the Mirrorshroud, and spells such as true seeing can penetrate the disguise.

A failed save indicates that the wearer of the Mirrorshroud is virtually indistinguishable from the target's friend, as the Mirrorshroud alters his appearance, voice, mannerisms, and so on. The cloak gives its wearer insight into how to respond verbally to anyone encountered by giving him a limited form of mind-reading. Essentially, the wearer can glean enough information from someone's mind to vaguely answer any questions intended to verify the wearer's identity.

**Drawbacks:** The Mirrorshroud was constructed with powerful shadowen magic; it was made to be worn by shadowen. Any non-shadowen who wears the Mirrorshroud takes the risk that he might, eventually, become one. Each day, a non-shadowen wearer must make a Will save (DC 20). Should the save fail once, the wearer becomes obsessed with the cloak, refusing to remove it at any time. A second failure means that the wearer begins to change, gaining all the abilities of a shadowen (see The Bestiary). The wearer's alignment also changes to lawful evil. There is little that can be done at this point to save the wearer other than to destroy the Mirrorshroud. Should the wearer fail the save a third time, even the destruction of the Mirrorshroud cannot save him.

**energy drain** spell as if cast by a 20th-level wizard. A successful save indicates the creature or object takes only 10d10 points of damage, half of which is fire damage, the other half of which is negative energy damage. If the target is a non-magical item or creature, it suffers the effects of the energy drain power on a failed save, and only the damage on a successful save.

The Black Elfstone does not simply destroy that which is magical, it steals magic and recycles it. The user of the Black Elfstone gains all the supernatural and spell-like abilities of any creature drained. Likewise the user gains the ability to simulate the effects of any magic item devoured. For example, should someone use the Black Elfstone to
THE SWORD OF LEAH (Minor Artifact)

The Sword of Leah was crafted to aid Rone Leah in protecting Brin Ohmsford as the pair traveled in the company of Allannon. The sword was nothing more than a non-magical relic carried by the prince of Leah until its blade was dipped in the swirling waters of the deadly Hadeshorn and then purified by druid fire (see the Elder Druid prestige class on page 40). Since that day, the blade has carried a powerful enchantment, summoning white-hot flames to strike down those monsters that dare stand against its wielder.

The Sword of Leah is a +4 ghost touch, wounding greatsword of flaming burst,bane vs. evil outsiders. Three times per day, the wielder can invoke fire shield as an 18th-level spellcaster. The wielder of the Sword of Leah must be aware of the nature of the weapon to gain access to those abilities. In the hands of someone ignorant of the sword's capabilities, it is merely a masterwork greatsword. In addition, the weapon only exhibits its magical nature at the will of its wielder. That is, if the wielder doesn’t wish to use the magic of the sword, he can simply wield it as a masterwork greatsword.

However, if he has knowledge of the power of the sword and wishes to use its full potential, he can do so at will. It is unlikely, but possible, that another such sword could be forged. Such a task would require an individual capable of summoning the druid fire or something quite similar.

Drawbacks: Using the Sword of Leah is highly addictive. Each time its powers are called upon, the wielder must make a Will save (DC 16) or be unable to release its magic. The wielder then becomes unwilling to put down or even sheathe the sword, refusing to follow a course that doesn’t involve immediate combat, and will attack anyone who tries to take the weapon from him by force. The wielder will not eat, drink, or sleep, and often stops fighting only if he goes unconscious from exhaustion or is slain.

Those the wielder still perceives as allies can attempt to talk the wielder down from this manic behavior, giving him another Will save with a +4 circumstance bonus each time a rational suggestion is made as to why the wielder would benefit from putting up the blade (DM’s discretion). In this state, the wielder also attacks recklessly, gaining a +2 bonus to all attacks, but suffering a -2 penalty to AC.

Caster Level: 18th; Weight: 15 lb.

The Stiehl

The Stiehl is one of the most lethal assassin’s tools ever made. The actual creator of the blade is unknown, but it is assumed that it was crafted for a professional killer. The blade is best known as the weapon of the formidable Pe Ell, an assassin who was often found in the employ of Rimmer Dall. Pe Ell found the Stiehl in a cavern when he was a young man. With the Stiehl, Pe Ell went on to become one of the most successful assassins in the Four Lands.

The Stiehl is a +4 keen dagger of life stealing. When it deals a critical hit, it bestows a negative level on its victim. The wielder of the Stiehl gains id6 temporary hit points each time a negative level is bestowed on another. These temporary hit points last for 24 hours. The blade glows silver and sheds light as the spell, at will. The wielder can also invoke cat’s grace three times per day as a 3rd-level caster. Since the Stiehl was designed to aid assassins in their craft, the weapon grants a +5 competence bonus to both Hide and Move Silently checks. The Stiehl also adds +2 to the save DC of an assassin’s death attack ability.

The Stiehl’s most powerful ability is its bane ability. This ability functions just as listed in the Dungeon Master’s Guide, with one exception. Each morning, the wielder can choose which creature type the bane ability affects. For the next 24 hours, the Stiehl grants an additional +2 bonus to attacks against that creature type and deals +2d6 points of bonus damage.

Drawbacks: The Stiehl is an evil intelligent weapon (CE, Int 15, Wis 11, Cha 18) that can communicate empathically with its wielder. However, it does not radiate evil to any sort of detection spell (detect evil, true seeing, and so on). This effect acts as a nondetection spell cast by a 20th-level spellcaster.

The Stiehl’s corrupting influence is insidious. Above all else, the Stiehl hungers for more victims and more blood. Each time the wielder slays a creature with the Stiehl, he runs the risk of losing himself and becoming simply an extension of the Stiehl’s dark desires. If an opponent is slain by the Stiehl, the wielder must make a Will save (DC 20). Success indicates the wielder feels nothing more than an immense satisfaction over the kill, which seems to radiate from the blade. Characters of good alignment will immediately realize the artifact as a weapon of evil. Those who fail their saving throw become a slave to the Stiehl’s will, and they are compelled to immediately begin looking for another victim to sate the Stiehl’s bloodlust (treat this as if the wielder had fallen victim to a dominate monster spell cast by an 18th-level caster). This effect lasts as long as the wielder carries the Stiehl, or for an hour after the weapon is (forcibly) removed from the wielder’s possession. Thus, most wielders of the Stiehl eventually meet a bloody end as the people they prey upon take notice and band together to hunt the maniac down. Wielders of the Stiehl who the blade has recognized as killers already (typically those of evil alignment who do not hesitate to kill on a whim) are not compelled, even if they fail their Will save. The Stiehl is content to let the wielder choose the time and place for the next kill, knowing that it won’t be far away.
rianne Ohmsford was six years old on the last day of her childhood. She was small for her age and lacked unusual strength of body or extraordinary life experience and was not therefore particularly well prepared for growing up all at once. She had lived the whole of her life on the eastern fringes of the Rabben Plains, a sheltered child in a sheltered home, the eldest of two born to Araden and Bjornlief Ohmsford, he a scribe and teacher, she a housewife. People came and went from their home as if it were an inn, students of her father, clients drawing on the benefit of his skills, travelers from all over the Four Lands. But she herself had never been anywhere and was only just beginning to understand how much of the world she knew nothing about when everything she did know was taken from her.
It was her gift of magic and her understanding of what they expected of her and to hide from them what they did not.

So on the last day of her childhood she had already come to terms with having use of the magic. She had constructed defenses to its demands and subterfuges to her parents’ refusals to let her fully test its limits. Wrapped in the armor of her strong-minded determination and stubborn insistence, she had built a fortress in which she wielded the wishsong with a sense of impunity. Her child’s world was already more complex and devious than that of many adults, and she was learning the importance of never giving away everything of who and what she was. It was her gift of magic and her understanding of its workings that saved her.

At the same time, and through no fault of her own, it was what doomed her parents and younger brother.

She knew there was something wrong with her child’s world some weeks before that last day. It manifested itself in small ways, things that her parents and others could not readily detect. There were oddities in the air—smells and tastes and sounds that whispered of a hidden presence and dark emotions. She caught glimpses of shadows on the vibrations of her voice that returned to her when she used the magic of her song. She felt changes in heat and cold that came only when she was threatened, except that always before she could trace their source and this time she could not. Once or twice, she sensed the closeness of dark-cloaked forms, perhaps the shape-shifters she had found out on several occasions before, always hidden and out of reach, but there nevertheless.

She said nothing to her parents of these things because she had no solid evidence of them and only suspicion on which to buttress her complaints. Even so, she kept close watch. Her home was at the edge of a grove of maple trees and looked out across the flat, green threshold of the Rabb. All the way to the foothills of the Dragon's Teeth. While nothing could approach out of the west without being visible from a long way off, forests and hills shielded the other three quadrants. She scouted them from time to time, a precaution undertaken to give her a sense of security. But whatever watched was careful, and she never found it out. It hid from her, avoided her, moved away when she approached, and always returned. She could feel its eyes on her even as she looked for it. It was clever and skilled; it was accustomed to staying hidden when others would find it out.

She should have been afraid, but she had not been raised with fear and had no reason to appreciate its uses. For her, fear was an annoyance she sought to banish and did not heed. She asked her father finally if there was anyone who would wish to hurt her, or him, or her mother or brother, but he only smiled and said they had nothing anyone would want that would provide reason for harm. He said it in a calm, assured way, a teacher imparting knowledge to a student, and she did not believe he could be wrong.

When the black-cloaked figures finally came, they did so just before dawn, when the light was so pale and thin that it barely etched the edges of the shadows. They killed the dog, old Bark, when he wandered out for a look, an act that demonstrated unmistakably the nature of their dark intent.
She was awake by then, alerted by some inner voice tied to her magic, hurrying through the rooms of her home on cat's paws, searching for the danger that was already at the door. Her family was alone that morning, all of the travelers either come and gone or still on their way, and there was no one to stand with them in the face of their peril.

Grianne never hesitated when she caught sight of the shadowy forms sliding past the windows. She sensed the presence of danger all around, a circle of iron blades closing with inexorable purpose. She yelled for her father and ran back to her bedroom, where her brother lay sleeping. She snatched him up without a word, hugging him to her. Soft and warm, he was barely two years old. She carried him from the room and down into the earthen cellar where perishable foodstuffs were kept. Above, her parents sought to cover her flight. The sounds of breaking glass and splintering wood erupted, and she could hear her father's angry shouts and oaths. He was a brave man, and he would stand and fight. But it would not be enough; she sensed that much already. She released a catch and pulled back the shelving section that hid the entrance to the cramped storm shelter they had never used. She placed her sleeping brother on a pallet inside. She stared down at him for a moment, at his tiny face and balled fists, at his sleeping form, hearing the shouts and oaths overhead turn to screams of pain and anguish, aware of tears flooding her eyes.

Black smoke was seeping through the floorboards when she slipped from the shelter and sealed the entry behind her. She heard the crackle of flames consuming wood. Her parents gone, the intruders would come for her, but she would be quicker and more clever than they expected. She would escape them, and once she was safely away, outside in the pale dawn light, she would run the five miles to the next closest home and return with help for her brother.

She heard the black-cloaked forms searching for her as she hurried along a short passageway to a cellar door that led directly outside. Outside, the door was concealed by bushes and seldom used; it was not likely they would think to cover her flight. The sounds of breaking glass and splintering wood erupted, and she could hear her father's angry shouts and oaths. He was a brave man, and he would stand and fight. But it would not be enough; she sensed that much already. She released a catch and pulled back the shelving section that hid the entrance to the cramped storm shelter they had never used. She placed her sleeping brother on a pallet inside. She stared down at him for a moment, at his tiny face and balled fists, at his sleeping form, hearing the shouts and oaths overhead turn to screams of pain and anguish, aware of tears flooding her eyes.

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She heard the black-cloaked forms searching for her as she hurried along a short passageway to a cellar door that led directly outside. Outside, the door was concealed by bushes and seldom used; it was not likely they would think to find her there. If they did, they would be sorry. She already knew the sort of damage the wishsong could cause. She was a child, but she was not helpless. She blinked away her tears and set her jaw. They would find that out one day. They would find that out when she hurt them the same way they had hurt her. Then she was through the door and outside in the brightening dawn light, crouched in the bushes. Smoke swirled about her in dark clouds, and she felt the heat of the fire as it climbed the walls of her home. Everything was being taken from her, she thought in despair. Everything that mattered.

A sudden movement to one side drew her attention. When she turned to look, a hand wrapped in a foul-smelling cloth closed over her face and sent her spiraling downward into blackness.
black beard, eyes so piercing they stripped you bare, dark brow creased with frown lines. She saw him, knew him for his enemy, and felt a rage of such intensity she thought she might burn from the inside out.

Then she was crying, thinking of her parents and her brother, of her home and her lost world. The man across from her drew her gently into his arms and held her close. "You cannot go back," he told her. "They will be searching for you. They will never give up while they think you are alive."

She nodded into his shoulder. "I hate them," she said in a thin, sharp wail.

"Yes, I know," he whispered. "You are right to hate them." His rough, guttural voice tightened. "But listen to me, little one. I am the Morgawr. I am your father and mother now. I am your family. I will help you to find a way to gain revenge for what has been taken from you. I will teach you to ward yourself against everything that might hurt you. I will teach you to be strong."

He whisked her away, lifting her as if she weighed nothing, and carried her deeper into the woods to where a giant bird waited. He called the bird a Shrike, and she flew on its back and carried her deeper into the woods to where a giant bird might burn from the inside out.

A Druid had such power, he told her. The Druid Walker in pitch or tone could alter health to sickness and life to death. She had made it so much a part of her that its use seemed to define, but was unmistakably there. He could be Bek. But is it possible? She tried to make sense of the idea, to find a way to address it, to form words to speak in response. But everything she thought to say or do was jumbled and incoherent, refusing to be organized in a useful way. Everything froze as if chained and locked, leaving her so frustrated with her inability to act that she could barely keep herself from screaming.

"No!" she shouted finally. A single word, spoken like an oath offered up against demon spawn, it escaped her lips when nothing else dared.

"Grianne," he said, more softly now. She saw the mop of dark brown hair and the startling blue eyes, so like her own, so familiar to her. He had her build and he kept her safe. He told her more of the Druid Walker, of his scheming and his hunger for power; of his long-sought goal of dominance over all the Races in all the lands. He showed her images of the Druid and his black-cloaked servants, and he kept her anger fired and alive within her child's breast.

"Never forget what he has stolen from you," he would repeat. "Never forget what you are owed for his betrayal!"

After a time he began to teach her to use the wishsong as a weapon against which no one could stand—not once she had mastered it and brought it under her control, not once she had made it so much a part of her that its use seemed second nature. He taught her that even a slight change in pitch or tone could alter health to sickness and life to death. A Druid had such power, he told her. The Druid Walker in particular. She must learn to be a match for him. She must learn to use her magic to overcome his.

After a while she thought no longer of her parents and her brother, whom she knew to be dead and lost to her forever; they were no more than bones buried in the earth, a part of a past forever lost, of a childhood erased in a single day. She gave herself over to her new life and to her mentor, her teacher, and her friend. The Morgawr was all those while she grew through adolescence, all those and much more. He was the shaper of her thinking and the navigator of her life. He was the inspiration for her magic's purpose and the keeper of her dreams of righting the wrongs she had suffered.

He called her his little Ilse Witch, and she took the name for her own. She buried her given name with her past, and she never used it again.

Her memories of the past, already faded and tattered, fell away in an instant's time as she stood in a woodland clearing a thousand miles from her lost home and confronted the boy who claimed he was her brother.

"Grianne, it's Bek," he insisted. "Don't you remember?"

She remembered everything, of course, although no longer as clearly and sharply, no longer as painfully. She remembered, but she refused to believe that her memories could be brought to life with such painful clarity after so many years. She hadn't heard her name spoken in all that time, hadn't spoken it herself, had barely even thought of it. She was the Ilse Witch, and that name defined who and what she was, and not the other. The other was for when she had achieved her revenge over the Druid, for when she had gained sufficient recognition and power that when it was spoken next, it would never again be forgotten by anyone. But here was this slip of a boy speaking it now, daring to suggest that he had a right to do so. She stared at him in disbelief and smoldering anger. Could he really be her brother? Could he be Bek, alive in spite of what she had believed for so long? Was it possible? She tried to make sense of the idea, to find a way to address it, to form words to speak in response. But everything she thought to say or do was jumbled and incoherent, refusing to be organized in a useful way. Everything froze as if chained and locked, leaving her so frustrated with her inability to act that she could barely keep herself from screaming.

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"Grianne," he said, more softly now. She saw the mop of dark brown hair and the startling blue eyes, so like her own, so familiar to her. He had her build and looks. He had something else, as well, something she had yet to define, but was unmistakably there. He could be Bek. But how? How could he be Bek?

"Bek is dead," she hissed at him, her slender body rigid within the dark robes.

On the ground to one side, a small bundle of clothing and shadows, Ryer Ord Star knelt, head lowered in the veil of her long silver hair, hands clasped in her lap. She had not moved since the Ilse Witch had appeared out of the night, had not lifted her head an inch or spoken a single word. In the silence and darkness, she might have been a statue carved of stone and set in place by her maker to ward a traveler's place of rest.

The Ilse Witch's eyes passed over her in a heartbeat and fell upon the boy. "Stay something!" she hissed anew. "Tell me why I should believe you!"

"I was saved by a shape-shifter called Truls Rohk," he answered finally, his gaze on her steady. "I was taken to the Druid Walker, who in turn took me to the people who raised me as their son. But I am Bek."

"You could not know any of this! You were only two when I hid you in that cellar!" She caught herself. "When I hid my brother. But my brother is dead, and you are a liar!"

"I was told most of it," he admitted. "I don't remember anything of how I was saved. But look at me, Grianne. Look at us! You can't mistake the resemblance, how much alike we are. We have the same eyes and coloring. We're brother and
sister! Don't you feel it?"

She advanced a step. "Why would a shape-shifter save you when it was shape-shifters who killed my parents and took me prisoner? Why would the Druid save you when he sought to imprison me?"

The boy was already shaking his head slowly, deliberately, his blue eyes intense, his young face determined. "No, Grianne, it wasn’t the shape-shifters or the Druid who killed our parents and took you away. They were never your enemies. Don’t you realize the truth yet? Think about it, Grianne."

“I saw his face!” she screamed in fury. “I saw it through a window, a glimpse, passing in the dawn light, just before the attack, before I...”

She trailed off, wondering suddenly, unexpectedly, if she could have been mistaken. Had she seen the Druid as the Morgawr had insisted, when he told her to think back, so certain she would? How could he have known what she would see? The implication of what it would mean if she had deceived herself was staggering. She brushed it away violently, but it coiled up in a corner of her memory, a snake still easily within reach.

"We are Ohmsfords, Grianne,” the boy continued softly, “But so is Walker. We share the same heritage. He comes from the same bloodline as we do. He is one of us. He has no reason to do us harm.”

“None that you could fathom, it appears!” She laughed derisively. “What would you know of dark intentions, little boy? What has life shown you that would give you the right to suppose your insight into such things is better than mine?”

"Nothing.” He seemed momentarily at a loss for words, but his face spoke of his need to find them. “I haven’t lived your life, I can’t possibly know. But I’m not as practiced as you, and I only just discovered it was there, but it is a part of my heritage we share—”

She felt his voice taking on an edge similar to her own, a biting touch that caused her to flinch in spite of herself and almost as if to smother his words, to bury them along with her memories of him. "Put an end to him at once!” she warned herself.

Her patience slipped a notch. "I think you believe what you are telling me,” she told him coldly. "I think you have been carefully schooled to believe it. But you are a dupe and a tool of clever men. Druids and shape-shifters make their way in the world by deceiving others. They must have looked long and hard to find you, a boy who looks so much like Bek."

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"Nothing.” He seemed momentarily at a loss for words, but his face spoke of his need to find them. “I haven’t lived your life, I can’t possibly know. But I’m not as practiced as you, and I only just discovered it was there, but it is a part of my heritage we share—”

"But so is Walker. We share the same heritage. He comes from the same bloodline as we do. He is one of us. He has no reason to do us harm.”

"None that you could fathom, it appears!” She laughed derisively. "What would you know of dark intentions, little boy? What has life shown you that would give you the right to suppose your insight into such things is better than mine?”

"Nothing.” He seemed momentarily at a loss for words, but his face spoke of his need to find them. “I haven’t lived your life, I can’t possibly know. But I’m not as practiced as you, and I only just discovered it was there, but it is a part of my heritage we share—”

He took a deep breath, straightening. “I’ve come a long way for this meeting. Too far to be intimidated into giving up what I know is true and right. I am your brother. I am Bek, Grianne—”

"Don’t call me that!” she screamed. Her gray robes billowed from her body and she threw up her arms in fury, almost as if to smother his words, to bury them along with her past. She felt her temper slipping, her grip on herself sliding away like metal on oiled metal, and the raw power of her voice took on an edge that could easily cut to ribbons anything or anyone against which it was directed. "Don’t speak my name again!”

He stood his ground. "What name should I speak? Ilse Witch? Should I call you what your enemies call you? Should I treat you as they do, as a creature of dark magic and evil intent, as someone I can never be close to or care about or want to see become my sister again?”

He seemed to gain strength with every new word, and suddenly she saw him as more dangerous than she had believed. “Be careful, boy.”

"You are the one who needs to be careful!” he snapped. "Of who and what you believe! Of everything you have embraced since the moment you were taken from our home. Of the lies in which you have cloaked yourself!”

"Put an end to him!” she screamed. "Put an end to him at once!”

Then something shimmered to one side, drawing her attention from the boy. She struck at it without thinking, the magic escaping from her in a rush of iron shards and magic escaping from her in a rush of iron shards and...
caught in a violent wind, and left voiceless and wide-eyed in shock the boy who had been speaking.

An instant later, he disappeared. It happened so quickly and unexpectedly that it was done before the Ilse Witch could act to stop it. She blinked at the empty space in which he had stood, seeing the brightness take on shape and form anew, becoming a series of barely recognizable movements that crossed through the night like shadows vaguely human in form chasing one another. She lashed out at them in surprise, but she was too slow and her attack too misdirected to catch more than empty air.

She wheeled this way and that, searching for what had deceived her so completely. Whatever it was, it was gone and it had taken the boy with it. Her first impulse was to give pursuit. But first impulses were seldom wise, and she did not give in to this one. She scanned the empty clearing, then the surrounding forest, searching with her senses for traces of the boy's rescuer. It took her only a moment to discover its identity. A shape-shifter. She had sensed its presence before, she realized—on Black Modips, after the nighttime collision with the Jerle Shannara. It was the same creature and no mistake. It must have come aboard during the confusion to spy on her, then remained hidden for the remainder of the voyage. That could not have been easy, given the intensity of her control over ship's quarters and crew. This particular shape-shifter was skilled and experienced, a veteran of such efforts, and not in the least awed by her.

A new rage built in her. It must have followed her from the ship to the clearing, revealing itself when it believed the boy in danger. Did it know the boy? Or the Druid? Did it serve either or both? She believed it must. Otherwise, why would it involve itself in this business at all? A protector for the boy then? Perhaps. If so, it would confirm what she had believed from the beginning, from the moment the boy had tried to trick her into thinking he might be Bek. The Druid had concocted an elaborate scheme to undermine her confidence in her mission and her trust in the Druid's capabilities, to sabotage their relationship, and to render her vulnerable so that he might find a way to destroy her before she could destroy him.

She clenched her hands before her, fingers knotting until the knuckles turned white. She should have killed the boy at once, the moment he spoke her name! She should have used the wishsong to burn him alive, waiting for him to beg her to save him, to admit to his lies! She should never have listened to anything he said!

Yet now that she had, she couldn't shake the feeling that she shouldn't dismiss him too quickly.

She turned the matter over in her mind carefully, examining it anew. The resemblance between them could be explained away, of course. A boy who looked like her could be found easily enough. Nor would it be all that hard for Walker to make the boy think he was Bek, even to think he had always been called Bek. Duping him into believing he was her brother and somehow her rescuer was certainly within the Druid's capabilities. It was reasonable to believe that he had been brought along on the voyage solely for the purpose of somehow, somewhere encountering her and acting out his part.

But...

Her pale, luminous face lifted and her blue eyes stared off into the night. There, at the end, when he had lost his patience with her, when he had challenged her as no one else would dare to do, not even the Morgawr, something about him had reminded her of herself. A conviction, a certainty that registered in his words and his posture, in the directness and intensity of his gaze. But more than this, she had sensed something unexpected and familiar in his tone of voice, something that could not be mistaken for anything other than what it was. He had told her, but in the heat of the moment she had not believed him, thinking only that he was threatening her, that he could do damage to her in an unexpected way, and so she must protect herself. But it had been there nevertheless.

He had the magic of the wishsong, her magic, her power duplicated.

Who but her brother or another Ohmsford would possess power like that?

The contradiction of what seemed to be true and what seemed to be a lie frustrated and confused her. She wanted to explain the boy away with no further consideration, but she could not do so. There was in him enough of real magic to cause her to wonder at his true identity, even if she did not believe him to be Bek. The Druid could do many things in creating a tool with which to deceive her, but he could not instill another with magic, and particularly not with magic of this sort.

So who was the boy and what was the truth of him?

She knew what she should do; it was what she had come all this way to do. Find the treasure that was hidden in Castledown and make it her own. Find the Druid and destroy him. Regain the safety of Black Modips and sail home again as swiftly as possible and be shed of this voyage and its dangers.

But the boy intrigued and disturbed her, so much so that almost without understanding why, she was rethinking her plans entirely. Despite what she knew of his duplicity, whether willing or not, she was loath to give up on solving the mystery of him when so much of what she discovered might impact her. Not in any life-altering manner, of course; she had already made her mind up to that. But in some smaller, yet still important way.

How hard would it be to discover the truth about him, once she set her mind to it? How much time would it take?

The Morgawr would not approve, but he approved of little she did these days. Her relationship with her mentor had been deteriorating for some time. They no longer shared the student/teacher connection they once had. She was as much the master now as he was, and she chafed at the restrictions he constantly sought to place upon her. She had not forgotten what she owed him, was not ungrateful for all he had taught her over the years. But she disliked his insistence on keeping her in her place, always his subordinate, his underling, a charge who must do as he dictated. He was old, and perhaps because he was old he could no longer change as easily as could the young. Self-preservation was what mattered to him. But she did not aspire to live a thousand years. She did not consider near immortality a benefit to be sought.

whipped the leaves of the surrounding trees as if they were
thoughts of the Druid faded, then went black. struck by the fire and sent pinwheeling into a wall. Her black tower, forced an entry, and disappeared inside, trying to keep them alive. At last he gained the doorway to a

in vain for the others of his company to fall back, to flee, to determine if the seer was coming out of her trance. But he had not interfered with anything she decided she must do with what she found. Perhaps just to keep him in line, where he belonged.

She walked over to Ryer Ord Star and bent down, trying to determine if the seer was coming out of her trance. But the girl never moved, sitting silently, motionlessly in the night, head lowered in shadow, eyes closed. She was breathing steadily, calmly, so it was apparent her health was not in danger. What was she doing, though? Where inside herself had she gone?

The lise Witch knelt in front of the girl. She had no time to wait for the seer to conclude her meditations. She needed her answers. She placed her fingers on the other's temples, her answers. She placed her fingers on the other's temples, her memories tumbling out like falling petals. Without a glance at most of them, the lise Witch went directly for those most recent, the ones that would reveal the fate of the Druid.

Revelations surfaced like the ocean's dead, stark and bare. She saw a battle within Old World ruins, a battle in which the Druid and his company were assaulted on all sides by lines of red fire that burned and seared. Walls shifted, raising from and lowering into smooth metal floors. Creepers appeared from nowhere, metal monsters on skittering legs with claws that rent and tore. Men fought and died in a swirl of thick smoke and spurts of fire. Wails shifted, raising from

and awash in fear and desperation.

Amid the madness, the Druid advanced past lines of attack and changes in terrain, his steady, deliberate progress aided by his magic and buttressed by his courage and determination. Say what you would, the Druid had never been a coward. He fought his way into the heart of the ruins, shouting in vain for the others of his company to fall back, to flee, trying to keep them alive. At last he gained the doorway to a black tower, forced an entry, and disappeared inside.

Ryer Ord Star screamed and started after him, then was struck by the fire and sent pinwheeling into a wall. Her thoughts of the Druid faded, then went black.

Hence the need to get on with things, rather than sit and plot and wait and scheme, as he was so used to doing.

No, he would not approve, and in this case she would be wrong in failing to consider that. Seeking out the boy to solve his mystery and satisfy her curiosity was mere self-indulgence. She hesitated a moment, then brushed her hesitation aside. It was her decision to make, her choice if she wasted time that, in any case, belonged to her. The boy had something she needed, whether the Morgawr would agree with her or not. In any event, he was not here to advise her. Cree Bega would presume to speak for him, but the Mwellret's opinion meant next to nothing to her.

She would have to act quickly, however. The ret was not too far behind her, coming along with two dozen others. His approach was delayed only because, wishing to go ahead by herself, to have the first look at what waited, she had ordered him to wait. Perhaps, she added, to make certain he did not interfere with anything she decided she must do with what she found. Perhaps just to keep him in line, where he belonged.

The communication had come without words of any sort and with no resistance at all. Was this the nature of empaths, that they could neither dissemble nor conceal? She found herself wondering at the girl's pursuit of the Druid, galvanized by the latter's disappearance into the tower. Why would she risk herself so? The girl had been instructed to stay close to the Druid at all times, to make herself indispensable to him, to gain his confidence and his ear. Clearly she had done so. But was there something more between them, something that went beyond the charge she had been given as the lise Witch's spy?

There was no way to know. Not without damaging the girl, and she wasn't prepared to go to that length just yet. She had what she wanted for now—a clear picture of what had befallen those from the company of the Jerle Shannara who had gone inland with the Druid. She could not be certain of the Druid's fate, however. Perhaps he was dead. Perhaps he was trapped beneath the ruins. Whatever the case, he did not present any danger to her. Without an airship to carry him off and with most of his company dead or imprisoned, he could do little harm.

She had time for the boy, then. Enough, that she did not need to consider the matter further.

No more than a handful of minutes passed before Cree Bega and his company of Mwellrets appeared out of the gloom, heavy bodies trudging warily through the forest dark, slitted eyes glittering as they caught sight of her. Repulsive creatures! she thought, but she kept her face expressionless. She rose to meet them and stood waiting on their approach.

“Misstress,” their leader, her designated protector, hissed, bowing obsequiously. “Have you found the little peopleless?”

“I have decided to leave that to you, Cree Bega. To you and your companions. There has been a battle in the ruins ahead, and those of the Druid's company who are not dead are scattered. Find them and make them your prisoners. That includes the Druid, should you come upon him and find him helpless enough to subdue."

"Misstress, I think—"

"Be careful otherwise, because he is more than a match for all of you put together.” She ignored his attempt to speak. "Leave him to me if you find he is able to defend himself. Do not go into the ruins; they are well protected. Do not expose yourself or your men to the danger they pose. Keep a close watch over both airships and do not land them under any circumstances.”

He was watching her closely now, realizing that she had already removed herself from everything she was instructing him to do.

"Something has come up that I must investigate.” She held his reptilian eyes with her steady, calm gaze. "I will be gone for a time, and while I am gone, you will be in charge. Do not fail me.”

For a moment there was no response and she thought he had not understood. “Am I clear on this?”

"Where iss it my misstress goess?” he asked softly. “Our mission iss here—"
Gleaming eyes filled with malice, Cree Bega watched wordlessly until she was well out of sight. Hunched within his cloak and surrounded by those he commanded, he imagined how sweet it would feel when he was permitted at last to put an end to the insufferable girl child. That he hated her as he hated no one else went without saying; he had never felt anything but hate for her. He despised her as she despised him, and nothing shared through their service to the Morgawr would ever change that.

But the Morgawr, though claiming to be the girl’s mentor and friend, was more Mwellret than human. His connection to Cree Bega’s people was ancient and bloody. He had bonded to the girl because she was a novelty and he saw a use for her in the larger scheme of things. But his heart and soul were those of a Mwellret.

The girl, of course, believed them equals, outcasts bound together in their struggle for recognition and power over their oppressors. The Morgawr let her believe as much because it suited his purposes to do so. But they were not equals in any way that mattered, and the little Ilse Witch was far less skilled in her use of magic than she believed. She was a strutting, posturing annoyance, a foolish, ludicrously inept practitioner of an art that had been mastered by the Mwellrets and their kind centuries ago, before the Druids had even thought to take up the Elven magic as their sword and shield. Mwellrets would never be subjugated by humans, never become their inferiors, and this girl child was just another self-deceived morsel waiting to be plucked from their food chain.

He felt the eyes of his fellows upon him, awaiting his orders, their own thoughts as dark and vengeful as his. They, too, waited for their chance at the Ilse Witch. Cree Bega would give her the satisfaction of believing him subdued and obedient for now. He had pledged as much to the Morgawr. He would heed her commands and carry out her wishes because there was no reason for him to do otherwise.

But a shift in the wind was coming, and when it did, it would mark the end of her.

He wheeled on the others, finding them grouped tightly about him, dark visages expectant and eager within shadowed cowls. They awaited his orders, anxious for something to do. He would accommodate them. Members of the company of the Jerle Shannara were loose somewhere ahead within these trees, waiting to be harvested, to be killed or taken prisoner. It was time to accommodate them.

Growling softly, he told his men to start with Ryer Ord Star, then move on.

But when they turned to take charge of the seer, she was nowhere to be found.
Shannara fans: *ILSE WITCH* was just the beginning...

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Mind Players

Time to try a little alliteration. The dutiful designers of the infinite incarnations of Dungeon & Dragons naturally named plenty of products for adventuring alliteratively. Each entry takes two or three words which, stunningly, start with like letters (as MEN & MAGIC). The particular parts of the thirty-five alliterations appear alone. The long list is arranged alphabetically, and the asterisked alliteration is unusually used twice. The leftover letters spell some more modules in the same series that themed themselves in such a style. Good gaming!

ALLITERATIONS

1. The
2. of
3. into
4. of
5. &
6. of
7. of
8. of
9. of
10. The
11. of
12. &
13. of
14. of
15. of
16. &
17. of
18. of
19. of
20. &
21. &
22. of
23. of
24. of
25. &
26. of
27. The
28. The
29. The
30. &
31. The
32. &
33. &
34. &
35. &

SOLUTION

MENDING

SCRYING

SENDING

SILENCE

FREEDOM

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This is a false coffin 4 feet across and high, by 2 in length, atop a two-step bier; it is immobile, bottomless, and of solid granite. The lid relief is carved in the likeness of a serene female human knight in plate armor, but without a helm. She has long hair, a face that could belong to anyone—and which I believe echoes no real person—and her hands are clasped on a drawn sword and a wand, held ready to discharge.

In Common: "Within sleeps she of great magic/Disturb only what ye dare/for wealth and power still a re. here/"

The coffer holds a human skull (scavenged at random from a battle bonepit around Teshwave) ensorcelled with a continual flame. The scabbarded sword is not magic, and the "treasure map" drawn by the dragon is often fantastical, but usually begins with a real, labeled location that Shattershree wants explored.

On the table there are four parchment sheets—whichever current written "lures" Shattershree wants seen—and a ring. Also in this room, there is a dagger in a stained (water tainted with owlbear bile dye) and a warm wool cloak. The dagger, ring, and cloak bear only Shattershree's beacon tracer spells toalert her to their locations whenever magic is cast on them.

This room holds a climb-shaft of carved handholds, a chair and table of stone, and an open coffer holding three scrolls: a cure serious wounds and two invisibility spells. Their inscriptions are interlinked, with beacon tracer spells of Shattershree's devising. When a scroll is used, she is alerted to the user's location.

The furnishings shown are always here, just as depicted. Shattershree replaces those removed, damaged, or moved about by visitors.

The ring of keys on the side table were spell-duplicated by Shattershree from originals stolen from grand houses and vaults around Cormyr and Sembia. Next to the keys lie jars of drawing chalk. The chalked circle on the floor is intended to look arcane and powerful, but it is pure fantasy. The collar manacle is very real, in human disguise. Shattershree will question any captive left alone here.

The water in the well is cool and drinkable. The wooden stand displays armor taken from old Anaurma and Netherese tombs; they are always old and impressive-looking, often magical—and always ensorcelled with beacon tracer spells for Shattershree's entertainment.
In a nameless valley in the Desertsmouth Mountains, due west of Serpentsbridge through difficult wilderness country, stands a lonely stone structure known to prospectors as the Old Tomb. Just who’s buried there is a matter of some disagreement; it depends which colorful story one heeds. Popular tavern-tales include such candidates as a lost princess of fabled Anauria (older versions of the tale call her a “lady-lord” and give her name as either Ilmaerile or Yimaerl), the long-ago bandit warlord Loardrin (he who raided both the beast-men of Thar and the steadings that became Sembia with equal daring), and the human wizard known as the Sraedar (thought to have once tutored Malaug, founder of the Malaugrym).

All who fare into these monster-haunted peaks agree that for a reputedly plundered burial chamber, the Old Tomb seems a very popular place. Adventuring bands visit it often, if not regularly, and their movements have broken a clear trail through the valley: foresters warn that stags have taken to using this route and that, as a result, the path is now watched by owlbears and worse predators. No large beasts seem to survive for long in the valley, however, and veteran foresters believe that peryton, wyverns, or even dragons must hunt there regularly. The overgrown and boulder-studded valley slopes conceal several half-finished, deserted owlbear lairs.

In Daggerdale, those who drink late by tavern fires sometimes share tales of weird dancing figures composed of “flying light” seen around the Old Tomb, and of adventuring bands devoured all at once by a dozen huge fanged heads that burst out the Tomb doors on long, scaled necks. One also hears the usual “fell witches summoning fiends” and “upright, floating rings of blue fire that disgorged a flood of beasts.” Such tales cling to every ruin or strange wilderness site, and none of these have yet been proven.

Curiously, there’s no documented lore concerning the Old Tomb. It appears in none of the records held by Candlekeep, the libraries of Cormyr and Sembia, or the Leaves of Learning, the temple of Oghma in Highmoon—or, for that matter, any temple of the Binder. Who built it, and who’s buried there, are complete mysteries.
SHATTERSHERE

Shattershree is a whimsical, human-friendly dragon who loves to make wealth (but not necessarily keep it), influence events covertly, and manipulate folk. Nothing gives her greater pleasure than watching trade matters unfold as she's clandestinely caused them to do. She's neither malicious nor a lover of outright lies or law-breaking, but she seeks to punish or frustrate corruption in others and works against those who do ill while remaining technically within the law.

Shattershree has many friendships with humans, in a variety of guises. Sometimes she tests the loyalty of her human friends, or tries to learn more about their characters, by dealing with them in disguise. So far as she knows, thanks to her precautions, no human knows her true nature. In fact, Elminster, the Seven Sisters, and certain other Harpers know, but they try to avoid Shattershree since she is doing things they favor without their meddling, and contacting her might bring her to the attention of their foes.

Shattershree invests the riches she gains in various Sembian companies and is very interested in matters of trade and wealth in that realm. If you dabble in trade in Ordulin, you might well have met her in one of her many guises. She favors appearing as pretty ash-blonde female scribes of crisp manner, but I've seen her as male foresters, wheelwrights, and even farmhands.

Clanless dwarves out of the Storm Horns, led by one Hamhaerth “Goldhand,” built the false Tomb for Shattershree some eighty years ago, but they know that to say so might mean their doom. On a mountainside above the tomb is a ledge where Shattershree can lie in dragon form, to keep watch over her lure.

I've made something of a hobby, down the years, of looking over what she leaves there for adventurers to find. Here are some of her recent written missives, with my notations:

ELMINSTER’S NOTES

Mysteries and bewilderments to some, perhaps. Know ye that yon “Old Tomb” is but a mock burial-house built for a silver she-dragon, one Shattershree by name. It serves her as lair—or, rather, as a place of enterprise and entertainment. Therein she places written messages and items to be found as “treasure” to manipulate adventurers who come exploring. She lures them hither with rumors she spreads whilst in human form, in Zhentil Keep, Hillsfar, Cormyr, and Sembia. These adventurers aren’t prey to her, merely dupes. She manipulates them into attacking certain business rivals in Sembia, exploring possible treasure sites in Anauroch and the Moonsea North, and looking for trouble in particular places. Shattershree invests the riches she gains in various Sembian companies and is very interested in matters of trade and wealth in that realm. If ye dabble in trade in Ordulin, ye might well have met her in one of her many guises. She favors appearing as pretty light-blonde female scribes of crisp manner, but I've seen her as male foresters, wheelwrights, and even farmhands.

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SHATTERSHERE

Female Mature Adult Silver Dragon (CR 17, 290 hp) with the following:

SKILLS

Alchemy 15     Intimidate 15
Appraise 25     Knowledge (arcana) 25
Balance 15      Listen 30
Bluff 25        Search 30
Diplomacy 25    Scry 25
Escape Artist 15 Spellcraft 30
Gather          Spot 30
Information 25
Heal 15

FEATS

Alertness       Quicken
Improved        Spell-Like
Initiative      Ability
Quickenspell    Silent Spell

Alchemy 15     Intimidate 15
Appraise 25     Knowledge (arcana) 25
Balance 15      Listen 30
Bluff 25        Search 30
Diplomacy 25    Scry 25
Escape Artist 15 Spellcraft 30
Gather          Spot 30
Information 25
Heal 15

“When the usual sword-heads in Selgaunt start holding back grain, the price will soar. Last year the pirates waited until it was dearer than gold, then swooped in and snatched it all from the warehouses. This year it'll be upland warehouses in the Dales, or on their own country estates, guarded by the best sellswords coins can buy. They'll want to sell quick and quiet, not telling all the thieves in Sembia where the stuff's to be had, so they'll go to markets in Suzial and Tantras to whisper in the right ears. When big wagons start creaking up back roads, look within for the gold.”

Such false goods shortages are practiced by all Sembian self-styled nobles and “deep-pocket” merchant cabals from time to time. Here the dragon is hoping adventurers will try to rob or otherwise harass Sembian trade-rivals if she points the way to them. Many Sembians will applaud anything that shatters such “dark trading” deeds.

“Rethgar, come with all haste. They hold the gold at the Tesford Arms all this month and want bones of dragons, wyverns, and undead—skulls get the best price, but even dust is accepted. Ask for Tethtan, but seek me first, as ‘Hathla the Red.’ Don’t expect to recognize me.”

Although wizards, Thayan traders in particular, do buy certain bones, this is designed to lure adventurers into attacking trade rivals of Shattershree, who take up seasonal residence in the Arms in Dagger Falls and pay prospectors handsomely for gems brought out of the mountains.
“Starag says the Gethlen band is to blame. Three chests of silver they buried under the westernmost Zhent guardpost in Yulash. The gems they hid elsewhere, and only this little deceit keeps them alive, for Lord Raven’s men dare not slaughter them until that hiding-place is found.”

Know ye that “Lord Raven” is a notorious Sembian crime lord whose identity remains mysterious. I believe both Starag and the Gethlen band are fictitious.

“This blade belongs to Amalthus, heir of the family Roakhier, a decadent Sembian clan indeed. They’ve not seen Amalthus for a decade, since he began trading with drow out of Scornubel, and wouldn’t recognize him if he greeted them in the street. Middling height, hair so dark brown as to be almost black, eyes much lighter brown, and he always wears cast brass full-face masks. So if you’ve a man in your band who can match this, he can be Amalthus forevermore. He must remember his father is Sandras, his mother Maetha, his two younger sisters Amsalae and Shimra, his only friend among the servants was his man Tholt, now dead. The family arms is a black raven flying to the sinister with a big gold ring in its talons; the family estate is Stonepost House in the Flammentree Hills, and the Roakhier manor in Saerloon is Sevenstars House on Blackpearls Lane. Only I know where Amalthus Roakhier’s bones lie, and his father grows desperate for his return—not because he cares two coppers for his son, but because a visible heir makes his own neck that much safer in dealings with shady folk.”

“This blade” lies in the Tomb now. So far as I can learn without prying overmuch into the sordid lives of Sembians who have more coins than is good for them, all of this is true. It would amuse Shattershree to control a Sembian noble house, but she has no interest in the danger and boredom of impersonating the heir herself when she can get someone else to do it; befriend or seduce him, and then steer his deeds. I’d not expect a long lifespan for Sandras Roakhier, once his false heir “returns” to the fold.

“These should get you past the doorguards. Your tongue will have to work a way past any War Wizards. Nathra awaits those clever enough to reach her in the Red Helm Room. She needs non-mages to be her “silent agents” in the Dales and around Hullack, and she pays well.”

“These” refers to a helm, dagger, and ring of particular design, currently lying in the Tomb. Nathra is a War Wizard loyal to Alusair. She is trying to forge a small, undercover force of adventurers to spy on rebellious Cormyrean nobles and their dealings with Sembia. The Red Helm Room is in the easternmost wing of the Royal Court, on the second floor of the South Front, overlooking the Promenade (with the Low Garden, so named because of its uniformly knee-height plantings) rather than Vangerdahast’s Tower, which faces the East Front. Nathra has an office in that chamber of red tapestries—and yes, it has huge tilting helms, painted red, flanking its doors. Some courtiers have very strange ideas of decor.
Once she did hold the gorgeous east in fee,  
And was the safeguard of the West: the worth  
Of Venice did not fail below her birth,  
Venice, the eldest child of Liberty.  
She was a maiden City, bright and Free;  
No guile seduced, no force could violate;  
And when she took unto herself a Mate  
She must espouse the everlasting Sea.  

Venice, the Queen of the Sea.  
What other city could make Marco Polo homesick, even  
in the stately pleasure-dome of Kublai Khan? Venice, they say, is “la Serenissima,” the Serene Republic.  
They, in this case, being those archetypical sharp dealers, the Venetians. A city  
of turbulent conspiracy, bustling trade, and a yearly explosion of licensed  
mayhem, Venice's serenity might be  
open to question. Perhaps between  
hijacking crusades, beheading its rulers,  
and revolutionizing medieval economics, Venice felt peaceful—but surely your  
heroes can change all that.

HISTORY  
The first Venetians were refugees  
fleeing Alaric’s Gothic invasion of Italy,  
hiding out in the brackish swamps at  
the head of the Adriatic Sea. Raising  
a church to St. Mark in thanksgiving  
for their safety, they founded the city  
of Venice on April 25, 421 A.D. Venice’s  
sea-girt refuge became its bulwark, and  
as Venetian traders moved out into the  
sea, the sea built Venice’s unique  
power and prosperity. In 1000 A.D.,  
Doge ("duke") Pietro Orseolo formally  
mapped the Serene Republic to the  
Sea by throwing a magic ring into the  
ocean; Venice's doges have repeated  
their vows every Ascension Sunday  
since then. Both Pope and Emperor  
confirmed Venice's rights over the  
Adriatic in 1177 at a peace conference  
ending the Imperial wars in north Italy.  
Neutral Venice hosted the conference  
because it had cunningly avoided those  
woes, preferring to seek treasure and  
trade to the east in the slowly-crum¬  
bling Byzantine Empire and in the  
Saracen states of Egypt and Syria.  
When the Byzantines tried to restrict  
Venetian trade, the eighty-year old,  
completely blind Venetian doge Enrico  
Dandolo blackmailed and hijacked the  
Fourth Crusade and personally led the  
charge onto the beach that took the  
impregnable capital of the East. Venice  
emerged, for a time, as ruler of “A  
Quarter and Half a Quarter of the  
Roman Empire,” and the unquestioned  
mistress of the eastern Mediterranean.  
Venetian traders penetrated far into  
Asia and Russia, bringing back silks and  
spices to resell for gigantic profits.  
Unfortunately, the Byzantines recaptured  
their city in 1260, while the  
Venetian fleet was out of port and  
raised Venice's ancient rival, Genoa, to  
a place of privilege. After thirty years  
of piracy and counter-piracy, Venice  
and Genoa went to war. Badly mauled  
in the early going, Venetian admirals  
fought heroically and achieved a final  
draw in 1299. Venice came off much  
worse in its 1308-1313 war with the  
Pope over the city of Ferrara; under  
Papal interdict, Venetians could not  
celebrate Carnevale, and their property  
and citizens could be attacked anywhere in Christendom without legal  
repercussions. More frighteningly, the war and interdict led the Tiepolo and  
Querini family into conspiracy against  
the state. Thanks to a providential  
storm, the loyalty of the sailors, and an  
old woman’s well-aimed chamber pot  
(which killed Bajamonte Tiepolo’s stan¬  
dard-bearer and threw his conspirators  
into confusion), the plot of 1310 failed—  
barely—to overthrow the Republic.  
Wracked by war, barely escaped  
from murderous treason, only just  
emerged from the spiritual terror of  
excommunication, and its trade in  
danger, Venice dearly hopes for a  
return to its fabled serenity.
VENETIAN GOVERNMENT

For a medieval city-state, Venice has an admirably stable government thanks to a long-standing ideology of civic unity and interlocking business arrangements among all the major families. Every family in the nobility (which includes the major merchants, but has been closed to new members since 1297) belongs to the Great Council; from the Council come the Quarantia (“the Forty”), the chief judges. Three of the Forty (the Capi) attend the meetings of the Doge’s cabinet, the Council of Six—one for each sestiere. The Doge (“duke”) is selected by a random group of councilors, none of whom can be of the same family. Upon election, the Doge must sign a promissone, explicitly limiting his power, and swear an oath to St. Mark; the Six and the Forty are empowered to prosecute the Doge for violating his oath.

Of course, it isn’t all checks and balances; the Doge rules for life, while the Six serve non-repeating terms of one year each. The Doge’s bodyguard are the sailors and workers of the Arsenale, and he commands a secret police force called the Signori di Notte (“Lords of the Night”). The Signori di Notte, however, share jurisdiction with the individual town watches of Venice’s parishes; and a Council of Ten (similar to the Six) watches everyone for signs of treason and conspiracy.

Certainly [my house’s] builder chose the finest position on the Grand Canal. And since that Canal is the patriarch of all others, and since Venice is a female pope among cities, I can truthfully say that I enjoy both the fairest highway and the most joyous view in the world.

—Pietro Aretino

By 1320, nearly 200,000 people jam into less than three square miles of buildings, small gardens, and campi (“fields”) built on wooden piles pounded into the marsh. Each campo, usually planted in grass and trees, holds at least one decorated well-head, and a Council of Ten (similar to the Six) watches everyone for signs of treason and conspiracy.

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As far away as England, Russia, or Egypt. Only Venetian pilots can bring these ships safely to harbor; the main Venetian “island” sits at the center of a 200-square-mile lagoon, full of sandbars, riptides, shoals and other hazards. This geography keeps Venice safe from attack—only a superior navy could force the Lido (the bar across the lagoon), and no navy in the world outranks that of Venice.

This invincible navy springs from the Castello, the easternmost sestiere of Venice. Including the government arsenals, shipyards and lumberyards cover this district; the workers (and the lumber) come from Schiavonia (modern Croatia) across the Adriatic. The great Riva degli Schiavoni dockyard on the south side of the island throngs with traders—who superstitiously avoid the spot where Doge Vitale Michiel II was stabbed to death in 172. The Dominican church of San Giovanni e Paolo dominates the sestiere’s north side; across the Rio Nuova and Foscari remains a marshy area of food depots and informal dockyards. South of San Marco lies San Polo, the “hard backbone” made up of many rocky, and hence stable, islands. On the western end of Dorsoduro, the church of San Nicolò del Mendicoli watches over Venice’s hardworking fishermen; the eastern side of Dorsoduro, fronted by new palazzi around the church of San Vio, runs along the Grand Canal, along with boatyards and stonemasons’ shops. Dorsoduro’s petty bourgeois and working-class families face the case vecchie (“old families”) of San Polo across the Rio Foscarì.

San Polo is a round sestiere nestled between the mouth of the Santa Croce “C” and the Grand Canal. This sestiere, the oldest one in Venice, runs east from the immense Franciscan church of the Frari, past the bull-baiting pit at Campo San Polo, through canals lined with fashionable homes and wineshops, to the fabled Rialto bridge across the Grand Canal, Venice’s commercial heart. Its spiritual and political heart lies across the Rialto in the sestiere of San Marco, an oval district ranged around the great Piazza di San Marco, with the Molo docks on the south side of the Piazza (and of the sestiere), just east of the Grand Canal’s terminus.
Floorsplan of the Basilica di San Marco
**LOCATIONS**

1. **Doge’s Palace**
   This imposing building on the east side of the Piazza di San Marco resembles an immense cubical fortress festooned with looted classical art. Two corner towers face the sea on the south side; the various councils hold court in chambers along the east side. Deeper within the building lie armories, dungeons, and torture chambers. The Doge’s quarters are on the northeast, and his personal barge, the Bucintoro, docks there.

2. **Basilica di San Marco**
   It speaks volumes about Venice’s priorities that its most magnificent church, the glorious St. Mark’s Basilica (built on the Byzantine plan in the 11th century), is technically the Doge’s personal chapel. The cathedral of the Bishop of Venice is on an olive-shaped island east of Castello, not even in Venice proper. The importance of St. Mark’s derives from the miraculously preserved body of St. Mark himself, which Venetian agents stole from Egypt in 828 A.D. St. Mark’s abuts the Doge’s Palace and completes the east front of the great Piazza; on its front parade four horses looted from the Constantinople Hippodrome in 1204. In the middle of the piazza, the basilica’s bell tower, or campanile, rises 185 feet in the air; its bells ring for festivals or council meetings, fires under its gilded roof serve as a lighthouse for incoming ships to dock at the Mole, and convicted criminals hang from it in cages.

3. **Piazzetta**
   The bulk of the Piazza runs west from the Basilica, lined with shops and government office stalls. A smaller arm of the Piazza, the Piazetta, runs south to the Molo between the Doge’s Palace and the new granaries. At the south end of the Piazzetta rise two columns of Egyptian granite; the one on the west supports a statue of St. Theodore defeating a dragon, while the eastern pillar supports a massive winged lion in bronze, the emblem of Venice and St. Mark. Between the pillars is a legal “free zone,” where games of chance are allowed; here, also, Venice executes her prisoners.

4. **Arsenale**
   To keep up with new maritime technology, the Doges are expanding this great naval shipyard of Venice. In the Arsenale’s three acres, drydocks, cranes, and other equipment stand by for repairs to storm-damaged galleys, while trained arsenalotti use mass production of interchangeable parts to turn out entire new warcraft in mere days. The great rope factory, the Tana, runs 350 yards along the south front of the Arsenale.

5. **Ponte di Pugni**
   This stone “Bridge of Fists” in the northern Dorsoduro district crosses the San Barnaba canal and is a popular spot for duels. Rival gangs of toughs traditionally fight immense battles of “king of the hill” on this bridge, with fists or flails to settle turf issues elsewhere in the city. The Council turns a blind eye to such rumbles, considering them a way of blowing off civic steam.

6. **Rialto**
   This new 50-yard long pontoon bridge of wood crosses the Grand Canal between San Polo and San Marco. Goldsmiths, money-changers, bankers, jewelers, and other luxury sellers line the streets. Running north from the Rialto along the Grand Canal are Venice’s three great marketplaces, the Erberia (fruit and vegetable market), the Pescheria (fish market), and the Beccarie (abattoir and meat market). On the east side of the bridge, the immense Fondaco di Tedeschi serves as a warehouse and merchandise mart for German traders in Venice.
ADVENTURES IN VENICE

Yes, this was Venice, the fair frailty that frowned and that betrayed, half fairy tale, half snare: the city in whose stagnating air the art of painting once put forth so lusty a growth; and where musicians were moved to accords so weirdly ludling and lascivious: Our adventurer felt his senses wooed by this voluptuousness of sight and sound, tasted his secret knowledge that the city sickened and had its sickness for love of gain, and bent an ever more unbridled leer on the gondola that glided on before him.

—Thomas Mann, Death in Venice

Venice holds the riches of the east, and dishes them out with a liberal hand to those with a sharp sword or a sharper eye. Anyone can do anything under a Carnevale mask, or with the right connections. Enough silver grosso or gold ducats can buy plenty of both—and plenty of trouble. Here, then, is some more trouble to buy into:

• The acqua alta, the "high water" came in 1309 and flooded the city, costing Venice the war. The Council of Ten fear that the jealous sahuagin plan to drown the city—and want someone to pay them off or put them down. Perhaps the city's aquatic ghouls, the lacedoni, know where the sahuagin lurk—or perhaps they're part of the plan, hoping to turn Venice into an enormous watery grave.

LOCAL HEROES

All characters presented as of 1320. Character levels are suggestions, and you should change them to suit your campaign.

Dante Alighieri (born 1265)
3rd-level Fighter/2nd-level Bard
A brilliant poet and steadfast supporter of the Guelph faction, Dante has been exiled from his beloved Florence for almost 20 years. He is in Venice as an emissary from Ravenna, a rival for Adriatic trade. As secret head of the Fideli d'Amore troubadour society, Dante has contacts throughout southern Europe.

Francesco Dandolo (born 1270?)
3rd-level Aristocrat/5th-level Expert Diplomat A is known for skill and understanding. Francesco's family, the Dandolos, are the leaders of the powerful oligarchic merchant faction, allied to the Ghibelline parties in the rest of Italy. They support landward expansion.

Rogerio "Malabranca" Morosini (born 1267?)
3rd-level Aristocrat/6th-level Fighter Admiral and privateer known as "The Black Claw." Rogerio is famous for his heroism and skill against the Genoese. Although he is getting too old for raids and adventures now, he willingly sponsors schemes to profit Venice and harm Genoa.

Giovanni Soranzo, Doge of Venice (born 1240)
7th-level Aristocrat/8th-level Fighter/4th-level Cleric
Elected doge in 1292, after service as Procurator of St. Mark's and as an admiral during the war with Genoa, Soranzo has family connections to the Conspiracy of 1310, but he governs Venice evenhandedly and well. His policy of peace makes him popular with the merchant families.

Marco Polo (born 1254)
5th-level Expert/3rd-level Rogue/3rd-level Fighter
From a minor merchant family, Marco "il Milione" Polo returned with a fortune in gems after spending twenty years at the court of the Great Khan. He fought in the war against Genoa, and while prisoner there wrote a very popular travel narrative full of magic and wonder.

Domenico Schiavo (born 1275?)
6th-level Aristocrat/8th-level Ranger
The bold and daring Schiavo famously minted Venetian ducats in the Genoese harbor during a lightning raid in the last war. He remains eager for one last score, and he isn't too particular about where it comes from. As a Dalmatian noble, he remains an outsider despite his heroism.

Bajamonte Tiepolo (born 1275?)
4th-level Aristocrat/3rd-level Fighter and 2nd-level Rogue
Once a popular cavalier despite rumors of corruption, Bajamonte was the main figure in the Conspiracy of 1310. Now in exile somewhere outside the city, he continuously plots a second coup attempt. His family, the Tiepolos, are powerful members of the old nobility.

• There was more loot from the Fourth Crusade than even Venice's industrious merchants and civil servants could ever hope to catalog. Especially since some of the statues keep moving from church to church, killing people who take too careful an inventory. The Dominicans wish to see the gargoyles gone—or petrified for the further glory of the Lord.

According to rumor, Genoese spies have been sneaking around Murano—the island of glassmakers and mirror-grinders—trying to find out if the admirals are really trying to build Archimedes' famous ship-burning glass from plans discovered in the East. Whoever has the plans, or the glass or the spies, can write his own ticket with the Doge—or the Genoese—or anyone, really.

So dig in with both hands and see if you can emerge with a fistful of ducats!

FANTASY MEETS HISTORY

Some of you have written to say you love the "Cities of the Ages" articles but don't run an historical D&D campaign. Drop us a postcard to let us know what parts of Venice (and London, Prague, and the upcoming cities) you use in your campaign, and how. We'll print the most innovative and creative examples right here.
"The strands of fate are held in mortal hands. Only they can rise above the demands of destiny." ~ Praxus
This month we revive another specialty priest from the Forgotten Realms setting. In opposition to last month’s priests of Selûne, we present the nightcloaks, the most favored priests of Shar. Shar and Selûne have been at war since before Faerûn was formed, and their clergy carry on that battle.

Nightcloaks

Nightcloaks are the apple of Shar’s eye—devoted to her vision, preserving her secrets, practicing her magic, and as twisted and bitter as she is. They are beings of iron will and determination, although that determination is perverse. They weave webs of intrigue, mental domination, blackmail, and control through the use of illusion, necromancy, and enchantment. Yet they are not afraid to smash their toys if it suits Shar’s purposes. They are cruel and intelligent, and they do not fear slipping away to return and grind their foes to dust at a later time. Honor is of no consequence to them. They do as they please, so long as it furthers their—and Shar’s—power.

Clerics most often become nightcloaks. Rangers are rare. Nightcloaks often have levels of wizard, sorcerer, bard, or rogue in addition to the class that grants them divine spellcasting ability.

THE NIGHTCLOAK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Attack Bonus</th>
<th>Fort. Save</th>
<th>Ref. Save</th>
<th>Will Save</th>
<th>Special</th>
<th>Spellcasting</th>
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<td>+2</td>
<td>+0</td>
<td>+2</td>
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<td>+2</td>
<td>+0</td>
<td>+2</td>
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<td>+2</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>+3</td>
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<td>+4</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>+4</td>
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<td>+3</td>
<td>+4</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>+4</td>
<td>Disk of night</td>
<td>+1 level of existing class</td>
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<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>+4</td>
<td>+5</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>+5</td>
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<tr>
<td>8th</td>
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<td>+2</td>
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<td>10th</td>
<td>+7</td>
<td>+7</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>+7</td>
<td>Voice of ineffable evil</td>
<td>+1 level of existing class</td>
</tr>
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CLASS REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a nightcloak, a character must fulfill all the following criteria:

- **Patron Deity:** Shar.
- **Alignment:** Neutral evil.
- **Base Attack Bonus:** +4.
- **Spellcasting:** Ability to cast 2nd-level divine spells.
- Clerics must have access to the Darkness domain.
- **Bluff:** 2 ranks.
- **Move Silently:** 2 ranks.
- **Perform:** 4 ranks.
- **Feats:** Iron Will, Shadow Weave Magic, Spell Focus (Enchantment, Illusion, or Necromancy), and Pernicious Magic or Tenacious Magic.

HIT DIE: d8
Class Features
All of the following are features of the nightcloak prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Nightcloaks are proficient with all simple weapons, all types of armor, and with shields.

Darkness Spells: A nightcloak can pray for and receive any Darkness domain spell as if it were on her divine spell list. The spell uses a spell slot of a level equal to its level in the Darkness domain list. For instance, a cleric/nightcloak could pray for darkbolt as a 5th-level cleric spell, and a ranger/nightcloak could pray for blacklight as a 3rd-level ranger spell.

Eyes of Shar: Nightcloaks have eyes that are totally black. They have 60-foot darkvision. They can also see through magical darkness to a range of 10 feet (in the same black-and-white sight that darkvision provides). They cannot be blinded by magical effects. This is an extraordinary ability.

Insidious Magic: Nightcloaks get the Insidious Magic feat as a bonus feat at 1st level, reflecting their ability to use the Shadow Weave under Shar's close guidance.

Shadow Talk: Nightcloaks are able to communicate mystically through the shadows of the mind. Nightcloaks can whisper short messages to other worshipers of Shar within 500 feet. All Shar worshipers within range hear the message as a whisper in their mind. Observers can hear the words if they are close enough to physically hear the nightcloak's actual whispers (a DC 15 Listen check if the listener is within 10 feet of the nightcloak, +1 DC per 5 feet beyond that). This is a free action. This supernatural ability is a language-dependent, and it can be used to communicate with undead worshipers of Shar and undead creatures in the service of worshipers of Shar.

Disk of Night: When a nightcloak wields a chakram, she negates damage reduction in creatures she attacks as if it were a +2 weapon. If the chakram's bonus is greater than the effect of this class ability, use the chakram's bonus to determine if damage reduction is negated. This is a supernatural ability.

True Lies: A nightcloak can reach into a creature's mind and modify a subject's memories as the 4th-level bard spell modify memory. A nightcloak can use this spell-like ability a number of times per tenday equal to her Charisma modifier (minimum of one). The modify memory works as if cast by a bard of the nightcloak's character level. The effect lasts one day. Unlike most spell-like abilities, voice of ineffable evil has a verbal component.

Minion of Shar: Once per day as a standard action, a nightcloak can summon one shadow per nightcloak class level to do her bidding for a number of rounds equal to her class level. Any shadows this summoned shadow creates by draining Strength are under the control of the nightcloak, but vanish along with the original when the duration expires. The nightcloak is able to verbally communicate with the shadows as if she knew their language. She can also use her shadow talk ability to communicate with them. This is a spell-like ability.

Voice of Ineffable Evil: Once a day, nightcloaks can command a creature as per the dominate monster spell as though cast by a sorcerer of a level equal to the nightcloak's character level. The effect lasts one day. Unlike most spell-like abilities, voice of ineffable evil has a verbal component.

Class Skills
Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier

The nightcloak's class skills (organized by key ability) are:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Concentration</th>
<th>Craft Knowledge (arcana)</th>
<th>Craft Knowledge (history)</th>
<th>Craft Knowledge (the planes)</th>
<th>Craft Knowledge (religion)</th>
<th>Scry</th>
<th>Spellcraft</th>
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*Exclusive skill
Vampires come in two varieties—difficult and impossibly difficult. Vampires are rightly named the princes of the undead. They possess the strengths and resistances granted by undeath, regenerative abilities, the ability to flee gaseously if things don't go their way, the ability to charm their foes into accepting a Constitution-draining blood suck, and their touch inflicts a negative energy level. Then, when the vampire spawn are vanquished, the real vampire appears, laden with ten or more levels of a spellcasting class.

Now the true fight begins.

Preparation
If you know a vampire is in your future, take a few added precautions.

Negative Energy Protection: Prepare or buy a scroll of the 3rd-level spell negative energy protection. When the vampire encounter is imminent, the cleric should use the scroll or her prepared spell on the party member most likely to fight the vampire in melee. This spell won't last long, so casting it on other characters wastes valuable time.

Magic Circle Against Evil: Prepare or buy a scroll of the 3rd-level spell magic circle against evil. The circle trumps protection from evil in that it provides an area of protection, granting you and your allies a +2 deflection bonus to AC and a +2 resistance bonus to all saves against attacks made by evil creatures, such as vampires. Even better, it blocks mental domination and prevents a previously dominated person from responding to new orders, although the victim will still follow previous orders.

Gaseous Form: It's wonderful when you make the vampires run, causing them to flee in the form of mist until they return later, completely healed and in greater numbers. This is especially troublesome if it occurs repeatedly and your party is unable to penetrate the tiny cracks through which the vampires flee.

Before your next foray into vampire-infested halls, purchase enough potions of gaseous form for your whole party. Then, when the cleric's turning causes the vampire to retreat where you cannot follow, suck down your potions and follow anyway. This way, you can trail the troublesome bloodsuckers right to their lair and deal with them permanently.

Mundane Supplies: As with any undead, holy water deals 2d4 points of damage and ignores natural and standard armor bonuses. Garlic is also useful against vampires, as are wooden stakes. If you're caught without a wooden stake, snap the head off an arrow, and you're back in business.

Tactics
If you decide to fight instead of run, specific tactics help you prevail in your vampiric contest.

Don't Split Up: If you suspect vampires are abroad, don't split the party. Don't send the rogue ahead to scout, because more than likely, he'll come back charmed, ready to betray you when the vampire makes its inevitable appearance.

Turn Undead: The first thing the cleric should do when a vampire has entered melee is attempt to turn the dark creature. Vampires are harder to turn than their Hit Dice would otherwise indicate, because of their turn resistance, but a 5th-level cleric stands a good chance to turn vampire spawn, so if the first fails, a second attempt isn't a bad idea. If you're up against a vampire with lots of Hit Dice, the cleric shouldn't waste her time on too many turn attempts—there are many other things she could be doing instead. A divine favor spell cast on a fighter or paladin is quite useful, as is bless. Casting prayer is good; its luck bonus stacks with the other bonus types you are likely to employ (but not with divine favor).

Haste: This spell is always useful. Like negative energy protection, haste's duration is measured in rounds, so the wizard or sorcerer should use it only when conflict is imminent. The same goes for fighter-types who have potions of haste ready to go.

Overwhelm: Vampires have fast healing and slowly regain hit points each round. The best way to combat a foe with fast healing or regeneration is to focus all of the party's firepower on one foe at a time so that the overwhelming damage dealt far outweighs the fast healing. Once one vampiric foe is forced to flee, the party can collectively set their sights on the next target.

Stay Safe: Use the prepared spell or a scroll of magic circle against evil to your best tactical advantage. The area of protection extends 10 feet from the target touched, and it will move with the target.

Target the spellcaster with the spell. This way, the spellcaster's companions can stay protected from evil influences and mental domination while they remain within the 10-foot radius of protection, while at the same time clustering close to the spellcaster, helping to keep her safe. If movement is necessary for those in melee, they should delay their actions until immediately after the spellcaster's initiative, thus synchronizing their movement and actions.

Another method of using the magic circle against evil is to cast it on one of the main hand-to-hand combatants, such as the fighter or paladin. This grants the fighter maneuverability and allows flanking party members to enjoy the protection of the spell. Being undead, the vampire isn't susceptible to sneak attacks, but the +2 bonus to the attack rolls made against flanked foes still applies.
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The Next Desecration

Our heroes forge ahead and discover...

Who dares enter the chamber of the guardian?

Huh! A talking appetizer!

If that's their idea of a guardian, it's no wonder this place is a ruin!

Oh, you will SO regret this!

Should we sell it as a pet or a soup ingredient?

Stop that, Garagar! How would you feel if someone hosted you by your heiny?

We might be about to find out...

Let my talking mascot go, and I'll let yours go.

Ha! The jokes on him! Nobody's a mascot!

Our intrepid band finds the tomb of troglodytes popinax...

Oh boy! Grave robbing!

Be careful! This place is giving off unwholesome vibes!

This sarcophagus seems to be a simple puzzle box.

Loogie! Shnaw! Objects!

Hmm, a jade mask, rings, trinkets, and this weird bat-amulet.

I dunno about this. Can some things not kosher here?

Here we go... Don't touch that! It's cursed. Don't drink that. You'll turn into a lizard again. You worry too much!

Besides, we're just going to sell this stuff. It clashes with our outfits.

Well, I had to fix you guys more times. Do you hear muffled cries for help?

It's probably mice.

Pooh! My toesies are getting moist!

That isn't all that's moist-looking. A giant slug!

Oh, good. Something without sharp bits.

All right! I'll take care of this!

He seems experienced at this.

He's reliving one of his fondest childhood memories, I'm afraid.

Keagar? Buddy? Even I'm getting weeped out by this...

Mahahahahaha! Bubble and shrimp, you slime-bucket! Ha ha ha ha aha!
AN EPIC GAME OF SKULL EnsUed..
The Empire of Ravilla dominated Western Oerik for some two hundred years. The Elven Peace of 552-668 was a golden age for Ravilla. Elven learning and arts flourished, and the army did little more than police the border and fend off the occasional savage humanoid raid. In their strength, the elves became complacent. They were the masters of Western Oerik, and none could challenge them... or so they thought.

In 669, Ravilla was shocked to its core. A horde of horsemen appeared on its southeast border, and Stratis, the God of War, was spied among their ranks. As columns of horsemen poured into Ravilla, the elves first heard a name they would learn to fear: Ahmut. He was the undisputed leader of the invaders, a group of human tribes known as the Baklien.

The elven army was at first unconcerned. They had, after all, never been defeated in their home territory. When the two armies clashed for the first time, the elven commanders watched smugly as the Baklien broke and ran. Gray elf cavalry pursued to finish the job and quickly left the infantry behind. With astounding discipline, the Baklien reformed and ran. Gray elf cavalry pursued to finish the job and quickly left the infantry behind. With astounding discipline, the Baklien reformed and surrounded the isolated elven horsemen. Ahmut then led his heaviest troops forward in a devastating charge. The elven infantry could only watch smugly as the Baklien broke and ran. Gray elf cavalry pursued to finish the job and quickly left the infantry behind. With astounding discipline, the Baklien reformed and surrounded the isolated elven horsemen. Ahmut then led his heaviest troops forward in a devastating charge.

For the next three years, Ahmut and the Baklien rampaged across Ravilla. They defeated several elven armies and rebuffed all attempts at a negotiated peace. Where armies had failed, however, one woman succeeded. Prisca, the most skilled assassin in the Oligarch's service, penetrated Ahmut's camp and slit the warlord's throat as he slept. When Ahmut's death was discovered, his lieutenants scrambled for power. In the ensuing chaos, the armies of Ravilla rallied and drove the Baklien out of the empire. They disappeared to the south and never returned.

The Terror Reborn
Ahmut's body rotted in an unmarked grave for centuries. His name lived on, as he gradually became a bogeyman used to frighten elven children. When rain pounded on the rooftops, it was said to be the sound of Ahmut on his ghostly steed. Everyone understood that Ahmut would take vengeance on the elven people if given the chance.

As he died with an elven blade in his heart, Stratis gave Ahmut that chance. The god's spear fell straight and true, piercing the aged skeleton of the Baklien warlord. Ahmut, fire in his eyes anew, tore himself free from the grave. The godly artifact had brought him back as a lord of undeath, and he would have his vengeance.

The power of Stratis's spear allowed Ahmut to raise undead skeletons quickly from old battlefields. As he began his war against life, Ahmut was able to add zombies to his ranks as well. Soon the countryside was abuzz with rumors of Ahmut's return. The elven Oligarchs dismissed the talk as purest fancy, but theirs were not the only ears listening.

Unholy Alliance
Nerull the Reaper, the God of Death, is not without his followers in the Sundered Empire. The Red Scythe is a cult that dates back several centuries. It began in the outlying provinces of Ravilla, far from centers of elven power. Although quickly proscribed by the authorities, the cult grew. To humans, halflings, and gnomes living under elven rule, the Red Scythe offered not just power, but the power of life and death.

When word of Ahmut's return reached them, the leaders of the Red Scythe knew their hour had come at last. Here was a champion of death, ready to do Nerull's will on Oerth. All that remained was to contact Ahmut and put him under the cult's command.

The Red Scythe leaders were in for a surprise. They found that Ahmut retained all of his cunning and force of will. One touch from the lord of undeath slew the most powerful priest of Nerull, and the rest of the Red Scythe quickly fell into line. The cult would now serve Ahmut, not command him.

On the March
With the Red Scythe under his thrall, Ahmut was able to build a true legion of undead. Red Scythe necromancers from all over the Sundered Empire poured into his camp, ready to animate the dead for their new master. Ahmut led his legion into the mountains first, to establish a base of operations. There his forces slew several thousand troglodytes in fierce underground battles, taking the warrens for themselves. The troglodytes returned to life in a matter of hours, as zombies in Ahmut's service. This set a pattern for Ahmut's...
Who's afraid of the big, bad Ahmut? Well, just about everybody.

A doctor pronounces Wizards of the Coast old-school PC white powergamers unravel the mysteries of math.

Arcanum might not be your typical fantasy fare but it still offers D&D players plenty of material.

Some of the necromancers of the Red Scythe are of questionable sanity. They are not content to simply animate the dead; they want to find a way to make them “better” than they were in life. Slaughterpit Gnoll Zombies are the result of one such experiment. Two extra arms and one extra head have been sewn on to a gnoll corpse, thus improving upon nature’s design. While this may please Nerull, it makes the adepts of Yeenoghu mad for vengeance.

Although as slow as other zombies, the slaughterpits pack more of a punch with their two weapon fighting. Ahmut and his war leaders use them as shock troops, and they have broken more than one battle line.

Superior Two-Weapon Fighting (Ex): A slaughterpit gnoll zombie fights with a battleaxe in one hand and a longsword in another. Because each of its two heads controls an arm, the zombie does not suffer an attack or damage penalty for attacking with two weapons and it can attack with both weapons as a partial action.

Undead: Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and disease. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

Partial Actions Only (Ex): Zombies have poor reflexes and can perform only partial actions. Thus they can move or attack, but they can do both only if they charge (a partial charge).
If you're not interested in D&D, no amount of appealing to your sexual orientation is going to change that.

"she" as the neuter pronoun in the later 2nd Edition books, and it persists in the most recent incarnation of the game, with half of all examples referring to women. Yet despite these overtures to women over quite a long time, men still make up the vast majority of D&D players. The numbers of women playing D&D is certainly not at levels one might expect if the "passive sexism" (to use Jason Moscatello's expression) of earlier D&D material were to blame for the proportion of men in the hobby. The "sexism" of previous editions has declined over a period of years. By Julie Ratliff's own admission, it has now gone. So where are the women?

For the most part, women are still not playing D&D. While, there might have been a very slight increase in the proportion of female gamers, this has to do with the increasing average age of D&D players. Older D&D enthusiasts have introduced their girlfriends, wives, and now even daughters to the hobby. There has also been a shift in the style of play away from the hack-n-slash dungeon crawls that tend to appeal to young males and not so much to females. Over the last decade or so, D&D campaigns that involve more character and plot development have become popular with some mature male players. As Julie Ratliff herself points out, this style of play also suits women.

The preference shown by female gamers for a particular style of play and for certain games that encourage this style (another point made by Julie Ratliff) suggests that there are real psychological differences between men and women. D&D, with its emphasis on combat, appears to tap aspects of the male psyche more effectively than it does features of the female. That's not just my opinion. It's a possibility mentioned by Dr. J. Eric Holmes, a physician and editor of one of the earliest versions of D&D, in his book *Fantasy Role Playing Games*. Gary Gygax goes even further when he states that "[as] a biological determinant, I think men think differently than women do, and games are basically a male pursuit" (cited from Computer Games Online at www.cdimag.com).

The shrewd marketing team at Wizards of the Coast (and the TSR marketing people before them) would know about such a fundamental difference between the sexes. It would not have escaped their notice that attempts to woo females using political "correctness" fall on deaf ears. That only leaves one explanation for the widespread politicization of D&D: an ideological agenda. The anonymous contributor to issue #280 was right all along, and Jason Moscatello wasn't.

Jason Moscatello then switches tack and adopts a position similar to Julie Ratliff's by claiming that D&D's use of feminist-friendly language and examples is merely more inclusive, and that an absence of such language is exclusive. He invites male readers to see D&D from a female perspective. I do not need to imagine what it must be like to be a minority; I am already a member of one of the most persecuted minorities in history. I am not just outnumbered among roleplaying gamers but also in society at large. There are very few references to my ethnic group in D&D. There never have been. That didn't stop me from becoming interested in the game nearly twenty years ago. If the rules had included contrived allusions to my culture, as they do now for women, it wouldn't have attracted a single additional player. If you're not interested in D&D, no amount of appealing to your race, creed, sex, or sexual orientation is going to change that.

Advocates of political "correctness" in D&D, such as Jason Moscatello and Julie Ratliff, might argue that it doesn't do any harm and might do some good, so there's no reason to exclude it. They fail to consider or simply don't care that there might be a downside to it. The con is that gamers who don't share Jason Moscatello's and Julie Ratliff's political beliefs feel alienated by D&D as it now stands. Jason Moscatello and Julie Ratliff should try to imagine what it must be like to be repeatedly reminded of an ideology with which they strongly disagree every time they open a D&D book or read a copy of *Dragon Magazine*.

I'm as dedicated a D&D fan as you'll find anywhere, but even I was dismayed at the politicization of D&D over the years, and I almost did not buy 3rd Edition because of it. Presumably, that's what Jason Moscatello and Julie Ratliff want: a game devoid of people who do not share their political opinions. That isn't inclusive of them at all.

Alexander F. Simkin, Ph.D.
London, England
My Wizard Can Beat Up Your Wizard

It seems likely that 1st-level wizards played by Robert Kloeckner (who wrote in "Forum" issue #284) would quickly die in any edition of D&D, as he habitually directs them to pick fights. This leads me to question Robert's ability to convincingly play a character of genius intelligence, if you get my drift.

In his examples, Robert has his wizard concentrating on doing damage with shocking grasp. If my character had 4 hit points, I'd be concentrating on avoiding damage. Why doesn't this alleged intellectual juggernaut charm his enemy? How about sleep? Color spray? Why does he even allow the opponent to get close enough to hit him (spider climb, mount, expeditious retreat, jump)? And if the new young wizard isn't prepared to fight this opponent, why is he out all alone causing trouble in the first place?

If we jump ahead to 6th level, Robert's comparison between wizard and fighter is just surreal. I once again affirm that if a wizard is going to go out looking for a dust-up, he must be assumed to be prepared for it—if not, he's just suicidal. I will leave out of the example the numerous low-level mercenaries such a wizard would hire to back him up; however, he has used divinations to find his enemies' location and look over their defenses.

Coming in sight of his enemies, my wizard reads off a few fireballs from scrolls, then softens them up further with summoned monsters, stinking cloud, hold person, ranged damage spells, and so on.

Just off the top of my head, if I ran a combat-obsessed, quasi-insane melee mage, he would go into this fight invisible, flying, mage-armored, shielded, and bearing a high-damage polearm with reach (I like the ranser). Since this mage considers his only function to be to hurt things, he has taken Expertise, Weapon Proficiency (ranser), and Weapon Focus as feats. He has cast upon himself bull's strength, cat's grace, protection from evil, protection from arrows, haste, and blink. My ranser is +2 (courtesy of greater magic weapon) and I have four true strike spells if I need them. (Note: all the protection-, enhancement-, and movement-oriented spells noted above are cast from scrolls just before the fight, leaving the mage's normal daily slots available for use during the melee. Although insane, he does have genius Intelligence.) Several times, I will be able to cause an opponent to lose an action (with daze), and if I drop low on hit points, I can use vampiric touch to even the score. Why does Robert's mage slouch into battle naked with nothing but two fireball spells? Is he really, really depressed?

There are numerous ways to combine the wizard's intelligence-gathering and environment-affecting abilities (not to mention his ability to craft exactly the scrolls, plus potions or wands, he needs), so that his enemies can be neutralized before they ever see him. Robert doesn't really seem to want to play a wizard. The appeal of this class is its versatility. The fighter is a terrifying opponent in a battle, but he's not much else; wizards are capable of invoking many different types of effects, and they can do a lot more than just cause damage. What if each of the 1st-level characters met a foreign enemy from whom they needed information? Suddenly charm person and comprehend languages stack up a lot better than 1d8+6 damage per round. Got 10,000 orcs in platemail coming at you? The smart money takes the 20th-level wizard's cloudkill, move earth, teleport, and wish as tactical options over the fighter's four attacks per round (even with Great Cleave or what-have-you).

Robert also seems to imply that the new edition is unavoidably more melee-oriented than previous editions. This is a bag of crap. You can't fight anything your DM doesn't throw at you; if you find yourself fighting more often than you enjoy, tell him or her. There's a great article for DMs in issue #284 that addresses this very problem.

Sometimes you can't blame the rules system.

J. Ormond * Chicago, IL

Math is Hard

In response to Robert Kloeckner's letter about wizards being unable to match a fighter in combat damage, I would like to point out that he was adding the fighter's base attack bonus to his damage rolls. Last I checked, a base attack
in the twelve years that I have been a DM, I have lifted, looted, and flat-out stolen ideas, characters, and situations from everywhere. I have borrowed Gandalf's supposed death in The Fellowship of the Ring; and one of my players' first characters was trapped in a caravan station, stalked by a demon remarkably similar to one of Giger's aliens. But far and away, the two most useful sources of inspiration for my campaign have been the Wheel of Time series by Robert Jordan and the JLA comic book.

Jordan's style of writing and characterization are a veritable "NPCs for Dummies." The Wheel of Time is the first series in which I actively remembered a host of small, bit characters. A simple speech pattern or odd mannerism was enough to make them stand out, and the background players actually do things important to the story. Jordan's writing style is also a tutorial on plotweaving (a term from a previous Dragon article) and advancing multiple stories at once.

The Wheel of Time series is also a rich mine not just for its sheer volume of content but also its support medium. There are a plethora of websites devoted to it; artwork is available on many of these sites, as well as the series-inspired Wheel of Time card game. Visualizing an encounter, scenario, or features of a character are half of the difficulty I have as a DM, and the ease of overcoming these obstacles is a key factor in presenting new material to my players. Also, all the pieces of myth and classic fantasy I would want to lift for my own uses are already there. There are classic instances everywhere, like Rand's taking a sword from the Stone of Tear—a fortress.

In my campaign, a very long and drawn-out back story resulted in a player character being retired to NPC status when he was polymorphed into a squirrel. He was then given to the party's wizard as a familiar, and under magical experimentation, was allowed to recall his former life as a human. The wizard spent a great deal of time and effort trying to restore Eathan to full humanity, only to create a human familiar—similar to the Warders of the Wheel of Time. I was halfway through the telling of this story when I noticed the similarities and just decided to use Warders as a template. Everyone at my table (most of them Jordan fans themselves) knew what these characters represented. This strong back story makes the campaign seem more real. If Eathan could just live up to the image of Lan Mandragoran ...

The second influence, the Justice League of America comic book, is much more recent. I have read comics for most of my life, but a recent story ("The Tower of Babel") prompted me to buy my first DC comic ever. The general premise was simple; Batman proved himself to be a control freak and possessed of tactics and technology he hoarded specifically to take down other members of the Justice League in case they ever went rogue. The plans and equipment are stolen and used against the League. The villain tries to enact his grand plan without their interference, only to be stopped at the last minute. The real story, however, was a half an issue of dialogue at the end, with debate on why Batman should be thrown out of the League on his pointy ear or allowed to stay.

In my campaign, a regular player's wife's first character was actually a mole, whose goal was to remove blackmail material from the party for a local crime lord (thank you Chris Perkins for your editorial on playing dirty). When the heist was successful and the party divided, both physically and in opinion of what to do next, the mole was revealed, and for the next half hour I sat back and watched some of the most intense and rewarding roleplaying I have ever seen. When they asked me why I was laughing so hard at them, I could only produce the "Tower of Babel" story, opened to the debate at the end. Except for the names, the words were the same.

Admittedly, both of these source materials are "high end," dealing with the fate of worlds or reality itself. But when we sit down to a table to play at being heroes, why settle for anything less? We have good landmarks in these source materials and others. The rest is forging our own path in a direction all our own, and that's where the real fun is.

Jim Castlebury  Address Withheld

Evil is as Evil Does

I was interested in Alexander H. MacLeod IV's question in "Forum" in Dragon #284. As a long-time gamer, I remember all of the press about the "evils" of Dungeons & Dragons. It was connected to violent tendencies in young people, drug use, satanism, and mental instability. It was blamed for unfortunate accidents and deaths. I think I still have some of the articles that connected the suicide of a young man with the game because the police found gaming materials in his room in their investigation.

I think things have changed somewhat. Fantasy and science fiction are more commonplace in entertainment (just take a look at the movie listings), and I think that this has softened the resistance not only to these genres but to roleplaying games as well. I also think that in education there has been a new resurgent push for creativity and imagination. We've begun to realize that there are more types of intelligence than math and verbal, and that these should be cultivated not only during childhood, but throughout life.

"Roleplaying" has become a perfectly acceptable training technique in all sorts of companies, at all levels. Telemarketers train this way, along with human resource employees and managers. So the public has come to accept the uses of roleplaying in learning and making a "better" employee. Throw this in the mix with the interest in the Middle Ages and futuristic settings, and I think you have a public that is better suited to accept D&D.

This is not to say that there isn't some resistance, though people do still look at me (a 31-year old college professor) and screw up their face when I tell them I play D&D. I think it's more because they don't really know what it's about. The public needs scapegoats (just look up articles on "slackers," Marilyn Manson, and goths), and they will find plenty of places to lay blame. D&D, unfortunately, was just in the wrong place at the wrong time.
So in all, I think D&D (kudos to the companies that stuck it through the rough times) isn’t completely out of the woods yet, there are still questions the public has, but with organized gaming clubs, conventions, TV shows, books, and movies making fantasy and sci-fi “cool,” those dense woods are thinning, and there looks to be sweet water ahead.

Sandra Salla • Address Withheld

**Father Knows Best**

After I read Elzabeth Maclain’s letter (“All in the Family” in *Dragon* 283) about her many happy experiences introducing her son to *Dungeons & Dragons*, I looked back on one of my own happy gaming memories. In 1979 or 1980, my brother and I had received the Basic Set for Christmas. As we sat down to scribble out our fighter and magic-user tag team, we had one problem: Who would be Dungeon Master?

My dad ended any argument (or just wanted us to pipe down), and volunteered his services. He had never read the rules nor showed any interest before, but like any dad he felt the need to keep up the whole dad image.

So there we all were sitting on the floor of our living room, playing *Keep on the Borderlands* and having the time of our lives. Dad did not play much after that first dungeon delve, but our friends were always allowed to play at our house, even when gaming came under fire. I look back at those times and really have to applaud him for letting our imagination blossom all those years ago, watching his boys and their friends spend harmless summer nights playing with funny-looking dice, a few pieces of paper, and boundless imagination.

I totally applaud Elzabeth for keeping her son focused on real-life concerns by not only rewarding him with gaming time but by including him in her own gaming group as well! He is truly a lucky young man, and I hope that these are the days that both of them will look back on as truly golden moments in their relationship.

So there we all were sitting on the

Scott Sloan
900 Copper Way
Vacaville, CA 95687

**Weasel Gamer**

I would just like to say that everyone should forget about Jean-Philippe’s sexist house rule from issue 281.

The real issue at hand is weasels. I’m looking in my *Monster Manual*, and I see this: Weasel, Tiny Animal, 1/8d8 (2 hp).

My first complaint starts here. I think a weasel should have a little more than 2 hp! I mean, come on! Weasels might get intestinal blockage very easily, but it’s not like they’re insects.

Also, I’d like to point out that a weasel’s challenge rating is 1/4. Gosh! It could at least be 1! Sure they’re tiny, but do you know how hard those things are to catch?

One last thing I want to point out is that weasels shouldn’t get the normal animal intelligence like all the other animals! They should have average human intellect, around 8 at least.

Weasels are truly intellectual creatures, capable of religion, poetry, culture, and politics. Give these creatures a little more credit!

Alex Strother • Augusta, GA

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**All an adventurer needs...**

The next two Slayer's Guides have arrived. Lavishly detailing Gnolls and Centaurs, these sourcebooks provide an invaluable resource for Games Masters and Players alike.

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Arcane Lore, Demonology.

Dare you tread the Dark Road?
Our game with good ideas this month is *Arcanum*, a fantasy/weird science roleplaying game from Sierra. *Arcanum* features a game world where both magic and technology thrive, although these two sources of power are often at odds.

One of many cool things about *Arcanum* is the ability to give your character a background. This background represents a part of your character's history, or a personal quirk, that affects your abilities. Backgrounds are different from feats or class- and race-based special abilities because they aren't completely beneficial. Such histories serve to further differentiate characters, as well as provide more opportunities for roleplaying.

**RAISING A PROPER ADVENTURER**

Naturally, a background should be chosen only when you create a new character, and a character should have only one background. These backgrounds are fairly balanced, but some are going to be more useful or powerful than others. DMs should carefully consider each before allowing characters to have one, and DMs might want to require interested players to pick a background instead of an initial feat.

**BORN UNDER A SIGN**

It is said that when Kellogg the Ranger was born, the moon stayed full for three days, and it was taken as a sign that his destiny was to do great things. While his adventuring career was mostly unremarkable, stories are still told of the time he slew a hill giant with a single shot from his bow.

Your birth was marked by a peculiar astrological event, or possibly a volcanic eruption. For whatever reason, you tend to score critical hits less often, but they are more spectacular.

**Benefit:** Whenever you score a successful critical hit, roll a d6. On a roll of 1–3 the hit is instead treated as a normal hit, and damage is resolved normally. On a roll of 4–6 the multiplier is increased by 1. For example, if a critical hit would deal x2 damage, it deals x3 damage instead.

**Note:** If your campaign includes critical failures, they should similarly be affected by a character with this background.

**WARNING**

The material proposed in this article might present a threat to the balance of your D&D game.
HYDROPHOBIC

Elias Catspaw was the greatest thief and escape artist of his time, and it was said that no prison could hold him. Such was not the case. After his capture, he was left abandoned on a small isle not even a half mile offshore. There he lived the rest of his days. His secret had been discovered.

You are deathly afraid of the water. A lifetime of making up excuses and explanations for avoiding anything to do with water has made you a skillful liar.

Benefit: You gain a +4 bonus to Bluff checks. Your character will never willingly go into water (or other liquids), nor will he ride a boat if he can avoid it. When in or on water, your character suffers a -4 morale penalty to Dexterity, Intelligence, and Will saves but gains a +2 morale bonus to Strength out of sheer terror.

LADY’S MAN

James Bard was the only man in the city who could call the Queen “wench” to her face and keep his tongue in his head. He always had a way with the ladies, no matter their station.

You have a gift for dealing with members of the opposite gender. Alas, persons of the same gender tend to view you with suspicion and jealousy.

Benefit: In any Charisma-based skill check involving a person of opposite gender, you gain a +4 circumstance bonus to the roll. If the check involves a person of the same gender, you suffer a -4 circumstance penalty to the roll.

NIGHT MAGE

While it is certain that Mervin’s parents were human, there were those who said there was a drow somewhere in his ancestry. How else to explain his spells’ increased efficacy during the night and how they’d wane during the day?

Your spellcasting seems to be attuned to the moon; it is more powerful during the night and weaker during the day.

Benefit: Add +3 to the Difficulty Class of the saving throws of your spells cast at night. Your spells cast during the day suffer a -3 penalty to the DC of their saving throws.

Note: There could also be Day Mages, but Arcanum’s “Indoor Mage” and “Outdoor Mage” are probably a bit too unbalancing.

RAISED BY SNAKE HANDLERS

“Crikey!” exclaimed Irwin the ranger, raising his hand to see a scorpion attached to it, stinging him with enthusiasm. The cleric rushed to give aid, but Irwin waved her off. “It’s no problem, mate, I’ve been bitten by worse.”

You were raised by a family of snake handlers.

Benefit: You gain a +4 bonus to Fortitude saves versus poison. Unfortunately, all the bite scars on your body give you a -2 modifier to any Charisma-based skill check.

SHELTERED CHILD

Hubert II was not the man his father was. Feeble, sickly, and ill-tempered, a career as a wandering adventurer seemed right for him—Hubert II tended to wear out his welcome wherever he went.

Your character was coddled and protected as a child. Such soft treatment and isolation did nothing for you physically, and you don’t deal with people well, but your parents spared nothing on your education, giving you an agile mind.

Benefit: You gain a +2 bonus to Intelligence and Wisdom. You also suffer a -2 penalty to Strength, Constitution, and Charisma.

These backgrounds are just the beginning. A good DM, with the help of her players, should have little trouble working out more. Because there is a negative aspect to them, and because characters are limited to one, backgrounds can be somewhat better than feats. Still, you should be careful to keep things balanced, especially if ability scores are modified (the chart on page 24 of the Dungeon Master’s Guide is very helpful in such cases).
This month, the Sage considers questions about Defenders of the Faith and ponders a few other items of interest to clerics and paladins.

When an arcane spellcaster gets access to the spells from one of the prestige domains from *Defenders of the Faith*, do those spells become arcane spells? If so, doesn’t that mean that any arcane caster can learn them?

An arcane caster who gains access to the spells in a prestige domain can cast those spells as arcane spells, but they’re still divine spells as far as the rest of the multiverse is concerned.

An arcane caster with access to a prestige domain could use spell trigger items that use spells on the prestige domain list, but could not read divine scrolls with those spells on them. If an arcane caster put a prestige domain spell on a scroll, it would be an arcane scroll, and only another arcane caster with access to that domain (or a character with the Use Magic Device skill) could use the scroll.

Sorcerers or bards who get access to a prestige domain add the domain’s spells to the lists of spells they know, and wizards who get access to a prestige domain add the domain’s spells to their spellbooks. These spells do not get added to the bard or sorcerer/wizard class list, and other bards, sorcerers, or wizards cannot learn them without first gaining access to the prestige domain.

Page 77 of *Defenders of the Faith* says you get another spell of each level when you gain a prestige domain. Does this extra spell have to be a domain spell? That is, could a wizard cast an extra *magic missile* each day, or could he cast only an extra domain spell?

In most cases, the prestige class specifies how you can use the added spellcasting level. The warpriest specifies divine spellcasting but goes on to say that if you have more than one divine spellcasting class, you can choose which one you apply it to.

The divine oracle and sacred exorcist are the only two classes in *Defenders of the Faith* that don’t specify how you can use the added spellcasting levels, and the book’s designers assure me that’s intentional. You can add the spellcasting level to an arcane spellcasting class if you like.

Many of the prestige classes in *Defenders of the Faith* have the ability to cast divine spells, but their levels don’t stack for spells-per-day calculations. Even though both classes are casting the same spells, and all are divine spells, should you still record the available spells separately (as opposed to adding the available numbers together)? A similar situation exists for clerics and paladins (and, for that matter, wizards and sorcerers.)

As “Sage Advice” has pointed out before, you keep a separate list of spells for each class when you’re a multiclassed spellcaster. The spellcasting abilities from your classes don’t stack in any way. For example, if you’re a 5th-level cleric and 5th-level wizard, your caster level is 5 in each class.

The descriptive paragraph for the sacred fist prestige class in *Defenders of the Faith* mentions that they can cast only spells with a range of touch; however, this is not mentioned in the Class Features section. The Code of Conduct section mentions only a prohibition against weapons and medium and heavy armor. The Spell List section mentions the restriction to spells with a range of touch or personal, but that seems to imply that only spells gained as a sacred fist have this restriction. Does it apply to all spells a sacred fist character can cast, even those which were gained as another class? Also, does a sacred fist lose his class abilities if he uses spells (arcane or divine) from other classes that have a range other than touch or personal?

Sacred fists can use whatever spells they have freely, whatever their range entries. Sacred fists cannot use weapons; spells are not “weapons” for purposes of the sacred fist’s code of conduct. Passing references to a ban on ranged spells are unwanted artifacts from an earlier version of the class.

This is official errata.

The sacred fist seems to be the only prestige class in *Defenders of the Faith* that gives access to an additional domain but does not add levels to an existing spellcasting class to determine the number of spells per day. Does this mean that the domain spells follow the progression of the sacred fist class? For example, say that Lyrian is a cleric 5/sacred fist 4 who chose the Celerity...
domain as a sacred fist; would he be able to cast Air Walk (Celerity 3) because he can cast 3rd-level spells as a cleric 8, or would he be restricted to cat’s grace (Celerity a) because he is only a sacred fist? What if Lyrian was a cleric/fighter 4/sacred fist 4?

When you add a domain as a sacred fist, you add that domain to your sacred fist spellcasting ability. You get the granted power from the domain. As a divine spellcaster who is not a cleric, you get one extra domain spell each day for each level of spell you can cast as a sacred fist (see the discussion of prestige domains on page 77 of Defenders of the Faith). Since both versions of the character in your example have 4 sacred fist levels, the character would gain the 1st- and 2nd-level Celerity spells (blur and cat’s grace) as domain spells.

Does the sacred fist’s unarmed damage stack with the monk’s unarmed strike damage? Does the sacred fist’s puissant fists ability stack with the monk’s ki strike ability?

A monk/sacred fist uses her sacred fist unarmed damage or the monk unarmed damage, whichever is better. Likewise, the character uses her ki strike or puissant fist ability, whichever bypasses the most damage reduction.

Does the sacred fist’s evasion and uncanny dodge abilities stack with the abilities of the same name that a character might have from another class?

If the sacred fist already has these powers from another class, he can add his sacred fist levels to the existing class levels (or vice versa) to determine when he gets them and how powerful they are.

The sacred fist’s spell list includes spells of level 0 through 5, yet the class table only shows spells of level 1 to 4. The level 0 and level 5 lists are errors. This is official errata.

The description for the hospitaler prestige class in Defenders of the Faith first says a hospitaler gains levels as a cleric for purposes of spell-casting as well as full access to all cleric spells, and then later it says the hospitaler levels are simply added to the existing class levels (under Spells per Day). Which one is right?

The first entry (Spells) is incorrect. Use the second entry (Spell per Day) instead. In addition, Table 3-7 should have a Spells per Day column, which should read “+1 level of existing class” at each level. This is official errata.

The table for the hospitaler prestige class shows the ability to turn undead at 1st level. However, the class description has no mention of this ability. Does it stack with pre-existing turning ability, or is it a misprint and an ability not available to the class?

Hospitalers gain the ability to turn undead at 3rd level, not 1st level. The character turns undead at the hospitaler level, -2. This stacks with undead turning from other classes. Add the character’s hospitaler level -2 to the class level for any other class that has turning ability. For example, a 6th-level cleric/4th-level hospitaler turns undead as an 8th-level character. Note that paladins also use their class level -2 to determine their undead turning level, so a 6th-level paladin/4th-level hospitaler level turns undead as a 6th-level character. This is official errata.

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**HORSE SENSE**

The *Monster Manual* lists the heavy horse and heavy war horses as having a base speed of 50 feet. Yet page 143 of the *Player's Handbook* says a heavy horse has a base (unburdened) movement of 40 miles per day (which equates to a speed of 60) and a heavy warhorse has a base (unburdened) movement of 32 miles per day (which equates to a speed of 40). Which is correct?

The *Monster Manual* is correct. Both the heavy horse and the heavy warhorse have the same base speed and daily movement rate (50 feet, 40 miles a day).

It seems that when a creature is burdened (carrying a medium or heavy load) its movement is reduced. But what is the formula for that reduction? Is it simply reducing the speed by 10 feet? (For creatures with base speeds of 40 feet and 30 feet that works.) Or does the creature lose some fraction of its speed? How does this encumbered movement affect a creature's speed on the local or overland scale?

Encumbered movement is explained on page 142 in the *Player's Handbook* (Table 9-2). You can figure out any creature's encumbered movement by comparing base speed to Table 9-2 (which shows base speeds of 20 and 30 feet.) To find encumbered speed for other creatures, just add up the values for slower creatures. For example a creature with speed of 60 moves twice as fast as a creature with a speed of 30, so it's encumbered speed is 40 feet.

**COMMON ENCUMBERED SPEEDS ARE:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speed</th>
<th>100</th>
<th>90</th>
<th>80</th>
<th>70</th>
<th>60</th>
<th>50</th>
<th>40</th>
<th>30</th>
<th>20</th>
<th>15</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enc. Speed</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You can use the same method to find a creature's speed on the local or overland scales.

**COMMON LOCAL AND OVERLAND SPEEDS ARE:**

**ONE MINUTE (LOCAL)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speed*</th>
<th>100</th>
<th>90</th>
<th>80</th>
<th>70</th>
<th>60</th>
<th>50</th>
<th>40</th>
<th>30</th>
<th>20</th>
<th>15</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Walk</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hustle</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>1,800</td>
<td>1,600</td>
<td>1,400</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run (×3)</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>2,700</td>
<td>2,400</td>
<td>2,100</td>
<td>1,800</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run (×4)</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>3,600</td>
<td>3,200</td>
<td>2,800</td>
<td>2,400</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>1,600</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ONE HOUR (OVERLAND)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speed*</th>
<th>100</th>
<th>90</th>
<th>80</th>
<th>70</th>
<th>60</th>
<th>50</th>
<th>40</th>
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<th>20</th>
<th>15</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Walk</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hustle</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ONE DAY (OVERLAND)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speed*</th>
<th>100</th>
<th>90</th>
<th>80</th>
<th>70</th>
<th>60</th>
<th>50</th>
<th>40</th>
<th>30</th>
<th>20</th>
<th>15</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Walk</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Use normal or encumbered speed, whichever applies to the creature.

**Overland movement is measured in miles.**

There is a sidebar titled Ghosts and Vampires on page 67 of *Defenders of the Faith*. The sidebar says a master of shrouts can choose to summon these creatures in place of those a master of shrouts could normally summon. However, the number summoned is not shown, and this ability is not referred to in the main text for the prestige class. How many vampires or ghosts are summoned?

The sidebar in question shouldn't be there at all (it was supposed to be cut from the book). You can ignore the sidebar, or you can assume that the character can summon ghosts or vampires of the same CR as the other undead the character can summon, and in the same numbers. Each use counts against the character's total summoning limit for the day. Because both ghosts and vampires are template creatures with variable abilities, you'll need to create statistics for the creatures ahead to in the main text for the prestige class. How many vampires or ghosts should be summoned?

The description for the battle rod on page 25 of *Defenders of the Faith* mentions that the item gives allies a +2 morale bonus but does not specify what this bonus affects. Saves against fear effects.

The knight of the chalice prestige class from *Defenders of the Faith* specifically says the class has powers that affect demons. Does this exclude devils, or does "demons" in this sense mean all lower planar creatures (demons, devils, and so on)?

It means demons (denizens of the Abyss). If the power worked against all lower planar creatures, it would say so, or it would use the term "fiends."

Page 90 in the *Player's Handbook* has a rule that says the various racial deities can only have clerics of the correct races. For example, only dwarves can be clerics of Moradin. Does this rule also apply to other divine spellcasters, such as rangers and paladins?
No. The rule is only for clerics. Technically, the rule governing cleric alignments on page 30 of the Player's Handbook also only applies to clerics. Paladins and rangers, for example, can have alignments considerably different from the deities they serve (though paladins by practical necessity serve good deities, usually lawful good deities).

I'm thinking about making a wizard character multiclassed by adding a level of cleric. The wizard has a familiar. When the wizard starts gaining levels as a cleric, can the familiar deliver cleric spells that have touch range?

If the character already is at least a 3rd-level wizard, the character has the touch ability, and the familiar can deliver any spell with a range of touch that the master casts, no matter what class the spell is from. The familiar also can share any spell the master casts (subject to the limits of that ability). The character's cleric levels, however, don't increase the familiar's natural armor, Intelligence, or special abilities.

Can a multiclassed character who can cast both divine and arcane spells use the spells from one class to affect spells from another class? For example, can a cleric/wizard cast spectral hand and use it to deliver a cleric spell with a touch range?

Unless the spell description specifically says it only works on a certain kind of spell, it will work on any spell the character casts. The spectral hand description says the spell works on any touch range spell of 4th level or lower; the effect is not limited to arcane spells.

Would it be possible to multiclass as two different types of cleric and gain four domain powers?

No, you can take a class only once.

One of the protection from evil spell's effects grants the subject a +2 deflection bonus to Armor Class and a +2 resistance bonus on saves. Both of these bonuses apply against attacks made by evil creatures. To cast a spell isn't an attack action but a magic action. Does that mean that the bonus from protection from evil only applies if the caster of the spell has to make a touch attack or ranged touch attack to affect the protected target? Or does it apply to any spells cast by evil creatures?

A spell is an “attack” whenever its target, area, or effect includes a foe. See Special Spell Effects on page 152 of the Player's Handbook.

It's possible that both the Armor Class and the save bonus from protection from evil could apply to the same effect. For example, the disintegrate spell produces a ray that requires a ranged touch attack, so the protection from evil spell's deflection bonus to Armor Class applies to that attack if the spell's caster is evil. Disintegrate also allows a Fortitude save. If the caster is evil, a protection from evil spell provides a saving throw bonus as well.
Get Yourself Some Sub-Culture

As you draw nearer to the encamped caravaneers, you see that they’re halflings. Their wagons are colorfully painted. Some of them seem to be readying a performance of some kind for the crowd of gawking farmers gathered around them. Others are laying their wares out on tables.

Great! You’re playing a halfling—you go talk to them and see if they’ll lend us the money to construct that winch we need.

[In character, as Rœdrolling the Wastes-Walker] “Hmph! Halflings they might be, but of the most common sort. I was raised in the Gravid Steppes far from the fripperies of such frivolous folk.”

Last month, we addressed the role that stereotypes fulfill in making roleplaying easier. When you begin, you can take race and class descriptions straight from the rulebook and teach yourself to portray a character by sticking to the traits provided. Then, as you get the itch to expand your repertoire a little, you can use the stereotypes as a basic theme over which you can lay your own variations.

This month, let’s take that idea one step further. Concentrating specifically on racial traits, we’ll look at ways in which you can annex your own tiny corner of the DM’s world to customize it according to your own preferences.

The D&D races are popular because they’re familiar, easy to understand, and fun to play. Within that basic familiarity, though, lies plenty of room for individual interpretation. Most people who’ve read a certain amount of fantasy fiction, or gamed for a while, develop their own favorite takes on the major races. Look at elves, for example. You might prefer the noble, vanishing aristocrats of Tolkien’s Middle-Earth, or the fierce, Nordic weirdlings of Poul Anderson’s The Broken Sword. Even the D&D game’s standard portrayal of elves has evolved over the years, so sourcebooks and articles published at different times depict elves in slightly varying ways.

In her campaign, your DM has either chosen her favorite version of elves or (more likely) mixed and matched elements to create her own hybrid. During play, you might have heard the phrase “well, in my world, elves are . . .” on numerous occasions. The flexibility that D&D allows her in doing this is, of course, one of its great strengths.

Just as there’s no rule that says your DM has to stick to the current, “official” interpretation of D&D races, there’s also no reason for you to constrain your own creativity when playing non-human characters. Maybe you feel your DM goes too far in playing halflings as comic Englishmen. You still fondly remember your favorite character, a grim, survivalist halfling from an old Dark Sun campaign. You’d like to turn your current halfling character into a spiritual cousin of this long-dead predecessor.

The way to do this is to get the DM’s permission to create a sub-culture. Logically speaking, no race should have one monolithic culture. In the real world, humans have thrown up a dazzling variety of cultures with different organizations, beliefs, and customs. Any article on a D&D culture should be read as if it contains a zillion invisible qualifiers, reminding you that the statements it makes are general, that regional variations are immense, and that somewhere in the world there’s a group that turns every fact in the article on its head. (Excessive qualifiers turn any piece of writing into a boring, mushy mess, so they’re kept invisible for good reason.)
There is a right way and a wrong way to make this request of your DM. **Right Way:** "I'd like my halfling to come from an area where they have to be tough to survive and learn from an early age that the world is full of horrible dangers."

**Wrong Way:** "Your halflings chew rubber monkey lungs."

In other words, make it clear that you don't want to trample her cherished portrayal of the race in question. Your PC will come from a distant, isolated locale, and his sub-culture is an exception to the rule.

When you create a sub-culture, start by listing the cultural traits you want your character to have. Since this PC might be the only one of his people to show up in a game, there's no need to twist yourself into knots creating a culture and then determining how far the character deviates from it. Make the PC's values and the culture's the same. Be prepared for the DM to throw some changes at you if the PC returns home, or if your sub-culture otherwise captures her imagination and leads her to create NPCs brought up in it.

Next, take the standard racial description in the Player's Handbook and make a list of its major traits. Let's say that the DM tells you that her halflings are comfort-loving homebodies possessed of great curiosity, a mania for collecting, and an outgoing nature. The list will look like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Culture</th>
<th>Sub-Culture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>curiosity</td>
<td>alertness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>collecting</td>
<td>own only what you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comfort</td>
<td>austerity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>homebodies</td>
<td>wanderers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>outgoing</td>
<td>haughty sense of superiority</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You don't have to make every sub-cultural value the opposite of the baseline culture. If you depart too much from the norm, you might leave the DM and other players wondering why you bothered with this race at all. Make sure that your sub-culture maintains a balance of negative and positive traits, and that your PC (if not others of his kind) has a reason to adventure and to cooperate with other party members.

You can write up a full description of the sub-culture in the format used for the Player's Handbook races, or just stick to your point-form chart.

The advantage of creating a sub-culture for your character is that you feel an increased sense of creative involvement with your PC in particular, and the campaign as a whole. You get to play the race the way you see it, escaping the constraints the DM's standard version would otherwise place on you.

However, there are consequences to keep in mind. Your PC won't be able to mix with others of his race as smoothly as an off-the-rack character could. The standard halflings of your DM's world might look askance at him. He's probably a wanderer, far from his community. Others might regard him as an object of curiosity, bringing unwanted attention. If he wears war paint and a loin-cloth when the standard local attire for his race is a tunic, leggings, and cloak, he'll find it hard to remain inconspicuous while on his daily rounds.

As long as you're aware of the pitfalls, these disadvantages should fall into the category of entertaining challenge, not game-halting irritation.

So the next time the DM interprets your favorite race in your least favorite way, don't just fret. Instead, add something to her campaign.

PLAYER: That doesn't mean you'll annoy them and start a fight, does it?

YOU: "Hmph! My people do not shed our blood for trivial causes! I shall be the soul of diplomacy, as always!"

PLAYER: Maybe we should send the half-ore . . .
Janda's Valley, Part II

Last month, we started thinking about building a settlement to serve as the players’ “home base” during the early portion of the Lost World campaign. After a bit of soul-searching, we settled upon an isolated, easily defensible valley that is home to a self-exiled Solamani (elven) sorceress named Janda, as well as her followers. Not only is Janda’s Valley one of the few relatively civilized communities across the whole of the Lost World, it’s also one of the few permanent settlements in which members of all the region’s most important tribes live side-by-side.

Last month, we created a relatively sophisticated backstory for the Valley along with a few juicy secrets (as required by the Second Rule of Dungeoncraft). This month, let’s begin detailing Janda’s Valley. When we first crafted a home base (the Ironoak Stronghold for the Aris campaign, way back in *Dragon* #260 and #261), the result was rather sketchy, providing only as much information as we needed to give the players, with a few essential services and an overall impression of what their life was like between adventures. This time, let’s create enough detail to run the occasional “town adventure” set in the base. The result should provide a solid example of a well-detailed home base that you can use as a blueprint for your campaign. This level of detail is usually not essential at this stage in a campaign’s development, but it can prove useful. If you think you have the time and motivation to create a detailed base, the effort is probably worthwhile. If you’re pressed for time or you’re just anxious to start playing, though, you should stick with the less detailed approach we adopted in the earlier installment.

The Map

The first thing we need is a nice detailed map of the area. You’ve heard this advice before, but it’s worth repeating: when drawing a map for use with a Dungeons & Dragons campaign, it’s almost always a good idea to use graph paper. That way, you’ll be able to quickly judge distances, ranges, movement rates, and all sorts of other rules-related quantities quickly and easily during play. It’s especially important to use graph paper when sketching out Janda’s Valley, since we hope to run adventures set here.

When drawing just about any map, the first thing to consider is scale—just how big is the area you’re trying to map? Once you decide upon an appropriate scale, you can quickly calculate the distance each square on the graph paper should represent. Janda’s Valley should house a series of tents and structures spread out across a quarter mile or so, all neatly contained within a mountain pass. Since my graph paper sports five squares to the inch, a page is about 40 squares from top to bottom. A quarter mile is 1,320 feet, which translates into just about thirty feet per square to make the map stretch across the length of a single sheet of paper. This is a pretty good scale for mapping a town or village. It’s small enough that your maps can feature individual buildings and landmarks, but large enough that the resulting village map is conveniently sized.
Try beginning with two sheets of blank paper when drawing your maps. On the first, make a rough sketch of the layout; this lets you gauge approximate shapes and distances. On the same sheet, make a list of all the locations the map should ultimately feature, then plot their general vicinities on the sketch. During this first phase, you'll probably experiment with the overall shape of the terrain and move lots of features all over the page until everything is placed to your satisfaction. Only after the preliminary sketch is complete should you try to draw the final map (on the second sheet), filling in all the necessary details. Basically, this method allows you to make nice clean maps without lots of messy erasing, letting you tweak the map as you compose it.

There's no special processes to arrive at such a list. Just freely brainstorm on two specific topics—what sort of features Janda and her guests would logically need to survive, and what features might be interesting or "cool." We'll address the reasoning behind each location in their individual descriptions later, but for now, here are the results for Janda's Valley:

- Two well-defended gates
- Ruins
- Guard Barracks
- Guard Kennel
- Pterosaur Aerie
- Stream
- Manor dwellings
- A tangled mass of dwellings for less wealthy inhabitants
- A fishing area
- A primitive agriculture center
- A "moot circle"
- A tent bazaar
- A temple
- A large palace for Janda

Once the list of locations is complete and the map has been drawn, it's time to start writing detailed notes on each of the map's most important features. Although this takes a lot of work, resist the urge to "wing it" and trust your map and memory alone to get you through once play begins. Improvising on such a grand scale is a skill that only the very finest Dungeon Masters possess, and appropriate preparation vastly improves even their games.

As a general rule, the more prepared you are for your game sessions, the more fun they'll be.

Your notes on a detailed base might look like those below. Any "behind the scenes" comments appear beneath the notes in italicized text. Again, if you don't think you have the time or inclination to draw up notes that are this detailed, just shelve the whole project for now and create a less detailed base using the approach adopted last time.

As a general rule, you should use your location notes to capture three things:

1. Details you might forget. When you look back at your map later, you might not remember what you meant by "Merchant Quarter." (What merchants? What do they sell?) For this reason, it's generally a good idea to record as much info as you can. As you write, though, don't forget the First Rule of Dungeoncraft. Right now, you definitely don't need to know how those merchants came to this village, where they made their money or how their parents died.

2. Descriptive details that help bring the location to life. One of the main dividends you'll earn by developing your home base in detail is a whole host of descriptive tidbits that will help the setting come to life in the imaginations of your players. As a general rule, the more work you put into your
creation, the more real it will seem and
the more memorable your campaign will
become. For this reason, you might try
to come up with one or two distinctive
features for each of the locations on
your map. As you provide descriptions
during play, you can consistently
emphasize these features to make
the location more vivid in the players’
imaginations.

3. Notes that will help you resolve
mechanical situations that might arise
during play. If you plan on running the
occasional town adventure set in your
home base, you might need to know
how often the guards patrol each part
of town, the Difficulty Classes of
various locks, and all sorts of other
mechanical details. When you’re creat¬
ing your initial notes, it’s a good idea to
anticipate as many of these needs as possible and jot down some quick
answers so you won’t have to stop and
think about some of these things once
play begins.

We discussed the tax and the reasoning
behind it in last month’s installment.

Janda’s Valley—General Notes
Taxation: Everyone who enters the val¬
ley must pay a tax equivalent to 30% of
all the coins and other valuables he
is carrying. This tax applies to gems,
jewels, and trade goods, but not to
magical items or personal equipment (like
weapons and adventuring gear). During
the day, when both gates leading into
the valley are open, one of Janda’s
minor bureaucrats is usually stationed
at each entrance to appraise every
visitor’s valuables and collect
the tax.

Anyone caught entering the valley
without paying the tax (or concealing
items in order to pay a reduced
amount) must instead pay a 50% tax
and spend two weeks in the Pits
(described later). If the guilty party is
unable to pay the tax once appreh‐
hended, he must pay in the form of
menial labor (usually maintenance work
on the valley’s structures).

Janda’s Valley—Keyed Locations
Janda’s Soldiers: Janda’s soldiers
wear scale mail and are armed with
stone glaives and shortswords. They
have the following statistics:

Soldier, Elf Ftr: CR 1; Medium
Humanoid; HD 1d10+1; hp 11; Init +2; Spd
30 ft.; AC 16; Atk +2 melee (1d10+1/crit
x3, glaive), or +2 melee (1d6+1/crit 19-20,
short sword); SQ Elven racial traits;
AL LN; SV Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +1; Str
12, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 12.
Skills: Climb +4, Intimidate +4, Listen
+7, Spot +7, Search +5.

Feats: Alertness, Lightning Reflexes.

Obviously, these statistics will come in
handy in all sorts of situations once
play begins. The fact that all of Janda’s
soldiers are 1st-level fighters is some¬
what extraordinary (normally, they’d be
warriors as described on page 39 of
the Dungeon Master’s Guide). The Lost
World is a tough place, though, and
Janda’s crew is supposed to be special.

Janda’s Valley—Keyed Locations
1. Main Gate: The largest mountain pass
that leads into the valley is approxi‐
mately 600 feet across. A large plateau
(30 feet tall) divides the pass into two
sections. Shortly after they moved in,
Janda and her followers built solid
stoneworks across both sections. Each
of the stoneworks consists of two par¬
allel walls (25 feet high and 3 feet thick)
separated by about 20 feet. A couple of
iron portcullises in the inner wall
provide access to the hollow space
between the walls. The whole structure
is covered with a wooden catwalk and
stone parapets, allowing Janda’s troops
to man the walls and fend off invaders.

Ten soldiers man the larger stonework
at all times. Four soldiers man the
smaller. Atop the larger stonework is
one of the soldiers’ signal horns.

In the midst of the larger stonework
is the massive main gate that was
constructed from the ribs of a
diplodocus (a huge dinosaur) and
reinforced with iron. The gate is opened
and closed by four of the soldiers atop
the stonework turning a pair of huge
cranks. Opening or closing the gate
requires a Strength check (DC 28). The
soldiers normally take 20 and use the
Cooperation rules, allowing them to
automatically open or close the gate in
two minutes, or 20 combat rounds.
Attempts to move the gate any faster
or with fewer participants might fail.

Under normal circumstances, the gate
is opened every morning at dawn
and closed each night at dusk. If the gate is
open when the signal horn is blown, the
soldiers immediately begin to close it.

Just inside the gate are the remains
of two enormous statues of triceratops
dinosaurs. The statues were built hun‐
dreds of years earlier by the lizardfolk
civilization that once dominated the Lost
World (see The Ruins entry next issue).

There are archways in both walls of
the stonework that block the smaller
portion of the mountain pass in order
to allow a stream to flow through and
into the valley. Both archways are
covered, however, by a series of iron
bars that run from the top of the arch
donw several feet into the bed of the
stream. The bars allow water and small
fish to pass through, but prevent larger
creatures (like humans) from using the
stream to enter the valley undetected.

Most of the bars are severely rusted
below the waterline, though, and can be

The more work you put into your creation,
the more real it will seem.
broken (Strength check, DC 23). This is the gate the adventurers will usually use to pass in and out of the valley. Most of these notes are intended to help resolve various mechanical situations that might arise during play. Because we know exactly how high the walls are, for instance, we can easily resolve any attempt to climb them. The notes on opening and closing the main gate might come in handy in a whole lot of situations. Suppose, for instance, that a fugitive is being chased by Janda’s soldiers and attempts to run out through the gate. Can the soldiers atop the wall close the gate in time to block his exit if they only have a few rounds’ notice? The rusty bars under the stream are meant to provide clever players with a way they might slip into the valley without being noticed (and without paying their taxes).

The giant dinosaur statues are a descriptive detail that we hope to use to help the players form a mental image of the valley.

2. Curtain Walls: These structures are almost identical to the stoneworks that form the main gate. They are situated on the first rise on either end of the main valley entrance, making it even harder for invaders or predators to penetrate the complex. Four soldiers are stationed on each curtain wall at all times.

3. Oat Field and Mill. Wild oats grow over this part of the valley and a few enterprising souls have erected a primitive mill that they use to grind the grain into flour. They sell their output to Janda and her followers, various other residents of the valley, and the merchants who often pass through (see the Merchant’s Entrance entry next month). For the most part, this is as close as it gets to organized agriculture on the Lost World. There isn’t a more sophisticated agricultural operation for many miles around.

In total, there are approximately twenty commoners (assume they are all 1st level) operating the mill. They all live in tents on the outskirts of the oat field.

Some primitive agriculture helps explain what the residents of the valley eat and makes food more plentiful here. Since food will be relatively scarce across most of the environment, the adventurers will need convenient food sources where they can stock up before venturing out into the cruel world.

Next month, let’s pick up where we left off and continue to detail the keyed locations of Janda’s Valley, deciding why each site is important for later adventures.
Illustrator Mark Price is the conceptual artist for The World of Khoras (www.khoras.net) and has recently published his own comic book, Arm's Length. His sketch-booky style serves to bring out the quirks of this eclectic group of characters.
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Over the last six or seven months, “Role Models” has guided you into the miniatures painting hobby—from the very first steps of preparing and assembling your miniatures, to some of the techniques you use to create lighting effects, to dealing with different types of miniatures. All of the methods we have covered are equally applicable to painting any type of model. Thus, whether you’re painting orcs or Napoleonic soldiers, the techniques will stand you in good stead.

Starting this month, we’ll change tack slightly and look at collecting and painting miniatures for a specific game—Dungeons & Dragons: Chainmail. Even if you aren’t a Chainmail player, every installment will still include lots of useful information about miniature painting in general. If you do decide that you want to collect a warband and play Chainmail, “Role Models” will be your native guide through the whole process, showing you the exciting opportunities and fresh challenges involved.

**Chainmail!**

How does painting for Chainmail differ from painting for the D&D roleplaying game? Not much. Painting fur on a Chainmail miniature is basically the same as painting fur on a roleplaying miniature. What we will be looking at is how the techniques you have already learned apply to a different way of painting miniatures.

Chainmail is a skirmish miniatures game, one in which you collect a force of miniatures and pit them against another player in a tabletop battle. The great thing about skirmish games is that you don’t need many miniatures, so you can assemble and paint your faction in a short time. Indeed, time-saving techniques are one of the first things we will consider. We’ve already looked at how to paint an orc, but how do you adapt the techniques to paint ten at once?

Another point to bear in mind when collecting and painting miniatures for Chainmail is group identity. This may sound complex, but in reality it’s just a way to paint all the miniatures in your force so that they link together. In future articles we’ll be looking at each of the factions in turn, examining the colors and iconography they use. First, however, we’ll start with some basic techniques you can employ to link all of the models in your faction together into a cohesive group.

**Production-Line Painting**

When you start painting miniatures for Chainmail, you will have to adapt the techniques for painting single miniatures to deal with larger numbers of similar models. You must learn how to work on groups of miniatures together rather than one at a time, and there are a couple of reasons for this. The most obvious is that you want to be able to assemble and paint your warband quickly, so you can field your force and get on with conquering the Sundered Empire. But another reason is that working on several miniatures at the same time ensures that the colors match and the figures work better as a group. This kind of painting is often called “production line painting.” What are the differences between painting single miniatures and production line painting?

First, you should work out a series of processes: clean up all the castings together, then assemble them at the same time, then undercoat them at the same time. You’ll be amazed how much time you’ll save by putting all the miniatures through the same process at once. It doesn’t really take much more time to undercoat so miniatures than one.

You also need to start thinking of the miniatures as a group rather than as individuals. Each model doesn’t need to stand up to close scrutiny; the point is that they work well as a group. Remember that these aren’t display pieces, and the way they look together is more important than how they look singly.

Let’s start by looking at an example of how you would go about assembling and painting a warband for Chainmail. As when you are painting anything, the first thing to do is clean and assemble the castings. Get all the components out of the packaging and put them all together (making sure you don’t confuse the pieces from different models). Then go over each one in turn, clipping off flash and filing away any mold lines. You might want to put all the cleaned pieces in a box so you know which are finished. Next they need to be assembled and glued to bases. Work through

**1 Remove Flash**

Any small bits of manufacturing metal should be carefully trimmed or filed off.

**2 Mount Bases**

Attach any pieces and mount all of your miniatures onto the bases at the same time.
1. **Mount to Strip**
   Mount your miniatures to a popsicle stick or heavy card to minimize your handling of the wet figures.

2. **Primer**
   The set of matching miniatures may be primed all at once.

3. **Begin Painting**
   Start with base coats of the larger areas. Do all the miniatures with the same color at the same time. Don't forget to rinse your brush periodically.

4. **Continue Painting**
   Once the first color is dry you should begin painting the second color. Continue this "assembly line" until all of the figures are painted to your satisfaction.

5. **Flock the Bases**
   Spread glue across the base and sprinkle it with flock, then proceed to the next figure. Don't spread glue on all of them at once because your glue will probably dry too quickly.

6. **Varnish**
   Spray varnish your miniatures to protect the paint and enhance color. Carefully remove them from the strip.

7. **You're done!**

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**Tips**

Here are some points to remember when painting models in a production line:

1. **Mix more paint than usual.** This might sound obvious, but once you've begun, you don't want to have to match a color by remixing.

2. **Don't mix too much paint.** Don't go to the other extreme and flood your palette. As the paint begins to dry out, just thin it out with a little water—it'll go further than you thought. Getting the right amount of paint is something you'll learn by experience.

3. **Don't assume the paint is dry before applying the next stage; make sure.** You are trying to save time, and if you make a mess on the miniature, you'll waste time cleaning it up.

4. **Be as neat as possible.** Just because you are painting quickly doesn't mean you have to rush the miniatures. Make sure to obey the basic rules of miniature painting—get good smooth coverage with the paints and make sure the colors don't overlap. A warband of simple and neatly painted miniatures will look great, but a carelessly painted one will look scruffy and unattractive.

5. **Wash your brushes regularly.** This is even more important when you are painting groups of models, as your brush will be in use far longer. Just rinse it out every few minutes, and re-apply the paint.

6. **Leave the basing to the end.** Wait until all the models in your warband are completed, which might be after several painting sessions, and finish all the bases in one sweep. Deal with them one at a time: apply the glue and dip the base into flock miniature-by-miniature; don't apply the glue to all of them in one go, or the glue on the first will be too dry when you want to cover it in flock.

7. **Apply spray varnish as you did the undercoat.** Stick the models to a strip of card and varnish them in groups of four or five. Remember to do this in a very well ventilated area away from flames or electrical equipment. Varnishing is best done outside when wearing a dust-mask to protect against the fumes.
Combat is one of the most thrilling parts of the D&D game, especially when the play is at a breakneck pace. Unfortunately, combat scenes often get bogged down as the DM and players struggle under a heavy load of information. At some tables, combat can become a yawnfest as the players wait for their harried DM to handle all the monsters, read the module and figure out what's happening. While the new rules do a wonderful job of streamlining calculations, there are still plenty of things to track from round to round.

Fortunately, there are a few tricks and tools to streamline combat, pick up the pace, and make things more exciting. Consider each of the following five game tools and keep the ones that suit your group.

1. Maps
Whether you run a published module or a homemade adventure, you probably have maps. You can turn these into a more powerful tool by making a few copies before play and marking all sorts of important facts, figures, and notes to help you when combat erupts. Since you are using copies, there's never any worry about keeping them in pristine condition.

2. Index cards
Index cards are an inexpensive, compact, and easy way to handle a ton of game information during battles. They can be sorted, filed in plastic boxes, and kept nearby when you run the game.

Organizing index cards is easy. You can sort cards into separate, labeled boxes, or you can use colored cards and create a coded system. For example, PCs could be on white cards, NPCs on yellow, spells on purple, and so on.

You can speed combat by creating blank card templates for use during unexpected situations. For example, you might have many monsters in your card library, and then a wandering monster roll catches you unprepared. But that's no problem, because you brought blank monster template cards to use during the game—just fill in the blanks! You can use a computer to print out blank templates by the dozen, or you can create copies by hand during commercials when you watch TV.

A great thing about index cards is that, once you've created them, you can use them over and over. After several sessions, you will have amassed a large collection of index cards, and combat will be faster than ever before. You can get longer life from index cards by using sticky notes as well. For example, you put an important NPC on a card but add campaign specific information to a note stuck to it. That way,
once the campaign is over, you can reuse the NPC and simply start with a new sticky.

The best use for index cards is tracking initiative order and special combat circumstances, such as being blessed, or having a temporarily reduced ability score. Use a separate index card for each PC, NPC, and monster taking part in the battle. After initiative is rolled, stack the cards in initiative order and cycle through them as the battle rages on. Write important comments on the respective combatant's card (or use a sticky note), and you'll always be up to date without having to remember a lot of stuff from round to round.

3. Miniatures

Miniatures are a fantastic way to manage combat. They graphically display the scene for the whole group to see at the same time, which helps communication. They help everyone plan strategies and resolve rules issues, such as attacks of opportunity, and they give players who are waiting for their turn something to focus on and think about, which should speed decisions.

The new rules make movement and combat easy to manage. If you don't like playing with a large grid, you can use an unlined surface and a piece of string with inch marks on it for easy measurement. Also, if you need to show more figures than you have miniatures to represent (as when you throw a hundred goblins at your cocky PCs), try low-cost alternatives.

It's a good idea to number the NPCs' and monsters' figures. This makes tracking wounds and special modifiers for specific foes a breeze during frenzied combat. Whether you use index cards or notepaper, you can now simply reference foes by their number.

4. Counters

Another great way to limit the mental gymnastics required during combat is to use counting tools. Get numbers like durations of cast spells or the current round number, out of your head and recorded with a counting device.

5. DM screen and combat binder

A DM's screen is an invaluable resource because it holds a lot of information for quick access during play. It's also a great place to make secret dice rolls and hide private notes. Even if you prefer a clear space between you and the players, you can always set a screen on a side table or on the floor by your chair. Also, most screens are collapsible, so you can lay it flat until needed.

Consider what additional charts, statistics, and information would be handy to add to your screen. You can always make photocopies of pages or charts from the rulebooks and clip them on so you can flip through them during a skirmish.

Another great tool is a special binder, folder, clipboard, or doro-tang for storing important combat information for quick access during the session.

Sticky notes are great for screens and combat binders, and a color-coding system for the notes, or for the pages in your binder, will help you access information even more quickly.

Another item you might want to consider making is a custom index page. Currently, each of the core rulebooks, and all rules supplement books, have independent indexes. You might find a unified index of pages that your group often researches a useful tool to clip to your screen or slot into your binder.

If you can free up your mind as much as possible from the counting, statistics, and special rules of combat, then you'll be less fatigued as the game session goes on, and you'll have more brain power to lend to other important activities, like roleplaying the foes well or thinking up clever battle tactics.
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What?! Fool! You should do your own proofreading!

I won't! Oh you are so cute!

Fling him into the red dungeon of fun.

Yers mistress.

I'll join you there later, sweetie.

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Ah - and here's our test subject for my 'styrofoam diet' experiment!

Prepare for defeat. Ridiculous, of course, but an amusing exercise, so set up that Swiss bank account, add that secret door in the dungeon, and cultivate old friends.

The mistress has escaped? Well I haven't seen her, but perhaps my oafish servant has. Let me go kick her a few times and ask her.

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