

So saith Ed

*Responses to questions and Realmslore requests
By Ed Greenwood on the Candlekeep Forums*

Part 6

Apr - Jun 2005

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April 1, 2005: Hello, all. kuje31, you asked about the werepegasus in the entry for Irytharna Dantras entry in VOLO'S GUIDE TO CORMYR. Here are Ed's 1981 notes on such critters: A werepegasus is a female human or half-elf who can change into a pegasus of white, dun, or blue hue. Aside from these hide colorations, a werepegasus looks like a 'normal' pegasus save that its eyes glow ("star-white" hue) in darkness - - and their pupil colour otherwise matches that of their human shape. They have 'normal' pegasi abilities and stats. This is an inherited (bloodline) shapechange power, not lycanthropy; no one can be 'infected' with it. The change in shape takes 2d4 minutes in either direction; the shift from human to pegasus shape can split clothing or other equipment that can't 'stretch' (and so is made unclad whenever possible), and the change is often accompanied by releases of body gas (yes, farting) due to instantaneous digestion of whatever either the human or the pegasi form might have in its stomach. The change heals 1 hit point of any current damage (to a maximum of 6 hit points regained every 24 hours), and a werepegasus can shift shape once per hour (in emergencies, a werepegasus can 'force' a faster shapechange, but does itself 1d4 hit points of damage in doing so, and/or a more frequent shapechange (twice or more per hour), at a cumulative cost of 1d6 hp, each time (beyond once, in any one-hour period); shapeshifts forced on a werepegasus by hostile magic don't inflict such damages, but may do other damage according to the nature of the magic applied).

So wrote Ed, all those years ago.

love to all,

THO

April 2, 2005: Hello, all. Ed replies to Melfius, Kajehase, Kentinal, and Garen Thal in the matter of Waterdeep's walls and possible sprawl outside the walls. I suspect Eric Boyd will also find this very interesting, given what he just couldn't fit about Waterdeep into a mere 160 pages.

Ladies, gentlemen, and others, I give you the words of Ed:

Waterdeep is a trading city, and is really crowded only at the height of the summer season; in winter, its population is far less. Please bear in mind that the majority of buildings south of an east-west line drawn from Castle Waterdeep to the City of the Dead have three or more floors of rental rooms or apartments (that is: multiple rooms rented as one) above their street-level shops. Often these are owned by families who use all of the rooms in winter, and in summer put some furniture and belongings into cellar storage and cram themselves into just a few rooms, so as to derive rental income from the rest. We modern real-world people would find this very crowded, but medieval real-world people would not have considered it so (remember, having "your own" bedroom as opposed to sharing a room and even a bed was the norm for a few nobility and for hermits; everyone else slept together for warmth or out of necessity, often in a room that served as both bedchamber and everything else). To a lesser extent than in Waterdeep, this rental of upper floors goes on in almost every city of Faerûn, augmented by sleeping arrangements we often wouldn't think of, including: Rent stable space? Then you and/or your grooms or servants or wagon-lads sleep up in the hayloft above the stalls rented to your animals, alongside the stable staff (who regularly sleep there, too, along with all the rats, et cetera). Rent carriage-storage space for your wagon? Then you sleep in or under the wagon, unless that particular carriage-shed forbids this practise to cut down on thefts or fires (and they'd better be attached to a rather exclusive inn, or they'll soon go out of business trying to enact such policies). Stay as guests at a Waterdhavian noble villa? Then your servants sleep in the stable-lofts there, or even on outbuilding roofs if rain isn't expected. And so on.

With all of that said: no, Waterdeep lacks fouburghs, shanty-towns, or suburban expansion, BY LAW. In addition to the Code Legal set forth in the CITY OF SPLENDORS boxed set, Waterdeep has an ever-increasing body of 'case law' in the form of Lords' decrees, built up with the passing years. One of them forbids any permanent structures outside the city walls, for a distance of half a days' patrol, except by license of the Lords (who only grant such permission for civic buildings). So the city occupies the entire plateau (note the cliffs along much of its eastern side), and the meadows around are kept clear for caravans to assemble, camp upon arrival (temporarily living

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there, with no permanent structures allowed), livestock markets, wagon-trains to muster for "straight runs in" to the docks or to dockside warehouses, and so on. You'll see a very brief scene in the Waterdeep novel that Elaine and I wrote (if it survives the editing) wherein two nobles go hawking in the meadows early in the morning; later in the day or at evening, this activity would be impossible due to all the Waterdhavians 'dining out' (eating picnic meals, often with the families of several friends meeting so the children can run and play while the grown-ups sit, drink and eat, and talk), lovers trysting, folk meeting to talk business (perhaps shady or illicit dealings) in relative privacy, and so on. So Waterdeep uses the open land around it, on a daily basis.

(By the way, the novel also makes clear why the City of the Dead isn't where the poor sleep -- unless they sleep by day. The gates of the cemetery are always closed from dusk until dawn, when ghosts roam in sufficient profusion to drive most folk mad.)

Caravan camping (and thus, daily prosperity due to caravan trade) plus controlling in some small way who can be a permanent resident of the city, plus providing some security from orc hordes by affording any attacking force as little cover and ready plunder as possible, are the reasons for keeping the meadows clear. Often traffic jams are so severe in the city streets (as I mentioned in a much earlier post here at Candlekeep), that going "out a gate and around" (to another gate, and back in again) is by far the faster way to travel; this plus the need to swiftly being in food from Goldenfields and keep the city from strangling on its own trade... all contribute to the decision to prevent Waterdeep sprawling over the surrounding landscape.

Security and caravan-camping will be the considerations that keep cities everywhere else from partially (usually) or wholly (rarely) preventing building outside the walls. Most cities restrict building to some extent, to keep roads clear and water-sources unfouled or accessible, or prevent woods from being entirely hewn down.

So saith Ed. Into the Realmslore files once more, to ably fill up another breach (no, not breeches), with passing apologies to Master Shakespeare...

love to all,

THO

April 3, 2005: Hello, all. This time, Ed makes reply to Jerryd about the tropics:

Jerryd, most folk of Faerûn have no PRECISE idea about solar seasonal 'wanderings' (in GENERAL, of course, they know about it, especially if they farm, sail the seas, or travel extensively), and therefore there's no widely-known concept of the arctic circles or the tropics, and no commonly-accepted names for them.

However, that doesn't mean that certain faiths haven't studied the sun closely. In Kara-Tur there are names for the tropic parallels (unknown to me), and they are also named (not necessarily venerated or made much of) in some Faerûnian faiths, as follows:

Angharradh: Dieree (Cancer), Luel (Capricorn)
Aumauntor: Resrar (Cancer), Alondar (Capricorn)
Baervan Wildwanderer: Nyarduth (Cancer), Sudduth (Capricorn)
Deep Sashelas: Dieree (Cancer), Luel (Capricorn)
Chauntea: Resm (Cancer), Londim (Capricorn)
Gwaeron Windstrom: Trethen (Cancer), Lonthen (Capricorn)
Horus-Re: Sebrah (Cancer), Umbrah (Capricorn)
Kossuth: Arfane (Cancer), Dloefane (Capricorn)
Labelas Enoreth: Dieree (Cancer), Luel (Capricorn)
Lathander: Resra (Cancer), Alondyr (Capricorn)
Marthammor Duin: Taen (Cancer), Muirtaen (Capricorn)
Mielikki: Trethen (Cancer), Lonthen (Capricorn)
Sejojan Earthcaller: Nyarduth (Cancer), Sudduth (Capricorn)
Sêlune: Treth (Cancer), Lonth (Capricorn)
Shaundakul: Trethen (Cancer), Lonthen (Capricorn)

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Sheela Peryoyal: Nyarra (Cancer), Soudrra (Capricorn)
Valkur: Trethen (Cancer), Lonthen (Capricorn)

So saith Ed.
Clip this snippet, devout worshippers!
love to all,
THO

April 4, 2005: Hello, all. Ed of the Greenwood makes swift reply to divers Realmslore queries this time, in another 'grab-bag,' as follows:

Ethriel, there are indeed "plans or opportunities to use Kymil Nimesin again," but I can say absolutely nothing about them. :) Sorry. NDA time.

Kajehase, you asked for the yuan-ti word or phrase for "Scaleless Ones."

In the yuan-ti tongue, the phrase Scaleless Ones is rendered: "ssolo" (from "ssa" [the short-form, everyday word for scales] and "olo" [ones]. However, "ssolo" has itself been altered by centuries of usage into: "ssul."

I know I was brutal with my own writing to keep it down to the proper length for SK, and we three scaled scribes STILL overwrote a lot, causing Penny Williams among others to wade into our verbiage with the proverbial sharp blade. If it ever made it into the first draft MS (which I doubt), it almost certainly fell right back out again, in The Wounding (ahem: the editing).

malchor7, Scyllua Darkhope isn't a character I created (I'm guessing Rich Baker or Sean Reynolds), so this is just my guess, but I'd pronounce her name either "SILL-ah" or "SILL-oo-ah," with the first suggestion being more likely but the second being more grammatically correct (in either case, a Southerner reading that name but not knowing the person and therefore how she pronounces it would render it "SILL-wah"). Of course, most folk of Zhentil Keep, including most Zhents, would speak of her as "the Castellan," and address her as "High Castellan." VERY respectfully. :}

Dargoth, Shraevyn's tomb is detailed in THE SWORD OF THE DALES module (adventure) by Jim Butler (TSR 9484, published in 1995), and definitely isn't the same as "The Tomb of the Archmage" you were asking about.

So saith Ed.

Who promises to deal with malchor's query about Mystra and Helm, right after I do some more housekeeping over the next few nights.

love to all,
THO

April 5, 2005: Hello again, fellow scribes. It's high time for some "you're welcomes" from Ed and from me, so... come into this cozy bower where we've drinks ready. The bearded smiling thing lounging yonder is Ed, so that means I'm the one wearing the high heels, fishnets, garter belt with little black ribbons, and the smile. Oh, yes: and the wristwatch. I'd feel positively NAKED without it.

To Erik Scott de Bie: invaluable? Great! You're warmly welcome to the team in harness (I enjoy it most when the editorial whips strike me just * here, * but your mileage may, of course, vary).

Please feel free to quiz Ed on all matters. If it's something about an unfolding project you don't want all of Candlekeep to know about just yet, just drop a private word to Alaundo, and he'll call on me, and I'll in turn rouse the Slumbering Ed for you. Not that he ever DOES sleep, mind you. Now have a glass of this! Cheers!

kuje, darling, you've remembered correctly; there IS one more unanswered query of yours, nestling beside a vintage query from Eric Boyd. Rest assured that Ed WILL get to them all, if he doesn't die of old age first! No inquiring scribe gets forgotten! And yes, Ed is even busier than usual, just now. I'll try to cajole him into maintaining a regular schedule of nightly answers, but if I don't, that's why. He's back up to nine projects on the go at once! (Plus, of course, the demands of a real-life day job.)

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To all who spoke about Orcus, Ed grins (ah, those changing rules! SUCH a pain to those trying to maintain the artistic versimilitude of a fantasy setting!), but reminds everyone - - with a bow of thanks to Taelohn for the kind words of recognition about Ed's ELMINSTER IN HELL depiction of Mystra and Asmodeus - - that if the DM properly presents and 'runs' such powerful beings, it should be VERY hard for PCs to come to grips with them in a final stand to destroy them, or even to learn much about their true powers and interests. Roleplay, folks, roleplay, and leave the rules as lore to be consulted in downtime.

Damian, fellow lover of the Realms for faithful years, it grieves me to dash your hopes. Let's cuddle as I proffer this tallglass of something special from Ed's cellar, to soothe your inevitable distress. The NDA Ed refers to is connected to more than one potential product, both of them are but shadows on the horizon right now (read: years off), and they are still carved, not in stone, but in quicksand on a stormy beach, with the tide coming in. Rest assured, however, that Ed and I both want to see "a decent update for Eveningstar," too, and know that we stand at your aside, swords and spells ready.

Ah, but this wine is... warming. I'm just going to snuggle in beside Ed, here, and greet more of you on the morrow.

love to all!

THO

April 6, 2005: Well met again, scribes. There're still plenty of flagons and nibbles (wherever you can find them, Wooly - - oh, but hamster fur is so SOFT, ummhmm), so step right in and mingle, whilst I ramble on:

To RevJest (simontrinity): Wooly Rupert is right (thank you, Wooly dearest!): the elf lass Rildarra Nierdre is (among other things) an Eldritch Knight indeed. And while we're on the topic of the Nierdre lore, a hearty "You're very welcome!" to Finglas Leaflock, Wooly, and SiriusBlack.

Now as for Paec_djinn: fie, sir! Have this flagon of Ed's finest and let it be answer enough for you at this time! NDAs have force and weight and meaning, and because of them Ed can tell you NOTHING about the roster of writers for REALMS OF THE ELVES, or even confirm if he's one of them. Naughty lass in need of a spanking that I am, *I* spilled the beans, and will go so far as to say that Ed has begun his tale, that the characters appearing therein will be of great interest to certain scribes here, and that diligent readers of THE FARTHEST REACH will find in its pages a certain utterance by Storm Silverhand that 'sets up' Ed's story. You'll learn no more from me just now, I warn you - - but of course, sirrah, you're welcome to try to persuade me! Here I am, standing defenseless...

To Rick Day: you're welcome, too, and I've deeply enjoyed playing in the Realms all these years (even if it does reveal my ever-advancing age). Ed has indeed read THE SILMARILLION (and UNFINISHED TALES, and the LETTERS, and all twelve [!] volumes of THE HISTORY OF MIDDLE-EARTH).

BTW, the man Ed considers Canada's greatest living fantasy writer, Guy Gavriel Kay, helped to edit THE SILMARILLION, and Kay's first trilogy (described by some as "Tolkien meets King Arthur meets some University of Toronto students"), The Fionavar Tapestry, is very "Tolkienesque." Ed recommends Kay's later standalone novels TIGANA and A SONG FOR ARBONNE as among the very best fantasy novels ever written.

As for your "events of the last ten years" query, Rick, I think SiriusBlack and Wooly Rupert have taken care of it very well. Much of the North Timeline (available here at Candlekeep, I believe) that Sirius refers to, the work of George Krashos (the man who is THE "go to" Lorelord for both Ed and Eric Boyd, by the way, and who never gets thanked enough, so I'm blowing him a kiss now!), was incorporated into the recent and essential LOST EMPIRES OF FAERUN sourcebook. Sanishiver, you're also welcome! Glad you liked the Waterdeep lore (and I can JUST SEE the fun Wooly alluded to, in his posts to you, and your response to him). Watch Ed's Realmslore column on the WotC website for a little more about Waterdeep, probably at about the time Eric Boyd's essential Waterdeep tome gets released.

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Verghityax, Ed can't tell you a word about the laws of Baldur's Gate or Elturel; that's what NDAs MEAN. He started to detail the legal matters of Secomber for you, but had to interrupt this to toss most of his lawmaking into another Realms project; he'll get back to you as soon as he can. He appreciates your offer re. Dungeon 64, but doesn't want you to get into any legal trouble. It's certainly no crime for Ed to receive the information (TSR and thus WotC are actually CONTRACTUALLY BOUND to provide him with all Realmslore he requests, and should as a matter of course furnish him with all Realmslore they or a licensor publishes), but neither of us are sure if you (not being an employee of WotC) personally run into any shaky legal ground at any step along the road of providing it (and we both suspect that you might). It's complicated because of the geography of where you are located and where Ed is located; two sets of laws are involved (and a third, too: the current administration in the United States is aggressively pursuing a policy of attempting, without any legal or moral right whatsoever beyond "hey, we're THE superpower, and might makes right," to try to apply American law to the entire Internet, and to all transfers of goods, information, or currency, no matter where they may happen to occur in the world, if "American business interests" are involved - - and regardless of how you define such things, TSR and now WotC and Hasbro ARE American companies, and thus quite properly fit even the narrowest definition of "American business interests"). The point is, it's a very complicated matter, and Ed doesn't want to upset anyone or get anyone into legal trouble. It will probably be easiest (though slowest) if Ed gets Paizo to provide him with a copy. How about: we'll get back to you after we've investigated further, okay?

Ah, I see the wine is running low (My! Some of you scribes must be darned near HOLLOW!) and that it's high time for meatier Realmslore to be served up, so I'll usher Ed up to his garret now, and start flogging him to produce more for tomorrow...

love to all,
THO

April 7, 2005: Hello again, fellow scribes. Ed replies to malchor7 in the matter of Helm and Mystra entwined (or not):

As for the notion that (the first) Mystra and Helm had once been lovers, it seems likely - - but then again, mortals can almost NEVER know the truth about the deeds, thoughts, and affairs of deities, because they can only 'go by' what the various churches, prophets (often self-proclaimed, and also all too often crazies who speak in opposition to the churches), and avatars report - - or far more often, that they hear third- or five-thousand-and-thirty-third-hand of what such parties said or did. And even (or perhaps particularly) gods, and certainly their churches, have agenda reasons for lying or embellishing the truth.

Even if a deity speaks directly to a character, and the character is utterly convinced the deity is speaking truth, that really means nothing more than that a being of divine powers can convince a mortal of just about anything.

All of which means the various tales about Mystra being the lover of Azuth (several times daily), Helm, or Shar, or Bane, or Moander, or the nearest rock MIGHT be true, or might not, but no mortal can be sure.

This, of course, neatly leaves every DM elbow room to sail armadas or ride armies through. First on the left, no pushing or shoving, one to a cross, please. :}

So saith Ed.

Ending with a paraphrase of Monty Python's LIFE OF BRIAN (for those whose wits are rusty just now).

love to all,
THO

April 8, 2005: Arthedain, your question to Ed about dueling has already be answered: on Page 74 of the 2004 Questions for Ed Greenwood thread, here in the Chamber of Sages, Ed made reply to The Blind Ranger about this same topic.

As for your question about noble marriages, heeeeeere's Ed!:

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Hi, Arthedain. Certainly George's (ahem, Mr. Martin, but he told me call him "George" when I sat drinking and talking with him at the 2003 Worldcon) nobles echo the behaviour of SOME nobles in Faerûn (such as those of Cormyr, Impiltur, and along the Sword Coast. "Arranged" marriages do foster (but not necessarily cement, because some families are quite internally fractious, so married-off daughter X may very well side with her husband's kin against dear old controlling mummy or daddy) political alliances.

As for the marriage between Lord Mourngrym and Lady Shaerl: the Rowanmantles quite openly and heavy-handedly THREW Shaerl and her sister at the lonely, far-from-Waterdeep Mourngrym in open and obvious hopes of gaining a toehold in the Dales, a move supported by the Crown of Cormyr (read: Vangerdahast) because he saw it as a way of extending Cormyrean influence into the Dales (first: make Tilverton a protectorate, then marry into shared control of Shadowdale, and - - the riches of the Moonsea are within sight and grasp!). Shaerl and Mourngrym both saw what was going on, but a marriage came about because they genuinely fell in love (and Shaerl politely told Vangey, via various War Wizards, to tuin off and get lost; she wants Shadowdale and Cormyr to be firm friends, but she's having no part of Cormyrean control, paternal and friendly or otherwise). So this was no 'hidden' plan: Vangerdahast didn't want to be subtle - - but he didn't succeed, either.

Now, as for your "general impression of the nobles and noble families has been that they feast, hunt and enjoy themselves (almost) 24/7 (or 24/10 to be precise), and that the heads of the families don't arrange marriages."

Not so. The 'idle rich at play' stereotype is just that: a stereotype. Someone in most noble families has to be loyal to the ruler, someone has to be good at war (or at least command), and someone has to be a shrewd investor: or the family will fall from grace and power in a hurry, and be exterminated, stripped of noble rank, or reduced to a handful of mere pawns in the hands of others. Many nobles like the wider Realms to THINK they spend all their time hawking, hunting, drinking, dallying with each other's spouses, attending or throwing debauched revels, and pursuing eccentric hobbies - - but most of them do so a few evenings a week, at most. YOUNG nobles, with nothing to do (because they're not trusted with any family responsibilities yet, as their elders watch to see what sort of people they'll turn into), now... many of them DO carry on like that all the time (or as much of the time as they can remain conscious and out of custody).

Moreover, in most noble families, even if the head of the family doesn't arrange a marriage (and they DO, whenever they have offspring not strong-willed enough to stand up to them, or a monarch meddling), their approval is needed in most cases unless the errant son or daughter is willing to elope, flee far beyond reach, and renounce all family wealth and favour if not name and title (and they are often disowned in absentia; when the furious head of the house dies, they may or may not be 'allowed back in').

It's always a mistake to try to relate conditions in the Realms too closely with the past history of our real world, as I've said many times before, but yes, in our real world arranged marriages were quite common in our Western World, and ARE STILL quite common in many other modern-day societies (many Muslim societies, most Hindu countries, and many African tribal cultures, to name just the first few that come to mind). So yes, colour yourself unsurprised: such practises are indeed common "in at least some parts of Faerûn." And yes, you correctly cite a published-early-on example of mine in this regard.

And I believe I'll add a note or two about your dueling query, too (my Lady Hooded correctly points out my earlier dealings re. this matter): As for your example of an adventurer insulting the wealthy Cormyrean noble: the noble wouldn't dream of dueling an "uncouth outlander," and so there'd be no duel unless the noble REALLY wanted personal combat with the adventurer (a rare thing, because usually the noble would see no loss of personal honour in being insulted by an outlander or commoner adventurer, because "they are so uncouth that they can behave no better, eh what?" but to accept a duel against such a lowlife WOULD involve a loss of honour), OR the adventurer was himself (or herself) a Cormyrean noble. Otherwise, no duel: the adventurer would simply be shunned by nobles, and politely told by a War Wizard or herald to behave (or even

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apologize), or face arrest and fines, exile, the band charter being revoked or their name stricken from it - - or worse.

And yes, if a duel did occur, the norm in the Realms is: no seconds, no lasting family feud (the duel settles all, unless one participant fights unfairly), clergy DO adjudicate (and unfairness therefore results in church edict against/divine disfavour against, the cheater), and normally the challenged has the choice of weapons (I say "normally" because there are limits: missile weapon use is disallowed in duels, as are ambushes and fights between someone who can fly or turn invisible and someone who can't, someone who can breathe underwater and someone who can't, and someone WHO HAS or CAN CAST MAGIC and someone who doesn't or can't).

In the past I've answered queries about wizards dueling each other, but in general: magic-using folk aren't allowed to duel non-magic-using-folk. "Trials by combat" may be local exceptions, but these are of course very special sorts of duels, not "honour-matches" at all.

Oh, and about the sandbox: you're very welcome, and it has been and continues to be my great pleasure!

So saith Ed, and there you have it!

love to all,

THO

April 9, 2005: Ah, Wooly, you oblige with spankings? WON-derful. My persuasions will forthwith begin.

As for sharing more of my adventures in the City of Splendors... well, now. There's the time I "persuaded" a member of the Guard to share his hippogriff saddle for some ardent bareback riding over the city - - but no, no, this is a FAMILY thread... er, isn't it?

Well, perhaps I could tell you about the time I impersonated Lady R- - - so as to delay her husband returning too soon to a certain office where a certain secret passage could be found. But then, that adventure's not completely played out yet, so perhaps instead I'd best talk about the time my character found a new way down into, and back up from, Skullport (well, not exactly NEW; the bodies and bones festooning the sequence of gates sorta betrayed the fact that it had seen heavy use in the past); we found quite an interesting little symbiont along that route, too... but I KNOW Ed doesn't want me to spill the beans about THAT, given his current fiction projects, so... hmmm, it seems there're not that many really interesting tales left about Waterdeep at all. Endless shopping trips, Dock Ward tavern brawls, and wild nobles' revels undertaken, of course, but those are hardly unique, mmm?

But enough dalliance. I DO have an answer from Ed to impart, to malchor7:

No, there aren't a lot of known godlings wandering around (the word "known" is key here; there are some divine surprises as yet unrevealed about the Realms, even after all this time), and Wooly Rupert and kuje31 are quite correct: deities only conceive children when they specifically choose to. I'm not so sure that we can say with certainty that conception wouldn't occur in the case of unions between deities, where one wanted issue and the other did not. However, a deity must surrender some of their 'divine spark' or essence to impart some to offspring, so you can have "true godlings" (immortals), mortals with some special spell-like powers (innate abilities), and normal mortals who just have 'tuned' or 'cherry-picked' aptitudes ("You, child, shall have a talent for sorcery and the feats Drift Magic and Body Pouch (regardless of the usual prerequisites)").

So saith Ed.

Wherefore: It Is So.

love to all,

THO

April 10, 2005: Hello, all. The tireless questioner Dargoth, a little over a month back, posed this question: "What occurred in 267 DR and why was it named the Year of Banes Shadow? (I'm assuming it refers to the God Bane)"

Ed of the Greenwood herewith makes reply:

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Aside from the Battle of Fallen Trees (noted in the CORMANTHYR sourcebook and in "A Grand History of the Realms" timeline by Brian R. James, hosted here at Candlekeep), the year 267 DR is little remembered in recorded history, though many sages have debated the meaning of its name down the years.

The most popular theory is that it does indeed refer to the god Bane, and specifically to a growth in Bane's power.

Some say it speaks of Bane's subsumption of a part of the divine essence of a slain god (perhaps one of the Seven Lost Gods, as part of Bane, Bhaal, and Myrkul treating with the god fell and wise god Jergal), and although no mortal knows the timing of those events - - or even if they are 'true,' as told - - that seems more likely than the second-most-popular theory: that it refers to Bane fathering Iyachtu Xvim, the 'Godson of Bane' (for the timing seems wrong for Xvim's birth, though mortals have no way of knowing if gods can sew seed in mortal wombs and have it 'wait dormant' for some years or until they command it to bear fruit in a mortal womb).

So saith Ed.

Who (as I've noticed a time or two before) takes many words to say: "We can't say anything for sure."

love to all,

THO

April 11, 2005: Hello, all. Ed makes reply to Antareana, in the matter of the god Milil and his clergy:

Antareana, properly detailing the Church of Milil (to say nothing of the god himself) is a huge undertaking, and one I'm afraid I just haven't time for now (a state of affairs that could well last for the rest of this year, the way things are going).

However, let me share a few of my notes about the Lord of Song and his clergy, as follows:

The best Sorlyn have perfect pitch, good singing voices, and perfect recall. Most Sorlyn have one of those three things (if not in perfection, than 'very good to superb'), and the vast majority of Sorlyn attend private (priests only) classes of endless repetition, so as to memorize the lyrics of ballads that can be chanted or declaimed as well as sung: both prayers of praise to the Lord of Song, and useful tales ('favorite standards') that can earn them a pint or a wedge of cheese in a tavern, such as "When Durathor Rode to Hunt" and "The Ghost Princess."

Most Sorlyn build up a great repertoire of memorized songs (a grieving son or two, a love song or two, a 'manly praise' song, and endless story-ballads) in this manner, and are taught to write them down and teach them to others. They are also expected, as they advance in church rank, to create original songs of praise to Milil.

The Lord of Song shows his favour in two ways: by 'inspiring' his faithful with new songs (that he places in their minds in dreams, usually visualized as "written in letters of flowing fire"), and by manifesting music (usually the notes of unseen pipes, chiming bells, or harps) around the favoured person that all can hear.

(Note that an illiterate Sorlyn who receives such inspiration can perfectly write down the "letters of fire" for others to read, without themselves being able to read the script. The inspiration, however, locks the meaning and sound of the words in their minds, forever.)

Sorlyn will be proud to share any music resulting from Milil's inspiration, and it often enhances their standing in the church immediately. It is always, words and music, 'burned into the brain' of the devout individual, and CANNOT be forgotten (even surviving thought-draining attacks and magics, the death and subsequent resurrection of the devout individual, and so on; even if a mind flayer drains it from Erevho the Minstrel, a copy of it remains in Erevho (not just in his brain, but singing in his veins, his soul, and his flesh). Acquiring sufficient marks of Milil's favour of this sort is the only way to avoid the inevitable forgetfulness and mental confusion of great age (what we modern real-world folks call Alzheimer's, and dementia, strokes, and just plain forgetfulness). It also (every DM must devise their own modifier) affects Will Saves against feeblemind spells and similar mental attacks.

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Manifestations of Milil's favour begin as brief flourishes of sound ("fanfare chords," some have called them) spontaneously manifesting when a favoured being says or does something. The being has no control over them, must endure them even when they cause embarrassment or danger, and will be increasingly respected by other Sorlyn who hear them. Gradually, if an individual acquires more such manifestations (remember, this can only happen because of a character's deeds, words, and decisions, not by merely faithfully following church dogma or the orders of superiors in the Priesthood of Song), some of them will remain within the favoured being's head, as "echoes" that can comfort or be used to focus attention for meditation and prayer. They can then be released a second or subsequent times (usually WITHOUT 'losing them forever,' though they fade a little with each such release) at the will of the favoured being. In other words, a favoured being can make a gesture of honour towards a newborn child or noble or monarch, and the music they can hear inside their heads will be released (it's up to them to decide if it will create the desired, or appropriate, effect).

So saith Ed.

Ah, Realmslore to make one smile. Thank you, old friend!

And to Melfius: no, Ed hasn't forgotten your request about Akadi; this comes so swiftly purely because Ed could lay hand swiftly and unerringly on his old Milil notes.

love to all,

THO

April 12, 2005: Hello, all. Herewith, Ed replies to Gerath Hoan re. matters Cormyrean: Gerath, you're quite welcome re. the Hammerstars series. I consider that eight-parter a paltry but essential offering of long-overdue Realmslore to fill the gaping 'black hole' that Sembia has remained for too long.

As for your Cormyrean questions: yes, I'd say you're capturing the right flavour. "King's Vale" is a good name (bear in mind that 'Vale' means "valley," so you've got to create a local depression, probably small and bearing streams running down from the height where they 'rise' to join either the Sword or the Immerflow). "Silverspurs" is a quite acceptable noble family name, so long as they're few in number and low in fame and influence (we already have Silver, Silverhorn, Silversword, Crownsilver, Huntsilver, and Truesilver - - so this had probably better be the very last "Silver" family among the nobility).

As I see the situation, most of the crofters (farmers) fled on the orders of army commanders as the foe advanced; only the most stubborn stayed to fight the orcs (and so died), though their buildings would have been looted and burned, their livestock slain and devoured, and crops and larders despoiled or eaten. So some of the farms would have been (thinly) resettled almost right away, with Purple Dragons sent out to patrol the area and work alongside the surviving (returned) crofters and a few poor street folk from Suzail offered Crown coin to work on farms (and, once it became clearer who was dead, even offered some farmland). So: few grand uniformed units of Purple Dragons riding here and there, and smaller garrisons - - but more Purple Dragons out working alongside commoners (building trust, just as the canny Obarskysrs want them to).

The Obarskysrs will have been calling on their coffers (the secret wealth of the Crystal Grot) to buy all manner of edibles, seed, and livestock, to make sure crops were sewn as soon as possible, and to keep folk from starving through the first (leanest) winter; mercenaries (closely watched over by War Wizards in turn watched or 'covered' by other, unseen War Wizards, to guard against treachery or plundering) would have been hired to bolster patrols and guardpost-garrisons, to fight off orc and goblin raiding bands, prowling monsters, brigands, and - - yes - - Zhent incursions.

Fzoul intends to keep his bargain with Khelben by not openly conquering anywhere, but also intends to continue 'buying' local rulers as the Zhents always did, and raiding as much as they always did, too ("Those raids? Those weren't us; can't have been - - I gave orders! Oh, a few low-ranking lads might have got ambitious, they always do... but if I discover that happened, rest assured I'll stretch a few necks, believe me! What do you mean, you don't believe me?"). So the

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Zhents will both raid and try to use crooked merchants as agents to take over local smithies and other businesses wherever they see a chance.

Purple Dragon units will escort all deliveries of these purchased imported necessities, which will come to 'local lords' for local distribution. Things in the backlands are a little "rough and ready" right now - - but the Crown is watchful, and ready to spring into action against outlaws, raiding outlanders, and adventurers who try to 'run amok.'

So saith Ed.

Who's deep in taxes right now, but still on his feet with sword in hand, and no trace of fear on his face...

love to all,

THO

April 13, 2005: Hello, all. Ed replies to Dargoth's question: "Whats the relationship like between Cormyr and the elven nations (le Evereska, Evermeet and the remaining elven settlements in the Dalelands) in the post Azouns IV death and the destruction of Tilverton era? both of them being events where elves did substantial damage to Cormyr/Particular does Alusair hold a grudge against the elves over her fathers death? Do the people of Cormyr in general have a negative view of Elves?"

(Wooly Rupert replied: "I wouldn't imagine so, for either case... Alusair is a smart lady, and it's not like this was an elven plot -- it was the actions of one former elf. And how many people know that the Devil Dragon was formerly an elf?"

Now Ed has his say:

Dargoth, Wooly Rupert is right: as the Steel Regent begins her rule, rest assured that no one in Cormyr, from Filfaeril and Alusair down to gossiping fishwives in Marsember, holds any hatred for elves over the events recounted in either the war against the Devil Dragon or the events recounted in The Return of the Archwizards trilogy. Elves just aren't seen as a group or race of villains in Cormyr. Some individual Cormyreans may hold grudges or feel hatred towards individual elves, but that's a far different thing.

Now, as far as relations between Cormyr and Evereska: Evereska doesn't have much to do with any non-elven land. Most Cormyreans believe it's a fallen land, or a myth, or a shining hidden paradise of the elves (and mostly don't think about it at all). Evermeet ditto (though few still believe it's entirely mythical). War Wizards, merchants, and certain courtiers carry on quite cordial relations with elves in the Dalelands, but again, the average Cormyrean never thinks of elven settlements in the Dalelands except as those "deep green woods where elves dance and fey things happen; best leave 'em be."

So saith Ed.

More Realmslore tomorrow!

Gerath: nice. I'll pass this on to Ed, weblink and all. I suspect he'll be pleased.

love to all,

THO

April 14, 2005: Hello, fellow scribes.

Krash, Ed replies to two of your DWARVES DEEP questions:

My Lady Hooded was of course quite correct when she said King Azoun IV's alliance with the dwarves of Earthfast was trade-related. She gave you its normal flows ("textiles, leather, boots, foodstuffs, and tinctures, tisanes, and infusions that could be used in making dyes and medicines, in return for trade-bars of metal, valued at fair market prices"), but of course didn't know that Azoun could call on this for armor and weaponry, usually in return for particular War Wizard spell castings on specific items. The primary trade route, by the way, was via portal from Suzail to a secret location in the Dales, and thence to the Low Road (see page 30 of my 2004 Questions thread here at Candlekeep) and south from there (and vice versa), with War Wizards magically overseeing Highknight-directed trade activities from afar (ready to leap in if treachery or

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ambushes from hostile third parties occurred - - something that, as it happened, never happened :}).

Glowhammers are enspelled warhammers that, yes, can glow with faerie fire upon mental command of the wielder, and can also be willed to 'send' a beam of stronger light (like a pencil flashlight, aimed by moving the hammer; strong enough to see small features or writing by, but not blinding nor strong enough to affect undead). They can be released and left floating, as The Hooded One described.

The primary magical ability of a glowhammer is to reveal all hidden runes, symbols, scripts, marks, sigils, and writings (within ten feet, when willed to do so). The revealed markings remain visible until this hammer ability is 'willed off' or the hammer is moved out of range, and the glowhammer ability is so crafted as to NOT activate any magics contained in the markings it reveals (even by touch).

I've never given glowhammers formal 3e stats (and of course the formal 2nd Ed ones are owned by WotC; only they can choose to release them), but such details should be easy enough to work up with this lore in hand.

The DWARVES DEEP corrections are: substitute "Rimmator" for "Rimmato" on the foldout map, and at the bottom of the middle column of text on page 5, insert the word "alloy" between "extremely hard and durable" and "known as"... also right at the bottom of the same column, in the passage:

known as "adamantine," and occasionally
please change the word "adamantine" to: adamantite.

So adamantite is the ore, adamant is the pure (and very hard but brittle) metal, and adamantine is the very hard, very durable alloy (sometimes shortened to "adamant" in daily usage, especially by non-dwarves).

Dareth next time, okay? Taxes wound and press me hard...

As for "all about dwarves in the Realms," ha! I should live so long! Et cetera...

So saith Ed.

As for his taxes comment: wince. By "next time," he almost certainly means tomorrow.

love to all,

THO

April 15, 2005: Hello, all. Ed of the Greenwood replies to Krash the Lorelord in the matter of Dareth:

Hi, George! Sorry for the delay in getting to this. Here we go:

After its initial founding, Dareth attracted dwarves who fled from eastern Delzoun, after being cut off from the rest of Delzoun by the "fall of Felbarr."

This fall was not a conquest, but rather a decade-long plague (known among the Stout Folk of the day as "the Slaying Slumber" or "the Slaying Sickness") in which stricken dwarves became drowsy, fell into nightmare-tormented sleeps that lasted longer and longer, until they awakened only briefly, raving and dangerous to all - - and in the end slipped into a deep final sleep in which they died, wasting away in comatose slumber from which nothing (even the pain of dismemberment!) could awaken them.

The Slaying Slumber passed away as suddenly as it had come, never to return, and a few dwarves recovered from it (some after being kept alive magically as they slept). Most dwarves believe that their various races became immune to whatever caused this affliction, but a few firmly hold the belief that the sickness was begun by a sinister spell sent by a foe of the dwarves, or perhaps duergar or others within the dwarves who sought to exterminate other dwarves, and that it ended when the spell faded, or its unknown caster ended the magic or was slain.

The dwarves never talk of the Slumber to non-dwarves, and say little of it among themselves, considering it a weakness some foe could use against them if knowledge of it became widespread - - so many younger dwarves have never heard of it. Most of its victims were burned, and it struck first and hardest in Citadel Felbarr, until some dwarves of Delzoun put a 'shieldwall' around the Citadel and "by the axe" prevented dwarves of Felbarr from venturing forth.

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A few broke out of Felbarr and headed east, to easternmost Delzoun (where it was commonly known in the Northkingdom that there was abundant food, water, and unclaimed natural caverns to dwell in). This in turn caused some panicked dwarves already dwelling in that region to flee far to the east "to get away from the Death," and they fled far, stopping and settling only when they reached the already-existing realm of Dareth, where they were welcomed.

Although the Slumber made dwarves of Delzoun mistrustful and wary for years, and hampered trade, it actually slew only a few thousand dwarves, and life in the Northkingdom slowly returned to normal. In Felbarr and elsewhere, many dwarves never fell ill even as those around them slept or raved, and no place in Delzoun was abandoned, or taken by foes of the dwarves, because of the Slumber.

So saith Ed.

Ooooh, essential Realmslore indeed! And there's more coming tomorrow!

Yessssss!

love to all,

THO

April 16, 2005: Well met again, fellow scribes. Ed deals with the last (well, actually it was posted first, but such is the Wandering Way of Ed) DWARVES DEEP question from George Krashos: The dwarven language section of FR11 was kept short, because even back then there was an attitude of "Runes are okay for dungeon inscriptions, but THIS is fluff! Keep it short, and give us more new monsters and magic instead!" You've no doubt noticed that I tended to stick to "adventuring-situation" words. However, I quite agree that a LOT is missing.

Quite honestly, I don't have the time to work up a proper "tongue" right now, and probably won't for a long time to come, but I can certainly expand the working Dwarvish vocabulary by listing some of the 'missing words' you mention, as follows:

adamantine: ohloro (usually shortened to "hloro" in everyday speech)

adamantite: oro

armor (plate or piece): harth

chain (linked end to end in rope-like form, not armor): burr

chainmail shirt: hauburr

cold: thorord ("THOR-ord")

dragon: aug

giant (the creatures): raulen ("RAWL-un") (literally "tall-walker") (plural: raraulen)

gleam (reflected light, also a reflected image): spaerend ("SPAYUR-end")

goblin: usarr (plural: sarr)

hammer: dorth

helm: tholdokh ("thole-DOCK")

hoard (usually of a dragon, but can be any monster-guarded treasure): augdauh ("og-DAW")

hobgoblin: usark (plural: sark)

journey ('walk'): ulen ("ULL-en")

kobold: ubol (plural: boldrin)

leathers (underlayer for armor, or forge-aprons and other protection): surk (plural: surrthen)

light (true, steady light, such as sunlight, moonlight, and phosphorescence): hara

light hammer (the weapon): hardorth ("HAR-dorth")

light hammer (a finework tool, smaller than a hardorth): trast

mithral: himral ("HIMM-rall")

pick (the tool or weapon, not the act of selection): isson ("ISS-awn") (literally "pierce-stone")

pierce: iss

priest: thaebrast ("THAY-brast") (plural: thaebrar)

shield (the item): harbarak ("HAR-bay-ur-ak") (often shortened to "barak" in daily use)

silver: thordspaer (literally "cold-gleam")

stone: onn ("AW-enn")

tall (high): rau ("RAWW")

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war: aragh ("AR-ag")
war hammer: aragh dorth
winter: arauthorord ("ar-AW-thor-ord") (literally "great-cold")
So saith Ed.
Ah, the essential Realmslore just keeps coming and coming.
love to all,
THO

April 17, 2005: Hello again, fellow scribes. Ed comments on the recent laws promoted in Cormyr: Dargoth, Cormyr will be attracting folk from Westgate and all over urban Sembia who long for the relative law-abiding security but can't afford space of their own where they dwell now, caravan traders from all over Faerûn who've visited Cormyr while trading and liked the place and wanted to settle down there when the rigors of the road become too much for them... and so on... However, please bear in mind that although YOU see the 'double standard' of one rule for now-dead Azoun IV and another for commoners and deem it 'cheek,' folk in Cormyr probably don't (except for the nobility); they EXPECT royalty to have different rules and benefits than commoners do. (It ain't injustice until someone convinces you it is.) Beowulf, your dislike of Cormyr is just fine with me; the realm seems to attract strong love or strong dislike from fans of the Realms. It's important to remember (and your comment about hypocrisy and your sarcasm about Cormyr being 'the good kingdom' underscore this) that passing laws and enforcing them energetically is a two-edged sword: whatever 'goodness' one attempts to promote through rules can easily be lost or subverted - - even without any intent to do so - - by the rules being twisted or poorly drafted (or thought out), or just piled on too enthusiastically.

It should also be noted that all rulers make mistakes, that regents are watched more closely than most monarchs for weaknesses and mistakes, and that Alusair is at least less stiff-necked than most: she WILL backtrack and reverse a wrong decision. So this law may not stand forever, or even for long.
So saith Ed.

Who is well aware of other outstanding Cormyr lore requests from these two scribes, and will get to them very soon.
Or (heh-heh) he'll answer to ME.
love to all,
THO

April 18, 2005: Hello, all. Hmm, I see a storm brewing. Swords, down, lads, and hearken to Ed Greenwood, as he replies to David Lázaro with his top five tips to DMs:
1. Give your players what they want. NOT "give in to them," but work hard to find out what settings (city, wilderness, dungeon, arctic, naval, underwater) and styles (intrigue, hack-and-slash, chase or hunt, etc.) of adventure your players prefer, and make sure you give them the entertainment they crave. Otherwise, why are you wasting your time doing this?
2. Everybody loves a mystery. Work three sorts of mysteries into your campaign play: little things tied to the PCs' pasts (e.g. The Six-Fingered Man from THE PRINCESS BRIDE), mysteries unfolding under PC noses (who's the villain who keeps plundering treasures before they do, who escapes back into - - gulp - - the Palace? and/or: who's the mysterious mage who's threatening to steal the Princess away before her wedding night, who keeps leaving messages that are driving the King mad with rage and worry?), and "little motif" mysteries that you can build into something greater, later (e.g. the same little bird that always flies past the PCs' noses after they find a treasure, or the same commoner who's always watching in the crowd during their race and chase scenes). It doesn't matter if you don't know what this motif means; as the campaign unfolds, you'll find a clever explanation for it that will make your players think you've been planning this for years!

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3. Like a favorite series of novels or television show, build up a colourful cast of NPCs that the PCs, love, like, hate, or just know (as gossips in the tavern, as shopkeepers who know where to get this item or that, and so on). Keep track of the lives, ambitions, and interests of these NPCs to make the setting seem rich and real, and to give the PCs sources they can 'check in with' or 'call on' if they're bored, or need information.

4. Intrigue and power groups. Remember, manipulating others is something all humans do, and dreaming and scheming is something most of us love to do. Most power groups won't be Fell Wizards with a Diabolical Plan, but a few fat merchants meeting in a back room to get girls behind their wives' backs, or work a little swindle, or something of the sort. Surround the PCs with dozens of these little mysteries, until they think they can uncover something really big - - and then the players will start their own adventures, and you as DM can sit back, 'ride the fun,' and embroider new side-adventures accordingly. Remember: the PCs are heroes who SHOULD take charge, not just reacting to the world by following the scripts of adventure after adventure you slap down in front of them.

5. Play sessions are ENTERTAINMENT - - or should be. Watch your players, change things if they get frustrated or bored, keep the pacing moving, forget the rules (except when to do so will start fights/anger players), and concentrate on acting and describing and making things seem alive. Watch a caper movie (for example, the recent remake of OCEAN'S ELEVEN) and notice how (without quite the frenetic jump-cutting pace of a rock video) things keep swiftly and smoothly moving along. By all means plan breaks (gossip and pee-break and chips-devouring time) in play sessions, but otherwise build things to cliffhangers, raise the volume and pace when fights are going on, and generally KEEP YOUR PLAYERS MORE INTERESTED THAN AN ACTION MOVIE DOES. They'll remember your play sessions fondly.

And now, Ed's top five Realms DMing tips:

1. The Realms is common people living their everyday lives (where does the food and water come from? where does the chamberpot empty to? how does yonder man feed his family?), not Elminster and the Seven whizzing here, there, and everywhere. Keep the big guns in the background (except for brief appearances to remind players that their characters aren't the only heroes swaggering through a landscape of cringing targets) until your PCs are of power level enough for them to be useful. Yet mention them continuously (see #2, below), so that when that time comes, it won't SEEM like you're just "tossing them into play now." This goes for magic as well as NPCs: just because the printed Realms has a lot of magic DOESN'T mean every last farm and woodlot is humming with it. Only the really interesting ones, that have ladies like Storm strolling around in the herb gardens. :}

Follow the Money. PCs' "day jobs" (and they WILL have day jobs, sometimes, won't they?) and all the 'ready money' that can be stolen, fought over, or hidden away as treasure follows the flow of goods (port shipping or caravan merchant trade). Know those flows!

2. And Now The News. Keep the gossip, wild rumor, and legitimate news flowing, with every talkative merchant and passing caravan. Make the Realms seem REAL AND ALIVE, and remind players that their characters aren't the only ones doing anything exciting. In taverns and marketplaces, toss local opinions about this king and that power group at them - - and don't forget to let them hear how gossip distorts their public doings, too, to warn them not to trust everything they hear.

3. Keep accurate track of calendar time. Which really means: note down your prime-mover villains and opponents of the PCs, and what these dastards are up to, day by day, so events will 'move along' when PCs are resting, recuperating, or lost in some dungeon somewhere. Remember to introduce new villains before the PCs have slaughtered the old ones (keep a constant supply coming), and that PC hideouts, strongholds, and loved ones left behind are fair game for PC foes, not 'off limits.' Have bands of adventurers attack the PCs while they're sleeping in their homes - - just to establish a reputation or rob these "filthy rich, successful adventurers." Make the PCs aware of the dangers of making too many enemies: they might get attacked by two or three groups at once, or foes may team up against the PCs, or tax collectors or creditors might seize PC property HERE while the PCs are busy fighting for their lives over THERE.

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Yes, doing this DOES mean keeping notes. Don't go wild, but do record which characters went along, important items gained, deaths, and initial meetings with NPCs. If you have to make up a character or place description 'on the fly,' note it down. Or your players will catch your inconsistencies, sooner or later!

4. Humour. Not nasty pranks, but 'human nature' moments and pratfalls. Don't forget to include them in play sessions - - and give the PCs chances to do funny things, so their players get the full release of laughter. Reward your players for spending the time around your gaming table, remember, and a good laugh and great memories of it last a lot longer than this many gold pieces or that many experience points. Nobody loves grim doom and hard battle, with the fate of the free world riding on their bloody swordblade, all the time - - that's WAY too much like real life.

5. Act, act, act: put on funny voices for certain NPCs, get up and wring your hands if you're playing a nervous innkeeper, sashay with hand on hip if you're playing the local lowcoin lass, stride manfully and snap grim orders if you're a Watch commander. Bring those NPCs to life. Make your players want to go out and meet the local loonies. Foster friendships and love affairs and cranky old eccentrics, so PCs will WANT to go and consult old Floppyboots the beggar (a retired wizard gone mad), or the sisters Lhindra and Shalara, who peddle scents (and drugs, and poisons), and their own fading charms ("We have whips, goodsir, if your interests lie that way"), or helpful priestess Thardra, a firm-voiced bitch who's full of sound, straight-truth advice (the DM, handing players "the way out" when they've really screwed up). The Realms is PEOPLE. Make your players want to have their characters marry some, bed others, slay and rob others, impress a few, and humiliate a lot more.

So saith Ed.

And there you have it: an entire GenCon seminar, for free! Enjoy!

love to all,

THO

April 19, 2005: Hello, all. Ed replies to this question from Beowulf: "I'm curious about the atmosphere in Arabel in the days immediately following Gondegal's defeat. Was the city unwillfully placed under Gondegal's lead or did he have local support? What sort of efforts were made following the occupation to root out traitors and/or to suppress dissent? Did it involve many folk? What did the common folk of Arabel think of these efforts?"

Here's Ed:

Beowulf, in those days Arabel was far more lightly 'held' by Cormyr, and there were many oldblood families in the city who believed Arabel should be independent once more. Some few of them supported Gondegal at first, but many turned away from supporting him when they saw what others had seen earlier: that no matter how they might chafe under the rule of the Obarskyrs, Gondegal was far worse.

He was a gallant, handsome war-hero, always in the saddle fighting - - and thinking and acting that way. In short, he was a demagogue and tyrant who mentally divided the Realms into those who served him or were his allies, and anyone who hadn't always, at every turn, obeyed or aided him: a very large group of "everyone else" whom he considered his foes, to be eliminated ruthlessly as opportunities arose. In short, he could be a far worse butcher and swift ignorer of laws and rights than any Obarskyr the folk of Arabel had known. Trials were a waste of time; if he was suspicious of someone or didn't like something he saw them doing OR IT WAS REPORTED TO HIM THAT THEY'D DONE, he butchered them on sight. And moved on. You can make a populace fear and hate you very quickly that way.

Independence from Cormyr, yes - - but under the heel of Gondegal? No.

That was the general mood among older folk of Arabel. As for the city's younger malcontents, most of them rallied to Gondegal early on, fell under the spell of his charisma, handsome good looks, tireless energy, bright new ideas and schemes, willingness to listen to opinions, and (for the ladies) prowess in bed, and (so long as they were wise and fortunate enough not to cross him, and learn how swiftly and brutally he could turn on individuals he now thought of as "foes") stayed with him.

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In the aftermath of his disappearance and the sudden collapse that followed, most in Arabel cowered, expecting butchery from Suzail. What they got instead was a strong garrison and street patrols, abundant food and drink, firm orders from newly-arrived Purple Dragon officers to resume their former work and to obey Azoun's laws...and not much public heavy-handedness at all. This was because Vangerdahast sent in his War Wizards, and some Highknights, to do the 'rooting out' of the handful of folk who still wanted to bloodily carve out independence from Cormyr. A few folk were given too much to drink and then spirited away in the wee hours, magically mind-reamed as they sobered up, truths learned and other rebels and traitors identified from their thoughts, and so it continued. Only a few individuals were quietly slain; many were offered new trade or employment opportunities by strangers (Highknights in disguise) and relocated to Suzail or even outside Cormyr, to head their lives in different directions. To most folk in Arabel, there didn't really seem to be much retribution at all. Gondegal's reign ended so abruptly that it now seems more of a dream than anything else.

So saith Ed.
And so we Knights found it to be, on our visits to Arabel.
love to all,
THO

April 19, 2005: Hello, all. Ed makes reply to kuje31 in the matter of spellfire during the divine reign of Mystryl:

Hi, kuje. There have always been humans (and possibly members of other magic-using races) whose Talent for the Art manifested in a way akin to sorcery, but rather than allowing them to cast spells ('shaped' force of the Weave, if you will, twisted and applied precisely by incantations to produce specific, predictable effects [i.e. spells]), instead resulted in their unleashing 'raw' Weave energy (spellfire). This preceded organized magic use, and thus all deities of magic, so there was certainly spellfire in the time of Mystryl.

What there wasn't was much knowledge, even among wizards and sages specializing in magic, of its existence, or even a name for it. Most spellfire-wielders destroyed themselves spectacularly (or were slain by fearful folk using arrows or flung rocks or whatever) before achieving any sort of mastery or much understanding of their own powers, much less that OTHERS had (or had previously possessed) such abilities. So the ability existed, but was known to very, very few.

So saith Ed.
Onward into the bright flames of future Realmslore! Blades out, all! GLORY!
love,
THO

April 19, 2005: Hello again, fellow scribes!
Ed just added this comment:

Blueblade is correct: I DID hint that there were other Obarskyr heirs hidden away, ignorant of their true heritage.
Naughty, naughty me.
I'll have to have The Hooded One spank me for that, when next we meet. :}
Ahem.
So saith Ed.
I'll try to cajole him into saying more, okay?
love to all,
THO

On April 20, 2005 THO said: Hunter of Storms, you're welcome. I love doing this, and I know Ed does, too (though how the poor man manages it never ceases to amaze me, given the schedule he keeps). Replies to your queries must, of course, await his pleasure (I've passed them on already, and Ed's responded with the words: "Groan. Deep In Taxes. Comfort Me, Please. Right Now Would Be Good.")

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so, yes, malchor7, Alusair IS "open" in terms of her sexual expression - - and boy, are you going to see that in the final story Ed's put into the Best of Eddie collection, due out in mass market this July!

Zandilar, that "mention it discreetly once or twice, but no more" is more or less EXACTLY the editorial caution Ed received after er, springing the Caladnei/Alusair scene on WotC. He also received a stern commandment from another WotC staffer not to ever, ever portray Caladnei as either "wanton or ridiculous."

We already know, of course, that Alusair is bisexual and (at least at this time in her life) VERY active sexually (and that she uses sex as an outlet for frustrations; see various scenes in DEATH OF THE DRAGON and ELMINSTER'S DAUGHTER).

Now, as for what else she consciously uses sex for, again, see the Best of Eddie story. I know Ed would love to explore this character again (we Knights have chatted about what a rousing tale an Alusair, Namra, Glarasteer, and perhaps Sharantyr 'team-up' novel could be).

But there's this little Knights trilogy to get out of the way first...

love to all,

THO

On April 20, 2005 THO said: One note to add here: from comments let slip by various TSR staffers, and ex-staffers, at GenCon over the years, the Realms was NEVER unprofitable. In fact, it was the engine that carried the company while money (largely made by Realms products) was repeatedly sunk into other projects that were sometimes disastrous.

Ed used to tell me that if "he were running TSR" he'd be looking to build more than one basket to carry all his eggs in, too, but as I understand it, the "won't make enough money" argument was never valid FOR THE REALMS in the old days.

In the new days, of course, all expenditures must be justified to Hasbro management, who will quite reasonably suggest sinking dollars into alternatives that will make MORE returns than merely a "moderately successful product that will please diehard fans" (hence the ever-expanding novels line).

love to all,

THO

April 20, 2005: Ed concurs:

Any child birthed by Alusair would indeed be recognized as a legitimate monarch (over, yes, the inevitable objections of some self-serving nobles) if the parentage was "confirmed" by Caladnei (or Laspeera, if Caladnei doesn't publicly disagree) or by Alaphondar (if Caladnei and/or Laspeera don't publicly disagree)... and so on. Things could be tricky if the various players at the time want them to, but Garen Thal has understood things just right. Also, everyone should remember the clone sample policy.

So saith Ed.

And there you have it.

love to all,

THO

On April 20, 2005 THO said: No, malchor7, you haven't misread the Yanseldara situation at all. Some things slipped into the Realms got "caught" and changed in the editing, but not all.

Ed wants the Realms to be a richly detailed playground FOR ALL, without (as much as possible) alienating anyone.

love,

THO

April 20, 2005: Ahem. Piercings, rituals of Loviatar... you fellas don't really need my teasings at all, do you?

And as for the hamsters: this is a FAMILY forum. Uh, I think. Ooops.

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Now where was I?

Oh, yes... Hi, fellow scribes. Grab-bag/housekeeping time again, wherein Ed makes swift reply to a number of questions:

Kajehase, "blade" is a term for a young idle lad given to wild attitude and deeds (what in certain real-world times and places was called a "layabout" or "roustabout"). In Waterdeep and Cormyr, it has come to mean only young male nobles (of wild habits and speech), yes.

A "boldblade" is a rogue, chaser-of-skirts, or "bad boy" who dallies "with the ladies" (or tries to make others think he does, cultivating that image: the dashing handsome cad who darts in through bedchamber windows late at night, pinches bottoms, and so on). This should not be confused with "Blade" (beginning in upper-case/capitals), the title of one of the rulers of Mulmaster (whereof "The High Blade" is THE top dog).

So, ahem, SOME adventurers could well be "boldblades," or labelled as such by the populace. :) Dusk, kuje31 has dealt ably with your questions, but I'm going to add: "never say never." Novels are more likely to touch on (not focus on, but perhaps include brief scenes in, or references to) Zakhara, Kara Tur, and Maztica before WotC game sourcebooks ever get around to such places. However, watch the pages of DRAGON and my "Realmslore" WotC website columns, and - - years from now - - you just never know...

Phantom_Lord, I don't believe The Twelve have "ever been explored, named, or even seen in any novels or games." I can't recall if that precise lore-detail was Dale Donovan's, or added by Julia Martin, Eric Boyd, or me. I do recall that I had a "The Twelve" in my 1976 Realms notes and in the original Realms turnover. In any case, Beowulf is quite right: feel free to ahead and make your own (and if I can find those old notes, I'll use my original "The Twelve" for something else! :~)!

A Gavel, my Lady Hooded has summed up LANDS OF INTRIGUE quite nicely: Master of elegantly-written and thoroughly-grounded-in-history Steven Schend wrote it (drawing on my very brief overall outline of the character of Amn and Tethyr, the Council of Six, just as Scott Haring had done), bouncing occasional ideas off me.

zeathiel, yes, there are many "benevolent undead that haunt Silverymoon or similiar locales." Many, many, many. :~)

And there you have it. Swift snippets of Realmslore from the Creator himself. Who has been sent your latest queries (very nice, that one about elves and dwarves feeding themselves).

love to all,

THO

On April 22, 2005 THO said: Hoondatha dear, "lad" and "lass" aren't insults unless said nastily to a very pompous person of mature years: they're terms of casual endearment (like British ladies of a certain sage call everyone "love" and American salesladies of a certain age call everyone "dear") or 'neutral friendly' words to describe young persons. "Any lad and lass" is the Realms equivalent of "Every Tom, Dick, and Harry." Elminster likes to remind Vangerdahast and other mortal wizards who've attained high rank or social position, and like to lord it over others, that they're mere youngsters compared to him; he's doing to them what Laspeera is commenting about Vangey doing to her (meaning she's old and impressive enough that no one else would dare call her lass, or think of calling her lass; they might say "ice queen" or "hag" if they hated her, but though she doesn't look old enough to be "old hag" yet, neither would they think of calling her "lass," because that's a term for the young).

Old men sometimes call old women "lass" to flatter or court them, and mean it as a compliment, not an insult (it's all in the WAY it's said).

However, I'll pass your request on to Ed for some Realms-specific terms, and see what else we all gain...

love,

THO

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April 23, 2005: Hello, all. Yes, malchor7, Ed often feels pressure to "tone down" sexual aspects of his writing (and remember, his work for WotC is "work for hire," meaning that editors can change every word in his published material if Ed refuses or fails to do so).

Ed is a Canadian who often shakes his head at some of the prudery and illogically repressive attitudes he encounters in American society and publishing (he often used to describe his Realms writing as "You have shelves full of NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC at home/in the local library, yes? Well, I'm just 'doing a National Geographic' about this invented fantasy world of mine. So if I, as the sole living authority, tell you the native women have long, floppy breasts, why is that shocking? Why do you tolerate National Geographic and chuckle at Playboy and then react with shock and horror at porn or a real-life bared breast? What's WRONG with you people?" However, he doesn't bother to do this, any more, these days. He just sneaks in all he can. Zandilar, expect a reply from Ed in the fullness of time (however, the story in Best of Eddie reveals Alusair's knowledge and opinion of her own sexuality more than any 'lack of hetero dominance' in it).

Ed's deep in his taxes still, having taken a break this morn to participate in a writers' panel at Trinity College School in Port Hope, Ontario with writers Farley Mowat, Jonathan Bennett, Richard Scrimger, and Farley's editor Meg for high-school students (an event he labeled "delightful"), and I bring you herewith his reply to kuje31's query: "How or why did Vhonna Deepdell go from Waterdeep to Ravens Bluff? Also why did she change deities? City of Splendors has her listed as a 12th paladin of Torm while City of Ravens Bluff has her as a 12th level of Helm.

And what is with the small font in City of Ravens Bluff. :) Need a magnifying glass to read this book!"

So saith kuje; now Ed speaks:

Sorry about the 'mouse type' in the Ravens Bluff book. I just kept writing, and was blessed with an editor steeped in Tolkien scholarship, who had a similar love for exhaustive coverage. We just kept cramming and cramming and... [insert Energizer Bunny graphic here, and stick with the bunny visualization: DON'T think of Storm Silverhand, The Simbul, or even The Hooded One energetically doing anything naughty; yes, I know I'm bad].

Vhonna Deepdell is a paladin noble and true. She was specifically sent (yes, direct holy orders from the deity) to Ravens Bluff to undertake a task, and while there so pleased Helm by her actions in defending faithful and clergy of Helm that Helm asked Torm if he could 'have' her, in return for [NDA]. Obviously, Torm agreed.

Hmmm. VERY interesting. A tale for the future, 'twould seem.

love to all,

THO

April 24, 2005: Ah, valiant thom, let me soothe thee...

behold, more new Realmslore from Ed of the Greenwood himself...

Hello, all. Ed makes reply to Chosen of Moradin:

Thanks for the kind words about the Realms, and I hope it continues to entertain you life-long! I'd love to spill all sorts of details about Merith, but I'm currently writing the Knights of Myth Drannor trilogy and some of the juiciest stuff about his character is therefore under NDA. However, I believe FR7 HALL OF HEROES and/or the 2nd Edition FR boxed set are free downloads (please help me here with links or denials, scribes of Candlekeep!), and these both give brief sketches of Merith. He was born in 1161 DR, is the oldest Knight, and my delightful Lady Hooded's brief character sketch of him appears on Page 14 of the 2004 Questions for Ed Greenwood thread. There's a very brief note re. his appearance on page 80 of that thread, too, and to that I can add that he's a tall, black-haired, darkly handsome moon elf with one blue eye (right) and one green eye (left), who can be sarcastic or merrily jest, but is usually a quiet, smiling type (wits always alert and active, just not as loud and gregarious as the human Knights). He's skilled with a blade (long sword preferred; also carries multiple daggers), and VERY swift to strike if need be (apply whatever 3.5e skills and feats necessary to achieve this in game terms). He's

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Jhessail's husband, has none of the haughtiness of xenophobia some elves (notably sun elves of high birth) exhibit (and finds such behaviour very tiresome), and is the sort of "get along with everyone" character that would have been highly valued in Myth Drannor.

I wish I could say a LOT more, but - - well, ask me again in 2009, after the last Knights novel is published.

So saith Ed.

Who has to juggle so many things, so far in the future, that I marvel that he has a brain left at all! love,

THO

On April 25, 2005 THO said: Ah, Lorelord George Krashos! Well met, and may it someday be in person! (Have no fear of hanky-panky on my part; Ed hath apprised me of thy family state.) Yet I curtsy before one who loves the Realms so deeply that he reads it so keenly, and adds details with such skill and depth...

Yes, I kiss ardently, but (as Ed says, when kissing ladies' hands) unless encouraged further, I stop at the elbow. Ahem.

As for we Knights of Myth Drannor:

Andrew Dewar (now happily and permanently settled in Japan, where he's become quite a celebrity as an author and TV personality making unpowered model planes that fly: "paper airplane" gliders that in some cases are quite elaborate 3-D models) was Doust (and later Rathan).

Victor Selby (now a lawyer in Toronto, Ontario, Canada) was Semoor Wolftooth/Jelde Asturien (and later Torm).

You may recall Ed saying on several occasions that we players vote, and that his job is to entertain us, not dictate. As designers (both Andrew and Victor wrote articles that were published in DRAGON), Andrew and Victor correctly felt that the "sweet spot" for play in the AD&D rules of the time (which as far as I can see hasn't really changed with various editions of the rules since) is so-called mid-level play (character levels 3-12 or 4-12 or whatever). We spent YEARS of real time at quite low levels (everyone under 9th level except NPCs like Dove), but Andrew and Victor felt that, as Ed developed details of the churches their cleric characters were a part of around them, as play continued, that the "right" thing for both characters to do (the decisions the CHARACTERS would have made) was to retire from adventuring, settle down into cloistered church roles, raise their families, and so on. This also allowed them, as players, the 'fun' of taking new characters (Torm and Rathan) back up through the "most fun" levels, and allowed Andrew better roleplaying of the religious side of his new character (Rathan).

The rest of we Knights were quite happy with our existing characters, and wanted to pursue the ongoing work (spell research and development, networks of contacts, ever-widening political influence, reforestation projects, and so on) they were individually interested in, so Florin, Merith, Jhessail and Lanseril, et al, continued in play.

And hope to (though ever more sporadically) for the rest of our lives.

love to all,

THO

April 26, 2005: Hello, fellow scribes. Baleful Avatar asked: "THO, is there anything you can tell us (yet) about the Knights trilogy? Has Ed let slip anything about the plot or chronology of the first book? Specific characters? Places? Chapter-length excerpts? (Such as, ahem, the sex scenes the WotC editors are going to edit out anyway?)"

And here's what Ed will let me reveal of what he told me about the trilogy:

It's simply impossible to put down any sort of 'record' of our actual Realmsplay sessions in fiction form. The result would be volumes (probably a hundred or so, just to cover the gaining of the charter to Mournngrym becoming Lord of Shadowdale) of unending, interwoven subplots. Great for a soap opera, death for a fantasy novel: there's NO WAY a WotC editor (or any editor in the field,

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except perhaps those who handle series by guys named Jordan, Goodkind, or Martin!) would accept books with such huge casts and unresolved stories.

Therefore, I've had to narrow the focus down. Even the core roster of the Knights is too large for a comfortable character-focused WotC-style Realms book, so to have room to tell even 'half a tale' I'm going to have to keep things simple, chronological, and tightly focused on the Knights, and craft a new tale. The first book starts in Cormyr, as the Knights gained their charter. We're back in the Year of the Spur, watching as a young ranger named Florin reaches out to snatch his first chance at a real adventure. Be careful what you ask for, as they say... :}

It would be a fairly safe guess to say that Vangerdahast, Azoun IV, and some Zhentarim will be involved in this first book (working title, still unofficial: SWORDS OF EVENINGSTAR). I can confirm that you'll see some glimpses of Espar and of the Royal Court of Cormyr. I suspect some of the other characters will be mild surprises to some readers.

As for sex scenes, I've only trimmed out these lines myself, thus far:

He discovered a sudden urge to swallow, and did so ere he managed to gasp: "What're you DOING?"

"Learning," she purred, from the near darkness above him. "Learning how certain things can be undone... in some urgency."

He swallowed again.

And there you go. That's all I'm revealing for now (said the actress to the bishop).

So saith Ed.

Fear not, brave scribes: I'll keep working on him. He yields in the end, he does. (wink)

P.S. re. the post above: Ed echoes Eric: "the Underdark."

love to all,

THO

April 27, 2005: Hello, all. Hereafter, Ed makes reply to some of the recent queries and comments of Zandilar and Gerath Hoan:

I, too, want to thank all scribes for allowing this discussion to unfold without a lot of the ranting and bigoted outrage that often seems to boil up online when such matters are raised (or even scented). Candlekeep is a nice place; thanks, Alaundo.

Yes, 'my' original Realms is far more sexual (with, for example, a far more casual approach to nudity, more societal acceptance of grown males weeping in public, and far less of the "I own my spouse's body and all access to it, regardless of my spouse's feelings in these matters" that the modern Western world seems to have) than the published Realms. Zandilar made a VERY important comment when she posted:

"It's just that sometimes I think WotC and their editorial staff are Ed's worst enemies. People level accusations of titillation at Ed, but it's possible the "meaning got lost in the translation". Which is to say that it has never come across in the correct or complete context it's supposed to... And I think, in part, the readers bear some of the blame for this too.

Sometimes even I need to take a step back and remind myself that Abeir-Toril isn't Earth. Other people seem incapable of distinguishing between them. So the correct context is missing."

Well said, Zandilar. VERY well said. Usually what I've written has been edited enough to destroy the context. It's no secret that although I enjoy titillation, and have even occasionally been asked to 'spice up' certain of my novels by editors (though far more of them have winced and asked me to tone things down, or just down the chopping themselves), I usually have far larger fish to fry in a given scene than mere naughty teasing. And it's largely folk holding the views and attitudes currently exemplified by the 'Christian Right' who see nothing wrong in purporting to be able to read my mind and state as fact WHY I wrote certain words, my thinking and purposes - - very ironic when in some cases editing means what they're complaining about aren't the words I originally wrote at all!

SiriusBlack is correct in pointing out that WotC attitudes are governed by marketing concerns (what they think the public wants tempered by what will cause backlash/reduced access to certain markets), and to that I'll add that from the original TSR days, art has always been able to 'go a bit

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farther' towards the risqué than text (and fiction a trifle farther than must-state-things-clearly game lore).

Now, with all of this said, I think it's important to dash a few hopes, just a little. The story in my forthcoming short story collection throws a spotlight on Alusair's sexuality and her own realization of her nature and behaviour (sexual and otherwise), but it does NOT (as it happens) spotlight bisexuality.

I also think it's a mistake to "reveal one way or another what Caladnei's sexuality is and what the nature of her relationship with Alusair boils down to?" Right now, and here (outside of future Realms fiction, that is).

You see, half the FUN of the Realms (and its feeling of life) is watching its characters grow and change, and both Caladnei and Alusair are changing and growing rapidly.

I intend to explore both women (ahem, no comments just now, THO!) in tales to come. I can go so far as to say I think it's a mistake to believe that either one of them has yet 'settled' on any world-view, sexual preference, or much of anything else. We do know that Alusair has sexually enjoyed the company of human males and females, the former many, many times, and the latter more than once. We also know that she 'lets off steam' sexually, sometimes even with violent or forced sex. We know she has the sexual promiscuity of her father Azoun IV, and that what the common folk chuckled at when Azoun did it causes many of them to label Alusair a "wanton slut" (which tells us more about the expectations of Cormyrean society about unmarried female members of their royalty than it does about Alusair, of course). We know very little about Caladnei, other than that she's very shy by nature but has been forcibly changed by her adventuring experiences and by assuming her new role in Cormyr (and the latter is continuing to change her).

Yes, they MIGHT have a future together. That would be interesting (not just leeringly "fun," although if WotC editors were willing, I could certainly make it that) to watch. Yet far more interesting for all Realms readers and gamers, right now, is to keep all of you guessing, examining ALL of the unfolding possibilities for both Alusair and Caladnei.

My primary aim must always be to be 'true' to the individual characters, not use them as vehicles to explore GBLT issues or anything else. Yes, novels or even series are often planned that way, 'using' characters to explore situations and philosophies and age-old conflicts, but when actually doing the writing, word by word and paragraph by paragraph, if I'm the one with quill in hand, it will only 'ring true' if I visualize the characters as themselves, and never have them 'step out of character' to fit the convenience of the plot.

Gerath is quite correct to say that Alusair would be a likely character to explore bisexuality, and I agree: an effective and even dramatic one, and one who certainly can't be seen as "weak." On the other hand, as a writer, I might find, say, Filfaeril a more interesting character to employ in an exploration of bisexuality rather than the more 'obvious' Alusair. WARNING: no, don't start any rumors, please, that I'm "revealing" here that Filfaeril is bisexual. I honestly don't know if she is or not; I was speaking in hypothetical terms.

Bear in mind that the Obarskys are nobles of Cormyr, and we've seen enough hints (yes, in large part planted by me) to know that Cormyrean nobility indulge in mate-swapping, and the younger ones of each generation often 'experiment' with partners of both genders (without being looked down upon by other nobles), until they usually 'settle' into whatever behaviour (to use modern labels, straight, gay, bi, and there's definitely crossdressing; I recall more than one nobles' revel in original Realmsplay where temporary "she-males" were created through spells for a night's experimental fun) individually suits them. As I see it, the common folk of Cormyr hold the royal family to higher expectations of behaviour than they do the "decadent" nobles, because the Obarskys represent the realm and its future. (Something akin to real-world modern British attitudes to their royal family, vis-a-vis their nobility.)

Gerath is half correct in saying: "We haven't seen Alusair in love, as far as i'm aware. She's a character of lust and little emotional attachment."

He's right about us not seeing her in love, and that she's a character of lust. She's often been governed by her lusts. However, it's wrong to say she has little emotional attachment: that's

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equating promiscuity with self-love or coldness or inability to form relationships (and reflecting modern Christian negative attitudes towards "loose" behaviour [that persons practising it are evil, or not quite sane {whatever 'sane' really is}, or temporarily disturbed in some way, or unsatisfied and wildly searching]). I see Alusair quite differently, although I can't fault Gerath or anyone else for not seeing things the same way as I have, because editing down the years has entirely chopped context on this point: Alusair is often so 'driven' because grief builds up inside her and becomes fierce anger when it bubbles forth precisely because she DOES form many emotional attachments: too many of them to handle. She bears the weight of loving almost all of her 'young blades' as 'very close friends.' You might say she genuinely has, as I put it once, years ago, when explaining the character to Jeff Grubb: "way too many 'best friends' for any heart to handle." Yet Zandilar, don't lose all hope. I, too, am "interested in exploring a Cormyr where it does happen that Alusair loses her heart to Caladnei. I'm interested in seeing what happens next." I'm just not certain that Alusair will lose her heart to Caladnei, or even that the two of them will just become friendly bedmates. I just don't know. Nor do I have 'the' say over the matter, please remember - - either in practical terms (Realms fiction is work for hire and the Wotc editors have the final say as to exactly what words are printed), or in moral terms (I feel an obligation to Rich Baker and Sean Reynolds to portray a Caladnei in keeping, or logically developed from, the character they introduced).

As for your view of the closing scenes of my Shadows tale: Alusair is angry because that's how she reacts to grief, and because she blames herself (the battle veteran) for not protecting this new and valued courtier. Yes, she's frightened of losing her Royal Magician, but she's far more heartstruck at losing her new friend. Her comment about missing Vangey's manner is wistful nostalgia for the Cormyr she grew up in, where she could rebel and pursue her own whims as all unhappy teenagers do, secure in the knowledge that her father and even more her mother and EVEN MORE Vangerdahast had 'everything under control' between them. She misses that security, and hates the fact that she's now going to have to BUILD that security for the realm herself. She's mourning the loss of what reassured her, and bemoaning the fact that Caladnei... isn't Vangey. Caladnei hasn't built up a track record of always being two steps ahead and having three ploys and manipulations up her sleeve, that will let Alusair dare to trust in her. She doesn't mistrust Caladnei's loyalty or character, she mistrusts her wily, experienced competence (because she knows Caladnei doesn't yet have any). It has nothing to do with the relationship between them; it has to do with what Alusair knows of what Caladnei can handle.

I have in the past written many scenes of Alusair weeping that have been chopped by various editors because they wanted Alusair to be a "strong," liberated "angry young woman." You see, I don't view crying, or kindness, or understanding, or trying to comfort someone else as a weakness, and others (however unconsciously) do: they equate the stoic John Wayne-type image with strength. That can say 'strength' cheaply and easily, yes, but I prefer something more two-dimensional (especially with major characters).

As for the "ahast" or Dahast family and the solitary propensities of Royal Magicians, I'd like to delve into such matters in future fiction. As I know very well certain other true believers in the Realms do.

I'd like to thank Zandilar and Gerath Hoan for raising and discussing these matters; this sort of character examination is a treat to write about, here in these posts.

And in the months and years ahead, I hope you'll both be pleased with what unfolds for Alusair, Caladnei, and sexually for some other characters in the Realms.

I DO have plans.

Heh-heh. That's my Ed, teasing as well as I ever do at the end, there, and leaving us all ah, hanging. More Realmslore tomorrow. I'll pass on to him the recent queries about Merith, et al, pronto.

love to all,

THO

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One April 27, 2005 THO said: Ah, I believe I can clarify a point Ed made for Zandilar, here: the "forced sex" bit.

There's a scene in ELMINSTER'S DAUGHTER wherein a furious Alusair marches out of a hunting lodge, accosts the young male noble (yes, one of her "blades"), and forces him to fight her (fisticuffs), a fight that will end (as they both know) in sex. He doesn't want to punch 'his' princess, and says so, and she snarls at him that she's ordering him to do so - - and the scene unfolds as one might expect. THAT'S what Ed meant: Alusair venting her anger by physically fighting with lovers, in effect 'forcing' them into sex. I should note that it's portrayed as unusual behaviour (not for her, but that others don't indulge in it).

Also, while I'm at it, KnightErrantJR: Ed means no attack on Christianity, and has no doubt that folks of all spectra, political and religious, exhibit views that often seek to control the behaviour of others. However, as a Canadian who sees American society firsthand only a handful of times a year (attending conventions and doing occasional bookstore tours), Ed sees and hears only the American Christian Right's yelling about such matters on a daily basis while at home up in Canada - - because only certain individuals among the American Christian Right have the towering arrogance to regularly go on Canadian media to tell Canadians what their laws and attitudes should be. This used to be known to Ontario journalists as "the Pat Buchanan Effect," just as it was earlier dubbed the "Jerry Falwell Noise," the "Jimmy Swaggart Yawp," and so on. Of COURSE this is just a very small part of Christianity, and Ed didn't mean to imply otherwise. It's just that while up in Canada Ed doesn't tend to hear attempted repression from American Democrats, or anyone else except what you might call 'card-carrying members of the right-wing American TV evangelists' or so-called 'Moral Majority.' Most other Christians who speak publicly on sexual mores and 'family' issues place their emphasis on supporting those in need, personal responsibility, and coming to the right moral choices rather than trying to coerce or legislate (or, ahem, damn to hell) others.

Ed himself sang in a church choir for decades, and was raised as a Christian, in the United Church (to Americans: that's the long-ago union in Canada of the Methodist, Presbyterian, Wesleyan, Congregationalist, and most Baptist churches). He can be as cynical as anyone else when it comes to corruption among clergy, but has always wanted 'true belief' on the part of individuals to be respected and seen as something positive, and the gods themselves to remain as mysterious (and therefore, sources of awe) to mortals as possible.

Alaundo, I don't usually delve into such matters, but I think this is important in any understanding of why Ed 'built' the Realms the way he did, and portrays it the way he does.

Ed of course may have something to say himself on this, though he usually avoids talking about what he sees as essentially personal matters.

love to all,

THO

April 28, 2005: malchor7, you asked me "Does Ed ever feel under pressure (from WotC, from fans, from anyone, really) either to ignore non-heterosexuality or "clean it up" (like, as Zhandilar was discussing, turning bisexuality into heterosexuality when it comes to a permanent relationship)? Does he feel that the fantasy market (and/or the world in general) is really hostile toward discussions of sexuality? [snip] Does Ed think sexuality just scares people, and they don't want to talk about it? Is it religious in origin? Media-driven? Political?"

So of course I turned to Ed for his answer:

Yes, I've quite often felt pressure from editors and co-writers, down the years, to 'keep it clean.' In some part that was due to their own preferences, and in others because of the target audience TSR (and now WotC) were/are aiming at. I was quite often told, in the early days, that we were writing for the "12-year-old American male," and laughing because I personally thought that, if we really were aiming for that consumer (and as a GenCon attendee, I KNEW we had lots of gal gamers and a majority of slightly older - - and getting older every year - - male gamers), the 12-year-old American male should have been getting a whole lot more examples of sex AND friendship and family trust and love and a whole lot LESS wanton gore and violence.

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I know that a lot of TSR fears were of offending "Angry Mothers From Heck" and the Bible Belt 'holy rollers' (TV evangelists searching for the next easy evil target), because doing so would cost them access to markets. So a lot of the 'avoid the sex' (sometimes carried to extremes; I've mentioned here in the past about having a DRAGON article on King Arthur pulled because an editor wouldn't let me say Lancelot and Guinevere [just to pick one of the simpler spellings of her name] were "lovers" - - a no-no because Gwen and Arthur were married at the time, so that would be "extramarital love!" Horror! Shock and awe, even!) was based in not wanting to offend certain religious folk.

However, much of the fantasy market (check out the old John Norman GOR books, and the long-running series by Robert Jordan and Terry Goodkind, to say nothing of all the Laurel Hamilton, Anne Rice, and other "vampire-sex" genre novels) these days goes much, much farther into sexuality than I ever do in the Realms.

And no, many other countries (particularly in Europe) lack a lot of the sexual repression I see in the United States. I believe part of it is rooted in how the States began (Puritan and Quaker colonies, among all the other early settlements).

What puzzles me about the current state of America are all the double standards I see (use sex to sell in television commercials and then [the football player and the Desperate Housewife ad] suddenly have a fit about doing so; revel in harder, faster movies and bestselling novels and then wag fingers at "immoral youth" and "wanton, loose morals" when the public mores that have been shown to people as examples for decades are these very same movies and novels; Religious Right preachers howl about the moral behaviour of others whilst trysting in hotels with partners married to other people, not them... and so on). I see dishonesty and hypocrisy as far more damaging to society at large than kissing and cuddling (and if it's sexual diseases and the like everyone's worried about, why not have full public access to protection and sexual hygiene instruction?). If celibacy is promoted for religious reasons, please also remove the fear and misinformation instead of treating sex as "naughty" and secretive, and therefore making it more alluring to the young (an allure that arises from basic human nature, and was being written about in ancient Rome [see Juvenal's SATIRES and others]; what's wrong with the Religious Right that they don't understand human nature?). And so on...

However, I'm not interested in fighting with anybody about such topics.

Until the moment they feel they have the right to tell ME what to do, and think, and feel.

(Again, a lot of the trouble caused by conservative folk of any faith begins when they believe they have the right to tell everyone else how to behave, not just folk of their own faith.)

In general, in Realms fiction, I do try to show diversity. After all, we postulate a world in which lots of different intelligent races live together with humans (and magic can permanently or temporarily alter physical form, so when you pick up that hot young lass or lad in the tavern, you really don't know if they're really of another gender, or are several centuries old, or are an orc or other race magically shapechanged and out for a little fun). So we really do have diversity already. I just want to show its richness and consequences, and entertain along the way; the aim of most writers, really.

So saith Ed.

Who'll return with more Realmslore tomorrow.

love to all,

THO

April 29, 2005: Hello, all. Herewith, Ed makes reply to David Maxson about the gods:

Hello, David. First of all, "Mr. Greenwood" is my dad. Secondly, everything I say here is abbreviated and tempered by some Big Secrets about the gods of the Realms that I can't reveal yet (BEEG NDA time, and probably for a year or three yet).

Here we go...

The big failing in the published Realms to date, throughout all editions, is (through editorial neglect that was probably due to fears of smaller sales and/or offending some markets) a lack of sufficient detail about churches (creeds, aims, taboos, rituals, specific garments and gestures and

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customs, sacred things; all of that), and too much focus and argument about which god did exactly what to what other god, when.

The problem with concentrating on the latter is that mortals (PCs) just can never know the truth about divine matters; even the gods lie and distort, and their priesthoods certainly do. So knowing exactly when the Dawn Cataclysm happened, or if Mask is a more effective liar than Leira was, isn't really of much practical use to a Player Character.

I've spoken about this here at Candlekeep before. Simply put, we can never know the truth about the doings of the gods (unless I'm writing about it, of course [Insert Big Cheesy Grin]).

As a result, the current state of affairs IS "properly "hazy" enough in terms of detail (more precisely, the lack thereof) to allow a DM to grow and develop it as his or her player's actions dictate." Even if it doesn't seem so.

We're stuck with Ao (not my creation) as the creator deity, yes, but the key is that Ao is a "disinterested" (or largely hands-off) creator deity. If we have any other sort of creator deity, the game becomes meaningless, because if your success as a PC adventurer is foreordained by the gods, or even driven by conflicting divine wills and prophecies, true free will vanishes, heroism isn't really heroism, and there's really no point in adventuring, is there?

I advocated a one-time Godswar as a campaign fix for 'broken' magic items and the like. TSR folks (operating on the Marvel Comics thinking of THOR having Ragnarok every fifty issues, et al) seized on it as the way to change the rules from 1st to 2nd Edition. Have a great crisis, make it an 'Event,' and use it (however clumsily; assassins being a case in point here) as a blanket explanation for changes.

In my opinion, that's MUCH better than changing things and then claiming, as you put it, "it's always been this way." That was an insult to the established fans/buying public when the comics editors did it (I remember listening to an artist who worked on AQUAMAN decades ago for DC Comics, bitching about an editor changing the colour of an undersea race, and answering protests that the readers would know it was different from one issue to the next with a snarl of, "Hey - - who cares? They're just KIDS, darn it! It doesn't MATTER!" Well, to me it sure as darn does!), and it tastes no better when you do it to gamers. By all means use incredible logic ("Sure you saw him fall over the cliff! But you found no body, right? Right? Then he's STILL ALIVE!"); it's better than trying to ignore changes.

Now, the changes can remain mysterious to mortals, a matter of debate and fear and even religious schism. As I said, mortals can't be certain of anything, and if the DM keeps the focus on roleplaying and what the churches do (what are the upperpriests whispering about, behind closed doors? what will they send their agents out to try to do, next tenday?), cosmological details will fade into the "doesn't matter to my life" for most PCs. THAT would be my foremost advice to any DM running the Realms right now.

As for my article, it's important to remember that I was suggesting one way to build a pantheon (balanced in terms of alignments, assign portfolios to deities), in a time when anything written by Gary Gygax was official by definition, and was to be immediately incorporated into one's own world as part of the D&D rules. I was suggesting one way of assembling and ordering gods, not promoting my method as the One True Way. I used a different, much simpler method when designing Darsar (the world in which my Band of Four novels from Tor Books are set), and a different one yet again for Castlemorn (hopefully soon to be published by Studio 2 Publishing). So saith Ed.

Whom I've always thought of as the One True Creator (and Old Bearded Overgod) of the Realms. Hmmm; can't beat THAT as an entry on his resumé.

love to all,

THO

April 30, 2005: Si, Ed replies to your query: "If we take the armed forces of Cormyr and Waterdeep as examples (since I know Ed likes specifics in questions) what sort of insignia do they use for Ranks, length of service Marks (if any) and Decorations for valour on their uniforms/armour?"

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Ed speaks:

Sorry, Si, but the Watch and Guard of Waterdeep are currently NDA (something [cough] to do with Waterdeep products and web support appearing this summer, so you [cough] shouldn't have to wait TOO long). Moreover, a BIG current NDA is going to trammel my pen when replying to you about the stalwarts of Cormyr, too, but let me say this much:

When in battle armour, Purple Dragons display nothing that demonstrates length of service. They do have identifying rank marks, and they do win 'dragonstars' (medals, consisting of a decoration pendant dangling from an ornate metal chain, some chains being worn around the neck and some over the shoulder [so the pendant hangs low on the chest next to one arm or the other]) for valour, but these are worn only on 'state dress' occasions (revels, when courting or being wed, and when at Court), NEVER in battle. Often Obarskysrs haven't worn crowns or circlets when armoured and in the saddle. As for specifics: sorry, NDA right now. I really am sorry, and in a little more than a month hope to be able to tell you a little bit more.

So saith Ed.

Ho-ho, your probe strikes into something SECRET...

curiouser and curiouser, as the actress said when unbuttoning buttons not her own - - ahem.
love to all,

THO

May 1, 2005: Well met again, fellow scribes. Ed replies to The Sage in the matter of Zhentil Keep currency:

Hi, Sage. Zhentil Keep has been a trading center from its founding, and so home to all manner of imported currency and rough-smelted trade bars (being as the wealth of metal mines north of the Moonsea flows through it), down the years.

It's also had various local mintings of coins, most of them crude stampings of a portcullis gate on one side and a diamond-shaped gemstone on the other, the coins being rough-edged and irregular.

Since the recent rebuilding of the Keep, a few copper and silver coins and a lot of gold coins have been minted. The copper and silver are mere coatings on iron, and are deemed worthless by most folk outside Zhentil Keep, but the gold coins are made of the 'real thing' (a slightly reddish gold, found mainly northeast of Glister, though there are rumors to be vast amounts of smelted gold buried under or near the Citadel of the Raven).

The details that follow apply only to these most recent mintings:

copper coin: square, pierced by central hole to allow stringing, the four sharp corners snipped off. One side: the Wingless Dragon (scaled serpent with fanciful head) biting its own tail; head facing anticlockwise, curls around central hole. Other Side: ten tiny four-point stars, encircling the central hole. Known as a 'fang' in the Keep and in the Dales, but elsewhere as 'dung-pieces.'

silver coin: triangular, pierced by central hole to allow stringing, all corners remain (silver usually wears off quickly). Both sides: six four-pointed stars encircle the central hole.

Known as a 'talon' or 'naal' (pronounced "NAH-ull," probably a distortion of the word 'nail') in the Keep and the Dales, but everywhere else as a 'dung-flea bit' or just a 'flea-bit.'

gold coin: square, with corners surviving, but two parallel sides bow inwards symmetrically (concave), for easy grasping by thumbs (no central hole).

One side: three crenelated castle turret-tops, central one slightly taller than the others.

Other side: Wolf head, side-on with nose to the dexter and with three drops of tears or blood falling away beneath it.

Known formally as a 'glory,' but called a 'Weeping Wolf' everywhere (even in Zhentil Keep).

So saith Ed.

Ask, and ye shall (eventually) receive.

love to all,

THO

May 2, 2005: Hello, again, all.

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Zandilar, Ed confirms my explanation of Alusair's 'forced sex,' and adds an answer of sorts (sigh) to your comment: "Vangerdahast didn't pull Caladnei out of thin air, she must have been there in the background for a while - perhaps as one of the senior War Wizards? I mean, there'd be plenty of people who would be miffed at Caladnei leap frogging over them from nothing. So how well did Alusair know Caladnei prior to... hmm... Cormyr: A Novel? Was Caladnei even around prior to that novel? And if not, how is it that Vangerdahast expected the Obarskyrs (let alone the nobles) to accept her as his replacement?"

Ed speaks:

Ah, yes. I slipped a LITTLE about Caladnei's past into ELMINSTER'S DAUGHTER, but Vangey's process of magically watching her from afar, covertly testing her, watching her some more, offering her the job, accepting but not accepting her refusal, getting the Obarskyrs to accept her, and so on - - as well as his motives for choosing a successor at last, and specifically choosing HER, is something I'd like to show fictionally, some day. If the opportunity ever arises.

I'm not sure if it will, but (ahem) I have plans. I hope they can be made to dovetail with those of a certain other scribe, but I can't say more just yet. No matter how much I want to.

You are of course correct: Vangey did not choose Caladnei impulsively, by any means.

So saith Ed.

Darn those NDAs and the need not to screw up future possibilities, even if they're not NDA'ed yet.

Ah, well: I hope in the fullness of time we shall all see...

Oh, to Chosen of Moradin, Ed says: Merith has gained only two levels in each class, in the 'home' campaign, but modify him to whatever you need him to be, in your own.

love to all,

THO

May 3, 2005: Hello, all. Ed sent along a little more for Zandilar:

Hi again. Yes, my Lady Hooded has clarified things correctly, from my point of view: by 'forced sex' I mean that Alusair takes out her fury in barefisted brawling with her young blades (or other men, if none of 'her' young nobles are around), with the full intent that this will lead to sex.

Sometimes this involves one partner holding the other down, but just as often, it seems Alusair wants to 'cut loose' and feel a little pain and race around breathing hard before intimacy, that's all. It's "her kink," if you will. I guess I'd better choose my terms more carefully: in Canada, "forced sex" is by definition consensual, and used when partners want to roleplay hunting, chasing, pouncing on, and using superior strength during sexual play (involuntary would, yes, be rape; re. that, read on...).

Your posts have highlighted two issues I am exploring with Alusair: the mental effects of almost constant battle on someone young (Alusair, of course), and what it means (morally and mentally) when someone with royal authority gives you an order: Alusair ordering someone to fight her, and then respond to her advances (note that young nobles joining her 'blades' KNOW this goes on - - in other words, they "know what they're getting into," and hence could be said to not being ordered to do something they weren't already expecting and wanting to do; it's just that they're afraid of hurting Alusair in the fighting and really enraging her and reaping the results - - and they're afraid of HER: one of the most 'driven' and fierce people they've ever met). To most young nobles of either gender, the two scariest people in the kingdom are Vangerdahast and Alusair, with any parents or family members they may fear running a distinct second.

(So while a blade might not want sex or the fight that precedes it at a particular moment, or not be expecting it, they know what they're letting themselves in for when they become blades; many young male nobles chose not to 'ride with the Steel Princess' [or 'the Steel Rose'], possibly for this reason. On the other hand, even if Alusair 'takes' them very much against their will, it's rape only by our modern definitions; in Cormyr, her word (right now) is LAW, and these are her subjects. Again, this isn't something I'm justifying or even - - for obvious reasons - - explicitly exploring in Realms fiction or published game lore, just an issue I'm waving gently in the background [subtext] for readers to think about if they notice it, and want to. The last story in my

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forthcoming short story collection charges head-on right at this issue; I'm awaiting the fallout with interest.)

Alusair very rarely fights fists-to-fists with women, probably because she doesn't want to hurt or frighten someone who'll only be bewildered, who won't fight back (and therefore deprive her of any satisfactory outlet for her own anger), and who will probably only scratch and bite and pull hair in self-defense, if pushed to extremes (the sole exception is Myrmeen Lhal, who understands Alusair perfectly and WILL provide both the fighting and the sex; and yes, Myrmeen IS a true bisexual). Tanalasta, when both she and Alusair were young, was a perfect example of the scratch and bite school, and Alusair knows full well that most females she'd dare show this side of herself to have been raised to do little else. Filfaeril and Laspeera are examples of people she'd not dare do this in front of, or want to involve (so of course both of them know all about it, but don't speak of it with her; they will, freely, if SHE ever raises it). Bhereu and Thomdor were examples of men who'd give Alusair the fight and then use their brawn to hold her helpless, refusing her all sex except a loving family kiss (perhaps this is where she learned to like doing this, when very young and tomboyish). BTW, Alusair mistrusts all intimacy with females she doesn't know, because she's always secretly suspected Vangerdahast of using magic to shapechange himself into such, to gain access to her. This belief is mistaken, and probably arose from her dreams (and why she'd think Vangey would take female human shape and not a younger, more handsome and well-endowed male human shape, to seduce her, I've NO idea; this just developed years ago in roleplaying with the Knights - - and yes, it was Sharantyr whom Alusair was confiding in, by a fireside, after fighting and sex).

It would be wrong to see Alusair's sparring with Caladnei in such a way. The Steel Regent is testing her Mage Royal's fighting skills, keeping them both sharp, and hoping to improve Caladnei's "dirty-fighting" by showing her tricks and 'training away' her non-aggressive hesitations. If either or both of them becomes sexually aroused by their sessions, they deliberately hide it from each other.

Which brings me to your question: "Well, how old is Alusair? You make it sound almost as if she and Caladnei were still teenagers."

They aren't in calendar years, no - - but both of them have been so swept up in life-shattering changes and in constant fighting or and/or adventuring that they've largely lacked opportunities for self-reflection, learning, and 'growing up.' (Something ELSE I'm exploring for alert readers: just how much some adventurers 'never grow up.')

They've been on a whirlwind in which they kept on reacting to, and participating in, violent events, relying on known and trusted companions, travelling constantly, and not really maturing the way other women would (they became veteran combatants, but that's a very different thing). This is, of course, already changing - - fast and forever, for both of them. Which is why it's going to be so much fun to watch them both.

Just to switch back to the violent sex and your followup words about "the SM part of BDSM" and "consensual BD or D/s." Both of the latter exist in the Realms, as I signalled by my depictions of Ilmater and Loviatar (safely 'removed' one step from mortals, and hence 'okay' by TSR's strict Code of Ethics), but for obvious reasons we've never delved into them much.

I occasionally slip a paragraph-to-three teasing bondage and whipping mini-scene into novel drafts for my editors to discover with shrieks (and remove, usually after sharing it around the office), but it's always been teasing, never intended to make it into print. (This practise, by the way, has led Peter Archer of WotC to jokingly refer to the mythical book of "Edtime Stories," which WotC JUST can't quite afford to put on the schedule this year... but perhaps next year... [next year, of course, never quite arriving].)

And yes, I could probably write every effective porn, but I don't want the Realms to be about that, just as I don't want it to be slavish detailings of gory monster-slaughterings. I want it to be about growing and developing characters and their relationships with each other. There's something magnificent about a wrinkled old lady (a commoner) daring to reach out and kiss the hand of Azoun IV as he strides through her village - - and of him raising her to her feet, asking her name, bowing to her in courteous greeting, and then kissing her full on the mouth in reply (and then setting his spies to learn her birthday, so he can send her a surprise gift a year later). Going along

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for the ride every time Azoun's roving eye falls on a chambermaid, however, is rather LESS than magnificent, as I hope even horny young scribes will agree.

So saith Ed.

Whew, getting a little WARM in here, isn't it? I'll just console myself with MY memories of Azoun. Ummm-hmmmm. He got rather a surprise with me, as I recall, though he did term it a "delight." Heh-heh. [Hums a purring little tune.]

love to all,

THO

On May 3, 2005 THO said: Zandilar, one point re. the "non-aggressive hesitations" discussed between you and Ed.

Ed and I talked about this, too, and here's my paraphrase of some of his comments:

In "fighting in the wild," Caladnei has none. In the Court of Cormyr, feeling her way through the intrigues of an unfamiliar country, she's uncertain (who's friend? who's foe?), and doesn't want to do anything that will have implications for the entire Forest Kingdom for centuries to come. She doesn't want to disappoint Alusair, Filfaeril, Laspeera, et al.

Alusair (in the Shadows scene) is trying to flog into a state of "Don't stop to worry about our feelings or think about how you'll be regarded: just ACT!"

In all matters of Realms characters primarily seen in fiction, things are complicated by what writers like Ed don't have space to say, or that editors trim, or that don't "fit" the pace and flow of the main storyline and so get left out by the writer. Ed's always arguing from a viewpoint of "knowing" the characters better than what any Realms fan has seen (as seen in this thread during his War Wizards debate with Jerryd).

Myself, I'd like to see much more of Alusair and Caladnei, and Ed tells me There Are Plans. What he DOESN'T tell me is what they are (the poltroon!).

I'll have to go and, ahem, "work" on him.

love to all,

THO

May 4, 2005: Hello, scribes. Well, what should I find in the old inbox but yet ANOTHER reply from Ed to Zandilar:

The attitude towards Alusair (the wanton slut) as opposed to Azoun IV (our rampant king, chuckle chuckle wink wink) is indeed holding the royal house to a different standard to the 'decadent' nobles ("wallowing in it, and each other" is a common Cormyrean saying, regarding the raffish behaviour, or at least reputation, of the nobility in general), but it's not a negative attitude towards bastards (children born out of wedlock), or even towards females (Alusair can rut all she wants before becoming Regent and after Azoun V is on the throne, or if he dies and she becomes Queen, after she marries and produces 'an heir and a spare'). The "good folk of Cormyr" (i.e. general public opinion) just doesn't think a female who sleeps around is the right sort of person to be a good Regent.

Of course, her blades and the Purple Dragons she's fought alongside judge her very differently, and already have as much or more personal loyalty towards her than they ever had towards her father. In my opinion, if Alusair produced two healthy children, in 'untainted' married circumstances, I think her strong sexual appetites would be accepted even if she then remained unmarried. However, we'll have to see.

And yes, she does think she's barren. Whether she really is or isn't, I can't tell you: yes, Vangey did something magical to prevent her bearing unwanted Obarskyr bastards, but whether or not his meddling was permanent, or still holds, remains mysterious. To everyone but him, heh-heh -- and no, he's said nothing recently about it to Alusair. Just one more thing she's wrestling with (because Caladnei insists she doesn't know, and doesn't know the right spells to try to find out without harming Alusair, both of them agree NO clergy can be consulted for fear of this becoming widespread knowledge, and for some reason Laspeera and Filfaeril refuse to discuss this matter

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at all, and have been able to murmur a reason why that's ended all insisting on the part of both Alusair and Caladnei. Alaphondar may or may not know something, but he's not talking either. Ohh, Throne of the Dragon, there's a lot of future Cormyr fiction that needs writing... :}
And yes, I'd said bisexuality IS fairly common, though the published Realms will probably never reflect that (remember, to folk IN THE REALMS, it's not a big deal, not something to be pointed out and commented on), and yes, as you put it, "people don't have too many issues with trust when it comes to their partners." Many folk in some lands, with the exceptions of cases where inheritance and lineage must be safeguarded, expect their adult partners to 'sleep around,' if said partners are so minded and their faith allows it (contraception is, however, widely practised, because unwanted young can be fatal in cases of severe climate, food shortages, warfare, and so on). In most places in the Realms, wanton public behaviour tends to occur at festivals or inside festhalls, not out on the streets "where you'll scare the horses." However, there are no Puritans in the Realms, nor anything like their attitudes except among certain senior celibate priests of particular faiths.

You ask: "Would magic in the Realms allow someone to change gender in such a way that they would be fertile?" Yes, but the incantation and casting of the spell has to be JUST right; most versions of the shape-changing magics are too 'rough and ready.' Most clerical magic concerned with such things is precise enough, and so are most elven magics. The majority of spells in current circulation among humans are not.

You asked: "But is holding them to higher expectations the same as holding them to the expectation of heterosexuality only? Have there ever been homosexual rulers of Cormyr?"

Answers: No, and yes, but not openly (exclusively homosexual, that is). As to whom... no, it's not revelation time yet. (That thundering sound you hear is another NDA curtain falling.) :}

Oh, and by the way, Lady Zandilar: I do believe it's high time I bowed respectfully to you. So... my knees are the creaking sound you're now hearing.

So saith Ed.

More and more interesting. However, there are OTHER sides to the Realms besides matters sexual, and Ed promises to deal with one of them next time.

love to all,

THO

On May 4, 2005 THO said: We Knights often discuss matters Realmsian in great detail with Ed, and as a result I can shed some light on this matter of diseases without contacting Ed.

First, remember always Ed's caution on too closely comparing the Realms and our real world in medieval or Renaissance times. The Realms has three strong mitigating factors, several of which have been mentioned or alluded to by scribes already:

1. Herbalists with very effective (read: better than real-world) remedies.
2. Churches and rulers who forcibly administer treatments (to the faithful, to warriors in sworn royal service) to slow or prevent much disease spread.
3. The mingling of species. The mere fact that humans dwell in close proximity to, or even in sexual relationships with, elves, dwarves, halflings, gnomes, orcs, et al (and all of the half-breed races that have arisen) meant HUGE plagues in the past (look at the lore and you can see the hints and mentions), as germs spread... and presumably recent-day prevalence of resistance. Remember, the worst outbreaks of disease occur when 'separate' populations are suddenly exposed to 'bugs' they've never faced before. That happened a long time ago in the Realms, and we're now dealing with "those left standing."
4. Lifestyles in Faerûn are such that cleanliness among children at play is less than the modern real world (they get to play in stables, road-dust, and/or swamps or forest muck, the latter being far more endowed with beast droppings than anywhere in our wildlife-thinned-by-man modern real world), so they're exposed to more as younglings, and build up personal resistance.

I hope this helps.

love to all,

THO

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P.S. Beowulf, re. "Christianity's stance towards sexual adventure," hast thou never heard of the Clink, in London? Just one of many hundreds of European city brothel districts run by, ahem, the Church? However, yes, they DID promote cleanliness among their staff whores.

May 5, 2005: Well met, scribes. I bring Ed of the Greenwood's answer to Rick Day, in the matter of moon elven eyes:

Yes, gold flecks in some. Why? No idea, not my doing; I suspect TSR designers were simply trying to make the elf subraces distinctive in a beautiful and 'cool' way.

As for food: my brother is a chef by profession, too. As anyone who's been to GenCons for years, and seen me go from a 29-inch waist (GenCon 13; I presume I was even skinnier at the earlier ones, but if I ever knew my waist size back then, I've forgotten it) to a 44-inch waist (now) already knows, yes, I love food. Far too much.

These days, I eat simply and sparingly, with occasional splurges. Every few hours.

Ahem, so saith Ed, and he was joking about the last bit. A very healthy and small-portion eater these days, though at GenCons he admits he breaks training and stokes up every morning, just so he can last the long days through (and go to lunch and dinner with so many friends).

Enough of this talk; 'tis making me hungry!

To Bakra, Lord of the Outlying Thread, Ed sends greetings, thanks for the kind words, and to your request for 1000 pages: "You and me both! However, length is specified by contract, so I can't. If I could, believe me I WOULD."

Which should come as no surprise to anyone...

love to all,

THO

May 6, 2005: Hello again, all. Ed replies to Weiser_Cain's query about the Chosen who "makes sure to keep human, half-elven, and elven family trees up to date so they don't become lost..."

Why would they become 'lost' and what does it mean to be lost?"

Hi. Here I simply meant a Magister who tries to record genealogies (not just of armigerous families, whom the Heralds are concerned with, but anyone, of high or low birth or station, who has within their family ranks someone with an aptitude for the Art [= a wizard or sorcerer], which turns out to be most people). She works and works to record who married who and what offspring they had. This isn't necessarily knowledge that the individuals she's recording know, or will learn, and it may never make the slightest difference to their lives - - but it does mean that Mystra's servants can follow genetic lines, if they want to, of persons with, say, spellfire, or an aptitude for water magic, or particular magic-related prestige classes, and so on.

(Note I said "if they want to;" thus far, few of the Chosen have bothered consulting this ever-accumulating genealogical work, for whatever reasons.)

Lineages become 'lost' for all sorts of reasons, of course, including warfare, disease, winterkill, slavery, monster attacks, fires that destroy local temple and family records, illiteracy and bad memory or lack of teaching (older family members to younger kin), and so on. Most 'common folk' in the Realms can accurately and fully trace their family tree back three generations at most, and 'back beyond that' is little more than a string of colourful tales and claims to be related to this or that king or local hero or villain.

So saith Ed.

Drifting close to real-world reality here, I'd say.

If that isn't too trite or redundant a construction. Ah, I'm too weary to mind much just now. More Realmslore on the morrow!

love to all,

THO

May 7, 2005: Hi again, fellow scribes. KnightErrantJR asked: "I was just wondering if Ed has ever done the traditional DM reality warping... by that I mean, you write down an NPC that you once

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listed as LG as being LN, and then make up a back story that would explain the change in class, alignment, etc. that your players may never have any idea about."

And Ed replies:

No, though I've often had to concoct explanations when other creatives at work in the Realms have changed classes, alignments, locations, lineages and even genders of existing characters from one product to the next. :}

In the 'home' Realms, I pay close attention to the imaginary lives of a rather large (40-plus) 'core' group of important NPCs that the PCs interact with repeatedly (not always often), and note their adventures, mundane doings, locations, and level or skill advancements (if any) in an ongoing manner, so they 'grow' alongside the PCs. By the way, the forty-some number doesn't include the dozen or so NPC Knights; add them in and we're easily up over sixty.

So saith Ed.

I've never said he was sane, have I?

Gods, all this writing and he's running a constant fantasy version of Coronation Street in his head, too...

shudder,

love to all,

THO

May 8, 2004: Hello, all. Herewith, Ed of the Greenwood replies to thom's amended query: "In Delzimmer the 4 noble families mysteriously work together. But, how would it work in a town (Nathlekh in my campaign for example) where the families don't trust each other, and one of the families secretly worships Bane and plans to become the Tyrants of Nathlekh? Is it reasonable to think the 4 houses would only trust ONE house with overall town defense? Tax collection? Day-to-day administration? I could see where fines and labor would be used commonly to handle crimes and ensure a labor pool for "dirty work" around the town ;). I guess if you could give a few realms pointers as to how *you* would set this up - given this specific situation I'd appreciate it!"

Ed replies:

No, it wouldn't be 'the Realms way' for families to trust each other, or for any institution to 'play musical chairs' with all of its civic officials every two years (when mysterious knifings and poisonings just before each 'switchover' could disrupt the process so easily).

The Realms norm would be to hire and/or train professionals to handle town defense and practical work (such as road and wall repairs), and to oversee these officials with members of the various families in a check-and-balance manner (family A runs the dungeons, so family B runs the Watch, and family C oversees the courts with members of families A and B sitting among the judges... and so on). Yes, this makes for constant tension and intrigue and mistrust. And yes, this maximizes roleplaying opportunities. :}

I'd say the four ruling families would have passed laws that give their members special privileges (e.g. we can have bodyguards of more than two armed men, and 'staff wizards,' and no one else can), and that they'd have worked out ways of sharing administration over the day-to-day work, and the important justice and law enforcement, so whomever is 'the First' currently DOESN'T directly control justice or law enforcement (so they can act as a check on the First doing whatever crazy things they please). Of COURSE a family intending to become absolute Tyrants would be working to subvert this, but the other three families would always be watching them and each other, constantly and vigilantly, and wanting to recruit (or frame as scapegoats) visiting PC adventurers and anyone else coming to town who might shift the current balance of power.

I'd like to say more, but my latest NDA, for something secret I'm working on right now, prevents it. Sorry.

So saith Ed.

Hmmm, that last sentence is (sigh) interesting. As I find myself saying all too often (Ed does respect his NDAs, guys, which means he certainly won't tell me what that line refers to.)

Damian, Coronation Street has been running (on CBC, which is our equivalent of BBC1) for as long as it's been running in the UK, only on a 6-month delay.

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I'll send your request to Ed, but the poor man is SO snowed under right now that he might not get to it until early June!

love to all,
THO

May 9, 2005: Hello, all. I come bearing Ed's reply to The Sage, specifically to this: "We know that from some of your previous postings at other locations online, the Lowlantern Lutes were "last seen busily fleecing rich Sembians." You also stated that they "presumably are still at it." I was just curious as to whether they've been encountered by the Knights of Myth Drannor (or anyone else) in your home 'Realms' campaign since?"

Ed speaks:

No, they haven't - - at least, so far as the Knights know. However (secret revealed here) the Lutes have taken to wearing spellspun disguises for long periods, impersonating others (or assuming their own invented identities) as they practise their shady dealings. So the Knights may very well have run into one or other of the Lutes without realizing it.

The Lutes aren't doing this for idle self-entertainment or to deceive the Knights, of course. They're doing it because fleeced Sembians quite often have both the anger and the resources to get back at those who've done them dirty, and the Lutes want to keep on successfully fleecing and continue to stay alive, too, if you catch my meaning...

So saith Ed.

Ah, yes, those dear, dear Lutes. How I'd love to see some of them again, in just the right circumstances, of course...

love to all,
THO

On May 9, 2005 THO said: Sigh.

Realmslore, I just hope you'll appreciate the irony here:

As one of Ed's original players, I was "in the loop" on HALLS OF THE HIGH KING, and saw the design directives Ed was given for that project (stapled to every TSR contract in those days as "Exhibit A").

They included a commandment to: "Bring the Moonshaes more fully into the Realms, update them vis-à-vis the Niles trilogy, and provide a suggested campaign arc set in the Moonshaes." The thinking AT TSR was that the Moonshaes (bought separately by TSR from Doug, a very nice man whom I liked at our only meeting, and I know Ed is friends with) didn't feel sufficiently "Realmsian," and Ed was the only guy who could fix that. So, yes, HALLS probably DOESN'T sufficiently capture the feeling of the original Niles trilogy.

Of course, Books Department later retconned the dating of the first Moonshaes trilogy to allow for the second trilogy, so HALLS and the novels don't match anyway, but that's hardly Ed's fault.

love,
THO

May 10, 2005: Hello, all. Divers 'little' replies from Ed this time (his housekeeping, as it were): Thanks for reminding everyone, kuj31: yes, there's still longevity magic in the Realms. Rules changes don't alter established lore. Even if your PCs can't find or get potions of longevity, or you as players can't find them in the rulebooks, it doesn't mean NPCs in the established Realms (such as Mirt, Durnan, Filfaeril, and dozens more) didn't find and imbibe (or even store, for future use) them in the past.

Rules should never trump accumulated Realmslore (our collective imagined 'reality').

SiriusBlack, re. "So for every one thing that slips through, probably two or three that editors caught? I'd love to know the ratio."

My reply must be: it's hard to score, here. There are little things and big things, and they catch most of the big ones and all of the unsubtle ones. I'm no longer trying to "put one over" on anyone, but rather just to layer meanings and possible interpretations into my fiction because it's

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more fun for everyone if some things, as in 'real' life, remain uncertain rather than stated baldly. I DO try to "expand the horizons" with every book, pushing back "what we're allowed to do" or the precedents for fictional styles, explicitness, and content topics a little bit more with every book I write - - but I'd prefer that to be with editorial support and agreement, not my deceiving the editor. Wooly Rupert, see Page 5 of my last year's thread about piercings. Common among goblins, sometimes popular in the Tashalar and other southern areas, but otherwise unusual. Some folk pierce their bodies in the Realms, usually 'scarifying' as part of religious or clan rite-of-passage rituals, or to adorn themselves with rings or bells (some Tashlutan female dancers sport tiny nipple-bells or chimes), but it's not a particularly common practise. Clergy of Loviatar and Ilmater (pain-weights affixed to testicles, and the like) are exceptions to this general lack of popularity. So saith Ed.

I'm recalling some rather vivid examples of the two priesthoods Ed mentions, from Realmsplay, but I'm sure your imaginations can supply detailed descriptions just as well as my quill can. Ahem.

love to all,
THO

May 11, 2005: Hello again, fellow scribes. Ed makes reply to Dargoth, Blueblade, malchor7, and Zandilar in the matter of the Cormyrean succession:

Yes, Dargoth, if the living Obarskyrs were publicly known to have been slain, various noble families and ALL of the surviving Court elements (the War Wizards and the Highknights in particular) would energetically attempt to seek out possible heirs, both legitimate "distant descendants" and Azoun's bastards (and descendants of the byblows of various of his predecessors, too). Unless unity was swiftly and firmly achieved, protracted civil war (with ongoing assassinations, and meddling from Sembian, Thayan, and other interested power groups, for example the Cult of the Dragon and various folk of Westgate) might well be the result. NDAs lurk close here, smiling in typical sinister fashion, so I'm not going to answer your query: "If Alusair and Azoun V died who would be the next legitimate heir to the throne?"

I will confirm that there ARE living heirs; I've hidden some of them myself. Oh-so-carefully, too. :) As for Azoun's bastards: they've been "up to" all sorts of things, a few of them even scheming to one day win the throne or at least an income and rank somewhere in Cormyr on the strength of their royal blood. Most don't know their true heritage, or don't believe it (and only a few have been quietly 'taken in hand' by ambitious nobles and convinced of their lineage). So, yes, some of them HAVE "sided with factions (both inside and outside Cormyr) trying to overthrow" the current Obarskyrs.

As for the one-night marriages of convenience: although I've heard that some nobles of Cormyr, some centuries ago, dabbled in this sort of behaviour, I am unaware of any Obarskyr ever doing so. So, no 'legitimate one-night stands,' as you put it. Er, that we know of yet (though I must whisper to you that some of the best scholars of Realmslore going, including Tom Costa, Bryon Wischstadt, Grant Christie, Eric Boyd, Garen Thal, George Krashos, and, er, myself, are working on nailing down the relevant exploits of every last Obarskyr, complete with family tree - - and may just manage it if we all live to be several centuries old and still have functioning wits).

Garen Thal, in his post to you, highlighted one very important fact: "The only known, legitimate claimants to the Dragon Throne of Cormyr are Azoun V (the current king) and Alusair (his aunt)." This holds for the common folk of Cormyr - - meaning that ANYONE ELSE is going to be viewed with suspicion by some, open disbelief by others, and so on.

Garen also correctly points out that, by law, failing the presence of a healthy body heir of the blood Obarskyr, "the rule of Cormyr should fall to one of the royal Silver houses (Crownsilver, Truesilver, and Huntsilver, in order of precedence), as these are the families that can trace their origins to relations - - by blood or marriage - - to Faerlthann Obarskyr and his father Ondeth." George Krashos also correctly reminded us all that "if the Obarskyr line did die out in Cormyr, we might see the re-appearance of the line of Vaerom Obarskyr, Faerlthann's brother. He fled Impiltur, banished into exile with his sons, after the defeat of Morlorn 'the Usurper' (whom the

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Obarskyrs in Impiltur had backed and assisted in gaining the throne in hopes of being elevated to the nobility like their cousins across the Inner Sea) and was made less than welcome in the Forest Kingdom when they arrived there. They headed for Westgate and parts south..."

However, bear in mind that many impatient-for-power nobles (especially of oldblood families like the Bleths) would loudly prefer someone "of Cormyr" in the place of some "outlander" linked to the Dragon Throne only by a "shadowy bloodline" from centuries past. Some of the important oldblood families have been exiled by the Obarskyrs over the years, which stains their influence with some Cormyreans, but the best way to 'undo' your exile, if you can't get it rescinded by a popular sitting monarch, is to put those who decreed it firmly out of the picture, yes?

There is an incomplete, unpublished Obarskyr family tree, but it will probably remain unpublished for years to come (as it continues to change, under the love-labouring quills of divers diligent scribes). No, you can't get to see it yet. See those drawn swords, behind us both? The Silent Knights of NDA stand ever-vigilant...

Blueblade, Garen Thal correctly told you that Filfaeril can "rule (that is, exercise the powers of the Crown, as she always did), but she may not reign (be considered Queen in her own right). Should Azoun V reach majority and declare that his grandmother is a crazy witch not to be heeded, she can't really do much of anything about it. She also could not pass her "royalty" on to any children, should the miracle of her conceiving a child past 60 ever happen. Filfaeril is not the "reigning Queen." She is the Dowager Queen, which means "once my husband reigned, but now one of his descendants does, but I may retain my title until another becomes queen." Azoun V reigns over Cormyr now, and Alusair Nacacia rules in his name (though Filfaeril is pretty firmly in charge)."

All of this is quite correct, with one little correction: Filfaeril will remain "the Dowager Queen" until her death, not until someone else is crowned "Queen of Cormyr." The Heralds will see to that (they fiercely defend these sorts of rules, to stop every tyrant twisting them until they become meaningless fictions everywhere in Faerûn: an usurper can overthrow a legitimate monarch and confer all sorts of titles upon himself, his kin, and his favourites, but he can't "rewrite the rules" of rank or precedence, because the Heralds will resist him in ways that I won't discuss further, here and now, due to ANOTHER current NDA (Gah! I am beset! To me, all who love the Realms! Swing our blades of silent patience valiantly, and the field shall in the fullness of time be ours!).

Of course, if the War Wizard and most of the senior heads of noble houses in the realm, plus all the high-ranking courtiers, all supported Filfaeril as the founder of a new line (in effect, an usurper), she COULD succeed the Obarskyrs, on the basis of her own lineage and her longtime marriage to Azoun, IF the realm accepted her. Many common folk have heard that she's cold and distant, but all those who've actually met her, outside of functions at Court, know this to be untruth - - and they WOULD prefer her to some "heir from the shadows," especially someone who's clearly a bastard.

Garen Thal correctly highlights for us all: "Speaking of Alusair, all of this is why there is so much pressure on her to be married. Azoun is still young, and there is no telling what kind of man he will grow up to be. Alusair is approaching the end of child-bearing years, and it is vital that she be able to produce a member of the royal house before that occurs. Azoun needs at least one royal cousin (in the mode of Bhereu and Thomdor), as an aide, advisor, means of grounding himself, and as a backup heir."

malchor7 then swiftly requested: "would the mighty Ed be able to forecast any *ahem* romances in the Steel Regent's future... ones that might end in marriage, anyway?"

To which I reply: able to, certainly. Am I going to do so? Not on thy brightest codpiece, valiant knight! Offend these sharpsword NDAs and ruin the fun for us all? Not to mention forego the possible sexual titillation of not just the affair Zandilar and Gerath Hoan and I discussed, but of Alusair's other and future energetic amours.

And speaking of Zandilar: she laid this question before us all: "If Alusair got herself pregnant somehow, would she be required to marry? Since there'd be absolutely no doubt that the child was hers, and if she actually formally acknowledged her child, I doubt anyone could really question it - - even if the father was unknown."

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Garen Thal ably and correctly replied that "a 'fatherless' child of Alusair would be a legitimate claimant to the throne, for precisely that reason: the child's royal blood is not in question. It would take public statements and proclamations royal to get the nobility to come to terms with the matter (because they need to complain about something, eh?), but there's both royal law (the child would be an "Obarskyr born and raised") and precedent to consider: this has happened once before, with the son of Gantharla First-Queen, called Roderin the Bastard for somewhat obvious reasons."

To which I echoed: Any child birthed by Alusair would indeed be recognized as a legitimate monarch (over, yes, the inevitable objections of some self-serving nobles) if the parentage was "confirmed" by Caladnei (or Laspeera, if Caladnei doesn't publicly disagree) or by Alaphondar (if Caladnei and/or Laspeera don't publicly disagree)... and so on.

Then I reminded all scribes of Vangey's habit of taking blood and tissue samples (of Alusair, Filfaeril, and Azoun V at the moment, fresh samples procured after the disaster revealed in CORMYR: A NOVEL - - and perhaps there are well-hidden, ancient and magically-preserved samples from long-ago Obarskyrs around, too!), for magical cloning purposes. I've recently posted via THO, in reply to Zandilar, about the mysterious current status of Alusair's fertility. All of which leaves us all gazing ahead into what other folk, in our real world, have termed "interesting times" for Cormyr. Which I hope to have a hand in writing about, in the years ahead. I hope you'll all come along for the ride (even Beowulf, who just might get something of what he desires for the Forest Kingdom). I'd love to say more, about Cormyr and some of its neighbours, too, but... one can't slay an NDA.

So saith Ed.

Whew. Now that's a summation to read and re-read more than once!

Fellow scribes, I'm afraid a real-life assignment is going to force e-silence on me until Friday (think of me as writhing in bondage until then, if that helps), but Ed has promised me more Ed-answers will be waiting in my inbox when I return.

So until then: love to all,

THO

May 14, 2005: Hello again, all. Yes, I'm back, safe and sound. Ed will be appearing at Mayhemcon in Belleville, Ontario, tomorrow evening only, but has found time to send me another Realmslore reply.

Also, I can answer zeathiel's query myself: "battle leathers" are indeed just leather armour, so-called to distinguish them from a smith's "leathers" (apron, leggings, protective tunic), the "leathers" worn by those who tame and train hawks, and so on (i.e. various sorts of workaday specialized leather garb).

Whilst penning his "state of things Cormyrean" screed (that I shared with you two days back), Ed hadn't forgotten Gerath Hoan's question about Caladnei: "Is she herself a member of the Harpers or does she just cooperate with them as very close allies? We saw War Wizards and Harpers working together in Elminster's Daughter, of course, so I was curious. If she isn't herself a Harper, is the level of cooperation between Harpers and Crown just as close throughout Cormyr? Are they often called on by the government for 'delicate' missions?"

Ed speaks:

I shouldn't tell you for sure, one way or another, if Caladnei is a Harper or not, until either a Realms sourcebook or passages of published Realms fiction say, one way or the other - - but I doubt Laspeera (and other senior War Wizards) would have 'let' her remain as Mage Royal, once Vangey was offstage, if she showed any signs of being a Harper first and a servant of Cormyr second. So she's quite likely NOT a Harper.

Nor are the Harpers and the Crown of Cormyr necessarily 'close.' Their beliefs and interests lie together right now, but remember that the Harpers oppose strong governments, so things might not remain that way. And the War Wizards are suspicious of anyone meddling in the affairs of Cormyr (except, of course, themselves :). Moreover, the Crown has a handful of agents of its own (the Highknights) to call on, to do the skulk-and-dagger stuff the Harpers often do. So I'd say

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they're NOT often called upon, formally or otherwise, by Crown officials. As for various Obarskys, Laspeera, Vangey, Alaphondar, or anyone else personally calling on this Harper or that, for aid or advice, as friends... that's different. (And of course we all know how fragmented and 'do thine own thing' the Harpers are, at the best of times.)

So saith Ed.

The wonderful thing about the richness and depths of the Realms is: no matter how many answers we scribes weaselXXX ahem, cajole out of Ed, we'll never get to the end of things. Every reply just triggers more questions, and reveals more layers of lore.

Yum yum yummy...

love to all,

THO

May 16, 2005: Hello, all. Ed hath more to say to Zandilar:

Zandilar, you posted recently about Alusair's behaviour, wondering if she'd been abused. The answer is 'no,' beyond the trauma of repeated war, what I've already noted about Vangey (and remember, his meddlings were 'normal' treatment for everyone she was growing up 'close to;' we must all be careful of viewing things in the Realms through our own modern eyes and judgements) and her rebelling against a father she never forgave (as a VERY young, bewildered girl) for "abandoning" her often to "go off and fight." Alusair was the possessive 'second shadow' daughter, always messy and rebellious where Tanalasta was cool, apparently contented, and perfectly behaved. (See Jim Lowder's Realms novel CRUSADE for a look at the still-confused, still-rebellious slightly older Alusair.)

You posted "People just don't behave that way without reason." Quite true, but the reasons aren't always apparent to anyone: consider how different siblings raised by the same people in the same house can be.

Yes, Alusair is carrying a lot of internal pain, and fear as an infant of Vangerdahast's magical mental invasions (and therefore of him) plus anger at her father for supporting and even obeying Vangey, plus vanishing whenever (the toddler) Alusair felt she needed him, is a big part of it. However, let's see what future Realms fiction shows us, rather than speculating more at this stage.

So saith Ed.

Who promises to send more Realmslore tomorrow.

love to all,

THO

May 17, 2005: Hello again, fellow scribes. Ed replies to Sarelle:

Hi! Your point about pleasing male-gamer readers with portraying only female characters as bisexual or homosexual is a good one. I suspect sales (and the attitudes of superiors, or their reactions to any consumer complaints) are the ultimate determinants. Down here in the trenches, I merely try to show you the Realms, warts and all. :}

Writing the Avatar modules was frustrating because I had to make turnovers before any of the novels were finished, and only had plot outlines to work from (and the novels were changing markedly, week after week, and went on changing long after my module-writing was done). Much of what you see in the published modules (such as Castle Kilgrave, and all of the details of Adon, Cyric, Kelemvor, and Midnight) isn't my writing, and I first saw much of that text when everyone else who bought the module did. So I DIDN'T translate the main novel characters into AD&D form, except in the most crude and preliminary manner. Someone did, yes, but it wasn't me. What I ultimately did was deliberately write way more text than would ever fit in the three modules, generating dozens of 'colour' NPC encounters and lore, in hopes that these elements could be cherry-picked and hung around the final module plot. I sent this all in to TSR, and then just had to wait and see: my work was done, and as a non-employee, I was largely 'out of the loop' from then on.

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All modules meant to 'mirror' books suffer to a greater or lesser extent from predeterminism (the plot has to go like this, or end up here, no matter what the PCs do), and I was specifically annoyed that Storm, Mourngrym, and other established NPCs had to 'act out of character' to serve the plot, and that we saw "Harper troopers" in print (Harper TROOPERS? When did we slide into the American Civil War, exactly?).

However, it's all water under the bridge now. I didn't decide there should be three modules covering the Avatar events and grandly tell TSR to publish them, I accepted an assignment to write the trio because someone decided the last one was to be entitled "The Death of Elminster" (yes, that's how the contract reads) and if anyone was going to kill off Elminster, it was going to be ME.

This was a perfect example of what people call a "learning experience." Everyone involved learned from it, and most of us learned the hard way (Jeff Grubb used to refer to the whole thing as "the Avatar Vortex" because the project dragged seemingly everyone at TSR into involvement with it, growing as it went). If we ever had to do this again, I'd want the three novels to be written, finished, and 'set,' and THEN start concocting modules that adapt the novels for maximum playability, or if that's not possible due to the fictional story, use the modules to create a side-adventure. The predeterminism coupled with the NPC party (Adon, et al) rising to godhood, plus the existing gods' avatars striding around blasting each other, makes for an exciting setting but leaves most PCs "in over their heads" and relegated to supporting, rather than heroic, roles. As for the yuan-ti and sarrukh threat revealed in SERPENT KINGDOMS, I'd say that most "powerful Scaleless Ones" are so used to yuan-ti intrigues that they largely haven't noticed anything 'special' yet, and that the Chosen of Mystra have always thought that a handful of separate, individual sarrukh probably survived, magically preserved or trapped, and so all too easily ascribe mentions of sarrukh sightings or activity as the work of a lone survivor creature, or a powerful wizard who's animated a dead sarrukh or shapechanged himself or a servitor creature into sarrukh form for some purpose or other, rather than any concerted or real threat.

It's important to remember that the Chosen are mentally-aging, extremely busy individuals who juggle platters full of multiple projects at all times, and that they can't be everywhere or ever have much leisure to sit around 'analyzing intelligence.' They're always racing here, there, and everywhere stamping out scores of figurative fires. If they weren't so overloaded, no PC adventurer would have much to do, right?

(This is why I always chuckle when I read a post online from someone complaining about how the Realms is too loaded down with powerful good guys. Well, powerful enough to keep the powerful bad ones from having blown the entire planet up long ago, yes, but...)

And yes, I'd say a "world-weary Elminster" certainly WOULD "jump at the idea that some of the earliest creatures in Toril's history slithered and worked magic once again on Faerûn." :}

So saith Ed.

Oh, you've got his mind humming now! I can tell from the tone of his phrasing! You did it, Sarelle! You started something big...

As to what, well, we'll all just have to wait and see.

And yes, Ed confirms the "female Lhaeo," and also wants you all to know that he, too, wants to know what's up with the superb Spin A Yarn novella (!) he did this year. He handed it in to Mary-Liz long ago, and she handed it on to the web folks, and... silence (thus far) is our stern reward.

Grrr.

love to all,

THO

May 18, 2005: Hello all. Ed of the Greenwood makes reply to new Realms author Erik Scott de Bie:

Hi, Erik! Welcome to the fold! The wolves come down fairly often, so pick a spot that's not too bloodstained and make yourself comfy...

Yes, of course I run into editorial restriction / oversight when I'm writing the Band of Four. My editor is the former head of TSR's Books Department, Brian Thomsen.

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Brian's editing style is to shape the story at the outline and rewrite stage (sometimes in great detail, sometimes in overall grand sweep), but leave the actual storytelling (prose details) to the writer. If you don't give him what he's looking for, of course, he'll zero in on specific paragraphs, scenes, or even individual names, descriptions, or lone words.

So, yes, I have greater freedom, but then again: no, I don't. I agreed to deliver a certain sort of book for the Band of Four series (the fifth one, THE SILENT HOUSE, is deeper, darker, and more complex than the quartet that precedes it), and Brian held me to crafting that sort of book.

Which is fine with me: I had great fun doing them, and got to explore things from a slightly different viewpoint and style than I usually can when doing Realms books. In terms of how 'sexy' they are: they're not much stronger than the Realms (a TRIFLE stronger than most but not all of MY Realms writing), because that's the niche Tor Books was looking to see filled. (See Jordan, Goodkind, Carey, Hayden et al for much racier Tor-published fantasy novels.)

Now, as for this comment of yours: "As I've found, eventually characters take on a life of their own and jump entirely out of one's control."

I know exactly what you mean, but my answer has to be: No.

Except when writing purely for my own pleasure, not publication, I've never had the luxury of sitting back and seeing where the characters take me. I always have editors who want the tale outlined, and I have to deliver that promised plot: I CAN'T "lose control." Yes, as you say, "everything flows organically," so you have to choose the right characters to 'fit' initially. However, the throne and the quill are yours: you CAN make characters do and say what you need them to do. The trick is squaring that with the self-life they seem to take on (which is only in your head, remember, until you get a particular tale published and others read those little curved squiggles of ink on a page and assemble imaginary pictures in their heads, to let the characters 'live' there). Decades ago, a much older writer, a friend of mine, used to challenge me to write a scene in which my latest favourite character did this or that. When I'd say, "But CHARACTER X would never DO that!" He'd reply, "Oh? Still think fairies dictate your dreams, do you? You're the writer here: show me how CHARACTER X would do that, and why. Don't tell me, show me."

And I would, often wincing and cursing, and then he'd do it all over again. Forcing me to make characters grow and change in front of my eyes.

I ache to be able to just let the characters take over. If you start a large, successful publishing company and want to offer me big bucks to write fantasy novels for you, give me the chance to do that, will you?

I'd give a lot to see where some of my characters would go, if I let them loose to wander as they willed. Of course, we might just send up with a big game of strip poker between Mirt, Elminster, Storm, the Simbul, Sharantyr, and so on (and I have this horrible feeling that the majority of our characters none of us would want to see naked would be the ones who'd be losing)...

So saith Ed.

Thanks for THAT mental image, Big Bearded Creator.

Asgetrion, good questions: sending them on...

love to all,

THO

May 19, 2005: Hello, all. Ed has replied to Slime Lord's query, relayed by kuje31: "How did you (Ed) manage to keep track of everything when you were and are creating Toril and all that goes with it?"

Here's Ed:

You think I can keep track of anything, anymore? BWOOOahahahahahah!

Do I strike you as particularly sane?

Ahem, seriously now: as a librarian, I spend oodles of my life organizing things. I love doing indexes for books, and otherwise 'tidying' information.

Yet the Realms long ago started moving too fast for me to keep up with all of the details everyone else adds to it. I just cling to the runaway dragon for dear (as in: not tonight, dear!) life, and try to keep up as best I can. Remember, I've always had a day job (with big commute), a busy social

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life, and a writing pace that most other writers frankly just don't believe. Oh, yes, and I play games, roleplaying and otherwise. Toss in eating and sleeping, and I've never had TIME to sit back and organize things!

So saith Ed.

Whose big secret is out, now! Sorry you asked?

love to all,

THO

May 20, 2005: Hello, all. More 'housekeeping' from Ed, wherein he replies briefly to several scribes:

To KnightErrantJR: glad you liked the Thor analogy, but I've got to show my age here: to me, as a Thor reader, Walt Simonson is one of the "recent, new" creatives (in other words, Ragnarok had already been done several times, notably both by Kirby [twice] and Thomas, before Simonson ever appeared on the book to do HIS Ragnarok). Which just strengthens my point.

Krafus, I WONDERED how long it was going to be before someone asked me who by the Simbul's wind-whipped nipples Ghalaster of Thay was. Congrats.

Hi, Damian. Krafus is correct in his hopes, the golem-builder is the Masked One, and not the same person.

As for the fates of both Ghalaster and the Masked One (ooh, I feel positively EVIL doing this), all I can tell you is [NDA].

David Maxson, you're quite welcome, and yes, there will be more major revelations about Realms deities and cosmology in the future. Not soon as readers receive things, but... as soon as possible.

So saith Ed.

Who has an answer for Si on the way (he tells me).

love to all,

THO

May 21, 2005: Hello, all. Herewith, Ed's promised reply to Si:

Si, I'll write a proper answer to your tallhouse request as soon as I can, but let me speak to this query of yours: "How closely related do you have to be to the rulers of a Waterdeep Noble family to receive the full Noble privileges (stipend, status etc)? Obviously this will vary from family to family, but there must be quite a few of the Noble families who have hordes of 'country cousins' who have to make their own way in the world."

Correct, many Waterdhavian nobles do have 'country cousins' who share the name but not the wealth. Most of them are indeed in the country (that is, outside Waterdeep, most often employed by the family as trade agents or to maintain stopover family houses in various cities or towns in Amn or elsewhere in the Heartlands). As for noble privileges: the only special treatment Waterdhavian nobles enjoy is legal status, which extends to everyone a particular family doesn't disown (who identifies themself as a Waterdhavian noble). These legal rights are most clearly detailed in the CITY OF SPLENDORS boxed set (yes, that coverage is incomplete), and the best 'feel' for the noble families will probably be gleaned from reading the novel Elaine and I wrote, CITY OF SPLENDORS, when it comes out. As for a stipend: the government of Waterdeep gives nobles nothing.

Most noble families of Waterdeep are very wealthy as a result of their land holdings (crops and rents) and trade activities (major fields of activity are identified in their CoS boxed set entries), and most core members of a noble family have their bills paid for them by their stewards (employees), drafts upon the family funds usually being approved by the family matriarch or patriarch (who may be enraged by the activities of a gambler or wild one in the family, but won't dare fail to pay their bills, because once word gets around, it will imperil the family's reputation, credit, and other mercantile activities). Some of the less wealthy nobles encourage their children to make investments or start their own businesses 'on the side' to earn their own spending money.

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Wastrels may be publicly disowned, quietly killed in 'accidents' or shipped off in virtual slavery (drugged or coerced) to far corners of the world to make their own fortunes, or serve as hireswords (in hopes that battle will soon kill them), or even sent on family business far from Waterdeep and there poisoned by hired agents.

In short, the heads of noble houses decide who gets lavish spending money, or lives in the family mansions. They dare not mistreat spouses or heirs in any way that the city can detect, or their own status (and that of the family) will be permanently harmed. However, inside their mansion walls, anything goes, from floggings or torture to incest and mind-altering or -controlling spells. Which is NOT to say that most nobles mistreat their relatives, only that they have the power and ability to do so. I recommend my story "The Eye of the Dragon," published in REALMS OF MAGIC and my forthcoming 'Best of Eddie' collection, for a taste of what internal relationships within noble families can be like.

So saith Ed, THE Master of Realmslore.

And bestower of great backrubs.

Oh, and Sarelle: Ed's a library clerk (his degree is in journalism, not library or information sciences or whatever they're calling it, these days). We've all become so used to journalists and publicity reps for various publishers and conventions just changing "library clerk" to "librarian" that we just go along with it, these days. For the record, Ed has worked continuously in various libraries since April 9, 1974, as a page, security guard, clerk, acting bookmobile supervisor, acting clerk caretaker, acting page supervisor, acting assistant branch head, acting branch head, and library tutor/mentor (to, yes, full-fledged "librarians"). He's also been a speaker at OLA and ALA annual conferences, several times.

love to all,

THO

On May 21, 2005 THO said: Bental, Ed has your question in his hands. Which is another way of saying it's been added to the HUGE (and ever-growing) pile.

Ed is probably the busiest person I know (and I know a lot of frantically busy people), and right now he's trying to co-write a book in 6 days. Yes, 6 days.

So don't be surprised if he falls silent for a day or two at a time. Your question is one of the more recent ones (some scribes have been waiting since LAST April), and so will probably be answered later than some of the earlier ones.

However, that's not a certainty either. Sometimes (particularly when Ed either refers to lore notes he currently has in front of him for some secret project or other, or doesn't have to consult or create lore at all, because he's dealing with matters of opinion) he answers the most recent questions as quick as a flash.

I promise that (unless he gets run over by a bus or otherwise removed from the scene) he WILL answer your question as quickly as he can. He doesn't want to leave DMs waiting in the middle of a Realms campaign; this is one of the reasons he's so energetically continued detailing the Realms in print for the past twenty-six years or so. First there's this gap here that needs to be filled, and then this other one over here, and then this third one, and oh, this fourth one - - and so on.

However, this thread and its 2004 predecessor long ago fell away from being a "swift answer service" just because of the pressures of Ed's staggering workload and so many scribes requesting answers.

I seem to recall that Ed dealt in passing with the area you're interested in, in his "New Adventures of Volo" DRAGON column, but I may be remembering some of the columns that never got finished and printed, rather than those that did. Can any scribe help Bental, here? In the meantime, I'll 'ping' Ed to see if he hath a Bental answer anywhere near the top of the heap.

As for your Underdark route question: strong, skilled adventurers can make that passage, but the route is far too dangerous (and dominated at its western end by the need to cross several subterranean chasms without benefit of bridges, which makes transporting goods and pack beasts VERY difficult) to see use as an easy trade route. Again, I'll ask Ed for amplification.

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love to all,
THO

May 22, 2005: Hello, all. Three brief replies from Ed, this time around:

To kuje31's "Come here Ed we only need a blood sample and a little bit of hair. :)" -- Um, no. I've been told before to 'stop all that cloning around.' Now, if you were a pretty girl, my answer might be different... ;}

To Lauzoril: much thanks. It's good to know that the Finnish translation of MAKING OF A MAGE is so good, and I thank you for your time and trouble. (I'm also pleased your mother liked it: hurray! Entertaining non-gamers whenever I can!)

I haven't the foggiest why they didn't include an author profile. Very few European edition Realms reprints seem to.

Zandilar, your sharp eyes did not fail you. You did spot a reference to Caladnei in my "After The Dragon" DRAGON ANNUAL article.

As for mental illnesses: they're treated in all sorts of ways, from driving the "dangerous mad afflicted ones" out into the wilderness to fend for themselves, to 'taking them in' to monasteries and temples and giving them a living in return for service (in the gardens, kitchens, privy-cleaning, floor-washing, et al) whilst elaborate cures are attempted (yes, sometimes this means "the crazed-witted" are deliberately experimented on, and indeed not all cures work).

Many 'slow' folk, or those who are just 'a little funny' (occasional seizures or triggers, as opposed to constantly-dangerous-to-all behaviour) dwell in their communities ("every village has its idiot"), and yes, there are asylums, often called 'howling keeps' (because of the loud ravings of the madfolk confined therein, and because of their fortress-like stone construction).

The majority of 'dangerous or helpless' madfolk are purchased or captured for sale as sacrifices (or body parts sources) to evil alchemists and priests, or are treated with drugs (usually herbs) in cloistered religious communities of various sorts (monasteries, fortified abbeys, temple-farms, and the like). They are often used as lay servants/workers.

So saith Ed.

Onward, deeper into the rich and ever-richer lore of the fabled Forgotten Realms.

Charge! (or, if you prefer: Wheee!)

love to all,
THO

May 23, 2005: Asgetrion, Ed replies very swiftly about tallhouses (he'll polish off your other requests next time):

Tallhouses vary like all other sorts of numerous buildings. Almost all of them are narrow, and have side walls either touching the side walls of adjacent tallhouses or very close to those walls, with minimal distance (or a 'sidle-alley,' which is an alleyway too narrow for any sort of handcart or small conveyance to traverse, only beings agile enough to be able to occasionally turn sideways, twist around obstacles such as downspout pipes, and so on) between one tallhouse and the next.

Beyond that, they vary widely. MOST of them have entrances at both back and front (usually a street-level entrance and a 'duck-down' (stone steps, down into a little stone-lined landing) entrance into the cellar. MOST of them have outside stairs linking to the upper floors (often via balconies), and these are more often on the 'back' of a tallhouse (dropping down into a walled and gated garden) than on the front or street side, but of course SOME tallhouses face directly onto streets at both ends (so there's no 'back,' only two 'fronts'). Many tallhouses have garbage or laundry chutes and/or common chimneys, passing from the cellar up through the roof, or to a 'jarra' (or roofshed; 'darshield' is a more Northerly term, used roughly north of a straight line drawn through Amn and the Lake of Dragons). In snow-heavy areas, tallhouses have steep roofs, sometimes with dormers, but in warmer climes they tend to have flat roofs sporting gardens or water cisterns.

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Some tallhouses (about 25 percent) have interior flights of stairs (zigzags), but more often they have a spiral central stair (about 40 percent) or no interior stair at all (35 percent). The layout of interior rooms, and the facilities, depend on climate and use of the particular building. Remember that most toilet facilities are chamberpots or 'sluice-privies' (go into the closet or behind the curtain, sit on the throne, flush when done by pouring jugs of water down the hole). Again, in warmer climes, a pull-chain valve may bring wash or flushing water down from the roof cistern.

Some tallhouses are the dwelling of a single person or family, and will have room uses laid out as the owner (or a previous builder or occupant) desires/desired.

The majority of tallhouses (80 percent) are rental properties, and tend to have one tenant (or tenant family) per floor (65 percent of rental tallhouses), or in some cases (15 percent of rental houses) a floor split between two tenants. However, in some cases, as many as eight business offices share a floor - - and in poorer neighborhoods, a floor may be divided into as many as ten or twelve tiny rooms, all rented to different tenants.

In all cases, each tenant will have their own chamberpots and kitchen facilities, or be forced to use a communal outdoor brick oven and/or privies at the end of the back garden. (In the case of tenants who occupy entire floors, cooking tends to be on a back balcony to minimize fire risks and cooking smells, except perhaps in the coldest winter weather, when warmth is desired.)

Think small iron-cauldron wood stoves with iron legs, resting on layers of stones and used to heat surrounding 'walls' of stacked stones that can be carried to beds or other rooms to radiate warmth, with said stoves all having metal-cylinder chimneys led through the rooms horizontally (for warmth and to yield a hanging place to dry damp clothing) to windows where shutters can be opened to let out the smoke.

So saith Ed.

Arndils and Sembian upcountry estates on the morrow.

love to all,

THO

May 24, 2005: Hi, fellow scribes. Asgetrion, Ed replies to your other structure questions:

Upcountry Sembian dwellings vary widely, of course, but of the hunting lodges and country estates that have walls, these walls tend most often to be high stone or wood walls around which trees and thorny shrubs have been planted to create tall, impenetrable hedges. Of course, some (due to age, collapse, neglect, adjacent trees, etc.) are readily scaled or penetrated through stream-culverts and gates, and others are not.

Bare wooden palisades are almost unknown (except as 'emergency fixes') and 'blended into the landscape' (concealed by foliage, and looking like things 'sorta grew that way') barriers are the norm.

Some of the oldest 'highruns' (compound walls) use earth-bank moats and hills, formerly 'dry' and bare but now of course in almost all cases overgrown and in the case of the moats, flooded by snow-melt, rainwater, or springs into wet-moat-like swamp tangles.

It's important to keep in mind that in most of upcountry Sembia tends to be forested or covered with orchards, with 'open fields' small and few. In other words, except when travelling along lanes, these overgrown barriers shouldn't easily be seen: they're just part of the general 'overgrown greenery.'

As for the half-elven 'arndils,' almost all of them are of wood or mostly of wood (many are built into hillsides so as to have earth cellars, and thereby acquire some stone stretches of walls due to natural boulders left in place), but almost all of them incorporate living trees, and have roofs covered with earth upon which mosses, flowering herbs, and other plants are grown. The intent is to both blend into the landscape visually, and to be a part of its natural plant life. Many have stone or tile floors (usually flagstones set into dirt), but stone isn't otherwise all that popular (unlike in dwarven or gnome dwellings). Cooking is often done in an outdoor stone oven handy to, but separated from, an arndil. Again, arndils vary; such a close link with nature isn't always possible (but will be compensated for, when an arndil can't be in a forest and doesn't incorporate living

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trees as part of the walls, roofs, and furnishings, by furnishing the interior with small lightcatching pools of water and a profusion of green-leaved potted plants, numerous enough to create the feeling of verdant wild growth).

So saith Ed.

More essential Realmslore, fellow scribes.

love to all,

THO

May 25, 2005: Hello, all. AlaLuin, wonderful questions, will send them to Ed forthwith (replies can take some time, I hope you're aware: Ed is deep in Deadline Doom right now). However, herewith, Ed replies to Hoondatha's request for Realms-specific terms of address:

Hoondatha, local slang terms for lad, lass and the like vary widely across the Realms, by age and social class of the speaker as well as by locale. There are WAY too many in use to fully answer your query, and of course they're constantly changing (see the Waterdeep novel Elaine and I did for a subtle sampling of current Waterdhavian ones).

However, simply "lad" and "lass" are perennially and widely used. Here follow a handful of equivalents (all of them subtly different in connotation or precise definition, of course, or they'd have died out already):

Lad, blade (a young reckless, high-spirited, or pranksome youth, especially noble or wealthy; 'highcharger' is another Sword Coast equivalent), jack (also means older male or male servant, as part of a compound word such as 'doorjack,' 'stablejack,' and so on), fist (someone who's strong or should be able to help with a physical task), boots (a traveller, usually seeking employment or good fortune), stick

Lass, maid (in many rural areas, 'maid' is short for maiden, and means unmarried and presumably virgin young female - - but in most cities, 'maid' means young female not obviously married to a male, or accompanied by a male partner, and makes no judgement whatsoever as to virginity or availability), dunlass (young girl, tomboy, girl seen out alone when the speaker thinks she shouldn't be), hipskirts (polite term for a nice-looking woman, used by either gender wishing to express friendly mild admiration but NOT rudeness or [necessarily, yet] any flirtatious invitation)

Almost all forms of address are REALLY insulting only when combined with other words and tones of voice, and/or context. Lots of folk in the Realms can curse quick colourfully (surprise!) and insults are therefore many and varied (if they survive into the final draft, you'll really get a sampling early in SWORDS OF EVENINGSTAR, when an angry young noblewoman is assailing a servant with a hot and colourful verbal tirade), but here are a few widely-used general insults: neck, horse, lout (always applied to a male, to mean someone who behaves rudely, and stupidly, stubbornly, or selfishly; the rough equivalent of 'sh*tthead' or "a right bastard")

haunch, dungshill, tornscabbard (always applied to a male, to mean a troublemaker who likes to start fights and/or beat up others, or vandalize, or bully, or play pranks; someone who's seen as having a mean streak, or to be sadistic)

wench (female in a subservient position, e.g. a servant; insulting only if said to someone nastily, or to a female who's NOT a servant or subservient [i.e. shouted by a backalley lout at a wealthy lady], or if said to a male)

longclaws (spitfire, bitch or witch, which are also terms used in the Realms, always applied to females of shrewish disposition [hot-tempered and harsh-tongued, or bullying])

rarecrown (as in "a proper rarecrown," this word means the sort of 'Mrs. Grundy' female who likes to control the behaviour of others around her, and pass judgement on everyone, and have such judgements agreed with [or else!])

jackslice (a murderous woman, or one who will get even through violence, either poisoning, or manipulating or deceiving others, including law-keepers, into harming those she dislikes or who've disagreed with her; someone dangerous; "an old jackslice" is the Realms term for what rural Europeans a century back would have called "an old witch;" the word "jackslice" derives from someone who literally sliced or tried to use a knife on a male - - or at least on his genitals)

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kisscloak (flirt, applied to females; is a term of affection or even admiration, equivalent to "she's such a tease!")

winker (lecher, applied to both genders)

kisscock, lickhips, boldshake, daedra (all of these are insulting terms for a slut [in the modern American meaning of a wanton woman] or prostitute; note that there are many, many euphemisms for prostitutes used when one doesn't want to be really insulting, and that 'boldshake' is mild enough to be used freely in mixed company, or not taken as an insult by those who don't want to feel insulted)

staggers, oldbottle, slurk (drunkard, especially a lazy drunk who does no work or little work, and can be found drunk at all hours; applied to both genders)

spincoin (a two-faced, deceitful person of either gender)

So saith Ed.

Fragmentary and brief as it is, this is essential Realmslore [ATTENTION ALL REALMS AUTHORS!]. Somehow I don't see WotC editors letting "kisscock" into print unaltered, but the others could prove very useful in writing future Realms fiction. I want to emphasize that these are just a small sampling of the many, many terms that Ed's used in Realmsplay and in various Realms fiction and articles, down the years.

love to all,

THO

May 26, 2005: Ed makes reply to The Blue Sorceress:

Well met, Lady Blue! I salute anyone who rides (my best friend as I was growing up was Richie Elder, of the famous Canadian Olympic equestrian family, and I lived just south of the original Windfields Farms of E.P. Taylor, famous horsebreeder, Queen's Plate winner, and so on; the point is, I had horses all around me, and often strolled across the valley to the polo barns to watch the fun, or spent a lazy weekend afternoon strolling among E.P. Taylor's fat old mares in the back field, or got out to the Elder farm near Aurora, to watch them train over the jumps, or ride with the Hunt). In short, I love horses, and riding, and even jousting (though you'd probably not be surprised by just how furious a trainer gets when he discovers some young lout is riding a thoroughbred bareback with a long pole for a lance, at another thoroughbred ridden by ANOTHER lout who's also holding a lance; luckily for all, the horses were WAY too smart to let us get those lances anywhere near where they could have accidentally injured anyone). An adventuresome lass once raced me along some grassy rides through a forest on a lovely moonlit night, with both of us on horseback, yes, but (ahem) that's another story...

Which is by way of gently coming around to tell you that although I love horses, I've little to add to the superb work done by Realms scribes, notably Eric Boyd and Tom Costa, and Tony Mekelberg, that THO tells me have already been served forth or linked to, here. I did once prepare an article on some of the horsebreeders and tamers of the Sword Coast (and the bloodlines they were recording and augmenting), and submitted it to The Dragon back in 1980, but it was the first of several articles to go missing, and I've since mislaid my copy of it. For the record, I like the scribes' sources I've mentioned here well enough to deem them "official" by me (WotC may well have other opinions, of course). I hope that's enough to go on - - ah, is it? :}

So saith Ed.

More next time, fellow Realms lovers.

love to all,

THO

May 27, 2005: Hello, all. Ed tackles some of the questions recently posed by Phoebus (just elves and their feeding, this time; the rest to follow):

Phoebus, your questions about elves are very broad and hence my answers must be, too, applying to general tendencies (for elves in the Realms only) rather than holding strictly true for all individuals, but in general:

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Elves derive energy from contact with sunlight and (purer the better) water (including winter ice and snow) in a way that humans cannot, aiding them in metabolic processes (including healing and actual body growth), but they do still need to eat and drink as almost all creatures of Faerûn do. (The sunlight and water allow elves to derive much more nourishment [complete breakdown of ingested materials] from food than the average human does, so that an elf can 'go for longer' on, say, a handful of berries than a human can.)

Most mythals 'boost' this process until access to water and sunlight ALMOST replace food (elves existing within a healthy mythal can dine only sparingly, perhaps once a month, if they wish to - - although most enjoy the tastes and sensations of enjoying good food and wine, and eat regularly, their bodies storing excess energy in a chemical manner that increases endurance rather than putting on body fat). So yes, your supposition about mythals is quite correct; note that in terms of sheer survival (as opposed to culinary enjoyment), a large number of wild berry-bushes inside the confines of a surviving mythal is enough to support a surprisingly large number of elves, particularly if they make forays forth to go hunting.

One of the reasons many elves dwell and trade with humans (and other races), aside from the endless entertainment the strivings of these other races provide (and there are elves who follow the deeds and careers of non-elven individuals or families as avidly as some real-world folk follow the unfolding lives of characters on favourite television or movie series), is that these other races are a ready source of food that elves can buy rather than spending as much time on procuring and preparation as they'd otherwise have to do.

Most elves, unless they've grown up getting their bodies used to other fare, NEED raw fruit and vegetables, and raw fish when they can get it, and enjoy subtly seasoned raw and cooked fruit, vegetable, and fish dishes, but can subsist largely on meat if they have to [enjoying it most when superbly seasoned and mixed with plant flavours through skilled cuisine], and when blood from the meat can be separately combined with other substances and imbibed. Most elves LOVE bread goods (especially light, sugary pastries), and fine wines. Elves can of course subsist on a wide variety of foodstuffs, but these are their favourites.

In a recent answer to Asgetrion, I mentioned that half-elven dwellings are crowded with growing plants; the same holds true for elven homes, and many of these plants are edible (in ways that a human wouldn't necessarily find palatable; i.e. there's much eating of raw leaves and roots that human tongues find bitter or violently hard on digestion).

This doesn't mean that elves trying to 'blend in' in a human-dominated urban setting don't have rooms or areas or even entire floors of their dwellings that are plant-free, or that can swiftly appear so (there are spells that can levitate a room's-worth of plants up to float near a lofty ceiling until visitors are gone [or the elf residents need something to dump on the heads of unwanted intruders], just as there are spells that can transport water from afar to appear near such ceilings, to fall as a fine mist, for watering indoor plants). As far as self-sufficiency (earning coin, or having material for barter) goes, many elves tend in their homes plants that can be sold as herbs, plants that can be dried, ground, and mixed into spices, and flowers.

Elves 'seed' forest areas, farming not as humans do (with tilled, sunlit clear areas), but rather cross-pollinating plants, irrigating plants, grafting and planting seedlings and all of that [employing some magics not covered in spell lists to date, that enable them to so 'cut' plants in far less damaging ways than, say, a human gardener's knife] to continuously spread and replenish supplies of favoured edible plants, moving new specimens to spots with optimal growing conditions so that these 'lightly tended, for all passing elves' plantings (as opposed to the common human "this field is MINE, and the crop yield must be maximized" approach) outstrip harvesting for food.

In this way, elves do alter forests, over long periods, continually 'improving' them [if the alterations a gardener makes on wild nature can be said to be 'improvements']. Yes, elves go hunting, especially to eliminate creatures that eat a lot of plants (bunnies, bears, and large avian flocks that ravage berry-bushes), but the answer to 'what percentage' of elves are engaged in farming or food-gathering must be: almost everybody; it's something most elves spend several brief periods

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of time every day 'working on,' on an ongoing basis (living in harmony with the land means you CAN'T strip it, but must encourage renewal and regrowth of all you take, and more).

The more urban elves you mention, lacking ready access to such wild foraging areas (and if day trips out from the settlement are possible, they will be done, in family or just large bands for safety if need be), buy fresh vegetables and fruit in markets whenever possible, and dine on whatever else they can buy when such provender isn't available.

You're quite correct: in urban settings whenever possible, "most 'common' elf families have some inconspicuous, small-scale fruit orchards and vegetable gardens."

So saith Ed.

The dwarves answers next time...

love to all,

THO

May 28, 2005: Hello again, fellow scribes. Ed tackles dwarves and their feeding for Phoebus, this time:

Hi, again, Phoebus. Okay, dwarves...

Dwarves (and gnomes, too) are great fisherfolk, of the 'weir and trap' method more than the hook-and-line or spear technique. They're also great hunters (of the 'herd prey over a killing cliff-fall, and then make a stew, carrying off marrow bones for use as trail food' sort), AND also great ranchers and farmers. Ranchers and farmers?

Yes, ranching rothé, wild boar, and other beasts with edible flesh and usable hides, that can be introduced into confined ravines and steep-sided, 'prison' mountain valleys. Like farmers, allow the growing herds to graze a valley bare, harvesting individual beasts as needed for food. At season end, keep just a few to regenerate the herd and move them to a second valley (or into mountain caverns for warmth and survival, if need be), and harvest the rest, leaving the first valley to regenerate edible plants.

Yes, farming edible cave and subterranean fungi. THIS is the 'neglected secret' of many dwarf and gnome diets: the near-surface Underdark in particular, but all depths of it to some extent, are home to a great variety of fast-growing fungi that can be sliced thin and fried, stewed, boiled to yield glues and teas and gravies, and that give dwarves (again, like elves, possessing metabolisms and chemical internal needs slightly different than those of humans, though they 'work the same way') all the nourishment they need, and a wide variety of tastes and textures [mushroom bread, anyone?]. This food source is self-regenerating unless fire is carefully and persistently used for eradication; think of real-life mildew that keeps coming back in the same spots.

Many southern and eastern gold dwarf tribes do breed, control, and harvest herds of grazing animals, and many cave-dwelling dwarves dine on bats, spiders, and various worms as delicacies. So except in the hearts of frozen glaciers, food's never as scarce as one might think. Dwarves are fierce, daring, and competent hunters (and train their young continuously to replace their elders as such), but they are also patient and persistent gatherers and foragers, who'll happily eat things many humans wouldn't consider food, or would shudder and turn away from as 'emergency edibles only' (maggots, leeches, eels, gnawing worms).

However, you're quite right: with so much trade-metal and gems to barter with, "most food the Dwarves get comes from trading (selling metalworks, weapons, armor, jewelry, etc., for foodstuffs, linen, etc)." Just like the elves, they enjoy the variety and the freedom (in terms of time not lost to foraging activities) buying food wins them. (Dwarves and gnomes distill potent vintages from Underdark materials such as molds, as well as enjoying human- or halfling-crafted beer and strong drink.)

It should be noted here that dwarves and gnomes have very strong digestive systems and tolerances for 'slightly off' tainted food and for strong or foul-tasting or highly-spiced food and drink. They also have the capacity to gorge themselves (become sluggish but not nauseated) incredibly when food is available (so that a dwarf who has six oxen to eat, raw or cooked, plus the

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expectation that food will later be very scarce, could settle down and stolidly and patiently eat most of those six beasts by himself, before lurching waddling on about his business. Most dwarves and gnomes smoke fish and meat into dried, hard-to-human-jaws forms for trail use, and season such 'hardscraw' to taste, taking pride in getting 'strong-but-just-right' flavours in their scraw.

So saith Ed, who'll tackle the last Phoebus question (aging and growing up) on the morrow. love to all,

THO

May 30, 2005: Hello, all. ISP problems kept Ed offline for a day (during which I see some good questions have arrived), but he's "back on" now, and herewith answers the last Phoebus questions: "I think most people have a good idea regarding what a human of reasonable ambition and means can achieve in her first, say, 35 years of life (putting her in her peak, if you will). How does an Elf compare? Does a Mountain Dwarf or a Moon Elf really need to hit 250-300 years before his drive brings him to the same skill level as the aforementioned lady, or is it more a case of plateauing early and just relaxing through the rest of life? I understand the concept of different races = different mentalities/philosophies, but I've always felt that carrying this over to the "game" portion of the Realms (to maintain "game balance", for example) is a bit contrived."

Ed replies:

Phoebus, I quite agree that this racial differentiation seems contrived, though I don't disagree with trying to make the races different (and the colour that brings to the game, which can of course be readily ignored by players and DMs not wanting to include it).

However, the 'big shift' of the Realms to bring it to the 'broad tapestry of reality' that the world first started to see it in published form as having, involved my adapting it to the (1st Edition, unfolding) D&D rules, and this slow maturing of the demi-human races was present in those rules, so it's there in the Realms.

I think of it like this: given proper amounts of nourishment (as opposed to, say, starved slavery) elves and dwarves physically mature about ten years later than their human counterparts, so that they stop looking like obvious children at about age 20 or 21 rather than 10 or 11. I don't mean that they stop growing or even looking older -- I mean demihuman individuals stop seeming obviously immature to other races observing them at about that age (members of their own race can judge their approximate age far more accurately, given a 'good look' at an individual).

I don't think demihumans are sexually mature when they stop looking like children; I believe achieving puberty takes at least another 80 years, and possibly as much as 120.

The time 'in between' being truly human and being sexually mature is the time in which demihumans start to grow up socially. So an elf or dwarf between, say, 20 and 100 can't become pregnant or impregnate anyone, and so can sexually 'play' free of some social responsibilities. At the same time, they are dominated by surging hormones (and hence, mood swings), and are especially susceptible to all sorts of diseases (which they inevitably catch, and conquer). Also, during this long onset of puberty, their bones are still hardening, and in soft state lack some strength that saves them from breakages in some calamities, but also robs them of some accuracy that they'll master later.

For elves and halflings, this prolonged adolescence is dominated, for most but not all individuals (so a PC adventurer could well be one of the exceptions, if desired) by judged-by-most-humans-as-wildly-frivolous-or-silly play, leading to an inability to stick with any one task or even pressing need for long (no attention span, a seeming complete inability to take consequences or impending disaster seriously).

For dwarves and gnomes, adolescence is dominated by a fierce, exploring independence that leads the younglings to be stubborn, proud, difficult, bad 'team-players,' and prone to racing off on quests or solo explorations.

Perhaps "ungovernable" is a good term to describe both the elves and dwarves. Isolated or in conditions of war or flight, they will, yes, be forced to 'grow up' or perish, but in terms of being trainable to specific skills (represented in the game by class abilities, skills, and feats) - - no, that

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comes later, at different rates for each individual. This is probably best simulated by having a favourite hobby or pastime (such as acrobatics, or archery, or a skill at identifying metals or the rocks that hold metallic ores) being mastered in this adolescence, leading to proper skills later. This DOESN'T mean that every adolescent demihuman is a hopeless, helpless, dithering [and pouting or flipping out whenever spoken to or guided] crazy - - it just means that they're unreliable, and can't muster the drive to master any one thing. Unlike humans, they're so rapt (lost) in experiencing the world and absorbing their cultures (song, dance, playing musical instruments, the lore of aeons, forge-craft, knowing stone by smell - taste - texture, divining directions underground and where water is, lineages and feuds and tribal tales, etc.) that they master everything a tiny bit at a time, not one skill and then another. By the time 250 to 300 years of age is reached, demihumans are masters of their own bodies, world-view and awareness, and so can begin to acquire task skills (classes) and at the same time have a natural restlessness stirring that goads them into having the sort of personal drive, patience, and foresight that humans have (and that their own elders just go on developing more and more of, until death). This in turn makes them want to accomplish things, have adventures (as opposed to playing games) and so on. In short, if an elf lass escapes from slavery at age eight to wander alone - - yes, she has no one to play with, and a need to master feeding herself and keeping herself safe, so she would 'grow up' pretty quickly (WITHOUT all the 'lore of the People' that an elf growing up far more slowly, with other elves, would possess). If the same escaped elf lass was found very swiftly by elves who took her in and raised her in an elf society, she'd mature more slowly with all of the usual play and blithe merriment.

This is my view, of course, not enshrined in the game. It's what *I* think of the races as being, in the Realms, but feel free to disagree. I'll be very interested in your opinion.

So saith Ed.

Nice solid trio of posts, to good questions. Thanks, Phoebus!

love to all,

THO

One May 30, 2005 THO said: Well said, Blueblade. Bental, the questions Phoebus posed, that Ed has answered here, are rooted in the perhaps-contrived, perhaps-not game differences between humans and the demihuman races. Those differences are in the game, and were put there by Gary Gygax and TSR designers before Ed's writings came along. They are, for D&D world settings, 'established fact.'

You posted: "if elves and dwarves were somehow sexually active but incapable of becoming pregnant/impregnating someone, that would be a first for a race. If a male is capable of sexual relations, then he is capable of fathering a child."

Not so. Check out any Jane Goodall or other intensive film or book on chimps or any of the primates (gorillas, oranges, etc.): all children engage in sexual behaviour from a very early age, not just when they're capable of fathering children. Your contention that most real-world human societies frown on females behaving in such a way is correct, but beside the point. Last time I looked, most real-world human societies had no laws against elves or dwarves engaging in underage sex.

Hmmm. I see opportunities for new roleplaying games here. Oh, wait, been done, Bunnies & Burrows...

love,

THO

May 31, 2005: Hello, all. Ed makes reply to Kentinal, khorne, and Bental, in several matters: Kentinal, Bental is correct in posting that the faerzress radiations of the Underdark impart sustenance to drow. It's best to think of faerzress as the "sunlight" of the Realms Below, as well as contributing to its magic. See pages 108 and 109 of the UNDERDARK 3.5e sourcebook for specifics, but drow require some heat, access to unpoisoned water (like all native-Underdark

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beings, they can safely imbibe mineral-rich and spore-laden water that surface-dwelling creatures would consider "foul" or "tainted"), and food. Drow have strong digestive systems, and can cope with most surface food and alcohol just fine; in the Underdark, they need to regularly devour foodstuffs that include fungi that grows in moderately-strong or very strong faerzress areas (which is another reason why their cities, including the "fungi farms" most drow families maintain, are located in faerzress-strong areas). Note that this fungi can be an ingredient in soups, stews, sauces, or seasonings, and is even imparted in trace amounts in the flesh of creatures, from snails on up to pack lizards, that themselves devour the right sorts of fungi.

Luminescent/phosphorescent fungi in the Underdark is ALWAYS faerzress-exposed (and therefore suitable to drow diets, to gain essential vitality).

khorne, Kentinal is correct: I was speaking in racial averages, and there will always be individual exceptions (just as some real-world humans are born blind or with deformities, or with conditions that cause them to age very rapidly or to mature very slowly or even never). The game posits adventurers as exceptional individuals, but NPCs (particularly rulers and important persons) are often exceptional too. So Keya is just an exception.

Speaking of which: Bendal, I agree wholeheartedly with Blueblade's reaction to your comment (and THO was speaking of intercourse, when she spoke of primates). Elves and other demihumans aren't humans, and should never be judged by human standards - - or we really are guilty of treating them as "humans with funny pointy ears, good looks, and different manners." (And as for slow maturation not making sense to you: there are certain bloodlines of humans who do not physically mature until their third decade. One learns all sorts of odd stuff in university. :))

By all means treat demihumans differently in your games, or omit them entirely; I know many gamers who run human-only campaigns (they have intelligent monsters as PC foes, but the "common folk who dwell all over the kingdoms" the PCs ride through are all humans). Do whatever sits well with you AND entertains your group of gamers best.

As for orc-quaggoth crossbreeds: my suspicion is that these were left unstatted for two reasons: to serve as a catch-all for several slightly different orc variants that divers designers developed over the years, and to recognize the need for DMs to be able to tailor PC foes for their own needs (as Damian said, stat them is such a way that they're "the perfect bad guys for your campaign"). Call them whatever you like, but I have run TSR-prepared adventures at long-ago GenCons that used "ogroths," so there's a semi-official name if you'd like it.

So saith Ed.

Elucidating the Realms wherever he goes.

love to all,

THO

June 1, 2005: Hello, all. Ed makes reply to the question posed by BelRex about whether or not the Shards of Selune are Chosen of that deity:

BelRex, all deities have favoured servants, and many of them empower these mortal creatures with 'special powers' for short periods or indefinitely. None of them have 'Chosen' in quite the same way that Mystra does (mortals with some of her divine power invested in them, that she can't reclaim or entirely control), although several deities have champions or other 'special servants' whom they CALL 'Chosen.'

The Shards are 'special servants' (yes, an elite guard, or rather, 'fellowship of elite agents' would be a better description), but they aren't "Chosen" in the sense that Mystra has Chosen - - and if Selune has 'a' Chosen, I'm not aware of it. But then, I prefer the gods to be as mysterious and awe-inspiring as possible, and there are oodles of secrets, large and small, about matters divine as yet unrevealed to mere real-world mortals (ahem: you, me, and other Realms fans). So mayhap Selune does have a Chosen or Chosen plural, and we just don't know it yet...

So saith Ed.

Hmmm, I'd accuse Ed of opening a can of worms if I wasn't privy to some secrets of the gods that he hasn't let out of his sack of tricks, yet. As it is, I merely smile enigmatically, keep calm, stay brave, and watch for the signs...

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love to all,
THO

On June 1, 2005 THO said: Reefy, from much Realmsplay with Ed as DM I can confidently say: in the Dales and most places in the Realms, Eldathyn (like clergy of Chauntea) are valued and revered as builders and nurturers by most folk. Even if you're a woodcutter, you're pleased that they replant, clean up, and replenish what you're hewing down.

So they're definitely not despised. I will, of course, send on your question to Ed for a proper answer in the fullness of time (possibly as late as the end of June; his "answers to do" pile is growing large. I'll have to restrain and flog him again, I'm afraid.

love to all,
THO

June 2, 2005: Hello, all. Ed replies to this question from Lemernis: "I have a question for Ed about the level of magic in Faerun. The 3rd ed. FRCS pp 92-94 implies that adventuring magic is not particularly common, and in fact may be rather hard to come by. Is real magic (as opposed to gimmick magic) extremely familiar to most or something of a rarity? How difficult is it to come by? Is it found commonly in stores?"

Ed speaks:

Well met, Lemernis. The reason why Realms sources tend to be vague about "how much" magic is out there, and how easily obtained it is, is simply because "we" (the Realms designers) want to leave the 'magic level' of any campaign up to the DM and players in that campaign.

It's easy to be misled by the endless writeups of new spells and magic items into thinking of the Realms as some sort of vast candy store of magic, and by seeing the Chosen of Mystra endlessly flitting about using magic (particularly if you forget that the Chosen of Mystra are charged by their goddess to EXPAND MAGIC USE throughout Toril, putting more magic into the hands of all who won't use it primarily to seize magic from others, slay those who work magic, and by other means restrict magic).

In 'my' original Realms, magic is gained in two ways: by adventuring (as shown in a scene in THE TEMPTATION OF ELMINSTER, Chosen of Mystra actually go around 'planting' scrolls, spellbooks, and magic items in tombs, for adventurers to find), and by undertaking training or study (which often involves temporary service with) someone who possesses more powerful magic. Apart from 'THE' MageFair, magic is never for sale in a store (as opposed to 'secret deals' where someone sells or auctions individual items to discerning persons). The published Realms does have some magic stores, because some gamers prefer that style of play and the published Realms was intended to be the "campaign setting for all" for the 2nd Edition of the D&D game. Myself, I believe you should pick the level of magic that's most comfortable for you and your fellow gamers/DM, and always err on the side of 'low magic' or at least 'mysterious magic' (the sword glows, and can slice through coat-of-plate, but it started humming that one time, and on that other occasion made a doorknob glow green, so I'm not quite sure what else it does, and what it was crafted to do), to keep roleplaying to the fore and avoid any temptation or possibility for your game becoming a sort of football-huddle tactical arms race wherein attention shifts to game rules and mechanics in endless fighting.

So saith Ed.

As one of his players, I can confirm that we Knights SAW a lot of magic hurled and carted (in the form of gleaming magic items) around, but rarely got our hands on all that much of it - - and when we did, we tended to worry, because it meant we were soon going to face a challenge that would test us to the utmost and we'd better be able to USE that magic if we didn't want to perish. Which is one of the reasons that the first decade or so of real playing time took us up to the lofty heights of 7th to 9th levels!

love to all,
THO

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June 3, 2005: Well met again, fellow scribes. Reefy, rest assured that I shall treasure my friend and great dungeon master Ed, who herewith speaks on the matter of the language of drow: Faraer, Zandilar, et al: I believe that the language spoken by the drow of today is rooted in the elf tongue spoken by the drow before they 'went under,' but all that survives from the elvish they spoke then (which of course has continued to be spoken by other elf races, and hence developed in a different direction, changing more rapidly in the last few centuries than it ever did in earlier times, thanks to all the intermingling of elves with other races, and words being needed for new concepts and things as elves encountered genuinely new customs, industries, and so on) is a smattering of vocabulary and the grammatical structure that underpins it all.

Which as Zandilar correctly points out, is the aspect of all non-Common tongues in Faerûn most neglected thus far. Most of us haven't the time to delve into full linguistic development, particularly as most publishers would regard promoting such a thing (as anything but a web enhancement) to be financial suicide. What most DMs and Realms fiction writers are looking for is a handful of useful, cool-sounding words or phrases to give flavour to the speech of nonhumans (like the orc guards the PCs are creeping up on, the elf courtiers they're eavesdropping on, or the dragon they overhear). In many cases, these will be used mixed in with Common, just as many English speakers of today lard their speech with individual words or even phrases from Spanish or French.

The reasons the drow tongue now shares so little vocabulary with surface elven speech is threefold: the Underdark is a very different environment than the Realms Above, so new names and terms were urgently needed, while a lot of words were no longer in daily use and started to fade; there was a deliberate political attempt to distance the drow from the Hated Ones who'd spurned them (other elves), just as there's a recent real-world American mood of anger against France re. the political disagreements over Iraq, with moves to change "french fries" to "freedom fries" and so on; and Lolth / Lloth (and her priestesses, under her command) saw controlling the very speech of the drow as a sure means to complete dominance over other faiths (both the "former faiths" of the surface elves, and the various other faiths, such as those of Vhaeraun, Ghaunadar, and later Eilistraee, that the drow had been dabbling in).

So, yes, as Zandilar commented: "Drow and Elven should be a little like Italian and French as far as differences go. They share similar origins, but today they're totally separate languages." Please bear in mind that this is just my opinion. The drow are from European mythology, Gary Gygax brought them into the D&D game (and therefore Greyhawk), and I was assigned (in writing DROW OF THE UNDERDARK) to "Realmsify" them (yup, that's the word that appears in my contract for that book), and later create a detailed D&D game presentation of Menzoberranzan to make sure "Bob's drow" were "properly in the Realms" (see the MENZOBERRANZAN boxed set, which can still be purchased in miniature form). I created Eilistraee because I was asked to create a "god for good drow" when doing DOTU.

So saith Ed.

Who's answered Faraer's question very well, I think, though of course debates on drow language and everything else drow will continue to rage for years, alongside creative work on drow speech. All of which proves that most of us have too much idle time, but we sure know how to choose a superior way to fill it!

love to all,

THO

June 4, 2005: Hello, all. Phoebus, you're very welcome, and Ed sends an "Oooh" of envy re. those Macbeth tickets.

He also makes reply to Arthedain, in the matter of dire spectres of death:

Arthedain, the Realms does have various legends and bards' fireside scare-tales about cowed, skeletal figures who wield scythes, in part because of Jergal (whose servants used to appear to mortals in this guise) and in part because of the magical Decks of Many Things (firmly part of the D&D rules up to 3rd Edition), in which drawing the death card summons a "minor death" to fight (and almost always slay, though one of the Knights of Myth Drannor famously defeated a death

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"called" in this way). The Hooded Death Woolly Rupert referred to is a powered-down variant of this (so that PCs could have the frisson without the doom). The Knights never encountered this little feature of the Gentle Mermaid, but they DID have fun with the magical chessmen, as I recall. Now, Jergal IS still around, and can send his cowled reapers as silently-gliding, intangible apparitions as either harbingers of death, warnings, or (when certain tombs are breached) as actual "monster" foes (your chance to use the Entropic Reaver).

Now as for Terry's Death (my favourite Discworld character, winning by a whisker over Granny Weatherwax): I'd LOVE to put him in the Realms, but of course legally can't. I'm a great fan of Terry's as well as a friend, and khorne, I quite agree that it'd be great fun if Death appeared in the Realms. I could do dozens of moments like these:

Elminster didn't bother to look up. "Stand ye back, if ye'd live a few breaths longer," he said a little wearily, his eyes on the rising wisps of smoke that had moments ago been a sorceress he'd loved, once. Her vicious attempt to slay him made what he'd had to do no easier.

THAT'S NOT A CONCERN FOR ME, I'M AFRAID.

Something in that voice made the Old Mage whirl around, and stare narrow-eyed at the tall, almost impossibly-thin figure standing a little too near. "Ye... I know ye."

I'D BE SURPRISED IF YOU DID NOT. YOU'RE ONE OF MY BEST SUPPLIERS.

... And so on. Ah, don't tempt me. When next I see Terry - - but no, we can't mix Discworld and the Realms. And I don't want to do ANYthing to impair the flood of Discworld brilliance in the slightest. As a reader, I treasure Terry's gems too much.

So saith Ed.

Heed, scribes assembled, and send those Grim Reapers gliding... "Me? I just like to watch."
Ahem.

love to all,

THO

June 5, 2005: Hello, fellow scribes. Ed of the Greenwood herewith makes divers replies to queries hobgoblin:

KnightErrantJR, glad you liked ELMINSTER'S DAUGHTER. I think it's the best 'romp' of my solo Realms books to date, too (ELMINSTER IN HELL is a more ambitious, but more flawed, book, and can arguably said to try to achieve much more than DAUGHTER, and to manage to achieve just a trifle more - - but then, tastes differ, and in the end I must leave judgements of my works to others).

Superb Lorelord of the Realms George Krashos has already directed you to Eric Boyd's work, and Steven Schend's masterful hinting, showing something of the once-greater power of hobgoblins. As mentioned, Troy Denning crafted Grodd, and I included many mentions of humanoid realms and formerly-greater realms in the original Realms (particularly in the Vast and the Moonsea North). Rest assured that WotC Realms designers aren't done with showing us more of orcs and all goblinkin. Which inevitably leads me into NDA troubles, and the need to say only this to you: your conclusion as to my implication is quite correct; the hobgoblin cult was more dangerous to dragons than the humans have ever been (though the Cult of the Dragon, if you take the view that dragons achieving lichdom is a "danger" to those dragons, is slowly coming to rival their achievements). There are remnants of the hobgoblin realms of that time, as well as ruins and artifacts, and I intend to say more about them. If I get the chance, of course.

(If these words sound stilted, they are indeed: I'm dancing VERY carefully along the jagged interfaces of several sharp and pointy NDAs here.)

So stay tuned, and I'll try to reveal more about hobgoblins in the fullness of time.

So saith Ed.

Who lives with more frustrations than most of us can really appreciate, scribes - - especially when NDAs silence him for years at a time, and then products are cancelled or transformed into something quite different than they started out as, and it turns out he could have spoken on various matters years earlier, after all.

Ah, well. All any of us ever get to do is play the hands we're dealt...

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love to all,
THO

June 6, 2005: Well met again, fellow scribes. I bring to you Ed's reply to Zandilar in the matter of Caladnei's looks:

Hi, Zandilar. Glad you liked ELMINSTER'S DAUGHTER. Faraer has quite correctly pointed out my approach to Realms fiction: there are no major or minor characters, just 'main' characters in a book who get the most page space. This is part of my ongoing struggle, down the years, against the prevalent preferred editorial style of "keep the story VERY simple" to hammer home to even the casual reader how rich and large and broad in scope the Realms is (well beyond the field of view of any single novel, including whatever Ed book is in your hand), and to sprinkle in details that herald future books, in such a way that it's not obvious to the reader until those later books come out (so the setting will seem alive, and not an otherwise lifeless stage that hosts a series of contrived literary 'events' and plots).

For obvious reasons, I can't say anything about those future tomes...

As for lack of detail, please tell me more, so I can avoid going too light on lore or in-passing description in future books.

And as for Caladnei: when writing the outline for EL'S D, I noticed that the (very brief) notes I had for Caladnei from Rich Baker (her co-creator, I believe, along with Sean Reynolds) were at odds with Troy's text, so I "checked in" for a definitive response from WotC, and got this:

"As per her racial origins, should have dark hair, dark brown eyes, middling height, average build (not buxom, adventurer-active so not fat). Give her some unusual trait to suggest magic-wielding in her genes?"

Not wanting to have her skin glow with runes or anything that 'obvious,' I devised the shifting-in-hue eyes as that visible trait of aptitude for the Art.

Interestingly, there IS a tall, slender female War Wizard in my old Realmslore notes (which TSR and therefore WotC have): Roedele Thornmantle, who DOES have a mane of long flame-orange hair and amber eyes to boot. I've never referred to her as "willowy," but if one takes that to mean 'slender, agile, bend-not-break, lithe,' then she fits the description. She's never appeared in print to my knowledge, probably because of this notation of mine in her original entry:

Roedele Thornmantle, knighted by Azoun for her services to the Crown (some have cattily referred to these as "personal services," but they seem to center around alley-fighting in rebellious Arabel, not anything romantic with the Purple Dragon), uses as her arms a circular white unicorn, head to the sinister, on a circular field of dark green bordered with white flames, and is a CG hf W9 who dwells in Suzail with her two lovers, the War Wizards Abrult Morglam (CG hm W6, darkly handsome, short, whittling wooden caricatures and dragons is his constant hobby) and Jakanna Bruen (NG hf W7, short-tempered, energetic, tanned, loves to climb trees and play pranks); the three are inseparable. Roedele's known for a polite public manner that displays a very dry humour.

[I don't think TSR was ready to show the world two bisexual ladies in 1986].

So my "in game" explanation would have to be that Caladnei borrowed Roedele's appearance when crafting the incantation for a spell that was probably also some sort of defensive mantle - - and that this borrowing may originally have been intended to conceal her own presence, so the Mage Royal could officially be elsewhere, and uninvolved. When the events related in THE SIEGE befell, Caladnei may have hastily cast this spell she'd developed, because she had need of its powers, and forgotten or not cared that it temporarily gave her the appearance of a fellow War Wizard. Or the spell may well have been one given her by Vangerdahast, that gives the caster someone else's appearance, and he had set the 'other' to be Roedele (and Caladnei used the spell in hasty need, either not knowing it altered her appearance or not caring).

So saith Ed.

A good illustration of the glitches that sometimes arise when various creators are busily at work in the Realms - - and the easy-going spirit in which these glitches are best smoothed away.

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love to all,
THO

On June 6, 2005 THO said: Zandilar, Ed will give you a proper answer, of course (eventually: gods, his platter is full!), but to quickly touch on two matters you raised:

- - Ed deliberately wanted to (his words, now): "underscore the point that Narnra (the street-smart sneak thief, out of her depth in a strange place) WASN'T going to unbelievably start defeating older, wiser, stronger NPCs on all sides, controlling situations, rising like a conquering hero head-and-shoulders above royalty, nobility, veteran wizards, and Marsemban sneak thieves just a bit older and wiser than she was."

Ed and I have e-discussed this point already; he was a bit dismayed by how static her character ended up in the last quarter of the novel, as the editors cut (and requested he make cuts) to shorten the text.

- - Caladnei is now Royal Magician of Cormyr, and has access not only to all of Vangey's spellbooks (except the ones he's REALLY hidden), magic items ditto, and the training he gave her to use them. The "mind ream" is part of this. The best way to think of it (yes, I know this doesn't square with game mechanics) is that being Royal Magician is an office that comes with a costume. Put it on, and you're putting on some minor superpowers woven into it.

love,
THO

On June 6, 2005 THO said: Kentinal has it right: there are no laws regarding drinking age in the Realms. Some cities have laws (overnight jailing and fines) for being (aggressively, or you won't get arrested in the first place) public drunkenness.

love to all,
THO

June 7, 2005: Hello, all. Ed of the Greenwood herewith begins a series of replies to the Morn family questions posed by Mark (MW Turnage). Ed's answers will also be of interest to longtime Realms Lorelord and Keeper of the Flame Steven Schend.

1. "Aside from FRQ3's Colderan (their great-grandfather), have either of Randal and Silver Morn's parents been named?"

Ed replies: Yes, but not in print thus far (so far as I know). Colderan Morn, the Mage-Lord (who ruled Daggerdale over a century ago) married Belesaria Arfeather, who was poisoned by his drow "allies." Her death enraged and embittered Colderan, who presumed his young son Belard (who simply vanished at the time of Belesaria's murder) had been murdered. His spells never found any trace of Belard, who'd been spirited away by the drow to be held captive and used in bargaining to ensure Colderan's obedience - - but promptly "rescued" from the dark elves by certain Harpers, including Elminster and Storm, to keep him hidden from both the drow and Colderan, and rear him with none of Colderan's cruel tyranny.

Belard "Crownthorn" never knew his true heritage. A hardy, energetic, and amiable youth, he was raised as a Harper in Secomber, Everlund, and the lands between, by the Crownthorn ranger family. While serving with the Harpers, Belard met, loved, and wed a fellow Harper, a commoner from Firefall Vale by the name of Danathra Ilkwood.

After being sorely wounded in winter skirmishes with trolls, Belard and Danathra retired from active Harper service to Deepingdale, where they became coopers (and were much enriched by trade with Harpers in need of good kegs and barrels) and had a son and a daughter, Flars and Yethtrae.

When winter-fever killed Danathra, the grieving Belard went wolf-hunting, taking increasingly reckless risks until he met his end in the woods nigh Myth Drannor, fighting something far deadlier than a wolf. By then Harpers posing as brigands had "captured" Flars (then a young lad) and Yethtrae (scarcely more than a toddler).

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Yethtrae they carried off to Waterdeep, where she was taken in by the Elondar family of scribes and raised as their own. She married the scribe she was apprenticed to, and as "Yethtrae Delraven," she's still alive today, as a respected, retired, elderly and frail accomplished scribe, bookbinder, and artist, with only faint memories of her childhood. Yethtrae and Deraun Delraven have two daughters, Elessra and Ilimbara, but no sons. (The Harpers regard this branch of the family as a 'backup' in case the Morn bloodline descending through Flars becomes extinct). Flars was raised as a minstrel and forester (ranger) by Harpers of the Heartlands, who ranged along the western verges of the High Forest. On a rare visit to Silverymoon, he met Maerindra Elrproast, a young weaver of Amn brought to the Gem of the North by Ultos Dreahond, a crooked and lecherous Athkatlan weaver who'd hoped to make his fortune there but had fallen into Silvaeren disfavour and swiftly lost nigh-everything.

Flars and Maerindra were smitten by each other on sight, in a true "match made by the gods," and were wed in a matter of days. Dreahond was living on the dwindling prentice-fee paid to him by Maerindra's parents, and tried to have her hunted and brought back to his custody on the (false) grounds that he was her bonded guardian. Harpers took advantage of the hunt to swoop in, spirit Flars and Maerindra away from the city, reveal his heritage to the dumbstruck Flars, and offer to assist them in reclaiming Daggerdale.

To make a long tale short, Flars accepted, Daggerdale was wrested from the various outlaws (supported by various lords of Zhentil Keep, many of whom were sponsoring various lawless "blade bands" to gain them wealth in the area, and keep all thrones weak, and lands perilous and troubled, except Zhentil Keep itself) who were ruling bits and pieces of it, and House Morn was restored to their rightful lands.

Flars and Maerindra had two children, Randal (named for Maerindra's grandsire) and his younger sister Silver (named for Silverymoon), who grew to adolescence before Flars and Maerindra were brutally slain by Zhent hireswords seeking to install puppet lordlings in Daggerdale.

Once again the Harpers rode to the rescue, and Randal grew to manhood fighting alongside them to regain Daggerdale and scour out both his own lands and the valley of the Tesh (Zhentish 'mercenary encampment' territory by then, from which Zhent-sponsored warbands raided all surrounding lands).

They succeeded-thrice, the "last" time decisively, and the Harpers persuaded Randal Morn (who hated ruling, but loved wandering and fighting) to go adventuring in the Sword Coast lands under the direction of Khelben Blackstaff (I'll say a little more about that in a later answer) and leave his sister Silver Morn as Lady of Daggerdale, ruling in his name until his return. (Again, the Harpers were cold-bloodedly separating the siblings in hopes of keeping Randal alive and to hasten his fathering of children of his own.)

The Zhents swept in again, with sizable armies this time, and overran Daggerdale. Silver Morn went into hiding (to prevent being forcibly married to the Zhentarim-installed "Lord of Daggerdale"), and Randal had to leave off his life of adventuring and come riding back to win his dale AGAIN - - with the Harpers both weakened and busy on many fronts, and greater wars about to descend on the Dales. I'll say a little more about this in my answer to your fifth question.

So saith Ed.

Who will continue his replies to Mark on the morrow.

love,

THO

June 8, 2005: Hello, all. zeathiel, consider that question hurled Ed's way. Now, Ed's Morn-family replies to Mark continue:

2. "I have a snippet by Eric Boyd (from one of the Realms lists of the past decade) that states that Randal arranged a marriage between Silver and one of the Cormaerils. Is this official Realmslore, and if so, what is her husband's name (I gathered 'Thracian' from Realms-L, and went with that IMC, but couldn't find a source for it)."

Ed speaks:

I'd rather not fight the "what's official? Canon is this but not THAT" battle one more time (I only have so many years of life left to me, after all), and Eric and I are both too busy right now with

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[NDA] (and for that matter, with [NDA] and [NDA], too) to confer on this. Yes, Silver did marry a Cormaeril, but I'm not sure how much Randal "arranged" it, other than serving as her safety-escort on any travels, or carrying letters or messages. Silver's quite a feisty, strong-minded (if physically small, and usually polite or even demure) person who can think very well for herself. I can't find anything in my notes as to the name of her husband, though I know it wasn't Rowen, Beliard, or Tarmuth "Tarmos" (who are all male Cormaerils of the right generation for a likely marriage, but by no means the only candidates), but "Thracian" (though a real-world ancient term for a group of people from a particular place [Thrace], and so a name I'd personally avoid) is fine until I uncover something different. "Thracian" could be a nickname, as "Tarmos" is (which is why I included it here); most Cormyrean nobility have "family nicknames," and a very few of them use or become better publicly known by such names than their 'real' ones.

So saith Ed.

Another reply next time.

love,

THO

June 9, 2005: Hi again, fellow scribes. Ed continues to reply to MWTurnage's Morn-clan queries: "3. If Silver's husband is indeed a Cormaeril, what does that imply for the couple after the events of Cormyr: The Novel? Pressure from the family to bear an heir that could take the Daggerdale throne, in an attempt to recoup the family's losses in a different (albeit smaller) kingdom?"

Ed writes:

It doesn't imply much for the couple, because the Cormaerils are physically scattered as well as 'all over the map' in their views on life, what it is to be noble, what it should mean to be a Cormaeril, what they think of the Obarskyrs or the prevailing weather in Amn or the price of potatoes, and so on. Certainly some of the older nobles will be mortified at what's happened to the Cormaerils and determined to either enact revenge or regain their lost and "rightful" status or both, and noble sons (like Silver's husband) are ALWAYS under pressure to sire heirs (that's all that being noble in the end really means: tracing your unbroken bloodline back far enough so as to be able to "prove" some special status or rights or traditional powers). So, yes, they'll always want an heir.

However, Daggerdale IS 'right next door' to Cormyr (albeit a troubled, largely-wild, ungoverned "on the maps only" part of Cormyr) and therefore vulnerable to attack or "friendly invasion" in a way that the nearby but fiercely-independent port of Westgate is not (Cormyr expanding into Daggerdale would win Sembian anger and warnings [to say nothing of the ire of other Dalesfolk, which the Sembians would count on to stop Cormyr expanding farther], but Cormyr charging into Westgate would result in Sembian-sponsored war against the Forest Kingdom). So Daggerdale would be a good base only for Cormaerils taking a "I'm really a good person, and loyal to Cormyr, and you've made a terrible mistake. Would you please reconsider?" stance, not Cormaerils hostile to the Dragon Throne or even desiring to "show the Obarskyrs a thing or two" by the social and economic success an exiled Cormaeril clan can achieve.

Like most noble families, the Cormaerils fight among themselves (not necessarily with weapons) more than with outsiders - - and only the strongest personalities can win fellow family members over to their views, to make them act together on anything. We already know that the three youngish males I mentioned have all gone their own sharply divergent ways - - while not necessarily disliking each other at all, just not having much to do with each other on a daily basis, even before Rowen's transformation - - so only the "elder Cormaeril aunties" are likely to hold shared strong views that would involve them telling Silver and her husband what to do. Perhaps only those aunts would expect their younger kin to listen and obey.

So saith Ed.

Good stuff, as usual. The replies continue on the morrow.

Verghityax, the city article will be in a later issue than the Waterdeep spotlight, and the city isn't Waterdeep. Rather, it's [NDA].

love,

THO

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June 10, 2005: Hello again, scribes. Ed tackles Mark's fourth Morn family question:

"4. What would the effect be on Randal? Pressure to take a wife and sire an heir himself to keep his in-laws from bumping him off in favor of a niece or nephew? A weakening of ties with Cormyr given a familial relationship with Azoun's would-be assassins?"

(Mark, I took the liberty of changing "bear an heir himself," though it's physically possible given the spells of the Realms that Ed's detailed or hinted at, over the years, to "sire an heir himself," which is what I think you meant. Ed will no doubt leap in to correct me if he thinks I'm wrong in this, and by all means do so yourself, if I am.)

Ed replies:

Randal may well have 'weak seed' (near-sterility, perhaps from genetics, and perhaps from long, hard hours in the saddle and years of living in the open under harsh conditions). He's certainly shown no signs of fathering anyone -- and he HAS enjoyed many trysts and even several-year-long affairs with women during his rugged life. I don't think his ties with Cormyr would be altered at all (Vangerdahast and others have long since used magic to stealthily 'read' what they could of Randal's mind, and take his true measure and learn his loyalties). What will happen is that some Highknight, undercover War Wizard, or other Cormyrean spies will go into Daggerdale (which is already awash in Harper, Zhent, Sembian, Dalesfolk, and yes, Cormyrean spies) to watch and listen carefully for any signs of Cormaerils subverting Randal Morn or "starting anything."

These agents could be Randal's best defense against anyone Cormaeril or hired-by-Cormaeril from "bumping him off." I don't think Randal would feel any such threat, or be influenced by it even if it were made openly to his face. The man has spent his life guerilla-fighting or adventuring, after all. Most of the folk of Daggerdale view the Morns as the "rightful first family" of Daggerdale, and will do so no matter what Randal does (if he turned into a butchering tyrant, they'd soon acquire the view that he wasn't a "true Morn," not that the Morns shouldn't be ruling Daggerdale). I doubt Randal wants to openly take a wife and therefore endanger her (Zhent assassins or wizards seeking to rule her mind, and him through her), but as he grows older, I think he'll want to settle down and have a family and an everpresent mate he can love, trust, and cuddle.

Whether whatever fates there be will allow him this happiness is another matter altogether...

So saith Ed.

Wisely reminding us all that life has a way of surprising us, and that not a few of those little surprises are nasty ones.

Krash: Could be, could be. Naughty Ed and I may both be, but NDAs we honour.

love to all,

THO

June 11, 2005: Hi again, scribes. Ed of the Greenwood herewith answers MWTurnage's fifth Morn question:

"5. The first Realms set mentions that Randal explicitly trusts on his sister (obvious), Florin and Mourngrym (also obvious given the Knights' activities in the area), and Mirt, Durnan and Khelben(!). Now, above and beyond the idea of anyone explicitly trusting Khelben, there's got to be a story in how he came to trust the three of them. Will we ever see it?"

Ed replies:

Funny you should ask. The first Realms short story I ever sent to TSR, back in 1980, was TO SLAY A BLACK RAVEN, which tells the tale of Florin (not Florin Falconhand of the Knights, but his distant cousin, a slightly older man of Cormyr also named Florin), Mirt, Durnan, and Randal Morn riding back to Daggerdale from where they'd been adventuring together to rescue Randal's sister, Silver Morn (who'd gone into hiding, living in the reedy moat of her own castle) from Malyk, a Zhentilar mageling who'd been installed as Lord of Daggerdale by a Zhent army that had stormed and taken Daggerdale. (No, this Malyk has nothing to do with Troy Denning's similarly-named character.) I realize that the text of the 2nd Edition Realms boxed set gives a slightly different impression of the way the Zhents gained power; it was shortened and simplified down to words that make it seem like Zhent agents convinced the people of Daggerdale to overthrow House Morn and accept Malyk. The longer truth is: Zhent agents convinced many men of

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Daggerdale not to answer the House Morn call to arms, so Silver Morn's riders who went seeking reinforcements came back with nothing; the folk of Daggerdale did not overthrow House Morn, they just didn't turn out in droves to be butchered by large Zhent armies, so the small garrison of the castle were easily overwhelmed.)

So Randal Morn came to trust Florin, Mirt, and Durnan because the four of them were an adventuring band of little fame, brief career, and much success.

They enjoyed this success in part as "strike force agents" of Khelben (you might say they were the forerunners of the Moonstars, serving as the Blackstaff's own private little army), and Randal trusted Khelben because the Blackstaff was "always right," and seemed to Randal to be working steadily towards order, peace, and the greatest possible good for civilized humankind.

Mourngrym he came to trust later, as a Knight of Myth Drannor (sent from Waterdeep by Khelben to join the Knights) - - a trust Mourngrym repaid with his supportive deeds and decrees as Lord of Shadowdale.

Interestingly, BLACK RAVEN and its prequel, A SPELL UP HER SKIRTS (not as risqué as it sounds, sorry; it unfolded a previous adventure of the Four adventurers, in Khelben's service), were sent to DRAGON (or rather, "The Dragon," as it was then, circa 1980) and lost by them. Replacement copies were subsequently requested by them - - and lost again. After I queried later as to the fate of the two tales, a third set of copies were requested - - and they lost THEM, too! By then, TSR's Design Department wanted copies as background lore for the Realms. I sent a (fourth) set - - and, yes, THEY lost them.

So they're not getting fifth copies until I can personally, physically thrust them into the hands of Book Publishing staff! (Which is something I've done twice, at two different GenCons, with other fiction pieces). And yes, that means the two tales won't be in the forthcoming collection THE BEST OF THE REALMS BOOK II: THE STORIES OF ED GREENWOOD. (For one thing, they're early stories and far from my 'best.')

So saith Ed.

(I haven't told him yet that WotC has finally released the story roster for Best of Eddie, and he's much too busy to go surfing the Net and finding it by himself). Five down, one to go. Tune in next time for that last Morn reply.

love to all,

THO

June 12, 2005: Hello, all. Herewith, Ed handles the last of Mark's six Morn family questions: "6. Finally, in SHADOWS OF DOOM, Elminster expressly asks Storm to watch over Randal by name, singling him out over many of El's other responsibilities and projects. Why? Is it a 'professional' interest due to some importance of Randal and Daggerdale to the future of the area, or is it a personal interest?"

Ed replies:

A bit of both.

Elminster didn't want the Zhents to overrun Daggerdale (or take it by subterfuge, either), because there was something magical hidden there at the time that he didn't want them to find (what, precisely? NDA, sorry - - but it's not there any longer, in any event). That was the 'professional' interest.

El also held a personal interest, even beyond his liking Randal Morn personally: Silver Morn has a not-yet-manifested (even to her) affinity for the Weave, that may lead her to becoming an accomplished sorceress, and whether she ever casts a spell or not, is soon going to give her both dream and 'waking' visions, in areas of strong lingering (or not-yet-triggered) magic: brief animated scenes [sans sound] of beings and events befalling on that particular spot, that are or were magic-related. This is a blood trait that the 'old' Mystra (and therefore Elminster) want to see continued (i.e. for Silver Morn to have at least four children, so that at least one can be 'spirited away' for safekeeping if anything befalls Silver or any of the other children.

The 'new' Mystra is fascinated by this aspect of godhood: long-term genetic and other manipulations to attain desired ends. (Readers familiar with the classic old Lensman space opera series by E.E. 'Doc' Smith will recall the Visualization of the Cosmic All that the Arisians and other

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'superior minds' concerned themselves with; THIS is what certain of the Realms deities are most thrilled by and preoccupied with, though of course they neither call it that nor think of it in those terms.) So she supports this initiative, even as her divine predecessor did. Among the Chosen of Mystra, most information is shared freely, but due to them all being so busy with their own specific missions and tasks, each Chosen has some information not yet known by the others; in the novel scene you refer to, El was merely bringing Storm up to date on something that had been his responsibility and therefore not something she thought often about. So saith Ed.

And there you have it; done at last. Interesting to all Realms scribes, as usual. VERY interesting. love to all,
THO

June 8, 2005: Remember the clever words of Richard Lee Byers, at last year's GenCon Indy FR seminar: "In my father's house, there are many Manshoons."
In other words, there are MORE Manshoons than 3e lore currently admits (as Ed will reveal in the fullness of time). And I'd say he's far more powerful than Fzoul, because he has fall-back plans and caches set in motion far beyond Fzoul's capacity to anticipate. He may have suffered a personal setback within the Zhentarim, temporarily, but (to quote Ed of the Greenwood, hereafter):
"He's MUCH more cunning and better prepared than Fzoul has ever been. Fzoul always plays the "Hi, God of the Moment, I'm Yours!" card, and that's like juggling a flaming sword: no matter how good you are, sooner or later you're going to get badly cut and burned. My money is always on Manshoon - - and remember, I created Fzoul, Manshoon, and the Zhentarim, but haven't really had the chance to properly tell any of their stories, yet. Just fragments."
To this I can add: don't miss the Best of Eddie book, for a few glimpses more...
love,
THO

On June 8, 2005 THO said: Hello - - and "Oh, dear."
I'm sorry, but Ed's answers on matters of diplomacy and law are going to take a little while. The first topic due to NDA troubles (a very current Realms writing project), and the second because Ed was revamping the City of Splendors boxed set legal code for an answer here for Verghityax, and had to halt and rob his own work to provide legal details for an FR city article for DRAGON. When he's (finally!) "out of the woods" on these, I know he will be swift to answer. I'll make sure of it.
love to all,
THO

On June 9, 2005 THO said: Krash, you're reading this rightly. This is a two-parter, and the second offering relates something of how distorted "lore" like Tharnwood grow (with sages' and minstrels' embellishments) over time.
In other words - - these two pieces were supposed to be published alongside Lost Empires - - Ed's underscoring an "out" or "elbow room" for all Realms historians, and DMs, to twist lore to their own purposes, for their own campaigns, and not get tripped up on "but the books say this" arguments.
love,
THO

June 13, 2005: Hail, fellow scribes. I bear a reply from Ed of the Greenwood to the questioner now known as RevJest, in the matter of: "Can you tell us what was wrong with Cylyria of Berdusk while the whole Harper Tribunal/Khelben thing was going on? It seems odd that she'd be laying abed sick, given the sorts of resources at her disposal. Whatever you'd care to/can tell would be of interest to me. Plus, what did El say to Storm to get her to calm down?"

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Ed speaks:

The Lady Cylyria Dragonbreast wasn't just "sick," she was lying comatose, 'disminded' or in a similar condition, due to a magical mind-attack. Who was attacking her, why, and the precise outcome of this must all remain mysteries due to a current NDA, but I hope to tell this tale someday, somehow, in Realms fiction or lore.

As for Elminster's words to Storm: on which occasion, in particular? :}

So saith Ed.

He's posing a serious question to RevJest there, by the way: to which specific occasion is RevJest referring? (And I'm going to add a question of my own to that: in which published Realmslore source is this occasion presented in, RevJest? I ask because we Knights have seen many, many more moments of interaction between Storm and El than have ever been published, and I tend to get them mixed up, after so many years of play; our Realmsplay sessions seem more real than Ed's novels, and Ed's novels more real than Ed's game source material, which in turn trumps game material by others, followed by fiction by others... in my overloaded mind, anyway.)

And there you have it; a tantalizing tidbit more of fascinating Realmslore from the pen of the Master. Sorry, patient Mumadar Ibn Huzal! (But, hey, thanks for the wine! There's this trick I can show you, wherein I accidentally-deliberately spill it down my front and you...)

Ahem, to return to matters more serious: Mumadar Ibn Huzal, you more recently posted "I wonder what was hidden beneath the leaves of the great forest of which now only the Wealdath, Shilmista and the Forest of Mir remain." You're familiar with VOLO'S GUIDE TO BALDUR'S GATE II, yes?

love to all,

THO

June 14, 2005: Hello again, all. Ed helps me reply to Sanishiver's requests for Realmsplay revel tales.

Sanishiver, I dare not start telling "what happened to we Knights at various revels" stories, for the very NDA problems you anticipated, but I can quote some of Ed's relevant notes:

A "feast" is usually a private party held by a guild at its headquarters or more often a rented venue, for members (and their guests, generally a single guest of the opposite gender) only - - OR it's a private party held by a noble family for a select guest list, usually in their own city mansion or villa. Feasts are usually dominated by a sit-down meal, much drinking, and chat, and has small-scale hired entertainments (minstrels, jugglers, hedge-wizards). Many are intended to end in dalliance in various gardens or rooms.

A "revel" is a much larger social event held by a noble family, either in their own villa or at a large and luxurious rented location. It has a far more open guest list than a feast, or may even be an "open to all" event (if the latter, the Watch and Watchful Order will send out-of-uniform peace-keepers to bolster the hired security the hosts inevitably lay on). Revels may have dancing with music, and may have hired orators or actors or tumblers (acrobats), but are usually dominated by standing and chatting while servants (of the hosts' household, augmented by many hired servants; you'll see a glimpse of this in the forthcoming novel Elaine and I wrote) make the rounds with endless platters of food and drink. Guests are always "announced" by senior servants as they enter the venue (through a doorguard, to keep out gangs of street youths or thugs bent on thievery or pranks).

A few revels and feasts have costumes, or masks - - usually "doffed at deepnight" (taken off at midnight) - - and some of these even have 'themes' (costumes must all be piratical, or as a Tashlutan harem is imagined by Waterdhavians to be). Waterdeep has a long and colorful history of debauched celebrations, with wealthy families occasionally trying to outdo each other, and they serve as entertainments for the entire city (get injured or very drunk at a revel, and show up late for work the next day, and your employer may well be amused or even proud at your state - - provided you tell him and any guests all about what happened at the revel, over and over, until every questioner's curiosity has been satisfied).

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So saith Ed.
I hope that helps!
love,
THO

On June 14, 2005 THO said: DDH, Ed wrote a little short story describing their meeting (and El taking Lhaeo on) years ago. I've read it, and so have most of the Knights, but it remains unpublished (and no, isn't in "Best of Eddie"). I'll forward your query to him, as a goad to remind him to try to get it published (DRAGON? WotC website? In another Best of Eddie collection?). As far as I know, published Realmslore is silent on the topic of exactly how El and Lhaeo met and their lives together began. Can any learned scribes here point us at specific published references?

And I can confirm that no, Noumea ISN'T the "second Lhaeo."

love to all,
THO

June 15, 2005: Hello, all. Ed responds to Karth's queries: "What is the ground level, outside diameter of the guard towers in the city wall of Marsember?... How thick are the walls? Any ideas about the appearance of parapets and crenellation on towers and walls? Do the towers in the Gate House areas (Western Gate and Naval Harbor) differ?"

Ed spoke at such length that I had to split this to avoid the post-length limits. Here he begins: Hi, Karth. The best map of Marsember is now the one on page 37 of DUNGEON 113, although it still doesn't show the webwork of internal barge-canal, which are seldom more than sixteen feet wide (and are usually closer to twelve).

The ground level outside diameter of all Marsember "line towers" (which is the Heartland term for wall waytowers that don't sport unusual sizes or features, compared to their fellows) is ninety feet. Scaling from them may make some of the city buildings seem rather large, but remember that Marsember is riddled with warehouses (and not just near the docks).

The city walls themselves are forty-five feet thick, and are solid (blocks of fitted stone, right through) except for drain chutes (see below) and long, narrow inner passages linking all of the towers (running along inside the wall at street level).

These passages open only into the towers, which each have up-a-few-steps-from-street-level entry doors on their city sides (the passages themselves have no direct connection to the outside). The passages have floors of alternating solid, fixed stone slabs and stone slabs with hand-holes that can be lifted to reveal a long row of storage-niches for weapons, tar-sealed barrels of water, and food (notably cheese and fish, wrapped, surrounded by oil, and packed in pitch-sealed hand-kegs). The Purple Dragons must keep a month's-worth of food for their city garrison on hand at all times, and this must be at least doubled the moment winter "ices in" the port. Food-kegs are regularly "rotated in and out" for freshness.

The walls are sixty feet high, and raised (on an earthen bank that overlies their flaring-out, buried stone foundations) an additional dozen to twenty feet from the surrounding mainland fields (which are kept clear of all underbrush and settlement; caravans may camp and muster in them, under direction from the Purple Dragon garrison). (Note that the city of Marsember itself slopes up almost twenty feet from the waterfront to the base of the city wall.)

Each stretch of city wall is topped by a wall-walk, flanked by a crenelated wall on both inner and outer sides, with the merlons standing seven feet above the flagstone floor of the central wall-walk, and the embrasures between the merlons rising three feet above the wall-walk floor on the city side, and four feet on the mainland side. Drains every eighty feet or so along the wall empty through steep concrete-lined chutes (yes, Heartlanders in Faerûn know how to make a sort of concrete) to outflow ports sixteen feet below the wall-walk floor. All such chutes have cap-stones that a defending force can fit into place over them, and wedge in place with stone wedges (stone and wooden wedges are placed ready on the city-merlon side of each drain). The crenellated battlements are flush with the wall-faces, not projecting out.

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Wall-duty is always cold and damp, often swept by fierce winds. In winter, it can be a slick and deadly ice-slide, too - - and Purple Dragons sport 'fang-plates' (of metal studded with traction-points) on their boots, knees, and elbows.

The internal 'harbour arm' of wall, separating the naval base from the city proper, is in all respects identical to the outside wall.

So saith Ed.

I'll post the second half of his reply tomorrow. It's amazing to think he can visualize all of this stuff on demand. He'd have made a great city planner.

love to all,

THO

June 16, 2005: Hello again, all. Herewith, the second half of Ed's reply to Karth:

All line-towers are ninety feet in diameter and eighty feet high, with crenellated battlements of six-foot-high merlons and four-foot-high crenellations around their 'skyposts.' The skyposts are reached up stone-lid-capped ladder-shafts from the wall-walk passages immediately below, where each wall-walk pierces the line-tower (and from which circular stone stairs descend through each tower). The entry arches of each wall-walk, into a tower, are guarded by chained-shut iron-bar-grid doors, hinged on the mainland side. So each line-tower overlooks adjacent runs of wall.

Line-towers have only a single window each: a large one (not an arrow-slit, but wide enough to allow a ballista or crew of bowmen inside to have a wide field of fire) on the city side, a floor below the wall-walk (about ten feet below its "floor").

Only three towers of Marsember's perimeter defenses are physically different from their fellows:

1. The northern-side one of Dragonmarch Gate (a.k.a. Harbor Gate, that allows Calathanter Street to link the naval base with the city, when the gates are open; the other gate in the harbour arm wall, that admits Gelguld Lane to meet with the Dockmarch, is known as Stormhelm Gate, the Littlegate, or Drunken Sailors' Gate), 2. The tower next to Tower 1, that links the 'harbour arm' to the main wall, and 3. The central guardtower of the western gate (the Gate of the Dragon, or the Western Gate), that stands immediately west of The Roaring Griffon inn and tavern, with Calathanter Street passing it on the north side and Fendrol's Way passing it on the south side.

Tower 1 is formally called the Oldcastle Tower, but is more commonly known to all as "Old Sartha," after a long-dead harridan of a highcoin lass from the days when no families were allowed in the naval base, whose charms conquered everyone, and who drifted into giving orders more firmly and often than the most senior officers; legend credits her with seducing the king of the day, and becoming his 'eyes and ears' in Marsember. It's a hundred and ten feet in diameter and a hundred feet tall, and is studded with many windows on both city and naval base sides, its internal levels being the daily living quarters of the wives and children of Blue Dragons and Purple Dragons stationed in Marsember. Its cellars and skypost (topmost battlements) are off limits to them, and guards are stationed at access points to enforce this.

Tower 2 is called the Jaws (because its lower chambers used to contain a notorious torture device by that name, that locals believed some criminals were gloatingly slain in). Its rooms are officers' quarters (having many windows looking out over the city or the naval base), and (in local parlance) it's the only 'not-round' tower of Marsember's defenses, lacking its northwesternmost arc due to the placing of the city walls, but is a hundred feet tall. Its skypost is surmounted with both a signal beacon that when lit can be seen in Suzail (or so local belief has it), and a heavy mangonel that can be easily turned and aimed toward sea, city, or mainland.

Tower 3 is called the Westwatch. It's ninety feet in diameter and a hundred and ten feet tall, soaring above the flanking towers of the Gate of the Dragon, and (like the Jaws) its skypost is surmounted with both a signal beacon that when lit can be seen in Suzail (or so local belief has it), and TWO heavy mangonels that can be easily turned and aimed toward sea, city, or mainland.

(Scribes bewildered by these street and feature names should jaunt over to Page 2 of the Chamber of Sages, and select Pages 46 and 47 of the 2004 Questions for Eddie thread.)

All city gates, by the way, have (usually a foot-deep in water, or more) passages linking their flanking towers, under the cobbles the wagons rumble over. These have side-slide portcullis

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gates, normally chained shut, to prevent anyone digging down from easily gaining access to the towers and thus the entire network of 'inside the walls' area.

Hope this helps, Karth!

So saith Ed.

Whew. Talk about definitive!

love to all,

THO

On June 16, 2005 THO said: Correct, Faraer. Folk in the Realms speak of "the Realms" but never of "the Forgotten Realms," which is indeed our real-world term. Confirmed by Ed, who's frantically writing some VERY major Realmslore at the moment, for official WotC publication sometime in the future (NDA, so no one ask, please).

love,

THO

June 17, 2005: Hi again, fellow scribes. Ed answers everything, even queries about flicking forked dragon tongues (no, not the brothxxx ahem, festhall technique, I refer to the "real thing"), and here's the proof:

Hi, Proc. I'd say Erik Scott de Bie is quite correct: some dragons do have forked tongues, and some don't. Some may show them from time to time while 'tasting the air' as snakes do, and most don't. Myself, I've always pictured all chromatic dragons as having forked tongues (blues even displaying rigidly-aimed tongues when they spit lightning), but using those huge nostrils (we do have several D&D fictional instances of dragons sniffing - - and even if they're doing it to express emotion, it's not a sort of expression that would have developed if they lacked the means to audibly sniff, and betimes sniffed for purely biological reasons) to smell with, using their tongues for speech, taste, probing, and sucking (when eating something that has a lot of tasty blood or juices). As with humans, taste and smell are related (have a severe head cold, and food loses a lot of its taste), so the extended, flicking tongue could be used to enhance smell (or even to smell when the nostrils are blocked or overwhelmed, i.e. underwater). However, I'd say this is safe-surroundings behaviour only - - so, no, they don't flick their tongues at advancing, sword-waving, armor-clanking adventurers.

To cover all variable instances, consider this: dragons tend to live much longer than humans and to be (if sometimes fatally vain, and on occasion senile or weary of life) generally more intelligent than the great majority of humans. Humans exhibit a huge variety of behaviours (using essentially identical noses or ears to experience societies that may be very noisy and dominated by throbbing music, or stealthy-quiet, and steeped in widespread use of scented smokes and spices or avoiding such olfactory chaos) when it comes to using their various appendages and organs; why shouldn't dragons?

So saith Ed.

Deftly marching along one tightrope after another...

love to all,

THO

June 18, 2005: Hi, fellow scribes. I bring you Ed's reply to Thaingrim's request: "I'd like to know how they [the UNDERDARK drow prestige classes, especially the arachnomancer and drow judicator] are regarded in drow society (especially Menzoberranzan)."

Ed says:

The root answer must always be 'however you want them to be, in your campaign.' The drow are an intelligent, violent race, in which social and religious changes (turmoil) have been almost constant since we gamers have first been introduced to them, and it's up to you if Menzoberranzan still exists in your campaign, what conditions and social order prevail in that city, if the events of the War of the Spider-Queen have happened or not, and so on. So it's really up to you.

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It's my opinion that in Menzoberranzan specifically, the priestesses will be very jealous of any competitors, especially male drow - - so the arachnomancers who possess any power (both high character class levels and influence) in the City of Spiders will be females firmly attached to a House, such as Baenrae. I say again: specifics vary with your campaign (House Baenrae may not even exist any longer, in 'your' Realms). "Independent" arachnomancers, especially males or non-drow, will have to be able to show firm and visible signs of Lolth's personal favour to escape attack, or achieve cooperation or any measure of obedience.

I'd say that neither cavelords nor deep diviners would be welcome in Menzo (cavelords could "come in and report" to various Houses, but deep diviners would be shunned as "not of Lolth" and probably slain or chased out). Shadowcrafters would also be mistrusted and attacked or driven away, though a shadowcrafter wanting to keep their membership in this prestige class secret could manage it for a long time, if careful. Drow can't be illithid body tamers, inquisitors of the Drowning Goddess, or sea mother whips, and are highly unlikely to become Imaskari vengeance takers, prime Underdark guides, vermin keepers, or Yathchol webriders (even if they did, they would be unwelcome - - hunted down when their professions or allegiances became known - - in Menzo).

Which leaves drow judicators. I'd say they'd be feared and hated, and would survive for long only when firmly attached to a senior priestess of Lolth, herself of one of the more powerful Houses in Menzo. In other words, the drow judicator would be one of the close personal servants of the priestess and have to exercise extreme care whenever physically away from her, following her orders strictly and carrying evidence of his service (and her orders) when on missions, to avoid being slaughtered out of hand. Unless, of course, he too can display evidence of being a personal favourite of Lolth, so that harming or obstructing him will be seen as angering Lolth. In short, it would not be a role attractive to most adventurer-types, nor one with much job (or life!) security. Being sent away from the city on long Underdark missions without a priestess in command would be a relief to most drow judicators.

Again, you could have other drow cities in your campaign where drow judicators rule, and priestesses have been exterminated, are subservient, or are even captured from other drow communities, caged, and sacrificed to Lolth or transformed into judicator-controlled monsters (a version of driders, perhaps). The important principle is that drow society is a constant struggle for dominance, and that nothing is absolute, unchanging, or very comfortable for anyone involved.

Er, have fun! :}

So saith Ed.

Helping Realms campaigns every day.

love to all,

THO

June 19, 2005: Hello, all. Ed of the Greenwood here tackles AlaLuin's spellfire-related questions: "1. A spellfire character dies, and is reincarnated into a different body. Will the new body have the spellfire ability?" and "2. A dracolich dies, its soul transfers back to its phylactery. Now, the dracolich's soul is unable to return to its own body and takes over the closest reptilian body. The closest body it has available is a lizardman (is this possible?) that happened to have the spellfire ability. Will it then grow into a dracolich with spellfire?"

Whew. Glad this is Ed's platter of queries, not mine! He replies:

To question 1: Not necessarily. The ability to wield spellfire is a rare, not-fully-understood mental and physical ability (both mental and physical aspects must 'work' for spellfire to manifest) to access raw energy from the Weave (the same energy called forth in hopefully-predictable, reproducible ways by spells). So one can inherit the brain structure (certain minimum number and arrangement of brain cells, I suppose) and physical capacity to 'handle' spellfire without body cells breaking down ("burning up") as the energy flows through them - - and be able to wield spellfire. Inherit one or the other, or both but in the wrong arrangement or insufficient 'amounts,' and you aren't a spellfire wielder - - but CAN pass on these traits to your offspring, where they will

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probably, one or (more often) several generations down the line, combine correctly again to produce someone else who can wield spellfire.
That's why, in 3e game terms, spellfire-wielding is an 'oddball' supernatural ability (a supernatural ability that behaves or must be treated differently than other supernatural abilities, in many circumstances).

The reincarnation aspect makes the mental trait survive death, to enter the new body. That body, as a reincarnation, is more likely to have the physical trait than a strange, third-party body possessed or shared by the reincarnated mind, but then again is unlikely to be of the necessary nature and capacity if it's not of the same race as the spellfire wielder formerly was (or in any event, human, elven, or human or elven half-breed). I'd say more often than not, the reincarnated spellfire-wielder would NOT have the ability to manifest spellfire (though they could absorb it and wield it, if it was hurled at them) initially, but be able to slowly influence their new body (if not 'too far' genetically from their former one), to over a period of years slowly reach a state of being able to wield spellfire again (DM to adjudicate just how effectively).

2. This one's much easier: no lizard folk have ever been known to have the ability to wield spellfire. Yours could always be the first, of course, but it's likely the genetics are too different to allow for the necessary physical aspect of handling spellfire.

In any event, a lizard folk body can only grow into a larger lizard folk with the knowledge, magic, and some of the skill abilities of the dracolich: it can't "grow" into a skeletal dragon of any sort, and in fact will have a difficult time surviving at all, as the unlife clinging to its soul wars with the life and vitality of its new host body.

No dracolich can be 'given' the ability of wielding spellfire, or achieve or manifest it after attaining lichdom. The living dragon must have possessed it, in active, practised form, before becoming a lich (and would be very likely to lose it during the process of embracing undeath, even if Mystra or Azuth didn't choose to take it away - - and they very rarely allow dragons, due to their characters [hoarding rather than sharing magic, rapacious or devouring when they do mix with other species] to wield spellfire in the first place). Undeath and the flows of spellfire energy don't mix well.

So saith Ed.

I see some fascinating roleplaying possibilities with the first answer, and not much of a chance of a spellfire-filled future with the second. And yes, AlacLuin, I echo Melfius in saying I feel SO sorry for your players.

love,
THO

June 20, 2005: Hello, all. Sage, you're not forgotten, believe me! If you could see Ed's workload right now, even knowing his usual piled-high platter, you'd blink in utter disbelief! I kid you not. AlacLuin, you're very welcome (saith Ed as well as me).

Fellow scribes, Ed now reaches back to May of 2004, to answer Gerath Hoan ("What background information could you provide for us on Thaalim Torchtower and his Tun-land bandits?"), and continues on to reply to Beowulf's topic-related November 2004 queries, re: "... the relationship between Cormyr and the Tunlands. I was told that, while Cormyr officially claims the Tunlands as its own, this is done only to keep foreign powers from expanding into that area and that the Crown exercises little formal authority. Mostly, the Tunlands, along with the Farsea Marsh, Stonelands, etc. are just a headache.

It seems to me that the Crown's stance toward the Tunlanders has always been, "we're not going to help you, no matter your problems, and we're going to make sure that no one else does either, including yourself," i.e. no Tunnish kingdom.

And I'm not talking "day-in-day-out" problems of living in the Tunlands. I know that the Lich-Queen was primarily a Sunset Vale affair, or at least was presented that way, but the Tunland Vale was right there too.

When Cormyr failed to intervene, this left the door open for the Zhents to move in and become heroes in the Tunlanders. They have since probably received training, intel. and weapons from the Zhents, who have directed them to raid Cormyr's true western border.

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With that the Crown at last acknowledged the existence of the Tunlanders, but by sending out counter-raiders. This led to the death of Thaalim Torchtower's youngest son, and an all out war with the Tunlanders... which the Tunlanders undoubtedly got the worst of.

I believe the year for that was '65/'66 according to the old FRCS.

In the Zhentil Keep boxed set we learn that, amongst the Tunlar barbarians, long since driven by the Cormyrean Crown into the embrace of the Zhentarim, there is one group called the Mir, who were betrayed by the Zhents, and now raid both Zhentarim and Cormyrean caravans.

I want to know more of the Tunlanders... I'm interested in their relationship with "civilized" folk.

When did Cormyr first peek to their lands? Was there early conflict? Wars? Were they left alone, and vice versa until the Lich-queen? The Zhents?

Did a rogue Purple Dragon, one with a conscience, teach the Mir their horseman skills?

What about relations between the Mir and the other Tunlar? The Mir and the Marsh Drovers?

Whats going on in the Tunlands now that Azoun the Umpteenth has been reincarnated as a puppling, and the kingdom is nursing its wounds?"

Ed speaks:

Tunland is a largely-wild region between mountain ranges that contains some gently-rolling grassy foothills, a lot of boggy grassland plains, and large marshes. It's well-watered, but has few trees (in elder days, Tun legends say, because dragonfires repeatedly burned them away, and in later years because so many grazing animals devour the rising seedlings, and because so many sorts of trees die if "drowned" by standing water). There are many mists in Tunland, and the storms that sweep across it tend to be fierce, with driving rain (or sleet or heavy wet snow in winter).

These days, Tunland is home to the Tunlar: six or seven small, nomadic horseriding human tribes (there were once many more, smaller tribes, each only one to three families in size, but wars and monsters and diseases have taken tolls, down the passing years). The horses are native to the plains (or at least brought there so long ago that no reliable history tells of their arrival), and these nomads, who largely fight [each other] and hunt with javelins, slings, clubs, and bows [though they use belt knives and some tribes use bolas] also arrived so long ago that "no one knows" how they came to be there.

No one taught them to ride but themselves (apparently), and they have traditionally attacked all strangers to venture into Tunland (which is why the traditional caravan routes skirt Tunland, passing south of the Dead Ones, a few strange standing stones that the Tunlar consider "cursed," and to be avoided). They seldom venture east into Cormyr, fearing both the predators of the mountains and the magic of the War Wizards, but often raid passing caravans, when such can be reached well away from the Dead Ones.

So saith Ed.

To avoid triggering the "too-long post" wall, I've split his reply into three, and will post the second part tomorrow.

love to all,

THO

June 21, 2005: Hello, again, scribes. Herewith, Part Two of Ed's Tunland replies:

Cormyr has traditionally thought of its dryland borders as "dangerous mountain country" and kept to the verdant lands within them, raiding the Stonelands only in attempts to subdue the monsters and outlaws there to cut down on them raiding into Cormyr proper. The Forest Kingdom hasn't yet ever become so crowded (there are always wars to thin the ranks of its populace) as to need to "spill over" into neighbouring lands. If it does, Tunland is the most practical place to expand into (anchored by new settlements marching all around the Lake of Dragons coast). Right now, however, Cormyr's military commanders, ruling family, and War Wizards have no interest in doing so - - nor do they see any near-future need arising to make them try.

Any Cormyrean prospectors or would-be homesteaders looking to move into Tunland are forbidden on the grounds of "fierce resident barbarians" and fell, body- and mind-twisting magics that lurk and dance - - along with deadly undead - - among the bug-ridden marshes, hovering over "cursed ruins" of "fallen kingdoms." (Most of these tales are pure fictions or wild

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embellishments. Torchtower's bandit kingdom is one of them; the truth is that two tribes ride with him because of what he can do in caravan raids; they moment they see weakness in his brigand band, they'll turn on him.)

So aside from "farwatch" patrols along the verges of the Tun plains, to bring farscrying War Wizards close enough to 'look' all over Tunland and make sure no armies are assembling, invaders are sneaking in and massing, and no huge and terrible monsters like dragons are taking up residence, Cormyr has largely left Tunland alone. The fierce nature of the Tunlanders makes the area a useful shield against invasions from the west, and Cormyr has no interest in discarding such a useful bulwark or picking any fights with folk who will fight to the death because they're defending their home; most Purple Dragons have no taste for invading strange lands, but they understand all too well defending your own home and community.

Cormyr would probably move to smash any Tunlar who seemed to somehow be creating a kingdom in the so-called "civilized" mode (with castles, roads, a standing army, and so on), but they'll otherwise leave the Tunlanders in peace to dwell in "their own land," even if a Tun tribal leader succeeds in welding all the tribes together under himself, and creating a de facto kingdom. So they're not preventing a Tunnish kingdom, Beowulf, just keeping an eye on things to make sure a mini-Cormyr doesn't get built next door while Cormyrean backs are turned (as they nervously eye a far more real threat: Sembia, and its thirst for expansion). If a Lich-Queen or other problem arises, Cormyr will do no more than watch until the situation seems likely to become an eventual danger to Cormyr itself. Otherwise, "Tunland is Tunland, and the Tunlar are welcome to it." Foreign rulers (and adventurers seeking to found their own kingdoms) are sternly told (by the Crown of Cormyr) that Tunland is Cormyrean territory, and any intrusion there will be viewed as an invasion of Cormyr - - but a visitor will look in vain for signs of Cormyrean habitation or sovereignty there.

This left the door open for the Zhents (operating largely out of Darkhold) to move in, using magic to blast Tunlar who defied them and spells to control the minds of some important Tunlar. Mindful of the War Wizards scrutiny, the Zhents acted with more subtlety than usual, and managed to control a few Tun tribes. Beowulf, be mindful of Zhent propaganda: the Zhents are far less loved by the Tunlar than the Cormyreans are, because the latter are "metal-shelled men who hide behind their mountains" whereas the Zhents are "those robed demons sent to claw our MINDS!" No Zhents are "heroes" to any Tunlar. Some Zhents are seen as "folk seeking to use us, so we will use them even as we serve them - - and bide our time to smite them down, and free our land of them." The Zhent-controlled tribes have largely been wiped out by rival Tunlar, though the one that remains (the Drulla) have become a strong fighting-force, aided by Zhent magelings in battle, and equipped with Zhent weapons and trained in more sophisticated tactics than the usual "rider harder than the foe" Tunlar fighting-style.

Yes, the Zhents are behind a lot of successful Tunlar caravan raids and a few "testing the vigilance" forays into Cormyr, but the Zhents have largely survived in Tunland because they've been able to hide behind Thaalim Torchtower (whom they don't control, and who the War Wizard watchers are concentrating on) and thus far largely escape Cormyrean notice.

So saith Ed.

Part Three on the morrow!

P.S. Ed tells me he'll be "on view" at the WotC booth at ALA in Chicago on Sunday June 26th, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. (but with a lunch gap somewhere in there).

love to all,

THO

June 22, 2005: Hi again, all. Ah, some juicy questions to send Ed's way (remember that he'll probably fall silent for a bit, jaunting down to Chicago for WotC). Here's the third half of Ed's Tunland reply:

Tun tribes have always been hostile towards each other (except in certain traditional annual parleys), from skirmishes to "bride-stealing" raids, though all-out wars have been few because the Tunlar believe the gods curse those who "spill too much blood between rains."

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All Tunlar now shun the Mir, considering them "wild-heads who attack all on sight - - we can no longer share this land with them." These days, all Tunlar skirmish with each other constantly (success in such frays is one of the ways their young males prove themselves as competent warriors of the tribe), but do so very half-heartedly, because they can all see a common threat... and the Tunlar have always united against outland invaders (right now, the Zhents).

The Zhents are trying to push the Tunlar into a war, in which (they hope) the Drulla will be the only Tunlar left standing, but Thaalim Torchtower can see very well what they're up to, and is trying to convince all Tunlar he meets what the Zhents are up to - - thus far successfully.

The Tunlar see Torchtower and his ragtag band of outlander outlaws and brigands as the other major group of outlander invaders, but they respect Torchtower as someone who rides like them, hunts like them, and lives like them, rather than using "disgusting magic" to lord it over them. (Torchtower knows this, and keeps the very minor magic items in his band well-hidden, and to be used only in dire emergencies; he fears not only the Tunlar reaction, but some War Wizard being able to convince Vangey [who as far as he knows, is still in true control of the Florest Kingdom] that with magic, Torchtower is such a threat that all the spells Cormyr can muster should be hurled down on their heads, as they're hunted to extinction.)

The Tunlar don't think they're being "kept down" or prevented from rising to kingdom-hood by anyone: as far as they're concerned, they're living quite happily in their own land, except for these invaders (the Zhents) who "spread like a stain" and must be eradicated - - but handled carefully because of their "demon magic."

The Tunlar (including the Mir) traditionally despise the Marsh Drovers but largely leave them alone - - because when winters are really harsh or drought strikes, the Tunlar need the food the Marsh Drovers can provide, and are smart enough to know that if they slaughter the Drovers or try to enslave them, they are cutting off that food source. The rest of the time, the Marsh Drovers don't bother them or compete with them, and so can readily be left alone without cost.

Far from ruling a "bandit kingdom," Thaalim Torchtower commands about eighty outlaws and brigands, about sixty of whom are good mounted fighters (the others largely keep to various cave-lairs where they can readily fight off attacking Tunlar with crossbows). Torchtower is known as "the Outlander" to most Tunlar - - and if the Zhents are ever eradicated, the surviving Tunlar will turn on Torchtower en masse, and fight to the death to be rid of him.

All of which should show you quite clearly why Cormyr keeps its boots (if not its prying nose) out of Tunland.

So saith Ed.

Makes perfect sense to me. Ed didn't mention it, but part of his delay in replying was to try to make sure he didn't lay down lore here that hampered or contradicted any upcoming Realms novels or short stories involving Torchtower or Tunland. He hopes he's done that.

love to all,

THO

On June 22, 2005 THO said: We Knights discussed this with Ed years back, Faraer, and I believe the thinking was: the Time of Troubles was supposed to be a Ragnarok-like Big Thing (RSE, though of course that erm hadn't yet been coined), and so deaths of gods would be a good thing from a "making it impressive" standpoint, but not from a "lose the play possibilities" viewpoint. Result: lose gods that were as unimportant and peripheral as possible (Ibrandlin, et al). Fix the "confusion" of Lliira and Leira, etc.

I'm not saying this was good thinking, I'm just trying to report what Ed concluded from his discussions with various players at the time.

love,

THO

June 23, 2005: Hello, fellow FR scribes. Ed confirms what I posted above, and added that I'd better emphasize that "players" in my final line didn't mean we players in Ed's campaign, but rather all the TSR staffers "in play" (involved) in this matter at the time.

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Well corrected, lord.

Ahem.

Now, Ed of the Greenwood makes reply to RevJest (formerly known as simontrinity) about song dragons, and to the query "Why did Narnra's mother leave her all alone?"

Hi, RevJest. SiriusBlack, Garen Thal, and kuje31 have ably answered your query about song dragons (weredragons) already; the current game specifics for them are in MONSTERS OF FAERUN. As for FULL details of these creatures, I think I'll keep them under my hat for now, bearing some (hopefully, but plans are ever-shifting) very-soon-future fiction in mind.

Now, as for Narnra's mother leaving Narnra all alone (attention, all scribes reading this: SPOILER WARNING for ELMINSTER'S DAUGHTER!

SPOILER WARNING for ELMINSTER'S DAUGHTER!

I REPEAT: SPOILER WARNING for ELMINSTER'S DAUGHTER!), I don't want to Reveal All because I'm not done with Narnra or her mother yet. Please bear in mind that Narnra doesn't know what I'm revealing here. We know that in the human guise of Lady Maerjanthra of the Gems (a gemcutter and jewelry-seller), Narnra's mother (a weredragon) dwelt in Waterdeep. We know that Narnra was fathered by Elminster, the weredragon's sometime lover (who knew her true nature, but almost certainly didn't know, before the "present-time" events of ELMINSTER'S DAUGHTER, that he was the father of Narnra; obviously, [NDA], Narnra's mother, kept the truth from him-almost certainly to avoid Narnra's life being ruined [and then swiftly ended] by divers 'old foes' of Elminster, seeking to use the child as a bargaining chip to get at him, or a magical mental means of contacting or influencing him).

We glimpse Narnra's brief and fragmentary memories of the "death" of her mother. The weredragon was attacked by the spells of a human wizard, probably hired by House Artemel (but possibly by the Lathkules or even someone else Narnra never knew about), and "broken and burned" in the burnt-out ruins of her own front parlor (or so Narnra believed).

The truth is that the weredragon (not the one Krash remembers, by the way: almost no one of Waterdeep knew Narnra's mother was a weredragon, though many suspected she was a sorceress; the city is a magnet for dragons who like to live among humans, and can assume human shape to do so) wasn't slain, but was horribly wounded; the ashen skeleton found in the wreckage was that of one of her attackers. A contingency spell whisked her away, to a 'safehold' of ancient elven make that she'd discovered decades earlier (in [NDA]), where other contingencies kept her asleep for years, healing and recovering VERY slowly.

Some of the weredragon's memories were mental (her head was smashed and seared in the fighting and collapse of the flaming roof onto her), and she forgot all about Narnra and her apprentices and Elminster and much of her life in Waterdeep.

When some fragmentary memories did return, they were frustratingly incomplete, unsettling, and tinged with shame (she'd left something undone, she'd left someone alone and unhelped), and the weredragon avoided exploring them for some time, as she wandered the wilderlands, rebuilding her strength and will to live by enjoying the beauties of nature, swimming in fast-flowing, icy streams coming down through foothills, drifting (by means of spells) idly through deep woods, and finally turning to watching humans and their strivings.

She so happened to pass through the Stonelands, and come upon Cormyr, where she watched human doings as a sort of personal entertainment for some time, her memories returning but now mattering much less: she had a new place to dwell in and new entertainments. Plundering some treasures (gem and coin caches) she'd discovered in her wilderness wanderings, she took herself by magic to Sembia, outfitted herself with a grand wardrobe and hired servants and coaches, and journeyed to Marsember as "Lady Joysil Ambrur."

EL'S D finds her there some years later, remembering more and more and at the same time learning all she can of human intrigues and secrets, befriending and working with Harpers to do so. She has farscried Elminster and remembered him, she has remembered Narnra but lost all trace of her and has no idea what she now looks like (if she's even still alive), though Harpers have brought her information that MIGHT pertain to her daughter, or just to someone else of about the same age active in about the right place in Waterdeep -- and the weredragon is now a

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very different person, with her former life seemingly something that happened to "someone else." This detachment crumbles as the events of the novel unfold, but there you have it: why Narnra's mother left her to grow up and live on her own.

So saith Ed.

VERY interesting. I queried Ed about the NDA in his reply, and it specifically refers to the NAME (okay, identity) of Narnra's mother, which is even MORE interesting.

Ah, may we all be blessed to live in interesting times...

love,
THO

On June 23 THO said: Nicely done, BB.

Just one point I'd add: the number of stories with strong female characters or female leads make this a good book for female readers (old enough to be comfortable with sexual inferences - - NOT sex scenes, but blunt implications of sex). For the guys, of course, there's the usual titillation factor.

love,
THO

June 24, 2005: Hello, fellow scribes. Dargoth, game rule changes don't trump established Realmslore (some folks may tell you different, but the Realms agreement, by which you get to see the Realms at all, is firm on this), so "weredragons" it is ("song dragons" to we gamers looking in on the Realms). Ed speaks across the pond to the esteemed Faraer: Faraer, thanks very much for your core story of the Realms thread (and the links to Mike Mearls' livejournal).

Great stuff, that I wish more game company execs and designers thought about (instead of stat blocks - - in fact, if * I * were running a game company, I'd keep character stats to the "LN hm W9" 2e shorthand Jeff and I developed, with high ability scores and magic items listed: the names of prestige classes could be spelled out in full, with rulebook page citations... and put the full stat blocks on a website, for interested gamers, so they can readily be changed when game editions do).

Like "mission statements" for organizations, "core stories" should not be taken so far as to become restrictive prohibitions, but they serve as VERY valuable marketing (and product-line-focusing: not so much to restrict content, but to determine what content gets highlighted and stressed) tools.

Even more valuable than formulating a precise "core story" is the metagaming thinking involved; this way of mentally viewing a campaign setting can be very helpful to any DM.

Thanks!

So saith Ed.

Who's happily working away on [NDA], but will return with another Realmslore reply when he returns from ALA.

love to all,
THO

June 30, 2005: Lauzoril, that's great news! (About your dad enjoying the book, I mean. Of course it's also great news about ELMINSTER IN MYTH DRANNOR, but, hey, we'll celebrate that next October.)

Ed's back from Chicago, safe and sound (with a keyboard piled high with unfinished work that he's busily plowing right back into!) and he tells me that anyone who enjoyed ELMINSTER: THE MAKING OF A MAGE should watch the WotC website in July for "some things of interest." Sigh. Some men just LOVE being mysterious.

Ed promises he'll be right back on the Realmslore answer desk tomorrow, but in the meantime has a quick reply for Erik, whose forthcoming fictions he's eagerly awaiting:

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No, all of Shar's temples aren't like this. One branch of the faith tried this "style of worship" at the time of TEMPTATION (centuries ago, now), and it enjoyed brief popularity with clergy but not with worshippers, and so (largely) faded away.

Various important (and self-important) priests of all faiths try innovations from time to time, usually as a resulting of interpreting (or misinterpreting) dreams, or waking visions sent to them during prayer, from the deity (or so they believe). Some catch on, some are labelled "heresies" and earn their adherents swift punishment, and some create long-lasting schisms that spawn real change in more than one faith, or even in divine portfolios.

So, yes, it does depend on "local culture / people."

And yes, the practise of worship (precise details of rituals and even overall dogma) evolves greatly with passing time and even geographical location (this is the in-game "out" that allows DMs or Realms fiction writers to cover their own goofs or inventions in temple "dressing" or rituals, such as, just to invent one, including a chained-to-the-altar maiden in a temple of Chauntea).

And yes, we've seen repeatedly in Realms fiction and lore that the locally ranking priest can and does have a large amount of control over "local worship style" in most faiths.

In this particular case, the faith of Shar moved in two directions: more menace and manipulative control instead of pain, and more "personal pain" (priests inflicting pain on themselves and one other subordinate priest only, with the "head" priest of a religious community finding lay persons to inflict pain on him or her - - an obvious security weakness that led to the abandonment of the custom after a few high priests and priestesses were murdered by "ringers" who weren't part of the faith at all, or who were paid by an ambitious subordinate priest to do away with the head cleric.

So saith Ed.

Hope that helps, Erik. Ed will be right back on the podium, fellow scribes. Everybody bought and read "Best of Eddie" yet?

love to all,

THO

On June 30, 2005 THO said: Little-known Secret Realmslore:

SHADOWS OF DOOM was originally entitled ELMINSTER'S DOOM (which snuck into print in the quotations included in THE SEVEN SISTERS lorebook), but the title was changed because TSR's Book Department intended to "save" the title ELMINSTER'S DOOM for a future novel.

love,

THO

On June 30, 2005 THO said: I know Ed would love to do regular Current Clacks (longtime POLYHEDRON readers will recall that he even snuck a few "Clack" tidbits into EEE columns).

Sage, I understand from Ed that there's an overall wordcount length (no doubt Erik Mona, like anyone else involved with TSR, WotC, and now Paizo, is well aware that if not limited, Ed would write enough to squeeze EVERYTHING ELSE out of a given issue of DRAGON, and still want to add more!

love,

THO

On June 30, 2005 THO said: Oooh, I can answer this one!

Check out the Epic Level Handbook: Iyraclea.

One of the Secrets of the Realms not revealed for years.

Okay, she's working HUGE amounts of landscape-transforming magic, spells that build upon spells (somewhat akin to what the Phaerimm were doing to expand Anauroch). [This comes from the mouth of Ed.]

Dwarves aren't native to Faerûn, and therefore are more susceptible to certain Torilian magics.

No, we can't say with any precision yet just which ones, because there are very few long-term

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"species engineering" projects being dispassionately observed from a distance by anyone in the Realms. [Ed again.]

Put the two together: SOME dwarves swiftly mutated, thanks to the effects of magic.

[Strikes bell, bows, sits down again.]

love to all,

THO

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