

So saith Ed

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

Part 10

Apr - Jun 2006

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April 4, 2006: Hi, all. Yes, I'm back. Didja miss me?

Ed tackles Bental's question: "A general question about the Silver Marches geography. How wide is the Surbrin River downstream of Silvermoon? Is it narrow enough that a giant on one of the banks could throw a boulder and hit a barge anywhere in the river?" which he restated as: "How wide is the Surbrin River between Silvermoon and Yartar, in general? Is it narrow enough that a giant on one bank could hit a barge anywhere in the river with a boulder?"

Ed replies:

Below Silvermoon, the Surbrin is generally sixty to eighty feet wide. Ninety in a very few places, but none of the gorges one can find well upstream of Everlund. The river is cold, steadily fast-flowing, and boulder-scoured for centuries so that it now has a rock-and-pebble bottom (very few sandbars, no oxbows, back swamps, and not all that many "lazy" curves; it's flowing through hard rock and so isn't meandering all that much). So, yes, a giant could certainly hurl a boulder far enough to hit a barge anywhere in the flow (the DM would have to judge the accuracy), and there are boulders in plenty available near the banks and in the river for most of its flow. A sixty-to-seventy-foot-width will be more often encountered than other widths.

So saith Ed.

Chief Surveyor and Navigator of the Surbrin. Who will pop on another hat and return tomorrow with Realmslore on a different topic.

love to all,
THO

On April 4, 2006 THO said: Charles, this one of yours I can answer:

"You know, I always wonder what Eds original idea for what the Realms would be like in terms of sexual content and violence."

In Ed's original Realms, sex, violence, nudity, so-called sexual deviance (S&M, homosexuality, bisexuality, different family groupings than the North American Christian social 'norm'... and so on) were and are all present.

However, with the exception of the gossip social climbers (like the ladies seen talking in the early present-day chapters of CORMYR: A NOVEL) in the setting, there was no gasping at such things, no pointing and shouting with alarm.

None of the attention paid to such details, except when plots turned on them, that certain gamers seemed to give them, going on and on about Ed the lecher and nude woodchopping scenes and the like.

Ed was a little astonished at how much TSR (and many American gamers) reacted to the sex, but at the same time seemed to see nothing wrong with graphic, sadistic, and "how-to" violence. Ed was a child of the sixties, and sex was "everywhere but not talked about all that much by non-participants in a particular act or encounter, because, hey, it wasn't their business." It was a pre-AIDS world, remember.

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And the Realms wasn't, and isn't, a Christian modern-world North American setting - - or even, despite the attempts of many to portray or understand it as such, a medieveal or Renaissance historical real-world setting, with magic tacked on.

That isn't to say issues of jealousy, love gone wrong, sexual competition, moral disapproval, and other "human nature" issues didn't and don't feature in the Realms. Ed's just a lot more casual about such things than the worried-about-angry-mothers-from-Heck publishers (TSR and now WotC) have ever been able to afford to be.

I once asked Ed, in the presence of Peter Archer at GenCon, what an uncensored Ed Greenwood Realms novel would be like, by asking him to compare what he'd be aiming for to a published fantasy author, and he replied: Guy Gavriel Kay in *TIGANA* or *A SONG FOR ARBONNE*: present when necessary, used to give us insight into the characters and make them seem more real, but not dwelt upon.

It should always be remembered that Ed has been edited and toned down a lot, but also asked to "sex things up" on more than one occasion, and told "we're aiming for the twelve-year-old American male, so you can go as far as you like with violence, and give us lots of TITillation, but not much more than titillation." (yes, that's a direct quote, but I'll protect the identity of the TSR staffer who uttered it).

So there you are.

love,
THO

April 5, 2006: Why, thank you. Alaundo, don't hide that whip behind your back; use it!

Right here! And (ahh) here! And over here, too!

That's better. Purr.....

Ahem. Hello again, fellow scribes. This time Ed answers Woolly Rupert's query: "Menus in taverns. We know that some places have multiple items on the menu; there's a nice one for the Inn of the Dripping Dagger in Volo's Guide to Waterdeep. My question is, what form do these menus take? Are they actually printed, or are they painted on a big sign, or do the tavern lasses simply remember it all, or what?"

Ed replies:

It varies. Small wayside inns and taverns who are the only 'public dining' in town don't bother with menus: whatever's "On" tonight is whatever's "on," and the choices are usually so simple that the platter-maid just verbally imparts them ("What'll it be, goodsirs? The fish or the joint?" or "Full meat or the stew?") and outlines the drinkable and dessert - - the REAL "treat worth paying for" for most commoners and farmers in the Realms - - choices.

Most feasthouses and feast halls in inns and taverns located where there's 'real' competition (that is, all 'market towns' and cities; I'm distinguishing real-competition situations from locales where there's a temple that serves food only to pilgrims and night guests, an inn that serves different

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sort of fare only to guests, and a tavern that serves only sausages, cheese, and hot hardbread with lot and lots of ale to everyone who comes in the door and pays: three different food sources, but they are NOT competing with each other), and all places where food sources change often (fresh fish landed at ports, for example) chalk up their menus, typically on a board beside the bar, and another on a pillar not far inside the front door.

However, royalty, nobility, and wealthy wannabe-nobles have always regarded beautiful printed menus (often taken home as "remembrances") as a mark of "proper" or "superior" dining, and as a result all "highnose" feasting halls (what we real-worlders might call "fine dining restaurants") and inns who have haughty feastchambers (again, what we might call "fine dining restaurants") or agreements with feasthouses and dining clubs, tend to prepare handsomely calligraphic "provender bills" (both sides of one sheet of heavy paper; menus are a field in which exotic papers are the rage, not parchment). In Waterdeep, darn near every eatery in North Ward, Sea Ward, Castle Ward, and Trades Ward west and north of the City of the Dead has such printed menus. Even some of the more exclusive "upstairs clubs" in Dock Ward, frequented by young nobles, use either printed menus (done by the broadsheets printers) or handwritten calligraphic cards.

There are also a very few establishments (mainly in Calimshan and the Tashalar, but in a few places in Amn, coastal Tethyr, and the Vilhon, too) that do what we would recognize as "coated paper, multi-panel foldout menus." (The coating is wax, to keep stains from curries and sauces off the paper, and the paper is usually shield-shaped rather than rectangular.)

The old tradition around the shores of the Shining Sea (still seen in some places there, and flourishing in Var the Golden) is to have a "banner maid" - - a provocatively or grandly-dressed lass or pair of lasses who comes to a table of diners with the platter-maid for that table. The banner maid is literally wearing the menu, as a fore-and-aft stiffened fabric, close-in-to-the-body (rather than jutting out sideways much) variant of our real-world "sandwich boards." She stands and moves as diners direct, they choose, the platter-maid records the orders, and off they go to the next table (good-looking or very scantily-dressed banner maids often get called back several times throughout a meal). It's considered good fun and perfectly acceptable to "call out" the banner maid once or even several times as one eats, but NOT considered good form to dally over the initial order, or call her back multiple times immediately after making that order. Some restaurants also use their banner-maids for rowdy-diner-patrol: they have bulbs of sleep gas or liquid drugs that act as sedatives when mixed with wine or ale hidden within their boards (or, in certain Calishite establishments, even magic wands!).

So saith Ed.

A gourmet (oh, all right: glutton) of the first order.

love to all,
THO

April 6, 2006: Hi, all!

Just for the record, none of the Seven is based on me (or on any of the rest of us, including Ed).

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In March of last year, Skeptic asked: "I've read somewhere that there is a Gargauth temple somewhere under Waterdeep, where I should place it?"

Ed delayed replying to avoid conflicting with Eric Boyd's superb Waterdeep update lorebook and its web enhancements, but can now reply, thus:

Right underneath Malather's Fine Wheels and Axles (All Sizes, All Kinds), a four-storey shop - - the upper floors are a workshop and two 'warehouse' floors of stock, crammed with wheels that go right down to tiny carved wooden ones for toys and for making serving "boats" (miniature carved wooden ships loaded with bottles of condiments and sprinkle-spices, that some nobles like to push across their dining-tables to each other), and the cellar is rented out for "small storage" to individual Waterdhavians (i.e. you pay by the strongchest you put down there, in the damp) - - that stands on west-front The Way of the Dragon, four doors north of Simples Street [for those with access only to the most recent (and superb) CITY OF SPLENDORS: WATERDEEP hardcover lorebook by Eric Boyd, Simples Street is the cross-street that runs through the "bottom" (southernmost tip) of Virgin's Square] in Trades Ward.

The temple is formally known as the House of Hidden Watchfulness (faithful just call it "the House"). It's a small, simple subterranean complex of four rooms: a 'robing room' (where worshippers set aside outer clothing and carried items), that opens into an approach hall with flanking pairs of torch-brackets and braziers, which leads into the holy sanctum or main worship area (which has curtains at its entrance, a raised chancel with altar at its far end, and curtains at the back of the chancel that conceal two doors into the last room: a vestry for the priests to store offerings, temple regalia, their own robes, sacrificial materials, spare braziers and fuel, and so on).

The temple has three entrances: two worshippers know about, that reach the robing room from different directions, and a third known only to the priests, that connects with the vestry.

The east-side robing room entrance is a stair down through the NE corner of the (hollow at that point only) front wall of Malather's shop, that opens out into the floor above the shop (one of the warehouse levels; Hardro Malather [owner of the building and a LE male Chondathan human Exp2 who sometimes worships in the temple himself] lets worshippers access it for a 1 cp/person fee that is turned over to the priests to defray running costs of the temple).

The west-side robing room entrance connects with the cellar of the notorious Bowels of the Earth tavern [location T36 in the hardcover sourcebook]; specifically, a sliding wall panel in the mens' jakes in the cellar; the priests like to inform female worshippers only of this entrance, to humiliate them - - and force them to make the long, chilly, damp walk through the connecting tunnel to the robing room in the dark.

The vestry entrance runs northeast (crossing under The Way of the Dragon) to reach the second floor of a building in a very similar manner to the connection with Malather's shop. The building is Saraera's Fresh Loaves and Handpies (a bakery of buns, small round loaves, and hand-pies [we real-world moderns would say "meat pies;" most of Saraera's are stuffed with highly-spiced mashed fish that we would call "curried fish," but sometimes she buys old, strong-flavored cheese or 'past-it' sausage, which she slices into medallions and fries in oil with her own spice mixtures, and uses them for filling, instead]). The three-storey bakery is locally very popular, floods the area with pleasant baking smells every morning, and stands on the SE corner of the moot of The Way of the Dragon and Blackhorn Alley.

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Saraera lives on the upper floor, rents the middle floor out as offices to two mysterious companies: Red Anchor Importing and Elraen Investments (neither really exists; they're just fronts for the priest who owns the entire building), has her shop on the ground floor, and has her ovens and supplies in the cellar. Ilmarara Saeraera is a fat, short, wheezing, sharp-tongued and beady-black-eyed malicious little matron who takes in young lasses as her staff, slaps and whips them if they misbehave or displease her, but loyally stands up for them otherwise. She's a CE female Calishite human Exp1 who has no idea that one of her tenants is actually her landlord, too (the rent she pays is collected monthly by a hired bailiff), or about the hidden stair inside the SE corner of the bakery wall, or about the temple. She worships Loviatar, and every third day spends a morning going outside the city to a patch of stinging nettles, cutting them, stuffing them inside her clothes next to her skin so she'll feel appropriate pain, and praying all the way back to the bakery, where she disrobes, climbs into a waiting cold bath to wash away the nettles so she can bear to work again, and returns to her baking.

(I've left the clergy of this temple mysterious so DMs can insert their own NPCs tailor-matched to their campaign.)

So saith Ed.

Revealing hidden temples upon request (one at a time, ONE at a time...).

love to all,
THO

April 7, 2006: Hello again, fellow scribes. Ed makes reply to createvmind AND Lauzoril, to wit:

Ed responds to Lauzoril's snipped comments on the Finnish translation of Elminster in Myth Drannor, and his queries: "Has the exact circumstances been told or will they be told when and why Elminster stumbled into the spell trap which immobilised him for years, resulting him not being present in Myth Drannor's fall? Particularly how soon after leaving Drannor he did it?" and "How do Drow handle the waste disposal, generally?"

and to the first of createvmind's March 15th flood of questions (leaving the spell queries for later): "Rereading "Temptation of Elminster" I was curious as to whether Mystra caused his whole stasis thing so that he wouldn't have gone down trying to prevent the various events that occurred, Fall of Myth Drannor in particular. Since all it took was adventurers to stumble upon him, surely Mystra could have "guided" others to where El was as well, was this her way of keeping him safe till he could mature into the Chosen we have currently?"

Ed replies:

Lauzoril, glad to hear you and your mother liked ELMINSTER IN MYTH DRANNOR. And I'm glad the translation was "perfect," too! No, the exact circumstances haven't yet been told when and why Elminster stumbled into the spell trap - - and I'm not sure if I'll get the chance to tell them in print, or when. I can tell you and createvmind this much: Bingo!

createvmind, your speculations are EXACTLY right. It was indeed Mystra's "trap" and subterfuge; she knew he'd throw his own life away in the fighting, spilling her silver fire (forever), and didn't want that to happen. We don't yet know how soon it befell him after departing Myth Drannor

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[ahem: meaning there's an NDA regarding El and Alais], but we DO know that this is something Mystra arranged. I was WONDERING when someone would think about that and wonder why the all-powerful goddess of magic couldn't just spring Elminster by ordering and guiding one of her Chosen or the nearest wizard or sorcerer to go and free him. :}

Now, as to drow and waste disposal: "junk" wastes often just get dumped in the Underdark to attract monsters for drow to hunt and slay or for scavengers to pick up; drow bodies tend to get fed to beasts or burned to ash in Lolth-worshipping cities to eliminate evidence, or fed to spiders (sometimes while alive, and immobilized) as punishment; and kitchen scraps and excrement get fed to the right sorts of fungi, that consume them while growing more of themselves, that either (depending on the type) glow brightly as lamps for the drow, or shoot forth edible growths that the drow harvest for their dinner tables (some fungi have "blossoms" like broccoli, and some grow "caps" like mushrooms; either sort can be severed, sliced and fried with spices, or boiled to mush in stews).

So saith Ed.

Who's never felt very hungry while visiting drow cities anyway.

love to all,
THO

April 8, 2006: Hi, all. Ed tackles some more of createvmind's questions: "Does a magic user notice when a wild magic area is possibly manifesting (weave seems more concentrated, sporadic, porous, not continuously even or flowing like outside of spawning wild magic area) can they notice when a dead magic area is manifesting such as a "thinning of the weave" or do dead magic areas occur instantly from whatever previously named reasons?"

Ed replies:

Generally, no: magic users can't see or feel that a wild magic or a dead magic area is manifesting. There are certain 'homespun' spells that try to examine and make visible Weave flows, but these are VERY short-range and unreliable (it's like thrusting your head into the full glare of an overhead streetlight from about a foot away and trying to see the pattern of the joining filaments at the back of the bulb). Spellfire users, some sensitive people and sorcerers employing certain spells, CAN feel Weave flows (as tinglings or even shudders), but that doesn't mean they'll "guess right" as to the reasons for flow fluctuations (there are many), unless they already know a wild or dead magic area exists in the locale, and they're just trying to find its precise location. Both sorts of magic areas usually come into existence violently and spectacularly (that is, as a result of causes or effects that a magic user can readily see and in fact would find it very hard to ignore), but if they are already in existence, they're usually invisible and found only "the hard way" (for example, a hurled spell suddenly stops in midair, or twists into something unexpected).

So saith Ed.

Who of course created wild magic AND dead magic areas in the Realms before there was a D&D game.

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love to all,
THO

April 9, 2006: Geez, way to make a lass feel old. (Looks down.)

Yep. Once pert and proud, but pretty soon my knees'll have company...

Ahem.

Hi again, all. Kuje has been very patiently waiting for some private lore from Ed, and is going to have to wait a little longer, I'm afraid - wherefore Ed guiltily turns to answering these questions of his: "I'm curious, Ed, about make-up and other beauty products. I can't recall any references to such things in published lore, or maybe there's some in passing but, those references don't give enough details. So, where is make-up made? What cities import and or export these types of products? What kinds of make-up are there? What are they made out of? Hmmm, lets see...what else. How much do they cost? How are they sold? Are there shops/stores that sell them? Who uses them the most? I figured that nobles and other...carnal workers, shall we say?, would use them. And, anything else you might think is relevant to the topic."

Ed replies:

Faraer is right; we haven't dwelt on details of cosmetics yet. I was waiting for the great caravan and merchant book that will never come. :}

This is a very broad topic, so I'm going to restrict my reply to "fleshpaint" makeup: substances painted, smeared, or rubbed onto skin, either to cover blemishes or introduce artificial colours or both. I'm also going to restrict it to those substances used by what 2nd Edition D&D called "humans, demihumans, and humanoids," leaving out the dyes and such that, say, yuan-ti use.

There are literally thousands of "secret recipes" for making fleshpaint (also known as adratha in Calimshan and dardarra in the Vilhon, but never "blush" or "rouge" or "makeup," for that matter) in the Realms, but in general, they can all be broken down to this:

A particular mud or chalk base is gathered, dried, and pulverized into powder. To it are added powdered natural ingredients (boiled essences of bark, reptile hide, plant roots or leaves or sap, and so on) that impart both colours and scents (NOT perfumes or scents, but something to stop the mud and the next ingredient [grease] from stinking). This mixture is then mixed with grease (usually animal fat, but sometimes oils from certain crushed seeds), and the resulting glop is usually simmered over heat. Various additional colour agents and scent agents may be added and the mixture treated again in various ways; many of the most popular cosmetics are kept from separating, "going bad" (rancid), losing their hues, or turning into something that irritates or even consumes skin by applications of particular (secret) cantrips.

In general, fleshpaint making takes place in southern Tethyr, the Vilhon, Chessenta, and locations to the south of that, being most popular in rural Calimshan, Mulhorand, and Var the Golden (though the witches of Rashemen have long practiced these arts, using material brought from the east through the Great Dale). Ormpur and Sheirtalar are just two of many cities that have local fleshpaint crafters. (The reason for this geographical 'range' is that most of the best natural ingredients for colouration are found in southern climes.)

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It should be noted that all across the North, barbarian women and "old wives" who live close to the land know well temporary cosmetics (which berries can be rubbed into the skin, etc.); I'm speaking now of the making of goo in little jars (or large casks, that are emptied into little jars when they reach a market like Waterdeep or Athkatla) that can be transported great distances, stored on shop shelves, and sold to folk over a season or three.

So fleshpaint is made in thousands of rural and urban kitchens, generally but not exclusively in the south. Much of the rural stuff is sold or bartered to passing peddlers, or just used locally (sold in the village tavern or square or out of the home, or taken on muleback or sack-over-shoulder once a tenday to the market in town). The urban stuff is made in bulk, often by guilded workers (and sometimes as a daytime sideline by, to use your term, "carnal workers"), and is sold in shops, from street vendors, and at markets.

The cities that export these products are: every port and crossroads caravan trading-center in the Realms south of the places I mentioned. The cities that import them are all those same places (fleshpaint's a very "personal tastes" thing, with those who use it trying and swearing by substances made by particular people, or from a specific area, and so on), plus everywhere else in the Realms (large population centers in particular, so important ports with large local consuming populations or lots of other populations to serve, like Waterdeep, Baldur's Gate, Athkatla, and so on).

Like collectibles and fine wine, fleshpaint costs whatever the market will bear. Scent, hue, and properties (does it cover warts, scars, or other bad skin flaws? or conceal distinctive tattoos? does it match my skin? does it stay supple, or start to crack and flake, or come off onto other things I touch, if I sweat excessively while wearing it, or wear it for long periods, or rub my bare skin ardently and rhythmically against someone else's?) all affect price. Like everything else: cheaper in the market or on the street, and more expensive in a shop, particularly one that carries a larger selection. A glass "two thumbs" jar (widemouth glass jar large enough in diameter for a merchant to thrust both his thumbs into at once, and deep enough when empty for his thumbs to easily touch the bottom) will cost a minimum of 4 sp for the very worst stuff, 4 to 8 gp for most cheap, everyday stuff (so, a median price of 6 gp/jar), and good stuff: 20 or 25 gp/jar or even more. Sometimes a LOT more (this one contains flecks of gold, or the blood of this elf maiden prince so-and-so killed, or a love spell, or...) 50 gp to 75 gp.

Who buys fleshpaint? Actors, prostitutes, and anyone wanting to cover skin blemishes (male and female) or even their identity. The heaviest users are fat, aging women trying to look more attractive or exotic or both - - and of that group, the heaviest users are nobles and especially wealthy wannabe-nobles, who may have closets full of a wide selection of scents, fleshpaints, specialized lip-paints, and so on. They'll rub a foundation onto themselves, add eyeshadow and reddeners to make highlights and shadows, paint their lips and nails (with quite different things), and sometimes also paint adornments - - by which I mean: on one's cheek or under the eyes or upper breast (or around nipples) or palm, with henna or fleshpaint of a contrasting hue to the foundation, applied with a needle under the skin, or onto the skin with a shaped thin stick or wooden tool cut on an angle like a quill pen, draw a symbol or an illustration of a flower head or a staring eye or star or whatever, as a "beauty spot."

So saith Ed.

Whew. I'd say that more than covers it, Kuje.

love to all,
THO

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On April 9, 2006 THO said: Nope. D&D didn't come along until 1974, and Ed didn't encounter it until 1975.

In 1966, Ed was writing Mirt the Moneylender fantasy stories (yes, he was born in 1959, and yes, that makes him young - - but the man IS a genius, and was a child prodigy). In 1967, he mapped the Sword Coast, coined the name "Forgotten Realms," and started writing more ambitious stories, that explored his unfolding world. Which, yes, makes the Realms older than the D&D game.

Since then, Ed has written or contributed to more than 180 books and game products. Wince.

love to all,
THO

April 10, 2006: Hi, all! A mundane technical reply this time, from me to this from Dargoth: "Hooded One: Do you and Ed have Excel? (Or a means of viewing Excel Spreadsheets?)"

Sorry, no. Ed primarily works in Word (not Office) on old (pre-OS 9) Macs, and for security reasons I can't touch anything Microsoft. We can both read anything made into a .pdf in older versions of Adobe Acrobat, but not if they require Reader 6 or up.

No, we're not Luddites; I in fact customarily work in betas and proprietary applications and operating system variants that haven't yet been (or will never be) released to the public. We both deliberately prevent cross-contamination, viruses, etc. by working with Mac-only software too old and simple to permit most problems from occurring.

Ed tells me that many Word tables I send him leap off his monitor (columns of cells placing themselves to the right of his scrollable margins), and he can only read them by selecting the text and "squashing" the table into incoherence, and then trying to sort it out by context.

So whatever you were going to try to send him, Dargoth, it's probably simpler not to. Please remember our Ed is perhaps the busiest writer alive; I feel guilty enough about how much of his time answering scribes' Realmslore queries that I pass on to him is taking, already.

And to Julian Grimm, who asked "... I was wondering how close the original Undermountain boxed set was to your home Undermountain," Ed and I have recently answered this exact query, here at Candlekeep.

love to all,
THO

April 10, 2006: Ed Comes Through!

Kuje, please forward this to Purple Dragon Knight, hot off Ed's keyboard:

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Sentencing depends on PC's contrition (or lack thereof) in court. Here's the best possible outcome: guilty on three counts of Murder With Justification, and three counts of Magical Assault. Result: exile from Waterdeep for 10 years total for the first three, and damages of 2000gp payable by the PC wizard to the kin/survivors of the three dead circus folk (payable to the circus in lieu, if no kin or can't easily be found). So, 2000 times three. If the PC can't pay, forfeiture of all goods to kin (failing that: circus), plus a year of (supervised) spellcasting in service to Waterdeep (in effect, PC becomes unpaid employee/servant, does some adventuring/monster cleanup in Undermountain, and casts spells for coin, coin then turned over to kin/circus (full year, coin in excess of 2000 each is considered interest on delayed payment of court fine).

If PC behaves just right, impresses Palace official, can be parlayed into real job (rest of PCs allowed to tag along IF they behave).

Good luck!

Ed

And there you have it. More Realmslore as usual, later...

love to all,
THO

Kuje, a postscript: Ed didn't mention it, but it's obvious to me as a player in his campaign: the exile would begin after the other punishments (so after the fine payments or the year of service). And if the Palace officials Ed mentions are pleased enough with the PC wizard, the exile would just be quietly forgotten (assuming the aggrieved kin and/or the circus aren't dwelling in Waterdeep). He did just this once, with a PC from the Company of Crazy Venturers.

love,
THO

Oh, Rory, you're right, but this is rich! I handed it on to Ed, who also roared with laughter and said:

Go for it. Who knows which Black Robe is on the bench this night? Wait, I've got it: the ten years of exile is WITH THE CIRCUS. Yesss!

So saith Ed.

Giggling here, too.

love,
THO

April 11, 2006: Hi, all. This arrived in my e-inbox from Ed, so I'm turning the floor (or table, or wherever he prefers - - purr - - over to him):

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To Rowan and Faraer: well, yes, we are celebrating those anniversaries: by finally writing and releasing what should have been the very first published Realms novel, way back when. Actually, that's what I'm hoping all readers of SWORDS OF EVENINGSTAR do: pretend as they open the book that it's their first glimpse of the Realms, with what we now call the Old Gray Box promised at their local hobby store one week from now...

(ripple of harp strings)

And I was still young and slender, my hair dark, my smile bright, comely lasses flocking to me...

(twanging cacophony of breaking strings)

As the Lovely Lady Hooded would say: Ahem.

To Kuje: Sorry. Please hang in there. Things are so busy on the writing front right now that the impending visit of family at Easter and the looming, many-clawed darkness of Taxes are going to hit me unexpectedly - - even though I'm expecting them. Sigh. I want to do a proper job with what you've sent me, so I need to carve out at least two days to deal with that - - and there are three different parties who've been waiting for me to deal with THEM for far longer than you have. I need clones; WHERE ARE MY CLONES? (Send in the clones...)

Well before GenCon. Promise.

Which reminds me: Spin A Yarn needs to be written, too. Gulp.

To Dargoth: that's a good idea (plotting the relationships between the various noble houses of Waterdeep on an X and Y axis), but I'm afraid it just wouldn't work. You're oversimplifying, I'm afraid, because only a very few houses have such a strong leader that they speak and act with one voice (in Oz, despite having various autocrats as prime ministers, you never seem to get governments that always speak calmly with one unified voice, right?). Most Waterhavian noble families have a dominant matriarch or patriarch who speaks for the house and swaggers in public, but if that head of the house doesn't reach agreement in private with spouse, a dowager mom if one exists, and any number of uncles, aunts, brothers, and sisters, all of those other family members are going to "do their own thing," often spending family money or wielding family investments as part of it. It's the norm for there to be money and policy struggles behind closed doors - - and for the losers to just become more covert in their defiance of the winners. So almost NO family can be plotted neatly in one place or position on such a spreadsheet: individual family members will be scattered (e.g. a brother having a deadly feud with a man of family X, whilst his older sister is having an affair with that man's mother - - and his younger sister is having an affair with that man). It's also oversimplifying, as you did with the Cassalanter and Cragmeres, to assume that two families sharing the same fields of activity are necessarily Business Rivals. In many cases, they drew up private pacts, sometimes over a century ago, to geographically (or by specific product) divide the field between them, to co-exist rather than compete (remember: unlike our modern real world, there are no laws against such practices - - and despite the laws, such behaviour happens all the time in our modern real world). And a last kick at your idea: any such chart would be at best a snapshot of a moment in time, out of date the moment it was done.

Most of the adventuring and roleplaying fun of a Waterdeep-based campaign is the everchanging, sometimes swiftly-shifting nature of alliances, positions, viewpoints, and attitudes among the nobles and the wealthiest wannabe-noble merchant families, and you can REALLY entertain your players by having their characters groping around trying to learn who's friends with who, who's

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lying about their deals and alliances, and who's changing sides today. Nobles have a hard time keeping score, and outsiders can be utterly bewildered.

Let me paint you an example. A PC thief sneaks into noble revel, and late at night discovers the matriarch of noble house X and the patriarch of noble house Y making energetic love in the gardens. The PC is bewildered, because he had thought these two people hated each other fervently, and their families were coldly formal to each other at best. So he sneaks away, and a day later slips a truth drug into the glass of the matriarch when he catches her alone, and asks her if she and the patriarch of Y are friends - - and she honestly spits, "No. I hate the very ground he walks on! I despise Y, and house Y, and Y's little dog, too!"

The PC thief blinks at her, and says, "But - - forgive me - - you were with him in the gardens, at the Z's revel just the other night..."

And the matriarch blinks back at HIM. "Yes - - so? I hate and despise the man, but he's one of the most handsome beasts in all the city! We see each other often, and hold several joint shipping investments, as it happens. That was just rutting - - 'Tis not like I TRUST him, man!"

Now, imagine every noble house being a collection of such strong-willed, self-absorbed hedonists, who hunger more for personal freedom than they respect any authority or agreement (remember the behaviour of the nobles Elaine and I showed you in CITY OF SPLENDORS 'the novel, not the game book'), and the impracticality of such a chart should be clear.

P.S. I am not unmindful of your Thorp family request.

So saith Ed.

And as a well-scratched and bitten veteran of Waterdhavian revels (some of those nobles play rough, dear), I fervently concur. Trying to learn who was up to what really is the roleplaying heart and soul of Ed-as-DM Waterdeep campaigns.

love to all,
THO

April 12, 2006: Hi again, fellow scribes! Feanor very recently posted (as part of a much longer and more detailed question that Ed intends to properly answer later) this: "So, at what age do elves reach adulthood or, to be more specific, at what age an elf would be physically capable of becoming an adventurer?"

Ed replies:

To address (at the moment) only the second half of your question, elves are physically capable of adventuring at around age 33 or so. However, that's just like saying, "Yonder kid who's gawky and in the middle of a growth spurt and accident-prone due to clumsiness with his extremities - - banging things with his elbows because he didn't think they protruded so far, and so on - - is ready to drive this truck."

In other words, elves at age 33 are neither physically or emotionally mature. The latter is often exhibited by behaviour that more dour individuals see as "whimsically inane" or "silly" or

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"gigglingly reckless" (or "suicidal" or "dangerous" in stealth or combat situations), and the former may well mean clumsiness, a pronounced tendency to drop things, and a lack of anything close to full mature upper body strength. Immature elves tend to take far too little seriously, see far too few consequences until hit by them, and to have attention spans that make butterflies look like deep thinkers. (I am speaking in gross generalizations here, please remember.)

Yet none of this stops them from functioning as adventurers. Compared to some characters as portrayed by apparently intelligent human real-world gamers who've played in GenCon tournaments I've DMed down the years, such immature elves may even seem like stalwart veterans. :}

That DOESN'T mean they would normally want to go adventuring, or that their families would normally let them leave parental supervision to go and indulge in such suicidal activities at such ages. However, in an emergency (for example: where elves fleeing from a ruined tree-village or something of the sort attached themselves to an adventuring band), it could happen.

This would not mean that such elves would step onto the stage as adventurers with any skill at all at archery or anything else, or much worldly wisdom at all (even pertaining to elven society beyond their immediate family groupings). Nor are they necessarily ready to face the world and stay sane. Balanced reasoning, cause-and-effect perceptions, and other judgemental faculties just Aren't Yet Ready For Prime Time - - in part because the hormones inside their bodies are dedicated to physical growth at this stage in their lives, above all else (note to some of the younger scribes who may read this: despite the loose way in which "hormones" are often linked only to matters of puberty, sex, and reproduction, the term really refers to the naturally-generated substances within a living body that control ALL of its growth and processes, "turning on" and "turning off" and "regulating" various glands and organs throughout life).

In short, most elves at age 33 or so are like inquisitive, innocently-wandering children (which is why elf societies DO tend to isolate them from the wider, crueller world), who have progressed beyond incoherent crying and unstable "toddling" far enough to master speech and engage in simple acrobatics. As Steven Schend said, it's around age 50 before they're physically mature (enough to deftly and reliably control their own physical movements, and learn "motor skills" like aimed weapon use), and they're adolescents for what seems a very long time for humans (able to, for instance, engage in sex without conceiving - - although, again, please remember I'm speaking in generalizations rather than about every last specific individual).

So saith Ed.

Who will wade into the weightier "decide this for us" part of your question later, when he's polished off his taxes and at least two novels, two dozen web columns, three magazine columns, and a game product more than he has right now. (Whew!)

love to all,
THO

April 13, 2006: Hi, all. Nynshari recently posted a series of deity-related Realmslore questions, and Ed replies hereafter (Nynshari's queries interleaved in double square brackets):

Ed speaks:

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Nynshari, I hope I can be of help here. However, I'm afraid I largely disagree with what seems to be your root thesis: that Realmsian elements are modeled on the specific real-world mythic or historical elements you believe them to be.

When reading these replies, please remember that over seventy writers that I know of have "touched" the gods in significant ways, and that some of them may have taken very different approaches than I did.

My original approach to creating the Realms pantheon (complete with "placeholder" gods, awaiting what Gary Gygax was going to do with, for example, the elemental gods) can be found in issue 54 of DRAGON Magazine (or "The Dragon," as it was then). Most of my 300,000 words or so of notes on the gods, their priesthoods, and the creeds and rituals of their faiths became "base source material" for the 2nd edition sourcebooks FAITHS AND AVATARS tome and its sequel, POWERS AND PANTHEONS. Eric Boyd and Julia Martin did a lot of work giving the deities life, detail, and color, but (aside from "killing off" deities on several occasions) there have been very few wholesale changes in my original pantheon in which I wasn't involved.

[[Many of the countries in the realms resemble earth cultures either directly from history or from mythology. Was this modeling intentional or accidental regarding the following places:

Vaasa - Vikings]]

Vaasa wasn't in my original Realms; it's entirely a TSR creation, and I have no idea whether it was intentionally modeled on anything or not.

[[Netheril and Thultanthar - ancient Greece and Rome/Plato's Republic (respectfully)]]

The Netheril you saw in print differed in fine detail from my original, and Thultanthar was developed by others. So for the published Thultanthar, again I can't answer as to the intent behind its detailing.

Netheril certainly wasn't modeled on ancient real-world anything, and attempts to draw parallels between real-world places and Netheril are tenuous at best. In Netheril I intended to show the decadence of humans consumed by the desire to "master" magic, and achieve immortality or godhood (or the ability to reshape the world like gods, at a whim), and the contrast between their created worlds (not all floating cities, by the way), with altered gravity and such, and the "other" Netherese living like hardy hunters in the forests, ignored or considered beasts by the archwizards.

This doesn't resemble either "real" or mythological ancient Greece at all. Not in society, climate, history, warfare, world-beliefs, presence or absence of magic, religious beliefs or divine influence - - sorry, no correspondence at all. Imperial Rome could be said to have a similar "we're the greatest, the ultimate, and our might makes right; it's morally right to do to the rest of the world just what we want to do" attitude as Netheril, but it's important to remember that attitude only 'comes down to us' (except as fancifully amplified by Hollywood) in the fragmentarily surviving writings and proclamations of a few rulers, who were politicians attempting to justify their actions and positions. It's highly unlikely the "average" Roman citizen (or legionary) held such views, considering what various Roman plays reveal of public attitudes, and what Juvenal says in his SATIRES. That megalomaniacs or persuasive politicians want (and profess to believe they deserve to wield) power is hardly something distinctive to either Rome or Netheril - - something so universal hardly establishes a parallel.

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[[Cormyr - Imperial Britain]]

I created Cormyr to have the Sherwood Forest/Arthur and his galloping knights of the Table Round "feel," but to be a distinct kingdom with quite a different history. Imagine the fictional court of Camelot - - all the bickering knights, that is - - and see what happens if a royal line manages to hold the throne for centuries. Quite different from all of the fictional depictions of Arthur, who creates his own great kingdom, far more powerful than what existed before him - - a kingdom that either declines (through Constantine) or is swept away entirely after his death or departure, depending on which sources or versions of the Arthurian mythos one embraces most closely.

The various approaches to Arthur (the Christian king; the Celtic or Welsh king of England repelling or withstanding Germanic foreigners; the Celt holding together civilization after the departure of the Romans; the predestined king who fulfills his destiny, and so on) are all quite different from the concept of the Dragon Throne of Cormyr and the Obarskyrs who've held it. (Elves take land from dragons, arriving human settling family manages to establish a settlement, and holds it almost continuously for over a thousand years, withstanding all challenges in various ways and in the process building a strong kingdom.)

The term "Imperial Britain" of course refers to the far more recent, historical British empire (wherein the English sailed wooden ships all over the world to conquer, occupy, and exploit distant territories such as India, Canada, the colonies that later became the United States, and so on), and of course Cormyr has never had imperial ambitions. Its armies stay at home, beyond temporary occupations of pirate ports such as Teziir, patrols along its fringes (Tunland, the West Reaches, the Stonelands), and naval skirmishes with Westgate and Sembia that arise only when Cormyr is trying to keep those two rivals from cutting off access to Marsember and Suzail. So Cormyr has no correspondence whatsoever to "Imperial Britain." Sorry.

[[Mulhorand - Egypt (actually, I think this one is obvious, but I have to ask as part of the class research)]]

Correct. I wanted Mulhorand to be a land of dusky-skinned Set worshippers, because I postulated the worship of Set to have spread through the planar links from earth. When it was developed in print by other designers than me, it had become "Egyptians from our real-world Earth resettle in the Realms, and bring all their gods and worship with them," so there is direct modeling. Not by me, and it's not how I would have handled Mulhorand, but that's what other designers did, and they did it well.

[[Unther - Mesopotamia (ditto as above for Mulhorand)]]

I wanted to "echo" or "suggest" the concept of god-kings from the real-world Sumerian myths of Gilgamesh, and create a place where nagas (the game monster, drawn of course from real-world mythology) could rule or at least be venerated in cults - - and go no closer to real-world beliefs and matters than that.

Again, the Unther that was published wasn't designed by me, and it's not how I would have handled it.

Several senior TSR designers were former history teachers, and the Realms was seen by TSR as a vast tapestry that was to be the "home" for all sorts of D&D roleplaying, from Hollywood pirate movies through Viking raids and sword-and-sandal movie epics, so TSR added many real-

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world elements to the Realms - - such as Mongol hordes, an overt version of the Orient, and in one real blunder, the Dalai Lama. (No kidding.)

Again, this is NOT what I intended for the Realms.

[[Calimshan - Arabia]]

Correct. TSR had an "Arabian Adventures" sourcebook planned, and I pointed to Calimshan and said: "Turbans and veils and sand and camels, bare-bellied dancers and pointy-bearded men, slaves and gold and souks, ruled by viziers and satraps." TSR promptly did the historical thing and put in pashas and all the rest. Again, they did it very well and gave a historical 'home' to the geniekind D&D game monsters.

[[Evermeet - Atlantis]]

Nope. If you see Evermeet as Atlantis, you're completely misreading it. Evermeet is an unspoiled forest isle that the elves long ago took over and defended as their own kingdom, keeping other non-sylvan races out - - and in particular keeping humans, dwarves, and orcs out (being as said other races were, in the elven view, "despoiling and ruining" the mainland, and swamping the elves in their attempts to hold onto the forests there.)

Whatever the truth about the historical Atlantis (Thera or any of the many other candidates), the mythological Atlantis is a great, advanced (and in some sources, decadent, with its fate self-inflicted or at least deserved) human city swallowed by the sea.

Again, I don't see any connection whatsoever. Evermeet's never been human, never been a city or "advanced" in terms of wealth or settlement or structures, and has never been drowned. It's not "lost" and not a treasure-trove: it's a chunk of forest very like much of the mainland used to be, that was maintained as forest and 'gardened' by the elves to keep it vigorous and prevent erosion, blights, land-clearances, and so on. Atlantis in all of its folklore versions is a great, grand city of advanced technology (in the view of the day), not unspoiled nature at all.

[[Cormanthor - Camelot]]

I can see how someone examining Myth Drannor and Camelot could draw a parallel between them (both were great shining cities, and were lost), but I certainly didn't model one on the other, and both history and mythology are FULL of proud cities that are now lost (I can think of twenty right off the top of my head).

When you think about the two for a moment, that parallel breaks down. Camelot is a castle, and a city that develops around it, built by one human, that fades from view after his death, location now lost or disputed (i.e. no extensive ruins).

Cormanthor is a city built by many elves, and inhabited for generations before being "opened to other races" as a place for traditionally warring or at least rival races to dwell together in harmony - - a city that exists still, in recent years as an extensive ruin occupied by devils and demons, visited by a "gold rush" of adventurers when those fiends are largely eliminated, and now seen as something that could be reoccupied again.

So again, the comparison is tenuous. It looks good until you glance at history, both real and mythological, and seen just how darn many cities were lost and are longed-for in memory (of

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someone, at some time). This is, yes, a universal theme, rooted in the human dislike of change, and nostalgia ("Oh, it was golden in the old days, when fair Freedonia's towers still soared into the sky, and folk - -"). If your idea of Camelot is only the musical, wherein Arthur sings sadly "don't let it be forgot," charging the audience to Remember the Dream, then yes, Myth Drannor represented a Dream that some desire to be revived. Again, that's hardly an original concept, and I certainly wasn't thinking of Camelot when I created Myth Drannor - - I was thinking more of "backward humans are allowed into the bright, gleaming city, and allowed a brief glimpse of wonder that they fight alongside the elves to try to keep, but fail gloriously."

So saith Ed.

THO here, splitting Ed's post so as not to run into the post-limit lengths; I'll send the second half right away!

love,
THO

Hi, all. The promised second half, beginning with Nynshari's next question (in double square brackets):

[[Many of the 'hero myths' associated with the above places also resemble the hero myths in their earth counterparts. Was this modeling intentional or accidental regarding the following stories:

Vaasa - (I haven't decided on one yet)]]

Obviously not; see my answer for Vaasa, above.

[[Netheril/Thultanthar - Ioulaum (Brutus), Karsus (Julius Caesar), Telamont (Augustus Caesar, 'The philosopher king' of Plato's Republic)]]

Wow, you're REALLY stretching here. Ioulaum is a trickster "I'm cleverer than everyone else, and will foresee the peckadilloes of my fellow ambitious archwizards, and craft spells that will give me escape hatches beforehand" loner wizard. Brutus has no magic, is a scheming politician, and in the most famous accounts had a hand in murdering Caesar.

Karsus is a wizard obsessed with power, intent on joining or defeating and replacing the gods. Gods he KNOWS to be real, remember, no faith necessary. He cares very little about, and pays very little attention to, the affairs and interests of others, except as they exist as obstacles to what he wants to do. His attention is bent on personal magical power, in the end attempting to transcend mortality. Julius Caesar, if you do any extensive studying of the historical character, was a very pragmatic politician (and war leader), concerned with social power: getting to the top of the Roman Empire and staying there. Both were powerful schemers, but that's about the extent of their resemblance to each other.

Telamont as published is the work of others, so I can't say whether they intentionally modeled the character on a mythic hero or not. It doesn't look like it to me.

[[Cormyr - King Azoun (Richard the Lionheart)]]

This connection puzzles me. Do you see it because of the "Crusade" against the Tuigan Horde that TSR designers (not me) grafted onto his life story? The historical Richard is an absent-from-

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his-realm king (Azoun is almost always "at home" in Cormyr), probably homosexual (Azoun is aggressively heterosexual), both are seen in folklore as bearded crowned men good in battle (though Richard was defeated, imprisoned, and ransomed, whereas Azoun was not) - - but then, history, folklore, and modern fantasy literature (from Dunsany, Morris, Eddison, Cabell, and other writers before Tolkien) is full of bearded warrior-kings. We really don't have a consistent folk representation of Richard; from THE LION IN WINTER to his various depictions in various versions of the Robin Hood tales, Richard is "all over the place" as a hero (or not so hero) king.

I certainly never saw King Azoun IV as Richard the Lionheart, King Arthur, John F Kennedy, or any of the other real, historical, or folklore characters various commentators down the years have tried to compare him to. However, I haven't had the chance to paint as vivid a living, breathing picture of him as I wanted to - - which is why you'll see more of him in SWORDS OF EVENINGSTAR and in my current Realmslore columns on the Wizards website.

[[Unther - Gilgameam (Gilgamesh, Tiamat and Marduk)]]

Correct. Yes, deliberately modeled. See my Unther answer above.

[[Calimshan - (I haven't decided on one yet)]]

Sorry. None. See my Calimshan answer above.

[[Evermeet - (I haven't decided on one yet)]]

Sorry. None. See my Evermeet answer above.

[[Cormanthor - Shevarash (the goddesses Sekhmet and Durga) and Starbrow (King Arthur)]]

Nope. However, the characters you mention were brought to life by others, and I can't speak for their motivations or modeling, if any.

[[Some questions about deities as well. I've been told that Eric Boyd did most of the work on the deity end, and I'm going to ask him as well, but I wanted to see if you had anything to say about it. Some of the deities are intentional copies of earth deities, in that they came from earth to Faerun, while others appear to be copies but are not said to have come from earth but rather have their home cosmology as that of Toril (please excuse my terminology if it is wrong). Regarding the latter group, were they intentionally modeled or was their similarity accidental, in general, but especially regarding the following deities:

Mask/Vhaeraun/Lolth - Loki]]

Sorry, Nynshari, but no. You're stretching again. Let's look very quickly at the three "Realmsian" deities:

Mask is my creation, the god of thieves, and envisaged by me as the sidling, soft-spoken, almost meek master manipulator, good at slipping away, who regards being caught or taunting victims or openly stepping into conflict as clumsy, distasteful, and not 'his way' at all. A thief and schemer, yes.

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Vhaeraun is my creation, a deity primarily concerned with drow males returning to the surface world and succeeding there. Through murder (poison, for instance: assassins), thievery, and evil. A thief and schemer, yes.

Lolth is not my creation; she's the spider-goddess who seeks to become the sole deity of the drow (a goal she might very well achieve), who both schemes and uses brute force. She wants to be the only goddess for "her" race. I can't speak for either her creators or those who've handled her since, aside from my brief handling of her in DROW OF THE UNDERDARK and MENZOBERRANZAN.

And now let's look at Loki: the Norse trickster god. A schemer, yes - - but if you read widely in the various writings, stepping back from modern comics interpretations and the Eddas, Loki burns to do harm to the other gods and win more power and favor. (So in this he's somewhat like Lolth.) However, in many of the writings, he craves Odin's favor and/or wants to be respected and obeyed by the other deities. This is unlike Lolth; she just wants to destroy the other drow deities.

Loki delights in scheming (so in this he's like all three of the Realmsian deities you cite). However, Loki often schemes quite openly, setting the other gods at odds with each other by lies and engaging in both gloating and taunting (and in this, he and Mask could not be more un-alike, and he lacks Vhaeraun's subtlety and shows far more glee and humor than Lolth ever has). Your problem here is taking two Realmsian gods of deceit and one evil goddess who sometimes engages in deception and trying to equate them with a Norse god of deception who is THE trickster of his mythos.

In other Norse or Teutonic sources, Loki is the god of fire, or (as the son of the giant Farbauti and of Laufey, not a god at all - - though he's certainly powerful enough to slay gods, and give birth to gods (such as Hel). What IS constant in the depictions of Loki is his hatred of the gods and determination to destroy them all. In this, he is similar to Lolth (though you can hardly make a convincing case for this being modeling, as Lolth first came on the scene as the only drow deity, with no other drow deities existing to destroy except the already-vanquished "Elder Elemental God," and because I've told you her deity-destroying aims more bluntly than the published Realms canon yet has) but not at all similar to Mask (who doesn't want any deity dead, and only wants specific mortals dead who can expose his faithful; otherwise, every dead god or mortal is one less potential victim, and therefore a Bad Thing). Vhaeraun delights in evil, and won't hesitate to kill for personal gain (assassins), but seeks to avoid notice of other gods rather than taking any of them on - - and doesn't hate them.

So I don't see any strong parallels at all, and certainly no modeling (and to argue that I was "unconsciously" or "accidentally" modeling a Realms deity on anything, when the creation of a deity in an attemptedly-balanced pantheon is such a complicated process, is the very height of academic arrogance, ranking right up there with professors who tell authors that they can't possibly understand what they've written because they're only writers, and not scholars).

[[Umberlee - Poseidon/Neptune]]

Nope. Every seafaring or shore culture down through history has had gods of the sea. Most deities are seen as humans (albeit sometimes with beast-parts grafted on), so most sea-deities end up with scales, fish tails, seaweed hair, and so on.

However, you've chosen the two "classical" faces of the bearded crowned king of the sea and tried to draw a parallel between them and Umberlee, whom I created and deliberately depicted as

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the personification of human male sailors seeing the capricious, cruel sea as a bitchy female. Their histories, characters, and aims differ sharply - - so I'm sorry, but I don't see any modeling.

Poseidon is lord not just of the sea but of rivers and fountains, and (leaving aside his wife and offspring), he's only one of many Greek sea deities, such as the titan Oceanus, Pontus, Nereus (and his wife and all of HIS offspring); in short, a much different concept than I've created with Umberlee.

[[Eilistraee - Artemis]]

Nope. I was asked to create a "good drow deity" for DROW OF THE UNDERDARK, pertaining to surface-dwelling drow, and I did, deciding to depict her as nurturing mother goddess worshipped through dancing nude under the moonlight (echoing British faery traditions, but seeking to make her seem not capricious, as the faeries are depicted, but non-warlike, non-violent except when protecting "her" mortals). Through her priestesses, Eilistraee aids her faithful in hunting and swordcraft as a way of helping them to survive and flourish in a hostile surface world. She's not HERSELF depicted as any sort of a huntress; she's the force that brings a stag into the reach of hungry drow, not the slayer-by-arrows of drow foes.

She can personally be an avenger or protectress, yes (an aspect strengthened in 3rd Edition, not by me), fearsomely wielding the sword she dances with, but owes more to the bard than the huntress.

So you've turned to a classical goddess depicted as the huntress, a peerless archer whose shafts never miss (or almost never miss, depending on the tale). This puzzles me; I certainly wouldn't equate a benevolent nurturing (and fertility, though thanks to the TSR Code of Ethics you have to read between the lines to see this in DROW OF THE UNDERDARK and SILVERFALL, where I certainly wasn't very subtle about it) goddess with the Queen of the Hunt, the virgin Greek goddess of chastity.

Let's look more closely at Artemis. In her Roman derivation (Diana), it's death to a mortal man to see her nude - - but he sees her bathing; she isn't in that tradition depicted as normally racing about the forests bareskinned. (Some writers do depict all of the classical deities so, which probably has much to do with many of the real-life mortal cities of worshippers having few nudity taboos.) She's the moon goddess, also goddess of childbirth, wild life, domestic animals, and infants (children just after they are born), as well as being goddess of flocks, and of the chase.

So there are a lot of possible portfolios here that someone TRYING to draw a parallel could catch onto, to try to make their case, but none of them really fit: I created Eilistraee as worshipped under the moon because that's when she appears, NOT a moon goddess; her only connection to the moon was because drow (who had to stay in the dark to keep any power, in that edition of the D&D game) on the surface could see the moon but Underdark drow could not. Eilistraee has nothing to do with domestic animals or wild life, and her mothering is not of childbirth or the young, but of the whole race (to sustain and strengthen them in their return to the surface). Eilistraee has nothing to do with flocks or the chase, is not virginal, and has nothing to do with chastity.

Hmmm, looks like you've got the wrong gal. :}

[[Erevan Ilesere - Hermes]]

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Here you're speaking of a god not of my creation, an elf god of the D&D game put into the Realms with the rest of the elven pantheon, who is the deity of bards, revelers, rogues, sorcerers, and tricksters (fickle, changeable, a jester).

And you're trying to equate him with Hermes, the messenger and herald of the Greek gods, who is also the god of eloquence, speech, roads, protector of travellers, prudence, cunning (fraud, perjury, and theft), commerce, good luck, crops, patron and guardian of athletic contests, god of mining, treasure-diggers, sleep and dreams, and (in Arcadia) of the fertility of the soil and of animals. He invented numbers, the alphabet, astronomy, weights and measures, sacrifices (and so was the patron of sacrificial animals) and so on and on and on.

Well, they're both gods of rogues, but otherwise, they couldn't be more unlike. One delights in mischief, and promotes elves - - the other has never heard of elves, and is interested in getting his own way through cunning, not spreading mischief.

Again, I think you're really stretching.

[[For any of the above that were intentionally modeled, in terms of culture, hero myths, and deities separately, were they modeled due to:

the popularity of the culture/place/histories/deities with the public, or
because those cultures/places/histories/deities were common knowledge, or
because those cultures/places/histories/deities were obscure knowledge, or
any combination of the above?

If not any of the above, can you offer a different explanation?]]

Mulhorand: Egyptian due to the popularity of Set-worshipping with gamers at the time, including my PCs (so as to establish an ongoing conflict: PCs versus the evil cult of Set-worshippers, with no intention to include the rest of the pantheon or closely model Egyptian life; that was the doing of others).

Unther: Nothing to do with popularity; I wanted to explore what apparently immortal god-kings would DO, and what effect their rule would have, on a fantasy society.

Calimshan: Arabian because of the popularity of "exploring the exotic" culture (my version of it, that is) with my PCs; its inner workings and world-views.

[[Is there a significance to cultures/places/histories which were not chosen to be modeled, for example:

because they were not popular with the public, or
because they were too common knowledge, or
because they were too obscure knowledge, or
any combination of the above?

If not any of the above, can you offer a different explanation?]]

As I've said, Nynshari, with the three exceptions noted above, and the individual deities noted in DRAGON 54 (such as Tyr and Tyche), I wasn't trying to borrow or model real-world historical or

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mythic anything. I was creating my own fantasy world for my personal writing pleasure and DMing enjoyment, so public tastes and degree of knowledge played no part in it.

I'm sorry if I've shattered your academic work (I hope I haven't), but I'm NOT going to accept anyone, for any reason, just assuming this part of the Realm is real-world this, and that element of the Realms is real-world that, and asking why I chose to model this or copy that. I imported a few real-world deities, with explanations, I "echoed" some real-world fantasy and folk settings I wanted to write about or play in (and TSR designers and other writers went down this road much, much farther), and otherwise I tried to craft and flesh out the Realms with reference to the Realms (and what I saw as human nature, elven nature, dwarvish nature, draconic nature, and so on). It had to be self-consistent, but it didn't have to correspond to anything else (TSR's needs were, of course, different).

I'm quite willing to discuss this farther, elaborating on anything you'd care to ask, but please don't promote any thesis based on my 'obviously being influenced by this or that' - - because as you can see from my answers above, you drew the wrong lines and conclusions far more often than not.

Sorry, and thanks for the interest. I hope you can salvage something from this, really I do. (I rushed to answer your questions so as to give you time - - before the two weeks is up - - to try a different approach or hypothesis.)

So saith Ed.

Who DOES mean it, so post again on this if you'd like, Nynshari. I'm enjoying the glimpses of "why Ed made this design choice, what he intended with that deity" I'm getting.

love to all,
THO

On April 13, 2006 THO said: No, authors don't have veto power. WotC editors do. :}

"In the old days" (when TSR's published Realms began), Jeff Grubb was the "traffic cop" of the Realms, and established the "gentlemens' agreement" of asking permission to use the characters of others.

Some played by the rules, some didn't, and there arose a tradition of Books and Games departments fighting for control. I know Ed didn't know anything about Doug Niles using El or Flamsterd in FR2 Moonshaes until he bought a copy, and several Troy Denning books had character uses that were surprises. On the other hand, Ed and Jeff worked closely together when using "each other's" characters, and Bob Salvatore asked Ed about using Alustriel and the Harpells at an early GenCon, in his early Drizzt novels.

I know Ed wouldn't dream of using, say, Erevis Cale unless his creator OR Books editors asked him to.

love,
THO

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April 14, 2006: Hello again, all.

Ed's family is descending on him for Easter, so he's rushing to get some replies in, just in case his postings get interrupted by having a nine-year-old granddaughter who thinks computers were created to be her personal toys crawling all over him.

First, to Lord Rad, Ed says thus:

THANK you. I love that scene. One of my little whimsical asides, a moment of "meanwhile" off to the side of all the action and frenetic intrigue and word-fencing that dominates that novel. I love doing these, and they often get amputated by editors, but - - if not overdone - - to me they seem like the rewards of reading, the little moments of reflection and seeing things from unusual angles, eavesdropping on offbeat events (and making the night forest seem just a little more real). I'm very glad you like it.

Secondly, to David Lázaro, Ed speaks:

David, I'll reply properly to you (re. themes) the moment I have the time, but two swift notes: no, Silvermoon and the Silver Marches aren't yet out of NDA (sigh). As for the Arcane Brotherhood introducing drugs: they are conveyed to Brotherhood agents in the city, and introduced into specific food and drink consumed by particular individuals, to make them forget having ever met particular Brotherhood agents before, and forget what befell during those encounters (so they won't raise the alarm or launch attacks when said agents [not the same ones doing the cooking and pouring, of course] encounter the drug-affected individuals again.

The widespread smuggling and selling "to all" (in powdered spices, wines, and sauces, so as to affect those who consume them) is to spread the memory-loss effects randomly around the citizenry, in an attempt to "hide" specific sources of memory loss and therefore the Brotherhood's activities.

The drugs are brought into the city mixed into, yes, "legitimate cargoes" of powdered spices, wines, and sauces. The spiked stuff goes to Brotherhood agents, the unadulterated spices, wines, and sauces go to innocent vendors for resale to the citizenry.

Thirdly, to Nynshari, Ed responds:

Goodness, no, you didn't upset me, Nynshari; no apologies necessary. I just wanted to make it very clear that I wasn't deriving things directly, so that no scribe reading your questions and my responses could take it as "proof" that I borrowed X from here and Y from there.

I know all about professorial "suggestions." :) Years ago, I even had one prof who used to wink, grin, and mime bringing a lash down on our behinds when she sweetly issued her "just a suggestion - -" epistles.

One of the most fascinating aspects of building the pantheon, for me, was to have it more or less balanced between power levels and the various alignments, but in constant flux, with events "really happening" to the gods, and their power directly related to the in-Toril power and influence (not quite the same thing as numerical strength of, but related) of their worshippers. This of

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course makes tinkering with the deities a neverending, "living" part of any ongoing Realms campaign.

And lastly, Ed responds to Faraer's query: ""Hey, 'Feasthouse' median Realmsian for 'restaurant'? What's Realmsian for 'doggerel'?"

Ed speaks:

In the Realms, the most popular term for restaurant (there are local variants) is either "feast hall" or more often "feasting hall" (to avoid confusion with "festhall") or "feasthouse" in Common, but "skaethar" in Chondathan, a word that has crept into Common to serve as the 'formal' word as opposed to the everyday slang term (I suppose, to put things in Modern English terms, "skaethar" would correspond to "dining establishment" and "feasthouse" to "eatery").

And "doggerel" in the perjorative sense is either "horoloro" (pronounced "HAUR-oh-LORE-oh"), formally, or "bardspit" ("bardsquall" is bad, usually off-key or even tone-deaf, singing). Doggerel in the affectionate, "Oh, this isn't really worthy poetry, but it's catchy and witty and serves the need of the moment" sense is "bright-words" or more formally (only if it follows a rhyming scheme), "tarnrhyme" (after a long-ago bard called Tarn, who's remembered for little four-line ditties like: "Wind and rain before highsun/Will clear before the day is done/Love that presses hot and swift/Will fall away like a lover's shift").

So saith Ed, Grand Linguist of the Realms.

(I'm trying hard to resist saying most cunning...)

Ahem. (Wooly, get busy! I'm a busy woman, and that's a LOT of whipped cream. Next time don't order the family-sized dessert! And take the darned stems off the cherries next time!)

love to all,
THO

April 15, 2006: Hi again, fellow scribes. First, a quick note to The Sage, about how soon the state visits Realmslore columns may appear on the WotC website from Ed:

You're very welcome, Sage, and here's the situation: how quickly and in what order the columns appear is up to Wizards, of course, but there SHOULD be 9 columns between the end of The Lost Ship 2-parter and the first of the two State Visits duo.

So saith Ed.

Secondly: on March 30th, Jamallo Kreen asked Ed "a heap o' questions about architecture which may well have been answered previously. If so, I would appreciate being directed to those answers, please."

Well, Ed hath detected several questions in your heap that deserve his own, direct answers (in the fullness of time), but in the meantime, Jamallo, I'm going to happily refer you to Ed's many extant detailings of Realms architecture, which (outside of the Volo's Guides and other TSR/WotC

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sourcebooks, include: the recent 4-part Realms Architecture columns in Ed's "Realmslore" series on the Wizards website, plus the earlier 8-part Sembian merchant "Realmslore" columns, AND his architecture answers here at Candlekeep: in the 2004 thread (page 2 of the Chamber of Sages), page 16, page 62, and (Northkeep) p74; and in the 2005 thread, page 56. Happy reading!

And now, the Bearded One tackles this, from Lord Rad, about The Pride of the Lion: "I know that he didn't have time in his schedule to write this concluding novel to the Sembia series, but did he get as far as to have any ideas of what the novel would cover and what it would be about? I don't know if he had to pull out in the early stages before the preceeding novels had been written and therefore the overall flow not been established."

Ed replies:

The series was about half-written, as I recall. After a hilarious conference call or two involving various writers and WotC editors, Dave Gross handled the subject matter that would have been the backbone of my concluding book in his preceding novel. Here's my brief synopsis of what PRIDE would have been about:

"Thamalon is going to die, and knows it. The book will explore what it is to grow old, with failing personal abilities, and face death. What foes should be reconciled with, or taken down with oneself? What debts should be paid, what legacies established or grand last gestures made? What sort of peace can Thamalon make with various members of his own family (especially his wife and his eldest son)? We'll watch him try, with varying degrees of success; the Old Lion fighting his last fights. And then he'll die, and I want to leave every last damned reader of the book in tears as they close it."

So saith Ed.

Makes you wish he had written it, doesn't it? By the way, as someone in the book industry who has access to BookScan and some warehouse shipping sales figures, I suspect the reason Pride got cancelled was as much a function of WotC looking at sliding sales on later books in the series as it was Ed being too busy, although Ed's never so much as hinted at that.

love,
THO

April 16, 2006: Hello again, fellow scribes of the Realms. This time, Ed replies to this from Asgetrion: "I have some questions about four obscure military/Purple Dragon ranks that have been featured in your novels. Namely, Lancelord, Swordlord, Warcaptain and Boldshield (the first three in Death of the dragon and the last one in Stormlight). I have assumed that Boldshield might be a "unique" rank, and that the others are "battlefield ranks" granted when a more complex command structure (such as during a war) is needed? Am I wrong here?" (a query that was promptly seconded by Sanishiver).

Ed makes reply:

Lancelord: This title, still in current use, doesn't appear in the POWER OF FAERUN table because it doesn't 'fit' as a strict rank. It means "messenger" or "envoy" of a battlefield

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commander (of the rank of Oversword or higher, plus any royal, or any War Wizard assigned to serve with a military unit). Some real-world armies would use the term "aide-de-camp" for a lancelord. In short, it's a temporary service rank that trumps the holder's everyday rank (or lack of military rank), and puts them a shade below the rank of the person they're speaking (or running errands) for. So the Lancelord of an Oversword outranks any Constal, but is outranked by any Oversword.

Swordlord: This title, still in current use, also doesn't appear in the POWER OF FAERUN table because it doesn't 'fit' as a strict rank. "Swordlord" is a title that means "unit commander," but where it falls in the rank hierarchy varies with the size of the unit, from patrol to army. In other words, Swordlord Heldrar Aeron may be Swordlord of a small local militia patrol and be outranked by a First Sword, but Swordlord Jaeroevan Blackfeather may command a hastily-mustered (in the face of an orc horde attack) Army of the West Reaches, and be more or less equivalent to a Battlemaster.

Warcaptain: "War captains" (as two words) is a collective term for officers, really meaning "battlefield unit commanders, acting and permanent, plus their lancelords, here in this location [usually: at a battle or a meeting] at this time."

Warcaptain as a single word is the title given to any acting commander, serving because of the death or incapacity (due to wounding, disease, captivity, or magical affliction or curse) of the "real" commander. By "commander" I mean the leader of any official military unit or force (aside from patrols and other usual divisions of an army).

For example, if a large cavalry unit is assembled and dubbed the Riders of High Horn, it will be commanded by an Oversword (or higher rank) who will be known as Swordlord of the Riders of High Horn. If that Swordlord falls in battle, and his Lancelord finds himself the highest-ranking surviving officer of the Riders, the Lancelord will take the title Warcaptain (and instantly cease to be known as a Lancelord; he probably still has a "real" rank, remember), and go on leading the unit. Even if he's confirmed as the commander by other Purple Dragon commanders, it's customary for him to continue to be called "Warcaptain" until an Obarskyr officially bestows a new rank on him. Commoners, adventurers, or War Wizards who "step into the breach" and rally leaderless Dragons, give them orders, and so lead them in battle, are by tradition called Warcaptain. If they so serve with distinction, they are given (afterwards) the pay of an Oversword for the day, and either offered a position in the ranks, or knighted.

Boldshield: This title, still in current use, doesn't appear in the POWER OF FAERUN table because the other militaries compared in that table don't have an equivalent rank. A boldshield is ranked just above a Lionar, while in his or her district ONLY (and is otherwise just beneath a Lionar in the chain of command). Boldshields are wardens: officers stationed in districts or regions of the realm (usually on the frontiers) that require some military oversight but lack garrisons - - and therefore lack any nearby Purple Dragon officers. Their job is to observe events (including the arrivals and departures of "persons of interest") in their assigned territory; maintain up-to-date maps (right down to the "game trails" level) of the territory; report anything suspicious or of note to superior Purple Dragon officers elsewhere; brief (and pass on standing orders, sealed orders, and commands from on high) and act as liaison for any War Wizards and Purple Dragon units and personnel entering the territory; and act as a temporary bailiff, lawsword (police), and spokesman for Crown law in the territory, until higher-ranking or properly appointed individuals holding such duties can be summoned. They are regularly (and often: at least once a tenday, and usually twice a tenday, or more when "known trouble" is afoot) visited by lancelords, Highknights, and other Court envoys or Purple Dragon officers to receive their reports, check if they need aid or messages or items sent, and so on. There are only a dozen to sixteen

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boldshields, and they tend to be stationed in the household of local nobility (to keep an eye on said nobles, whose wealth and activities tend to be magnets for a lot of shady business in frontier locales, even if they aren't themselves disloyal to the Crown or dismissive of Crown law).

So saith Ed.

Who does have things pretty well worked out after forty years, as you can see.

love to all,
THO

April 17, 2006: Hi again, fellow scribes. Ed replies to this, from Taelohn: "... While Midnight's ascension to become (the second) Mystra is well documented, most mentions of the death of Mysteryl say that she was "reborn" or "reincarnated" as (the first) Mystra. I suppose I always just assumed that Mystra sort of "sprung into existence" as a new deity.

Does this instead imply that Mysteryl bestowed her powers onto a mortal woman, just as she sacrificed herself? Perhaps someone she had vested powers in (like a Chosen)? If so, who was (the first) Mystra in her mortal life?"

Ed speaks:

Taelohn, Rory Weston is quite correct; most of the gods of the Realms were indeed "at one time mortal & "ascended" to the position." And yes, "forgotten" gods dwindle to demigod status, and can in some cases be eliminated (killed, AND their worship wrested away/portfolios subsumed by other deities) by mortals or by other deities.

In the case of Mysteryl, she sacrificed herself, not foreseeing that she'd be reborn. She had no Chosen or preselected mortal vessel, and did not know or intend that she'd "live on." She simply did what she believed she had to do, to end a threat to the world she loved.

However, the circumstances of her passing prevented other deities from snaring her divine power, and largely prevented its dispersal, and it "fell like a dying star" to earth (or so the priests of Mystra say) to at random strike and "go into" a mindless, drooling mortal woman and infuse her with Mysteryl's divinity, so that she became Mystra. (Of course, clergy of Mystra speak of the woman being present and selected as "divine fate" and not random at all, but this is one of the Holy Mysteries of the Lady of Mysteries that only high-ranking clergy are allowed to discuss in detail; lay worshippers and non-believers won't get much more out of a priest of Mystra than this: "When Mysteryl made the ultimate and most holy sacrifice that defended Toril itself, that which was best of her fell to earth, and struck a mortal woman, and went into her, and Mysteryl was reborn as Mystra, as she was fated to do, that we may all have magic that serves us and not the howling chaos of wild magic spellstorms."

We don't know anything about the mortal woman who became Mystra other than these things: she was young, she was "mindless" (for reasons unknown; it may have been a birth defect or a later affliction), she was a poor rural unknown somewhere in the northern, western Heartlands being cared for by kin, and she was changed in looks and stature by Mysteryl's "going in" to her. I'd say more, but NDAs forbid.

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So saith Ed, Creator of All (The Realms).

love to all,
THO

April 18, 2006: Hello again, all. This time Ed happened to be at work on something that enabled him to very swiftly tackle this question, from Charles Phipps: "Ed, do the Chosen of Mystra have any tactical or military skill? Would you say they could lead armies and if so, would they lead them well?"

Ed replies:

The short, flippanant answers are yes, yes, and yes. :}

My more responsible response will begin by limiting my reply, for NDA reasons, to Elminster and the Seven Sisters (not just Khelben is "tied up" by future plans or projects), and to explain that it's hard for many Realms scribes to get a proper picture of the Seven, even if they read the published fiction and game products exhaustively, because there's so much of the early personal histories of the Chosen that we haven't had proper opportunities to present yet. I'm going to go one step farther, and drop Qilué out of this, also for NDA reasons.

Which leaves us with Elminster, Alustriel, Dove, Laeral, Alassra (The Simbul), Storm, and Syluné. All of them are servants of Mystra, and therefore can, through the Weave, consult with Mystra, Azuth, and all of Mystra's servants (and so call on nigh-countless experience). Most of them hate doing so, because it strips them of personal freedom and claws at what's left of their sanity. Oh, yes: most of them are, it must be remembered, no longer sane as most humans in the Realms would think of sanity. Moreover, increased contact with Mystra and her guidance pulls them ever-closer to her aims (the spreading of the use of magic). Those aims, by the way, are a large part of the reason why all of the Chosen seem concerned with promoting peace in the larger scale (keeping countries from going to war), even if they employ much violence on a personal level. It's why Laeral, Alassra, and Alustriel, in their various ways and styles, are currently ruling or assisting in government, and why ALL of the Chosen (even those NDA'd and thus not discussed here) have in the past either tried their hand in ruling, or acted as "powers behind thrones" to support and guide rulers they liked or wanted to see reigning. Folk who've only read Realms novels (or a subset of Realms novels) or who have only "come to the Realms" recently have often missed the references to Stornanter and other now-vanished realms and city-states ruled by various Chosen.

All of the Chosen I'm discussing here have lived for centuries (far longer than most military individuals they will work with or against), and hence have more experience than almost any mortal foe in grand strategy, propaganda and morale, long-term manipulations, supply and foraging, living through both victory and defeat, dealing with the "fog of war," and battlefield tactics. Most mortals who have contact with a Chosen on more than a few occasions pass from awe to disappointment or contempt (they're human after all, and pretty wilfull, have-their-own-way-or-else humans at that), then to wariness (they're crazy, and unsafe to be noticed by, and really powerful) to respect (they're geniuses after all).

Now, the term "genius" is one I tend to avoid, because it means something slightly different to almost every speaker who employs it. I cleave to the view that a genius is someone who can see

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things others can't (when given the same information), who can create things or arrive at conclusions or new processes or views that others can't reach (so there are superbly skilled forgers who can paint a painting or carve a relief-carving every bit as well as the genius who created the original, but couldn't "see" and thus create that original in the first place to save their lives; they are always followers). There is also a genius in being able to handle more complexities (tasks, information) than others can, and still "see how it all fits together" and strive for a goal or visualized end result rather than just reacting to crisis after crisis and "surviving." It's hardly fair to non-Chosen to label any Chosen a "genius" at magic, because their access to the Weave allows them to manage magical effects and see (and therefore learn and understand) things about magic that mortal non-Chosen can only dimly perceive or grope at mastering, reaching accomplishments by luck or unseen Mystra-servant aid or just plain dogged hard work and repeated experimentation as often as by correctly "leaping ahead to what only they can see, but in doing so perceive how to get there."

Please note that the Chosen ARE humans (yes, less than demigods), and are faltering in their faculties (though some of the Seven are still increasing their skills, particularly at rulership, and have a few centuries to go before they begin to decline as swiftly as, say, Elminster is now). They do make mistakes, and they can't personally prevail against overwhelming odds or motivate fighting forces that don't want to be motivated (they can magically overwhelm and control individuals, yes, but in the Realms turning military leaders or even rulers into your own mind-controlled robots doesn't usually translate into anything close to precise command and control of lower-ranking forces).

This sort of personal control is all that is really left to Syluné now, and she is beloved in Shadowdale but has only a "Wise Witch but dead and gone now" reputation in the northern Dales, and no public profile to speak of, elsewhere. So she can hardly inspire or lead troops, beyond "whispering in the ear" of someone ELSE who's trying to do so.

So now we're down to Elminster, Alustriel, Dove, Laeral, The Simbul, and Storm.

All of the Chosen left on our list have had Harper involvement, and thus experience in spying, manipulating, behind-the-throne intrigue, and judging military strength and deployments (in many lands, over many years). Dove is the one who's had an extensive military career (both mercenary and in the more-or-less disciplined forces of several realms), largely eschewing magic. The Simbul is the least stable and self-controlled (apt to "cut loose with spells"), and Elminster is the most experienced and wily. Alustriel, Laeral, and Storm display a marked preference for the soft word and superb acting to manipulate folk, rather than lashing out with swords and spells - - but, please note, they are thus manipulating those who DO lash out with swords and spells, and therefore commanding military forces, even if they don't put on uniforms, get on horses, and ride out into "bloody-bannered fields" to do so. However, all of the Chosen listed here have in the past done all of those things, and fought both hand-to-hand and spell-to-spell, faced down foes and slaughtered foes, and commanded military forces. So, yes, they all can "lead armies." And HAVE led armies in the past, though tactics and real-world situations change over time; we don't know if they would, but it seems likely, given how much better informed about life in the Realms they are than most mortals. The real meat of your questions is: "... would they lead them well?"

Again, the answer depends on who's doing the judging. A bored, mad, or weary-of-life commander (like all of the Chosen are, or can very easily be) can achieve both disasters and brilliant victories, exhibiting what some observers call "fearless" or "heroic" battlefield performances, and motivating troops to lay down their lives eagerly in the heat of battle. Is that "well"?

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What's kept most of the Chosen going for such long lives is their obsessive pursuit of some goals in the service of Mystra. This service and those goals hamper them in ways other mortal commanders aren't trammled (leading them to prefer peace over warfare, for instance), and may well weaken them in some military situations - - when compared to other mortal commanders.

THO has passed on to me some of the postings in the Heroes In Novels thread, and among them were some posts belittling Alustriel's military leadership because she hasn't launched a preemptive strike on Obould and his forces. This points out differing viewpoints once again: in many real-world modern-day countries such preemptive behaviour is seen as criminal lack of military discipline, clear court-martial offenses if not done with full government sanction beforehand (not wise tactics or military leadership at all) - - and a proper reading of SILVER MARCHES shows us that Alustriel (even though she may have established the confederation) really can't act militarily on her own without endangering the unity of the Marches: she will be establishing the very precedent that she's seeking to avoid, to keep Harbromm and Warcrown from doing just the same thing, and picking fights they're not militarily ready to win. She also can't act preemptively except by doing so without government sanction (in effect, "going rogue"). It might be smart tactics to clobber Obould before he can gather and consolidate his strength, but it's very bad grand strategy - - IF you can see the "bigger picture."

The very strength of the Chosen is also their weakness, to those who view military matters as "success here and now, and let others worry about tomorrow or down-the-road consequences." The Chosen can see those down-the-road consequences all too clearly in most cases, and so seek to avoid many military confrontations that will result in disaster: you can't promote the widespread public use of magic if most of your magic-using individuals are dead, and the rest are strictly controlled by military authority or church dictates.

So we'll just have to see (and continue to debate) how "well" the Chosen perform, as the great tapestry that is the Realms unfolds before us. However, if you're asking me are these Chosen I've discussed here capable of out-commanding in the field darn near every mortal leader I can see alive and on the scene in the Realms right now, the answer is a resounding YES. However, it must come with this caution attached: BUT THEY REALLY DON'T WANT TO, and may avoid doing so even when the result is disaster for a particular realm or city.

So saith Ed.

Who can see the Realms more clearly than all of the rest of us, remember. (And spare me, please, all the ignorant moans about "Elminster being Ed's favourite" or "the Chosen are all Mary Sues," because such views are simply uninformed and wrong, and wilfully ignore the fact that the entire Realms is "Ed's favourite," and he's given us thousands of characters in various shades of gray, good sides to all villains and vice versa.)

love to all,
THO

On April 18, 2006 THO said: Ed actually left out more than half a dozen Chosen (The Srinshes being one of them, yes), all for NDA reasons.

[insert diabolical laughter here]

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love,
THO

April 18, 2006: Hi, Faraer. I sent this off to Ed, and his response follows:

No, of course not. WotC authors are often asked to provide "sell copy" for book jackets, though it NEVER reaches print un-tinkered-with, but in the old TSR days, writers were rarely invited to do so. I had never seen that blurb until a copy of the book was brought to me for signing at a convention, and I certainly never wrote a word of it. No, I have never said Elminster is my "alter ego." TSR has, many times; a practice that began in GenCon pre-registration blurb booklets, describing the seminars I did in costume, acting the part of Elminster - - ALSO a practice TSR asked me to begin and carry on. When they, many years later, asked me to leave the costume at home, I happily did so. Those robes are hot. :}

To reiterate: I have never, ever said that Elminster is my alter ego or wish fulfillment character, or thought that way for one minute. I will never use any Realms characters in that manner, because doing so would ruin the whole fun of creating the world and its characters, and watching what happens and how they evolve. Just as all of the gamers who have played various PC adventurers in my Realms sessions over the years are playing roles, not themselves.

So saith Ed.

Who will return with regular Realmslore about ten hours from now, if he stays on schedule.

love,
THO

April 19, 2006: Hello again, all. This time, for reasons he states hereafter, Ed deals with this recent question from RodOdom: "Dear Ed, In the Realms you introduced a number of very long-lived characters. Besides the Chosen of Mystra, hidden here and there are mortals who've lived thousands of years, such as the survivors of Netheril. What drives these people to live on? Why haven't they succumbed to ennui?"

Ed replies:

My previous lore reply (to Charles Phipps, about the Chosen) provides some illustrations of the reasons why certain individuals (who have the magical power, or have magic "done to them," such as being put into stasis or a sleep of ages by someone else, to "last" for thousands of years) desire to continue to exist.

Most such individuals are obsessed with reaching various goals, or completing unfinished tasks. Sometimes it's prolonging and defending a kingdom, or one's own descendants, or conversely destroying a foe (or the foe's kin or organization or kingdom). Sometimes it's cheating mortality, living on as a lich or prolonging life indefinitely by some other means - - and sometimes it's perfecting some other sort of magic entirely, or founding a faith, or... any number of aims that may seem strange or puny or futile to us, but that provide a drive and reason for the existence of someone. In some cases it's trying to craft a replacement body for oneself or a dying (frozen in

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stasis, or dead and "living on" as some sort of phantom) loved one; in others, it's putting one's own descendants on a throne, or at the head of a guild, or completing some magical experiment or other. Driving, all-consuming obsession seems to be the key, and those who fulfill or lose it often fail and die swiftly, or seek to die by suicide or by plunging into a fight that's almost certain death.

So saith Ed.

Who once told me that love is the strongest force of all, and was why certain undead that my character was encountering existed.

So, with more feeling than usual:
love to all,
THO

April 20, 2006: Hi, all. This time, Ed tackles this, from Scarabeus: "In D&D the rules are pretty clear about how a wizard might learn his spells. Such was not the case for clerics, who we assumed could learn every spell available in their sphere (now spell-list 3E+). When Prayers from the Faithful came out I was quite pleased to see a new twist with the fact that a cleric must dig through sacred tomes, work his way to access them and ever wonder if one of his spell might hold a surprise (pleasant or not) for him. This point of view felt more real, more alive than the simple morning prayers where spells are always taken for granted. I used this principle, which also have the advantage of controlling what spells PC clerics might have. Looking through Prayers of the Faithful though it feels like some informations are missing about how sacred tome are used and how clerics can learn their prayers and rituals. And in the same subject I like to learn more about how you view the role of divine intermediaries (sp?) in relation the clerics (spell learning, spell granting and behavior correction). Thanks for you time, your writings are always inspiring and I need a little boost on the subject, with no specific faith in mind."

Ed replies:

When writing PRAYERS FROM THE FAITHFUL, I did not intend to make clerics follow the same "find, or create, and practice" spells that arcane spellcasters do (except for rare instances of discovering long-lost holy items and books while adventuring). Instead, I wanted to control their spell access by their behaviour (holy devotions, obedience, undertaking of missions requiring more spell "muscle," and so on).

Everyone can get first and second level spells (and orisons) "automatically," but use of more powerful prayers require that either a higher-ranking priest teaches or gives the precise wording of the prayer to you-the-cleric-character ("here's HOW to pray for that flame strike"), or that your own performance in the service of the deity attracts the attention of one of the god's servitors (divine intermediaries, who may be creatures or "spirits," seen or unseen), who gives you guidance through dream-visions or visions imparted to you in your mind during rituals or even "made manifest to all" (everyone can see them), at crucial moments or during rituals - - and in the same manner "inspires" you by giving you that same "here's HOW to pray for that flame strike" information, directly into your mind (in other words, you suddenly see how to pray for this or that magical effect, as a reward for your sufficiently attentive and faithful worship and holy service). Divine manifestations (a rosy glow for Lathander, for example) can also serve to give spiritual or literal guidance ("it's hovering above that stone: move the stone!").

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Moreover, if you displease the deity by straying from the deity's outlook, flouting holy rules, or harming the larger priesthood while pursuing your personal ambitions, your prayers may be answered by a lesser or markedly different spell from the one you prayed for, or you may be given nothing (prayers unanswered by anything except stony silence), or you may be given a penance (punishment or task) or a stern lecture (with or without the desired spells being granted).

I originally wanted to take this approach because of the many instances I encountered at GenCon and other "tournament" play of what I view as sloppy clerical roleplaying: "My priest is a fighter who can't use edged weapons, and you'd better obey me or suck up to me because I'm your only healing. I can do pretty much as I please, 'in the name of the god,' as long as my DM doesn't give me alignment grief, but I can lecture everybody else on THEIR behaviour because of my interpretation of the god's views - - and luckily this game [or this tournament round] doesn't have superior priests telling me what to do, a set creed for my religion, or the god directly and constantly telling me what to do!" (Some DMs laid on superior priests requiring services and missions pretty heavily when PCs came asking for raise deads for their fallen fellows, but that was about it.) I wanted to put into the Realms those religious creeds, those higher-ranking priests, and some degree of attention on the part of the deity (or divine servant creatures) so that the player of a cleric would have to roleplay properly. Years later, it's a task I'm still hard at work on. :}

So saith Ed.

Who HAS made playing clerics meaningful in the home Realms campaign, I must say.

love to all,
THO

April 21, 2006: Well, at least that question's BaeraubleXXX oog! Sorry.

Hi again, fellow scribes of the Realms. You know, Ed just returned from a convention that had coffee tastings, cheese tastings, beer tastings, scotch tastings, and chocolate tastings

... so I'm sure he's up for breast tastings.

So I'll offer mine (ahem, not for the first time) and see what happens...

Now, as for Realmslore, thom asked several questions back on March 10th, but Ed has plucked one of them out to answer right now (the others won't be forgotten): "... I was perusing the OGB again and I noticed that "Jelde Asturien" got his name at 3rd level, THO can you or Ed elucidate on the why of this requirement?"

Ed speaks:

Every member of the clergy of Lathander takes a new name in the service of the deity, usually at around 3rd level ("when they are ready;" i.e. it varies for each individual), to signify that Lathander has personally noticed and accepted them. In the case of Jelde, he "laid aside" his birth name of Semoor Wolftooth.

In some cases, the person uses their new name only inside the faith (when speaking to other priests, or participating in solitary prayers or temple rituals), but in most cases they use it openly,

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in place of their former name (note: it doesn't invalidate contracts, remove them legally from inheritances, debts, or obligations, or free them of secular laws and real-life local requirements).

The name is either communicated to them in dreams, or dreams or a holy ritual informs them they must undertake a holy vigil (usually when the individual has profaned Lathander's name, strayed from his teachings, or not caused or aided any new beginnings).

The vigil is this: the individual must first collect some of their own tears, shed when genuinely moved (though it can be happiness as well as sadness, and need not be a religious occasion). This is usually done in a consecrated glass vial, provided free by any church of the Morninglord. Collecting these tears is the only delay acceptable between learning of the need for the vigil and undertaking it. If the individual is in a monastery or in service at a temple, other priests may slap or spank the individual to bring on tears right away.

The individual then goes alone by night to "a high place of stone" (usually a rocky tor, but sometimes a building roof or castle battlements), disrobes, and lies down, spreadeagled on their back on the bare rock, in a location where the rising sun will strike them.

They then cut, prick, bite, or gash themselves enough to draw a few drops of blood, smear the blood in a hollow of their body (the navel is usually used), and shake the drops of their tears into it.

Taking care not to spill it, they put on a blindfold (again, temples provide them but the individual's only discarded clothing may serve), and lie still.

The sunrise must touch them, but the individual is to remain lying on the rock (baking in the sun if necessary) until their new name is communicated to them. It may come to them in their dreams if they fall asleep, may be ANYTHING (sound like any language, though it will always be two words, corresponding to a given name and a surname), and once it appears in their mind, they will NEVER forget it, even through death and rebirth, turning away from the faith, or anything else.

Some individuals see the god walking across the sky to them, to touch them and smilingly utter their name; some see it written across their minds in swirling letters of rosy fire, and some see the smiling forms of dead clerics or faithful lay worshippers of Lathander who were personally known to them in life, who come to them, kiss them, and whisper the name in their ear.

By tradition, an individual receiving his or her "name in the faith" is to go to the head of a temple of the Morninglord (failing that, any Consecrated priest of Lathander), whisper the name to him or her, and kiss him or her. Thereafter, within the faith, they are known as "Consecrated" and referred to as "a named priest of the god." Some temples keep the names semi-secret, using them only in rituals and in private temple talk, and others use them openly, every day.

So saith Ed.

So there you have it, Lathanderites!

love to all,
THO

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April 22, 2006: Hi again, all. Ed tackles this, from dearest Wooly Rupert: "In the fourth footnote of part six of the Uthmere column [[THO note: in Ed's Realmslore web columns, on the Wizards website]], you say that: "One of the Ladies, Asmra Laelock (known to all as Blacktresses for her long, dyed hair) has three removable artificial limbs that she can replace with rather astonishing attachments."

I'd like more information on these limbs: their function(s), how she replaces them and stores the not-in-use ones, and how she got these limbs. As always, thanks!

Ed speaks:

I feel as if I should be calling you Wooly dearest. :}

Asmra got those limbs for loving (both emotionally and physically, beginning as a paying client but ending as a firm friend) a very ugly wizard, one Thaskalos of Alaghôn, who was a wart-covered, hunchbacked "toad" of a man with oversized eyes and lips, and a hooked nose (no affliction, just the way he was born and developed). He was lonely, shunned, and often reviled for his fearsome looks, but Blacktresses regarded herself as a professional, and pitied him for his loneliness; she greeted him in as friendly and ardent a manner as if he'd been young and handsome. He was suspicious of her at first, but came to enjoy not just her charms but her genuine, easy friendship - - and visited her about once a month once he gained mastery of teleport spells.

Asmra was then a tall, very thin Illuskan lass, with raven-black hair and milk-white skin, a graceful dancer and singer, and an acrobatic lover. On her left flank is a line of dark blue birthmarks that look for all the world like small, discreet tattoos: characters in some unknown language.

However, one night she got caught in the wrong place at the wrong time, and was on a balcony that got blasted to shards by a spell intended to slay the wizard who'd hired her that night, and was embracing her on it. He escaped, the balcony and Asmra did not - - and she ended up lying shattered in the street far below (both her legs and her right arm broken in many places, the ends of bone protruding from the crushed and twisted limbs).

She was taken to an Uth temple for healing, but when the priests saw the tattoos on the unconscious woman, they literally threw her out of the doors (refusing, then and later, to say why).

A Harper found her, took her to his rented rooms on an improvised litter (she was alive, though still senseless, and burning hot from a fever, her open wounds having become infected), and went to try to find potions of healing. He managed to procure one, and it kept her alive until Thaskalos arrived that sundown, ready for a night of love - - and started to turn Uthmere upside down in an increasingly-frantic search for her.

Asmra was slipping towards death again by the time he found her, following wild tales of spell-duels and flying balconies and temple curses. Thaskalos had very few friends, but he called in all the favours he knew and help he could hire, and managed to nurse Asmra back to health, though her three shattered limbs had to be amputated.

He magically "floated" her back to her own rooms, and nursed her for months - - at the end of which she was as healthy as before her accident, except for having stumps where her right arm and both legs should be.

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Thaskalos had used the time spent away from her bedside well, crafting all manner of limbs to go onto her stumps (and harnesses to keep them there): shapely legs that end in feet, and skis, skates, and climbing picks, arms that end in pincers, a swordblade, a pot, and a skillet, a shapely arm that looks real but can't hold or manipulate anything (the hand is "frozen"), and various pleasure-use attachments that I'm sure you can imagine. :) (The "leg of many phalluses" is a particular favourite of her fellow Ladies of the Stars.)

Thaskalos gifted Asmra with these attachments, and wed her, but insisted that she continue her life as a coinlass of the evening, and he resumed his life of wandering adventuring and spell-experimentation. He "drops in" on her every tenday or so, and even has a rented suite of rooms at another upper-floor location in Uthmere to take her to, if they desire it - - but Asmra is happiest entertaining customers just as she did before her accident, and of course has acquired a stranger and more avid clientele as a result of her "extras." :}

She seldom leaves her rooms because of the difficult she has in negotiating steps with legs that don't bend at the knees; these also give her a distinctive walk. Thaskalos has offered to take her to temples of various faiths outside Uthmere, to get her missing limbs regenerated, but Asmra has refused, saying she's now comfortable with her attachments and life (this may be true, but Thaskalos suspects she's also afraid of what she might learn about her "tattoos" from other priests spurning her; as far as she knows, they're just birthmarks and nothing more, BUT...

So saith Ed.

Whose heart is in the right place, and whose other bodily features also have their rightful places. Ahem. (Seriously: these sorts of little stories about so many, many NPCS are the true backbone and life-force of the Realms, and Ed has, and can concoct, hundreds of them.)

love to all,
THO

April 23, 2006: Hello again, scribes. This time, Ed deals with Dargoth's "CSI Waterdeep" queries: "What methods and how much time would the Waterdeep watch spend trying to solve a crime ie Murder/rape/theft etc

As a rule are the watch willing to commit resources depending on the social status of the victim ie a commoner vs merchant vs a guildmaster vs a Noble vs a Lord of Waterdeep etc?

The D&D has a number of spells that could help solve a case (assume there wasn't a conventional witness to the crime) such as Locate Object, Speak with Dead, Speak with Animals, Speak with plants, Stone tell etc do the Watch regularly use these spells to solve a case?

If someone wanted for a crime escapes Waterdeep before they can be punished do the Watch try and track them down and bring them back? (I note that Duke Inselm Hhune and Lucia Thione have not been punished for the Torture and the attempted murder of 2 Lords of Waterdeep) If so do the Waterdeep watch employ bounty hunters to bring back wanted felons?"

Ed replies:

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The Watch generally operate on a "keep the peace, lock up the drunks overnight" level, but quickly refer murders, kidnappings, and any crime or problem they see as having wider repercussions (and they're pretty shrewd) the like to the Palace and the Guard, who call in the Watchful Order of Magists right away (in addition to the Order mages who accompany Watch patrols). The Order members do regularly use the spells you cite, and others, to help solve crimes, and do so with the Watch observing.

Piergeiron and Khelben have made it clear that discouraging and solving ALL crimes is vital to Waterdeep's continuing popularity (and thus, prosperity) as a trade-center, and push for the Watch to diligently aid all persons, and solve all crimes.

However, three sorts of victims have different rights: visiting outlanders, citizens, and nobles, and this is subtly reflected in how energetically most crimesolving and crime prevention is enacted. There's also an unspoken "what do you expect if you go drinking and brawling in Dock Ward by night?" attitude that allows more leeway in Dock Ward (and to some extent South Ward) than in other areas of the city.

And no, criminals who flee Waterdeep generally aren't pursued (though they may be exiled in absentia, or tried, sentenced, and have that sentence instantly imposed on them if they're found in the city, even decades later). The city doesn't employ or encourage bounty hunters, but many guildmasters, nobles, and individual wealthy merchants do.

It should also be remembered that many noble families (or their factors, working on their behalf) employ agents or short-term-hire adventurers to find miscreants, recover stolen goods, and enact punishments - - as do guilds.

So saith Ed, THE Masked Lord of Waterdeep.

love to all,
THO

April 24, 2006: Well met again, all. This time Ed turns to some queries from Asgetrion: "Hello Ed and Lady Hooded One, and many thanks once again for all the Realmslore you provide us here!

I was wondering if Ed could give us a glimpse at dwarven grammar and vocabulary beyond what was in 'Dwarves Deep'? For example, such as how possessive/genitive case works in dwarven. Would 'Durlik's axe' be 'Durlikuld' or 'Durlikkuld'?

Maybe Ed has also written dwarven battle songs he would share with us? (would they prefer horns or drums, or perhaps some other instrument when marching to battle?)

Then I would like to ask some details about mines... are the mines railed in the Realms, and is there any difference between how dwarven mines differ from those of the other races? If the mines are not commonly 'railed', are elevators used to travel between 'levels'?"

Ed speaks:

Asgetrion, you're very welcome. I love doing this, despite the time it devours. I have written dwarven battle-songs, but they're NDA'd right now because someone else may soon have a use

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for them. Dwarves prefer to trudge into battle in grim silence, breaking into deep, mass roars when they charge (and bellowing war-cries when enraged). They occasionally use horns, drums and "talk-blocks" (hand-held hollowed-out stones struck with wooden sticks, akin in use and sound to the so-called "Chinese blocks" of modern real-world orchestras) for signalling (troop movements) in battle, both above and below ground - - and because of that, rarely use them in music. Dwarves when singing often sit and stamp their boots rhythmically or use (sparse) strokes on a single talk-block for emphasis or to establish a beat.

I'm going to leave dwarven grammar for a later, longer reply (except to tell you to watch my Realmslore columns on the Wizards website for an upcoming entry on "Dwarf Common"), and move to your questions about mines. Dwarves have experimented with everything over the years, from levels and stopes to vertical shafts that descend to a seam which is then followed, other shafts being dug down to intersect with the seam farther along, and the shafts being filled with winch-cable-wooden-platform elevators. However, MOST dwarven mines favour a series of ramps, so ore and tailings can be dragged out by crawling or trudging miners to natural caverns (if they can find such), which are used for smelting and crushing, and which are gradually "filled up" with loose tailings and then abandoned (except for locales near to large human cities where the crushed tailings can be used by wizards (in combination with the right spells) to craft concrete and asphalt equivalents ("installed" by dwarves, of course). Some mines are railed and use ore-cars or skips (sometimes hauled by pack lizards or mules), and others are not. Simply put, the dwarves have tried everything. In ancient days, when they were more numerous, it was a common practice to enlarge worked-out mines (or sections of mines) into dwarven dwellings.

So saith Ed.

Expert on all things dwarvish (including the practice of carrying pets and future snacks in one's own beard).

love to all,
THO

On April 24, 2006 THO said: Ah, George, don't forget you'll get to see Khelben (however briefly) in Ed's SWORDS OF EVENINGSTAR, too...

Oh, AND Blackstaff Tower and a few apprentices and ex-apprentices.

Not that I've READ it, of course.

love,
THO

April 25, 2006: Hi again, all. Ed's parade of Realmslore replies continues, to whit: back in January, createvmind posted this: "Hello again, Sir Ed.

My query regards the powers of the Wierdstone from "Players Guide to Faerun" that nullifies dimensional travel and such. Does it also prevent someone within it's radius from using summoning spells since that is a form of "instantaneous" travel? And do spells like Rope trick and

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such function within it's radius, does that count as traveling since you are entering a "pocket" of space while within the wierdstones radius?

Basically whats your take on what it can and can't do in regards to such traveling spells and spell-like, supernatural abilities? Thanks"

Ed replies:

Hi! Glad you said "my take," because that's just what this reply is; my opinion.

I'd say a Weirdstone does block summonings (to any spot within the stone's area of effect - - and yes, that includes a devil using its ability, not just a wizard trying a spell) from functioning, and prevents spells from opening rifts or ways into other dimensions.

However, an active Weirdstone can't prevent items (e.g. portable holes, existing portals) that open rifts or ways into other dimensions from functioning if access to them is purely physical (e.g. don't require words of activation).

In fact, the opening of too many such dimensional accesses within the stone's area of effect, particularly very close to the Weirdstone, would have a good chance of shattering the stone OR sucking it through the "way" and then flinging it somewhere random through the dimensions during transit of the way (rather than just lobbing it through the opening to "the other end" of the rift or way) OR deactivating the Weirdstone (causing it to stop functioning and stunning or even striking unconscious its activator).

The same results MAY be possible to achieve through simultaneous castings of five or more spells that attempt to open rifts or ways, but I wouldn't want to be one of the mages trying the experiment. :}

So saith Ed.

Exhibiting the veteran DM's habit of trying to put limits and heels of Achilles on everything.

love to all,
THO

April 26, 2006: Hello again, scribes.

Quinton, I suspect Kuje is right in his NDA warning - - but I'll pass your post straight on to Ed and we'll see.

Now, for tonight's Realmslore...

Back in December (er, 2005), butterflyght posted in reference to this lore reply (snippet only): "Vangerdahast is BOTH "Chairman Emperius of the College of War Wizards" AND "Chairman Emeritus of the College of War Wizards.""

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butterflyght asked: "What about now [ELMINSTER'S DAUGHTER spoiler snipped by me, THO]:
"Is he, even now, a holder of all those titles?"

Ed replies:

Yes. As mentioned in the Realmslore reply you reference, Vangey has a habit of never relinquishing titles. It remains to be seen how "empty" those titles now become, but it seems very likely that he'll be out of contact and so the War Wizards will simply create - - at Caladnei's direction - - either an "Acting Chair Emeritus" or a Council De Facto in Governance of the College of War Wizards." Thge "Chairman Emperius" title will reside with Vangey, but simply become a fast-forgotten phrase, neither used nor heeded by War Wizards in the future.

Unless, of course, Vangey decides to "step back in" to a more active role. THIS is the true ace he stuffed up Cormyr's sleeve, IF word gets around. Sembian and other, more shadowy interests might think twice about moving to control the Forest Kingdom, openly or covertly, if they believe the result might be a flight of calm, striking-to-slay dragons in their laps at any unguarded moment. And oh yes: it should be clear to all that, for whatever unknown reasons (probably having to do with the spells set up around Cormyr by the elves and dragons so long ago, and augmented and modified by the various guiding mages of Cormyr, including of course Vangerdahast himself), none of the dragons surviving at the end of ELMINSTER'S DAUGHTER are affected by the Rage.

So saith Ed.

I know a LITTLE of what he's planning for Cormyr's immediate future, but NDAs shackle me as coldly and firmly as they do him.

I just enjoy the restraints a bit more.

love to all,
THO

On April 26, 2006 THO said: Have I ever told you fellow scribes about Ed writing THE MERCENARIES (which should really be called "The Pirates") in an afternoon, from a one-paragraph outline?

For which his reward was to be handed the last book with a one-day turnaround, with his co-author's first draft more than twice as long as the allowable wordcount for the final version?

Ed bought himself an extra day by pointing out (truthfully) that Fed Ex didn't do Saturday pickups in Canada at that time, rolled up his sleeves, cursed at the ceiling, and did what he had to do.

I understand there's still blood on the ceiling.

love,
THO

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April 27, 2006: Hi again, scribes. Dargoth asked this: "A question for Ed with regard to adding "Planar or Draconic Blood to a mortal:" I was wondering if Ed could detail any spells/Rituals that would allow a mortal Character/NPC to add the Half Dragon/fiend/elemental/celestial etc templates without being born with them.

There are several FR NPCs that have gained these templates without being born with the templates.

Vargo Kent from CoR gained the half Black Dragon template

Sun Elves from the Daemonfey gained the Half Fiend Template

A certain character from a recent FR novel has likely gained the Half Celestial template.

Thanks in advance!"

Ed speaks

: Potentially, yes. The problem is that anyone knowing such a ritual would keep it VERY secret, so any characters desiring to gain such traits (the characters don't know of or call them "templates," remember) are going to have to experiment on themselves or others, at great risk (from the others they experiment on, if from no one else!). Most mage's guilds would outlaw such attempts as too darned dangerous (in terms of the attention and potential enemies it would bring), and the experimenter is going to have to literally introduce the blood desired (procured from a presumably unwilling dragon, fiend, or celestial!) into their own or an experimental subject's body, somehow (magically) keep them alive as their body reacts to the blood (which poisons most bodies if injected or ingested, as opposed to being born with it), and then begin a series of (unknown, experimental) spells that cause the host body to alter in properties to the desired traits.

In short, it's a life's work for PCs, if the DM handles it properly, and if the DM presents NPC casters who have already mastered the process, or do so "in front of" the PCs' eyes, tell me this: why would such NPC casters share what they've learned, or agree to "do it to" someone else? Won't they try to hitch some magical control into the someone else, so at the very least they can stop the augmented being from turning and slaying them to "keep the secret"? Won't we be dealing with obsessed "mad scientist" characters here, who might well try to create an army of servitor augmented beings? (?)

Or to put it more succinctly: Have fun. :}

Chuckle. That's my Ed.

So saith he, and all that.

Keep us posted, Dargoth!

love,
THO

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April 28, 2006: Hi, all! Ed apologizes for taking so long to get to this simple question from Jamallo Kreen: "I have a question regarding the Herald class in PoF: what are their class skills?"

Because, errata or not, this "counts" as unpublished-but-paid-for Realmslore owned by Wotc, Ed had to get permission from Wizards to quote from his turnover manuscript. It's been duly granted, so here's the skinny:

"CLASS SKILLS

Skill Points at Each Level: 4+Int modifier

The herald's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are:

Bluff (Cha)

Concentration (Con)

Decipher Script (Int)

Diplomacy (Cha)

Forgery (Int)

Gather Information (Cha)

Intimidate (Cha)

Knowledge (any) (Int)

Listen (Wis)

Perform (Cha)

Scry (Int)

Sense Motive (Wis)

Speak Language

Spot (Wis)

Use Magic Device (Cha)"

And there you have it. Somehow this got dropped out of the text in the editing, a glitch that as we all know has happened a time or two before.

And to Jamallo Kreen: official pronunciations from Ed: "Vangey" is "VAN-jee" but "Vangerdahast" is "VAN-grr-dah-hast" (yes, regardless of what it may say elsewhere)

love,
THO

April 29, 2006: Hi, all. This time Ed gets around to dealing (in part) with the first post Scarabeus made at Candlekeep, back in August of 2005:

"... I would like to have further details about the original spellsinger character class you made for the Realms. Knowing about your fondness for music and the rich amount of details that you put in your work, none of the published spellsinger classes seem to be near of what you created. I once worked on a legendary Elven Spellsinger character class (a la Elfsong) but it does not seem to be the original spellsinger... Call you tell us more about how the original spellsingers used to cast spells, or spellsongs?"

Ed replies:

I can say a little, though I'm dodging among monolithic, Stonehenge-impressive NDAs here regarding the various other versions of Spellsingers.

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Originally, spellsingers were people (usually human, and usually female) who had an innate ability to call on the Weave to work magic in a specific way: when dancing and singing or chanting around a focus (usually a fire, but it could be any source of light or energy, from a red-hot sword planted in the ground and now radiating heat to a spring bubbling up from the earth), they could work limited, low-power magics they could think of (vividly; in other words, they almost always had to have seen the magical effect - - worked by someone else, or unleashed by an item - - before, and concentrate on that memory). "Put" the memory on top of the focus, and when staring at the focus try to see not the focus but only the memory, and keep staring at it - - largely oblivious to surroundings, and hence vulnerable to attack or theft - - while dancing around it.

Most spellsingers found they couldn't "feel the Weave start to work" (though they might not say it this way, because they might not even know it was something called "the Weave" they were calling on) if they wore clothes or footwear, and so they danced naked or at least barefoot. Most spellsingers couldn't do anything more than a cantrip when dancing alone, and even then had to dance for a long time and ended up exhausted; impressive magic (spellsingers always work arcane magic, or an arcane equivalent of, say, a druid spell) requires multiple spellsingers, dancing and chanting together. Enough experienced (upper-level, in game terms) and strong (not tired, wounded, or sick) spellsingers, working together, could enact even 9th level wizard spells - - but if a Zhent captures a spellsinger and wants her spellbooks, items, etc. he finds he has nothing but a helpless captive.

If he locks her in a room for the night, alone and unshackled - - and she's desperate (and strong) enough - - she cuts or bites herself, uses her own spilling blood as the focal energy, and dances until she can work up a magic to free herself or more often alert or summon aid.

Otherwise, she is no magic-worker at all. "A sorceress who can't sorce," as THO once described it. I wanted the spellsinger to exist for two reasons: to account for all the real-world old legends of "witches dancing naked around a fire by night" (the Forgotten Realms was originally supposed to 'account for' all those real-world occult and fey and unexplained "magical" things, remember?) and, in the Realms, to give a REASON why every second Zhent or unwashed independent warrior didn't just trek off to a distant village and rape, pillage, and murder his way through it for a night, and then leave again. The reason was that every single village had its crones and matrons and young daughters - - and the survivors would dance around the fire, find out who that warrior was and where he was now, and work revenge on him. (And as general folk knowledge, every warrior "knew" this would probably happen.) They haven't the time to "go after" groups of attackers in this way, and will never agree on anything enough to do it for idle or personal-spite purposes - - but if folk think the power is there and they'd better not awaken it, we have a reason low-level priests or government officials or any large, strong local blacksmith doesn't habitually and casually act like a tyrant.

The reason you never saw the spellsingers in print was, of course, the "ladies dancing nude" bit (running headlong into the TSR Code of Ethics).

The game-balance reason I put that element in was to make PC adventurers used to hacking anything that moved to the ground before even saying hello hesitate to "watch the show," and so learn a bit about what was going on, and so have a moral dilemma to face and not just "ooh, look: nude women: easy kills because they've gotta be evil witches; how many XP will I get?"

It worked, too. Back at GenCon 13, when I ran a table of players that included several TSR staffers, they DID stop and debate. And then went in hacking anyway - - and reaped the moral and social consequences.

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Memories of that may well have made TSR back away from the whole situation (so we'll end up defending nude female "witches" to the Bible Belt, who already want every D&D book burned and its makers jailed? Riiiiiight.) by just preventing the spellsingers from being published.

It's not something that upsets me; it's just one of the inevitable differences between my fiction world and a publicly-used game setting.

So saith Ed.

Bringing you secrets from the golden past. He's written at least one unpublished Realms short story ("The Long Sword") that features spellsingers - - and Chess and Manshoon and Manshoon's elder brother, too, back before there were any Zhentarim. I wonder when we'll get to see it?

love to all,
THO

April 30, 2006: Well met again, all. This time, Ed responds to Uzzy: "Hello Ed and The Hooded One. :) Thank you for all the Realmslore you've put up here over all the years. Certainly kept me up late at nights just reading through it.

Anyway, my question is about the Scarlet Mummurs, the Lliiran Militant Order of Assassins. I'm playing a Lliiran Character right now (Bard/Fighter) who definately seems to be leaning towards a more 'militant' bent. So, I started looking for information about the Scarlet Mummurs. But, there doesn't seem to be any at all, other then the mention in Faiths and Pantheons and, of all things, a brief mention in Neverwinter Nights! So, essentially, if you could help at all with things like their organisation, how they are viewed by the rest of the Lliiran church, or anything, it would be a huge help. Thanks in advance. :)"

Ed replies:

I, too, wanted to know more about the Mummurs. So I did something about that. Watch the Wizards website for a Realmslore column, probably this fall, that delves into the Scarlet Mummurs. Sorry for the wait I've given you, but it's done now. :) And you're very welcome for the other Realmslore. Two lore tidbits: some Mummurs use a single cut red rose as a signal or badge, and they have a fluid organization (no 'set' hierarchy) that "stands outside" church ranks.

So saith Ed.

One of the unavoidable perils of writing Realmslore columns rears its head again. Sigh.

love to all,
THO

May 1, 2006: Hi again, scribes. This time Ed makes answer to Penknight, in this matter: "... I have a question for Mr. Greenwood about Cormyr if it's alright. I have a paladin of Torm that is a native

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of Cormyr. I was glancing through all of my 1st and 2nd Edition (as well as my 3e and 3.5) sourcebooks and modules, but was never able to find a temple or shrine to Torm mentioned. I was just curious why this was. I kinda figured that he would be quite popular there in regards to what his portfolio is about."

RevJest then posted: "Torm is a favored (perhaps patron?) god of Princess Alusair, Regent of Cormyr. She is accompanied by several Tormite priests in "Death of the Dragon". If memory serves, there is a shrine to Torm at High Horn."

And Penknight responded: "I appreciate the information, RevJest. But if I may still ask, why isn't Torm bigger in Cormyr than what he is? Lady THO, if you would ask, I would be truly and deeply grateful. Also, please pass along my deepest respects and a thank you for creating my favorite place to play D&D (especially 2nd Edition) to Mr. Greenwood if you would be so kind."

Ed replies:

You're very welcome; thanks for the kind words. Torm is indeed a popular faith in Cormyr, and every Purple Dragon garrison has a small shrine. Suzail has a modest temple to the True, and both Arabel and Marsember have shrines. The chivalric ideal is something the commoners of Cormyr believe in, and take comfort in believing the Crown and the noble houses of their realm follow. Some of the nobles do, and some merely perform perfunctory devotions to the deity so that folk will THINK they revere and uphold what Torm stands for. Ironically, the "lip service" nobles most often use the public city shrines and temple, whereas the devout believers tend to have their own private shrines (chapels) on their own estates.

There are many cynics in Cormyr, and it's true that Torm is most revered by the young, shining-eyed, and naive (especially young male nobles). The reason Torm doesn't dominate is that many gods (Chauntea, Helm, Sune, and so on and on) are worshipped in prosperous, generally happy and stable Cormyr, and NO god dominates. Moreover, Vangerdahast had good reasons to prevent faiths from rising to dominance, and used the War Wizards to keep them balanced in power against each other, and as scheming rivals to each other rather than turning their attentions to meddling in politics against the Crown (perhaps by secret alliances with particular discontented nobles). Some of the self-serving priests we see in the later chapters of DEATH OF THE DRAGON hold their lofty positions (to Azoun's and Cormyr's cost) because Vangey, working behind the scenes (and unbeknownst to almost all of the clergy involved), got them there. (Yes, it's one of his largest blunders.)

With all of that said, it's true that we have neglected the faith of Torm in Cormyr, thus far, in print. This is due, I'm afraid, to the adventuring focus of D&D products: unfolding evil is always more interesting and thus gets more attention. Would you like some brief outline details of Cormyr's shrines, temples, and clergy? If so, let me know and I'll post some here (eventually!) or put them in a future Realmslore column on the Wizards website.

So saith Ed.

Oooh, Realmslore to order! Get your piping hot box of fresh Realmslore here! Get - - wait a minute. That's just what we've been doing since the beginning of 2004. Silly me.

love to all,
THO

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On May 1, 2006 THO said: Ah, SUPERB questions, JK! Just the sort Ed likes.

I can tell you that Archveult is pronounced "Arch-VULL-t" and that some of your Pages questions concern material added by the TSR staffer who worked on that tome.

However, off they all go to Ed, who will no doubt reply extensively, in the fullness of time!

love,
THO

May 2, 2006: Hi again, all. Ed answers Julian Grimm, in this matter: "Ed, I was wondering with the portals that connected and still connect Earth to Toril, if legendary wizards and heroes like Merlin, Vanimonen (sp?) and such have ever been there or may be hiding out or living there now?"

Ed replies:

They certainly could have, and be. That's up to you, of course, because in the published Realms heroes from elsewhere can never officially appear, for obvious legal and artistic reasons.

However, that is indeed how the "home Realms" have always functioned, though my players preferred the "Realms itself" from the first, and turned away from such play possibilities (usually AFTER Torm had said, "THAT's King Arthur? Oooh, I've just gotta kick him right in the codpiece, and then we can run. Er, fast!").

So it's never been a big part of the Realms, but it's always been there. I've felt more comfortable including characters from dead authors (like H. Beam Piper and Roger Zelazny) than living ones (Ursula LeGuin or McKillip or May or McKinley). Yeesh, it's still hard to think of Roger as dead, though it's been over ten years, now. Those who wonder why should try to get a copy of the mammoth last Amberzine (issues 12 through 15, bound as one volume), and read my "A Secret of Amber," therein. Only if you're an Amber fan, of course. (If you're not, find a copy of NINE PRINCES IN AMBER and start reading.)

And speaking of more traditional heroes, eagle-eyed scribes should go looking for a Carroll & Graf book, due out this fall, probably entitled CHRONICLES OF BEOWULF or something of the sort. Edited by Brian Thomsen, it should contain new Beowulf stories by (let's see now): Lynn Abbey, Wolfgang Baur (once editor of DRAGON) and Jeff Grubb. Oh, yes: and me.

Sorry from straying so far from your question, Julian, but a reading of my Beowulf tale will show how readily he could be made to stalk from our mythic past into the Realms.

So saith Ed.

Purr; more delights for readers. We work poor old Ed hard, we do, but the results are worth it! (She said, flicking the whip.)

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love to all,
THO

On May 2, 2006 THO said: Update, all:

Ed confirms the Archveult pronunciation and says the book title is "Further Tales of Beowulf."

love,
THO

May 3, 2006: Hi, all. Back in January Octa posted this: "Ed +THO, I've been trying to think up a question and I think I have one of general interest.

It concerns the Arn Rock in the center of the lake of steam. Everytime I look at it it screams Melnibone. There seems to be very little lore on the island. So my question is this:

Who was living on the Arn Rock before it went all Santorini? Were there any ancient civilisations centered there? We know that the lake of steam has been populated since pre-history, but it mainly considered a crossroads between Coramashan and Jhaamdath rather than a region in its own right. Were there any empires centered there, other than the Occasional Aencar uniting a few of the independent cities together for a single lifetime.

And the Arn Rock, any chance for an empire of draconic-human hybrids living there in the age of dragons or some other prehistoric time. thanks for any additional information you can give, I know how busy you are and am just shocked at how accessible you make yourself to the fans."

Ed replies:

Hi, Octa. Thanks for your thanks; yes, answering lore questions for scribes here does eat up time, but I enjoy doing it and I feel those who love the Realms deserve my time and attention. As I told attendees at my GoH panel at Ad Astra: writing books and games is a service industry, and you're all my clients; keeping you happy is my job.

Now, as for keeping you personally happy in this instance: Arn Rock is indeed the remnant of a long, long-ago volcano that "blew up," shattering the lava-tube-cavern-riddled mountain that once occupied the site - - and in the process blowing some red dragons (with their lairs) to tiny spattering bits. There is indeed a chance that draconic-human hybrids dwelt on this vanished volcanic isle, but I'd have to say their having an "empire" would have to be a generous interpretation, given the utter lack of evidence or lore concerning same, to date, and also considering the targets such hybrids would have been for so many of the dragons during the age of dragons. So unless the hybrids were under the protection of a really powerful dragon (looks at the ranks of dragon deities in the Realms that have been mentioned in lore) whom they perhaps worshipped, they'd be fast-made-extinct dinners rather than empire-builders (so a decadent, magically-powerful, wealthy Melniboné-like culture is out).

So yes to the possibility of hybrids dwelling there, no to a large empire of any sort centered there at any time, and yes to the crossroads nature of the Lake of Steam (which has seemingly always

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been actively volcanic), with possible ancient shore-dwelling cultures (but not large, sophisticated, powerful "civilizations") and certainly yes to port cities hurled into ruins and now entirely "lost" (but existing as buried "dungeon" labyrinths, for those who dig and search energetically enough). Have fun. :}

So saith Ed.

Interestingly, he always subtly steered us away from the Lake of Steam, suggesting he had some Plans of Note for it that he either never got around to developing or that he considered we Knights Not Yet Ready To Face. Hmmm...

love to all,
THO

May 4, 2006: Hi again, all. Ed has sent me answers to just a few of many questions posed in the same posting by HunterOfStorms, to wit: "Hi Ed, I have another question relating to the Sea of Fallen Stars. I've noticed in the descriptions of Aglarond, that despite the original human settlers of its shores being fisher folk and the concentration of settlements along the coast, Aglarond is not considered to be much of a sea-faring nation - which is fair enough, they don't need to be. However, since they do have a small fleet of warships, I was wondering whether the ships of Aglarond are built in Aglarond, by their own shipwrights, or whether their vessels are commissioned elsewhere by more renowned ship builders. Which brings me to an actual series of questions :) Does Velprintalar have its own shipyards or even just a dry dock for maintenance and repairs? Would it cater to only its own ships or others who might limp into port? Which nations/cities around the Inner Sea are noted for their shipbuilding skills (besides Cormyr, that is)?"

Ed replies:

Folk of western Aglarond in particular fish daily, but their fishing is almost all near-shore coastal, in small boats, with drag-nets. There are, however, at least a score of energetic entrepreneurial seafaring merchants of Aglarond (independent loners rather than fleet-owners, and hence often ignored or overlooked by those considering naval power on a by-country basis), and all of its coastal settlements have shipwrights of accomplishment (and builders who work for them), with both ship repair slips and dry docks for laying down the keels of new ships. Local forests provide both planking and mast spars, and there are sail-makers in Aglarond, too, though most sails are purchased in Telflamm and the Vilhon purely for reasons of price (greater competition, cheaper labour).

So, yes, Velprintalar has its own shipyards and ship repair docks, catering to all visiting vessels (just as do almost all ports - - as opposed to fishing villages or mere anchorages - - around the Sea of Fallen Stars). Almost all of the lands and independent cities around the Inner Sea have competent shipbuilding skills and facilities (the Wizards' Reach, Unther, and Mulhorand are the main exceptions, and such places as Calaunt, Scardale, and Telflamm are little trusted by visiting outlanders). Sembia has shipbuilders every bit as good as Cormyr's, but in Sembia one gets what one pays for, and those who go for the cheaper builders get shoddier work. Alaghôn and Cimbar are in the next rank of shipbuilders, followed by Lyrabar (good repairers there), and then (a slight but definite step down) the "general run" of ports, such as Tantras.

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So there you have it. Shipbuilding lore from the Great Sage himself.

A public service note: Ed has family descending on him tomorrow, and will fall e-silent from now until this coming Tuesday as the extended family Greenwood eats him out of house and home, plays endless computer games, goes gardening and drags Ed out to shop and dine in restaurants and go to farm and flea markets and car dealerships and oh, did I mention shop?

However, hang in there, scribes, and Ed Will Return.

love to all,
THO

May 9, 2006: Hi again, fellow scribes. Ed's back!

Speaking of "back," back in November of last year, CrennenFaerieBane posted this query: "Mr. Greenwood, Did you create the rules that govern that when two elves of different subraces come together and procreate, that the children take the traits of one parent or the other? I know that this first appeared in the Gray Box, but I didn't know the source of the rule. Thank you much."

Ed replies:

No, I didn't write that particular text; I suspect Jeff Grubb did, or Karen Boomgaarden [yes, that's her correct preferred surname spelling, not mistyping] did, following an internal TSR design decision.

It's one I agree with as a designer, though, because it makes possible some of the already-by-then-written-into-lore racial haughtiness of the drow and the gold or high elves, and it avoids the morass of "special" elf crossbreeds that gamers were at the time submitting to The Dragon (as DRAGON Magazine was known back then) as articles promoting their own elf subraces that had daily racial spells plus gold-flecked eyes that could shoot firebeams, or daily racial spells plus silver-flecked eyes that could shoot lightning bolts, and (my personal favourite) the elves that shat sapphires (talk about a personal neverending money source; the writer seemed to have no idea that if such crossbreeds grew numerous, the value of sapphires would fall to almost nothing, and had instead postulated that they'd already secretly become the equivalent of billionaires, and hence the Secret Masters of most kingdoms, bankrolling kings and guilds alike).

So saith Ed.

Ah, yes; I recall Ed's parody of this: a waddling little "old fat cat" -like monster that ate human excrement and crapped little steaming handfuls of diamonds. The Company of Crazy Venturers found one in Undermountain, but it was stolen from them by an evil mage whose attempts to discover HOW the poor little critter "worked" killed said Sh*t-Eater. Whereupon, of course, the Crazy Venturers cut open the evil mage to discover just why he'd found it necessary to kill such a golden goose. Then they carved up the mage's long-suffering servant, who'd been starving, and had cooked and eaten the remains of the Sh*t-Eater. You might say it was, er, a last meal that fatally disagreed with him.

love to all,
THO

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May 10, 2006: Hello again, scribes of the Realms. This time, Ed makes reply to KnightErrantJR's October 2005 query: "Good Ed, Master of all things that go bump in the Realms... Are the Phaerimm supposed to have rows of eyes running from their maw down to their tails, as they are illustrated in their first appearance in FR13 Anauroch. Current illustrations show them as plain looking funnels with arms and a mouth, but I rather liked the rows of eyes and spikes. Was this just an artistic flourish from Valerie Valusek, or did you describe the rows of eyes originally, but it just didn't make it into the description of the monster in their MC entry?"

Thanks Ed!"

Ed speaks:

I did indeed both illustrate the Phaerimm and describe them textually in my initial monster description (submitted to TSR in 1991, I believe) as having rows of eyes (protected by Pc-sword-snagging spikes), so they couldn't easily be blinded, and so that gaze-related spells they unleashed could utilize eyes pointing in almost any direction. Like so many other things, the text got edited for reasons of brevity, and so the illustration showed rows of eyes without any explanation.

So saith Ed.

Who's being SO polite and nice about it; as an editor, I often roll my eyes and say VERY unladylike things about game editing work that ends up causing more argument and controversy among gamers than the original design texts could ever have caused.

love to all,
THO

May 11, 2006: Hi again, fellow scribes. Ed makes reply this time to Jamallo Kreen's query: "Aside from bards and courtiers, are there courtesans in the Realms who are not prostitutes, but who simply serve as professional entertainers, companions, and/or escorts? If so, who have been the famous ones in Realms history, the ones about whom poems have been written and songs sung? From our European history, although they undoubtedly prostituted themselves, Aspasia and Phryne spring to mind from Greece, and also Veronica Franco, The Honest Courtesan of Venice. Who would be their Realms counterparts?"

Ed speaks:

Yes, there are (and have been) many courtesans, on various official payrolls around the Realms (notably in Calimshan, Tethyr, Amn, Waterdeep [see my posts on Shyrrhr, earlier in this thread], Silverymoon, Iriaebor, Cormyr, and Alaghôn, just to name a few places off the top of my head), who are professional entertainers, companions, escorts, and/or hostesses to visitors "to court." (And not prostitutes, at least until age robs them of their looks and effectiveness, and they lose their positions.) Most lordlings of small independent cities employ and highly value such persons, who may also serve as the commanders of their spies (and even their lovers). A handful are such skillful manipulators that the rulers serve them more than they serve the rulers.

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The most effective of these courtesans keep low profiles, of course, becoming famous only as word of them spreads, and therefore the famous ones are all dead. They include the Veiled Dancer of Calimport (name forgotten, but immortalized in the anonymously-composed ballad of the same name, each verse of which ends with the improbable appearance of the dancer, silently dancing: across a battlefield, in a moonlit glade where lovers are trysting, on thin air outside a castle turret window hundreds of feet in the air, out from behind a throne where a king has just been slain, out of the door of a long-sealed crypt when it's opened to put that dead king to rest, and so on), who flourished over four centuries ago; Tharlaskra of the Bells, who dwelt in Athkatla and chimed gently as she moved, due to the many tiny bells affixed via piercings to her skin (the focus of the ballad "She Rings Her Bells For Me" by the now-dead bard Muraevus "Merrysong" Ruroerlar); Dayatharra of Luskan, who was loved by many seacaptains of old, and is remembered in several ballads, including the famous "Sailing Back Home to Love" by the bard Brelmur Arskitarr of Neverwinter; and Joysarra of Zazesspur, who is the "Lady of the Haunting Eyes" in the ballad of that name by the minstrel Ronsil Haeladtongue of Zazesspur.

So saith Ed, shedding light on another small corner of Realmslore.

love to all,
THO

May 12, 2006: Hi again, scribes. Kuje fairly recently asked: "I warned you, Ed, that I'd find some more NPC's I'd like to know more about. :) And so, sticking with my fascination with Waterdeep NPC's I'm going to ask about Mhaere Dryndilstann and Tamsil.

What does Durnan's wife and daughter look like? Clothing and the materials it's made out of, jewelry, weapons, physically markings, etc, would be great, if you want to supply them. Thier personality. Do they help at the Yawning Portal? Some of thier history would be grand. What does his wife do as a cleric of Lathander? Do they know he's a Lord? Is this his only wife or has he had more? What about other children? What do they think of Mirt and the adventures Durnan and Mirt have had/still have? And as usual, I'll leave it with: Add anything else you want to add that you think we should know or you want to impart. :)"

Ed replies:

Kuje, I'd love to answer these questions properly, but NDAs strongly prohibit at the moment. So I'm going to run through your questions in order, saying as much as I can:

Both have strong-featured 'good looks' (not striking beauty, but not ugly, either), daughter is Durnan's height but has a face (and of course a figure :) more closely resembling her mother's. Both customarily wear belt knives and no jewelry, though the daughter went through a "gewgaws to the eyebrows" phase during her teens. They are brisk, kindly hard workers, alert and lively, knowing the gossip (through listening as they serve at the bar) but passing little of it on. Yes, they do work at the Portal (as well as sewing work smocks, simple gowns, and towels as a sideline), and yes, they know Durnan is a Lord of Waterdeep (though in general, it's "never discussed").

Durnan had two wives when he was younger; both were killed and he took revenge (he's never been married to two women at once). Yes, he has other children (two younger daughters from this marriage). They all love Mirt, warts and lecherous teasing and hard drinking and dragging Durnan off into trouble and all. Though they don't call him anything other than "Mirt" (or "Old

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Walrus" or Old Wolf" or "Wandering-Hands Trouble"), he occupies the social position of a beloved uncle in Durnan's family.

So saith Ed.

Who's hard at work on deeply secret matters right now (and cackling maniacally from time to time).

love,
THO

May 13, 2006: Hi again, all. Back in September of last year, Jamallo Kreen posted: "I have a RULES question which may well belong elsewhere, but Ed may be able to provide insight which settles the matter for the more formal amongst us: is the creature known as the "ur-priest," who can "steal" divine power to do clerical magic even possible within Realmspace? Admittedly the things of the Gods are known to the Gods, etc., but the DM is something of an Overpower; as such, being a DM, I'd like to know if allowing an ur-priest to function according to the written rules is possible in "real" Realms gaming, or if some deity (Gargauth, for example) would knowingly and deliberately power the spells of the ur-priest for reasons which are (probably) nefarious? (I could imagine a Good or Neutral deity, far-seeing Savras, for instance, powering spells for such a priest in the expectation of eventually acquiring him or her as a worshipper, but Gargauth or Cyric or Bane would probably do it just to raise heck and create eventual despair; a demon lord or devil would probably be delighted to grant spells to an ur-priest and then appear some time later contract and pen in hand and an announcement that only a signature is necessary for the spells to keep on comin'.)

I'm sorry if I seem to be flogging an expired equine, but I have a Thayvian PC in my campaign, and the player has hopes of him becoming an ur-priest. I have said that is not a guaranteed available class, but I would like to know what options Ed and others consider to be available for such a PC before I slam the door on the PC. (Eternal damnation for the character is one of the possibilities -- mwahahahahaaaaa! -- but not the only one. "Hey, everybody! Field trip to Hell! XP! XP!")

Ed replies:

Certainly it's possible, both for running ex-clerics of dead gods, as stated under the "Adaptation" heading, and for the stealing-divine-power character. Please note, however, that your supposition is correct: no mortal is deceiving a god and "getting away with it." Rather, a deity IS deliberately granting the ur-priest spells to let the ur-priest function as a "wild card loose cannon" and benefit from the results. (This may of course end in stopping the flow of spells if the ur-priest no longer benefits the deity, or even ending such granted powers at the same moment as priests of that deity show up to do battle with the ur-priest and publicly vanquish him, to the greater glory [enhanced public reputation] of the deity. So being an ur-priest in the Realms is by no means a long-term secure career.)

Some deities by their nature would have nothing to do with ur-priests or such tactics, but in the Realms of old, Leira loved to 'run' such mortals. Gargauth and Talos did and still do, though they will limit what spells the ur-priest gains, and support only a few isolated individuals (so, no

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temples or "unholy strike forces" full of multiple ur-priests). This makes it difficult to play a PC ur-priest, but easy to have NPC ur-priests.

So saith Ed.

Who may just have explained some of the strange foes we Knights met, down the years. Or not, as the case may be.

love,
THO

May 14, 2006: Hello again, fellow Candle-bearing scribes. This time Ed tackles this, from Kuje: "I was pondering the Unseen as I'm coding the cleric file for Alaundo and I'm wondering this: Does Selune know that Acolyte Respen Moongleam is "dead" and that his form has been taken over by a doppelganger? Why does she continue to grant spells to him then, if she does know? It seems a bit odd to me that she'd grant spells to a doppelganger that killed her worshipper and taken his form and life."

Dearest Wooly then reminded Kuje that when a greater doppelganger killed someone like a cleric or paladin, they lost all divinely-granted abilities and the ability to cast spells above second level, and reminded us all of the old "regaining 1st and 2nd level spells 'by default, anywhere'" concept, which Ed has confirmed elsewhere. Thauramarth pointed out its age and broad application, which Ed also hereby confirms.

He also has these words for Kuje:

Of course Sêlune knows. :}

It's a little hard to hide something like that from a deity. And in this case, the first and second level spells WOULDN'T automatically be regained, because the doppelganger is merely copying Moongleam's shape, not occupying it, and therefore no one who's ever been a devout worshipper is involved.

However, Sêlune IS granting the doppelganger spells, up to 4th level thus far, hoping the creature will begin to worship her [remember, in the Realms, everyone "believes" because everyone KNOWS the gods are real; it's worship the deities are after]. It remains to be seen if the creature will.

So saith Ed.

VERY interesting.

love to all,
THO

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May 15, 2006: Hi again, fellow scribes. Ed looks at Elfinblade's Tethyr queries this time: "I am in dire need of some linguistic and some gastronomical lore. I don't know whether you know these particular words from before, or if you would be so kind as to "invent" them for me now. I am looking for some translations from English to Tethyrian(?).

- 1: Shimmering black lights. (i realize single word translations may differ from entire sentences, but here it is the sentence i need translated)
- 2: Spiral (like in a spiral of stairs)
- 3: Murky Depths (Same as #1)

And now for some food/drink lore if you have time for it :P

In Tethyr, do you have any local dinner meals? I am looking in particular at specific meals from the northern reaches of Tethyr, near the coast.

Same goes with beverages. Not necessarily spirits or ale (although tis welcome if you would give a few ale specialties) but maybe if they drink milk? from goats, or cows perhaps? What about fruit juices? This is a land rather far south in Faerûn, i would guess they had certain juices and such. Wine from grapes perhaps?

Anyhow, thanks for the effort you put into answering us lorefreaks who believe lore is one of the aspects of role-playing in the realms that is the most important. It is really appreciated :)"

Ed replies:

Hi, Stig. You're very welcome, and I, too, treasure little details and rich, deep Realmslore. Which is, of course, why I'm here. It warms my heart that so many gamers care about the Realms enough to worry over small details and seek answers.

Which brings me to yours. :}

Kajehase rightly pointed out that Common is spoken in Tethyr, and indeed all the words you're seeking are simply spoken in Common. However, there are two relevant local dialect words: "glestaer" ("GLESS-tay-rr") for 'shimmering,' and "dusspel" ("duh-ss-PELL") for opaque, muddy, or dark depths (of water, not 'down a hole'). The sentence construction in Tethyr is pure Common, aside from a local tendency to say "am I" (as in: "Thirsty am I," "Drunk am I," "Weary am I," and so on (rather than "I'm weary") and a preference for "methinks" and "mayhap" for "I think" and "perhaps," respectively. So everyday English should suffice for most converse.

Now for the gourmands' lore, which (looks down at own belly, smiles in fond memories of enjoyable feasts galore that built it) I ALWAYS have time for.

Tethyr is a verdant, long-settled country, with many farms, coastal and river fishing, and cultivated vineyards mainly inland, in the south and particularly southeast of the realm. Local meals vary of course with the wealth of the diners and the resources available to them (fresh fish in ports and along the coastal roads, smoked or salted fish elsewhere), but in general:

Meals in rural Tethyr tend to consist of large morningfeasts (of what we moderns might call "bubble-and-squeak" or, along the coast, "kedgeriee:" leftovers of vegetables and meat scraps, or fish, fried in onions and oil); light 'past highsun' daytime snacks (field meals for farm workers, but called "runsun" everywhere in the realm) of a drink and a pie (cold meat pies of spiced roast fowl

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or leftover meats such as ham, diced beef, smoked meats or, along the coast, fish, chopped and mixed with diced parsnips or potatoes in a spinach- and mint- or hot-peppers-dominated "simmer sauce"); and then evenfeast.

Evenfeast is the longest meal of the day, typically being served after dark (when 'day work' is done). At expensive inns and in grand houses, it will be a large meal of multiple courses, including spiced vegetables in various sauces, fowl stuffed with herbed meats and "frothed" vegetables (all washed down with various wines, and ending with a sweet fruit tart of some sort).

In simpler households, evenfeast tends to be a large, hearty "manymeats" stew (again, in coastal settlements, the stew is often replaced with skewers of roast with diced vegetables fish [we real-world moderns might call them "fish-kebabs," though the term is unknown in the Realms]), accompanied by garlic bread or cheese-flavored bread, and with a dessert of diced cheese and apples, or even a sweet (berry) pie.

Children, nursing mothers, and sick folk drink either mint water or warmed mead with every meal, but the normal beverages are small beer made in every household, or flagons of a clear, faintly yellow, bitter white wine from southern Tethyr called "Ilurdren" or just "Ilur" (or less polite things, like "horsepiss," by outlanders encountering it for the first time). Farmers who keep livestock (and their immediate neighbours) drink the milk of both goats and cows, but most milk goes into making the "sharp" flavored (more like old real-world Cheddar than anything else) orange, crumbly local cheeses (called such things as Aerdruth and Hammaree, after the long-dead Tethyrians credited with concocting the recipes for the various cheeses).

Berry mash (boiled, from the crushed and overripe fruit, when in season) is drunk, but tends to act (and be used) more as a laxative than a beverage. No other juices are known, though no one cutting or biting into fruit would dream of wasting the juice that gushes forth (cutting is done in bowls, that are then drunk from, though no one tends to gather juice and sell it to anyone else).

Sausages aren't unknown, but tend to be purchased from northern Calimshan; in Tethyr, a "taste" for the highly-spiced Calishite meats is slowly spreading north. It's rare for smoked meats or livestock to be imported into Tethyr, which has enough of its own (and indeed exports same). In winter, root soups are popular, as are stews made from the tough bits of slaughtered animals and the worst-condition stored vegetables. Tethyrian cuisine tends to be simple and traditionally lightly seasoned, as befits a land that has an abundance of good, fresh food.

So saith Ed.

Who's made my tummy rumble again. Oh, well, off to the refrigerator...

There are more perilous expeditions, I suppose.

P.S. Dargoth: Ed didn't write the Ecology of the Dracolich in DRAGON.

P.P.S. To darkflame millithor: Ed was born in 1959, and has been a published writer since 1967 (his first DRAGON articles appeared in 1979, and his first Realms standalone books, game and fiction, were published in 1987). I'll pass your comments on to him (he's furiously busy right now, with, ahem, Secret Projects).

love,
THO

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May 16, 2006: Hello, all. Ed must be feeling guilty about keeping Kuje waiting on the special matter, because he's swiftly sent replies to this post: "Hi Ed, I'm thought we'd start this off easy and base these questions on the races from the PHB. :) Anyhow, I've been pondering some questions about demihuman and human babies and children.

1) What, on average, are the types of foods, besides breast milk, do humans and demihumans feed their babies and youngsters. Btw, since I asked about it, does the breast milk from the different demihumans taste different then the breast milk of humans?

2) What is some of the different furniture, and what does it look like, that the demihumans and humans use for babies and children when they are sleeping, being carried around the home or settlements, etc.

3) I'm curious about wet nurses and nannies based on the PHB races.

4) What are some of the toys each race gives their babies to children to play with. I know there are some games in Aurora's, but can you expand on those.

That's all of the questions I thought of for now. :)"

Ed replies:

1. Most babes and youngsters are milk-fed for a lot longer than in our real world, but are given mashed fruit (sparingly, to avoid laxative results!) as soon as they'll take it, if available, and "something to suck on" (teethe), often the small, pointed end of any vegetable with a fairly sturdy skin that doesn't readily "squirt" contents or dye things it touches (so, no tomatoes or beets). "Frothed" (mashed and whipped) starchy vegetables, such as potatoes or tubers (radishes, parsnips) are usually added to their diet next, but of course locally available foods and cuisine govern what younglings are fed.

And since you asked, :) yes, half-elves and elves have sweeter, SLIGHTLY more "minty" (menthol) breast milk than most humans (remember, in all races, breast milk varies in taste genetically, subracially, and by specific diet). Dwarves and gnomes have breast milk that tastes more buttery or nutty, and halflings have breast milk with a curious taste (black unsweetened real licorice?) threaded through it. I can't comment on the rarer demihuman races, because I haven't gotten around to, er, sampling. Yet. (And BTW, as we're on the topic, some adult males and even females, when visiting festhalls, do occasionally request and pay to suckle momentarily at ladies of the establishment who are nursing. I provide this lore because I just KNOW some Realms scribes will find an in-game use for it. :))

2. All of the demihuman races use "papoose" or similar carry-bags for babies and infants (slung around the bodies of adults, usually their mothers, and more often on the back than on the front or flank, though many of these garments can readily be "slid around" from side to side of the body to get them out of the way or just to ease muscles or balance posture. Humans in the Realms use such contrivances more rarely, though in some regions they use wicker baskets of a shape most real-world modern North Americans would recognize as a "cat basket" or the like. In cold, snow-in-winter regions, these often drop into shaped carry-sockets in sleds for overland transport.

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The sort of things we call strollers or prams or buggies are unknown in the Realms, and it should be emphasized that in the Realms most societies are closer to medieval, Renaissance, and Napoleonic real-world than to modern: once infants can walk, they are quickly taught to talk and to work, and are thought of as "little adults" (in other words, although everyone knows they're physically and emotionally immature, their position in society doesn't have the special "not responsible" status and treatment that our modern real world tends to accord children in "First World" countries). In many homes, children sleep and lounge in what we might call "round bean-bag chairs" (they are actually oval bed-couches made of scraps of old, worn clothing sewn together (what we might call "crazy-quilt" style, though that term is of course unknown in the Realms), and stuffed with fresh hay), or in "highrails" or "high beds" (cribs, sometimes consisting of a suspended-to-swing-or-rock sleeping pouch mounted between uprights).

The Realms is vast and many-cultured, and over time and from place to place and race to race, a huge variety of such furniture has been tried or seen regular use.

3. So am I. :}

Oh, a serious answer? Both wet nurses and nannies exist in all races, but among communities with strong family ties (or extended clans), doing either of these roles as a paid profession is rare. Among humans, doing it for pay is the norm, and of course hiring such servants is most common among royalty and nobility (and wealthy, socially-climbing, aspiring-to-become-nobility merchant families). Among poor rural humans, nannies tend to be aunts or grandmothers dwelling in the household anyway - - the same relations as customarily serve as nannies among dwarves, gnomes, halflings, and many elves. (Wet nursing is of course limited by who's lactating, why, for how long, and what their status and situation is.)

4. Balls of carved wood (among gnomes and dwarves, these are often intricate "trick lock" carved wooden puzzles that only older, defter childrens' fingers can get open, to reveal a hollow cavity usually holding peas or metal chimes, to make it a rattle) are popular with all races, as are carved wooden horses and "small squat people" figures of various races (so dwarves can play "fighting off bad orcs" from a very young age).

Wooden "hammer-peg" (through holes in a wooden "thing") games (with little hammers) are popular among dwarves and gnomes, as are "building blocks" (made of real stone, of course). Among all the races, for slightly older children, sets of carved and painted wooden model warriors (and steeds, sometimes including dragons) see use, and dress-up dolls (played with by both genders) are popular with all races.

In short, there's not a lot different from real-world childrens' toys and games (pre-plastics and catalogues and "safety first" design and big-time marketing, that is). Spinning tops and gliders and toy bows and arrows can all be found, local resources determine what things are made of, and local traditions determine what toys and "wide games" (tag, capture the flag, and so on) are played. And yes, "dress up" in discarded old adults' clothing is ever-popular.

I don't have the time right now to detail more of the specific invented games of the Realms, I'm afraid. Sorry. My life is hairily busy right now!

So saith Ed.

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Trying hard to bring us all more Realmslore, as usual. Oh, Blueblade: he says three big ones (and one of those three is HUGE), and the usual six or so "routine" Secret Projects. All on top of the dozen-some Not-Secret Projects. Hmmm; Ed must be taking it easy...

love to all,
THO

On May 16, 2006 THO said: tauster, Ed's a Blackmore's fan (though of course spellsingers were created when Deep Purple was still going strong), and Dargoth, I can answer your Dracolich query without even sending it to Ed.

Ed created Dracoliches, definitely. I remember the article going off to DRAGON well after we'd encountered them in the 'home' campaign. I ALSO remember the Dragotha text (much later) being mailed by TSR to Ed, for an unofficial editing "look-see" before publication - - because he showed it to us for a "last chance at fixing glitches we'd noticed during play."

love,
THO

May 17, 2006: Hi, all. Bookkeeping time again, one of those irregular occasions upon which Ed and I briefly provide answers (and half-answers) to divers questioners (so read carefully, assembled scribes!), to wit:

Quinton, Ed says:

Thanks for the kind words, and yes, Wizards really SHOULD pay me for it, because it is, as you say, great advertising - - and because I haven't bathed in coins for... oh, gosh, it's been a decade now. In fact, I just paid my taxes and I'm broke (starving writer, will write swift and swiftly-gratifying sex scenes for food...). Ahem. Seriously, I'm happy that the "real Realms" has shown through the all-too-common misconceptions of the setting for you, and though Kuje was right about my not wanting to harm Rich Baker's great trilogy by talking overmuch about Hillsfar, let me say this much: the racism is official ruling policy, enforced by the Red Plumes but little loved by the populace. There are still a few half-elves who can pass for human with the right cosmetics and/or spells and keeping indoors by day, and do so - - and a handful of halflings and gnomes who keep hidden in cellars and underground rooms, making a good living as armorers, locksmiths, and repairers of metal items (working for humans who run smithies and shops as "fronts" with such non-humans as the unseen 'backroom' crafters). In the streets, though, Hillsfar is a human-only city.

To be safe and fair to all, consider these words of mine to be uttered BEFORE The Last Mythal trilogy begins and any events of MYSTERIES OF THE MOONSEA befall, okay?

RodOdom, Ed says:

Well, the short answer is that I DIDN'T create the Realms for my gaming group, initially. I created it by linking together fantasy short stories I'd written, into a larger setting. I really started detailing it as a world after D&D gameplay began in it, yes, as a result of the inquisitiveness, roleplaying

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skills and hunger, and expectations (and attention to detail) of my superb group of players. As The Sage and Kuje mentioned, I've talked about this many times before, but what keeps me going is: love. Not just love of my creation, but the feeling of being wanted and appreciated that scribes here at Candlekeep, other Realms fans all over the world, and my players all give me. It's warming and satisfying to make friends - - and then make those friends happy.

(Here, have a hug. :))

As for the gods' beliefs about fate and destiny: nope. They may try to fool mortals by speaking of such things, but to be a god, one MUST believe in free will - - or take the view that one's own godhood is false, because somewhere unperceived there must be REAL gods who control we gods, and thus provide Fate and Destiny. This is a philosophical pit that scribes here at Candlekeep and game designers and fiction editors at TSR and my own players have wallowed around in before, but for the gods to gain and lose power by gaining and losing worshippers, and for PCs to truly be heroes, fate and destiny CAN'T exist. And there goes all the motivation for sitting down and playing the game, right? Otherwise, it's like sitting down to listen to the DM run and determine everything: he's the TV set and you're just watching the show...

Purple Dragon Knight, Ed says:

Your suspicions of Vangerdahast's aims ("to sire a real "dahast" wizard and to train him to be at the head of Cormyr, err, to serve as an advisor to Azoun V.") are shrewd indeed. The truth, though? Ah, not yet, I'm afraid. I have to finish with this Knights trilogy, back in the past, first. Read it carefully, though, and you may learn all sorts of interesting and insightful things about all sorts of folks' future intentions regarding Cormyr.

So saith Ed.

Who will return with more housekeeping swift-replies next time.

love to all,
THO

May 18, 2006: Hello again, all. As promised, Ed returns with more housekeeping replies:

To Jamallo Kreen, Ed saith: those Elminster-attacking "memory-devouring brain worms" haven't been "written up" as official game monsters. Yet. There's a good reason for that. No, I can't say more right now. Other than to hint that you may soon see, in print, yet ANOTHER sort of "memory-devouring brain worms" in action, in the Realms.

To Kuje and The Sage, Ed says: I honestly don't know who provided the pronunciations in the Old Gray Box. The two most likely persons are of course Jeff Grubb and Karen Boomgaarden, but I've never asked.

And to Kajehase, Ed saith: Kuje is right: Cylyria Dragonbreast is indeed a half-elf (and the FRCS is in error). I must tell more of her tale someday...

To VonRaventheDaring, Ed replies: Yes, I do use psionics, but sparingly. Usually in the form of characters having 'wild talents' (minor personal powers). I've spoken before here at Candlekeep

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about my experiments in psionic combat. I don't have any plans for adding any psionic-related elements to the Realms right now, because (bwuhahahaha) I have much bigger things on my plate, that I'm working on and that bid fair to keep me busy for years - - with more things being dumped onto that plate constantly! And yes, she does, and as for the sampling: take a number, sir, take a number. :} The end of the line is over the crest of yonder hill.

To Slime Lord, from back in September of 05, Ed adds this to his reply on the demonhandling debate: Though the priests of the Morninglord might question your sorcerer of Lathander character pretty closely about this if the character made a practice (frequent habit) of it, otherwise it'd be morally fine, as you're trying to bring about a "new beginning" for the demon.

To Asgetrion (also from back in September of 05), Ed says: You're very welcome re. the guilds reply, and glad you liked "Best of Eddie." "Living Forever" is certainly 'different' and so helps to balance the collection, and the other two are personal favourites of mine, too. It will probably be years before any "The Best of Eddie, Part 2" (so save those neighbours for now) as the spotlight shifts to Elaine now. In the meantime, I'll just have to devote myself to writing more worthy Realms short stories (in my spare time, of course :}) and getting them out to scribes of the Realms in various venues. Ah, to have more time...

To Anticlion Son of Semnion, Ed says: Well met, and the honour is mine. I trust the good sage Eric Boyd has answered your Hellfire Wyrms query adequately; consider his words definitive - - but don't hesitate to ask on other matters here; I'm all ears and mouth, it seems. :} [No comments on this point, thanks, Lovely Lady Hooded!]

So saith Ed, Creator and Peerless Master of the Realms.

And to Smyther, I can add a quick confirmation: Semphar and Murghôm were indeed part of Ed's original Realms.

love to all,
THO

May 19, 2006: Hello again, fellow scribes. Back in July of 2005 The Sage posted: "As some at Candlekeep already know, I'm a classically trained musician with a passion for baroque music. As such, I have a question for Ed... which relates not only to my personal interests, but also to a project I'm working on for Candlekeep.

Although it is a mundane topic, I find music in fantasy settings to be an extremely rewarding topic to read about. There's been detailings on the music at play in the Realms through the years, however I'm now looking for something extra.

So, what can you tell me about the state of music in the Realms? Whether it be a common bard's song sung in the taverns of Luskan, or a seven-hour long opera about King Azoun's last days in the Royal Court of Cormyr... music touches the lives of all who live in the Realms.

I of course know of the few Dragon articles dedicated to the topic (which you've written in the past), so I've already put those aside for research. I recall the discussion of musical instruments in both the original and 2e boxed sets, as well as the FRCS. And I know also of the instruments and musical works that have been mentioned in some of the novels.

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I have all that. What I'm looking for, is how you would visualise the musical scene in some of the more "cultured" regions of the Realms -- for example Sembia, Waterdeep... and perhaps even Thay. What's popular among the upper classes, the middle classes, and the low classes? Have you expanded on the core instruments that we know are already used widely in the Realms.

I realise this is a fairly heavy topic to discuss, so I can appreciate the fact that Ed may have to take his time with this. As always, my thanks to both yourself and the Lady Hooded One."

Ed replies:

Yes, a vast topic indeed; akin to requesting "tell me about music in the world" in our real world. :}

So let's leap on your narrowing of it and ride that hard, answering just about the current musical scene in Waterdeep, in Cormyr/Sembia/Westgate, and Thay.

I'll tackle them one at a time, beginning with the City of Splendors:

Waterdeep: A very cosmopolitan, sophisticated 'crossroads' city with a wide tolerance for varied sorts of music (including theatrical music, "music hall"-style comical songs and parodies, and unseen-musicians background music).

With that said, here are the by-social-class generalizations:

The upper class (senior courtiers, nobles, the wealthiest wannabe-noble merchants, a few wealthy "landed individuals" [such as wizards] who've settled in Waterdeep and have both great wealth and the desire to maintain a public profile, and a handful of the wealthiest, most pretentious guildmasters) tend to sponsor musicians, and thereby help to introduce some avant-garde material - - but at the same time tend to share (as a group) the most conservative tastes in music: they most often want their hired (or in some cases staff) musicians (yes, the "minstrels in the gallery") to play instrumentals, "the classics" (slow, stately dances [think the Baltimore Consort "O Mistris Mine" I mentioned back in 2005]; the more sedate or sadder traditional ballads arranged into what we might call symphonies [think Respighi's "Ancient Airs & Dances" or Praetorius]; and short 'mood' pieces [think "Elspeth of Nottingham" by Focus]) with instrument solos but limited improvisation.

The middle class is governed more by fads than any of the other classes, and tirelessly hires local musicians to rework traditional ballads with updated topical lyrics (or even to craft advertising jingles out of them), or - - aping the upper class - - hires musicians to compose and perform tributes at funerals [think "Alexandra Leaving" by Leonard Cohen]. "New songs by new singers" are constantly welcomed, in an endless 'hit parade' (if Ravallo the Minstrel is a hit at Daunaethna's evenfeast, he'll be wanted by respectable matrons up and down the city for at least a tenday). As everyone also tries to keep "just the tunes they like" in the everchanging ferrago, the result is a wide variety of music centered on memorable melodies, from sad ballads [think such traditional standards as "Molly Malone" as done by the Limelitters or "She Moved Through the Fair" as done by Nana Mouskouri] through LOTS of narrative ballads [think "Lord Baker" as done by Sinead O'Connor and Christy Moore, "The Prickly Bush" as done by Steeleye Span, or "The Lady of Shalott" as done by Lorena McKennitt] and comic or satirical songs [the traditional "The Vicar of Bray," or "The King" by Steeleye Span] to catchy little ditties [think "Cheerio" by Jethro Tull] and the occasional quieter 'mood' song [think "Love Itself" by Leonard Cohen]. The middle class is the group most accepting of truly new and different material - - but they want strong, memorable melodies.

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Except for catchy dance tunes and simple "strike-the-tables and roar-the-chorus" protest songs (what are now sometimes called "anthems" in our real world for their popularity, though they're not sacred choral music in any way), the lower class hates the new and unfamiliar. (Again, please remember that I'm generalizing and therefore stereotyping here; individuals of this class or the other classes may differ from what I say here.) They want traditional ballads with strong rhyme and rhythm, that they can dance to or at least sing along with. They'll tolerate a few new lines of lyrics (topical social protest or society jokes) delivered by a popular singer leading the song, but otherwise, stray not from the familiar words and tune - - or else! Dock Ward holds dear many sea chanties and sailors' songs [think "Three Fishers" by Stan Rogers], and loves either songs of sad rage [think "The Faith" as done by Leonard Cohen] or comic songs with bite [think "The Irish Ballad" by Tom Lehrer].

Beyond the human voice, instruments used in all of this include the birdpipe (pan pipes), glaur (fashioned like a saxophone, sounds like a serpent or a chanter depending on size and how played), hand drum, great drum (kettle drum), longhorn (flute), shawm (oboe), songhorn (recorder), tantan (tambourine), yarting (guitar), lute, harp, artang (dulcimer: bowed or plucked, NEVER hammered), straele (violin equivalent: is usually shaped like one of those tall, tapering wooden metronomes), cradled in one arm whilst rested in crotch or on chair one's sitting on, and bowed), great straele (cello or bass viol equivalent: is stood on floor and plucked or bowed), and drone (a large, stationary double-reed instrument with a bladder and several mouthpieces, played by multiple musicians and sounding either like the drones of a bagpipe or an organ or synthesizer that's being played like the background supporting tone in the aforementioned "Lord Baker").

The "scene" (no Faerûnian would ever call it that, of course, or even think of "music" in a collective, overview manner: in Common, "minstrelsy" is all live music except "holy" music, and is either "song" [vocal], "allsong" (choir and orchestra or instrumental accompaniment), or "wordless" (instrumental, but may include wordless vocalizations; many musicians use their voices to extend or modify the sounds their instruments can make) is lively, profitable for musicians (even in winter, for although the population shrinks, there's a lot less that can pleasantly be done outdoors, so more musicians are "hired in" for an evening, or paid to teach songs to children, elderly or infirm family members, and servants with good singing voices, for family entertainment later), and on the whole open to new talent, styles, and presentations.

So saith Ed.

Who will do Cormyr/Sembia/Westgate next time.

love to all,
THO

May 20, 2006: Hello again, all. Ed continues his 'music scene of the Realms' replies to The Sage, by examining the Cormyr/Sembia/Westgate area.

Heeeere's Ed:

Cormyr/Sembia/Westgate: All of the ports are very similar in musical tastes, regardless of realm, and have different "scenes" than the uplands (northern Cormyr and Sembia).

Lilting "lover and his lass" and "brave knight bold against the dragon" traditional ballads were formerly THE music of both the ports and the uplands, augmented in the ports (only) by a few

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VERY rhythmic courtly dances (Tudor-style stuff; think Terry Tucker's "Overture To The Sun" from the Clockwork Orange soundtrack).

The ballads are still popular, usually sung by a minstrel playing harp or yarting (guitar), but the dances are now favored only in Suzail and Westgate, and inside the halls of various Cormyrean nobles (and a few Sembian rich merchants who admire, and ape the fashions and lifestyles of, said nobility).

What's come along to displace the dances are grand, feel powerful, important, uplifted, and wealthy "the future is a bright flame in our grasp" pieces of music performed by a dozen or more musicians and singers (split roughly half-and-half). The singers provide softly-harmonizing, "fading in and out" choruses (sometimes chanting, momentarily plainsong for emphasis at the climax or close of some pieces [think (Enya- or later-Clannad-style vocals)]. What drives and dominates the songs, however, are intertwined, harmonizing, "proud" warhorns (trumpets), glaur, and gloon (single-note, valveless glaur) playing repeated motifs [think Terry Tucker's "Overture To The Sun" again, but with no percussion at all]. In many of these tunes, the warhorns try to sound like hunting horns, with high signal calls answered by fainter ("distant") responses. Multiple fast-plucked (with metal "talon" picks that fit over the musician's fingers like false nails) yarting move the tunes along (quickly, always with warlike or galloping energy) between the trumpet motifs.

This new musical fashion has developed in the region, blossoming so swiftly that such pieces haven't yet acquired a collective name, though the term "ardanthe" (from the Chondathan word for "strong heart" or "stirring spirit" [alert scribes will notice that this is also a feminine given name, that has appeared earlier in this thread]) is gaining popularity.

However, their emergence has been embraced only in the cities of Cormyr, Sembia (and Westgate itself); in the uplands, such sounds have been greeted with puzzlement and disgust, with traveling bards and minstrels expected to provide the traditional ballads - - and the rural folk themselves cleaving to simple (usually plaintive "everyday complaints") songs that can be sung in what we real-world moderns would call a capella choruses of untrained voices [think of what one hears in the Kipper Family British folk parodies, or when singers are stronger: Steeleye Span vocals but without the electric instruments]. Thus far, the uplands folk scorn the new ardanthes.

So, too, do the lower classes (servants) in all of the cities. The urban Sembian middle and upper classes lead the way in embracing new "outland" sounds, and in Yhaunn a crude keyboard-and-wires instrument, the "jassaran" (after its creator, one Jassaran Dungran), has just been invented, and is enjoying wild popularity in the dining clubs. The jassaran sounds like a simple spinet or harpsichord. Instrumental pieces galore are being improvised for it, but only the future will reveal if its popularity is lasting, or spreads beyond the cities of Sembia (if I was betting, I'd say yes and yes, but then I'm operating on what happened in our real world AND on a stereotypical view of the mercantile and social energy of Sembia, and of course both of those suppositions may lead me astray in this particular instance).

So saith Ed, adding fascinating detail that I hope is delighting The Sage (at least as much as it is me).

Ed will cover Thay's musical "scene" next time.

love to all,
THO

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May 21, 2006: Hi again, all. Ed herewith brings us all the last of his trio of "music scenes of the Realms" replies to The Sage, this time describing Thay:

The zulkirs and most powerful Red Wizards immediately under them in ranking enjoy a great variety of music 'picked up' on travels all over Faerûn, and of course have both the "recording and playback" spells and enslaved musicians to privately enjoy music, which many of them use to mind-focus for meditation, spell memorization, and relaxation.

Thay also has a prevailing national style of music (the only sort likely to be heard outside the private quarters of its upper classes), and it has been shaped by slave-handling: it's dominated by heavy drumbeats, providing a cadence for marching or rhythmic work. Usually large "walking drums" (tom-tom style drums, shaped like tops [the child's toy] but half the height of a man) are strapped to the chests of musicians and played with the flat of the hand or paddles, a dozen or more drummers striking in unison to create a deep, rolling beat. Over this blare warhorns (trumpets), that play martial-sounding fanfares. A single horn will then play a long, wandering melodic line, give way to a counter-melody from a "second call" (another horn), return to briefly harmonize with that second horn, and then other horns will join in again for another fanfare-like resolution. On long marches or day-long work, this process is of course repeated (ad nauseam, most outlanders or slaves would judge).

Inside the private homes, taverns, and clubs of the middle and lower classes, another, more wanton style of music is danced to (usually by slave girls or staff "house shes"): drum-heavy tunes in which a lone female singer vocalizes above a deep drumbeat [think "Dilko Tamay Huay," the ghazal heard in the Michael Danna soundtrack to the movie *Exotica*]. The melodic line in such compositions (and there are quiet ones, played for variety among the thundering-beat mainstays) is carried by wire-string yarting, piping glaur and orthunn ("deep shawms:" deep-voiced, floor-standing bass shawms), and usually consists of repeated musical phrases that sound almost like questions or challenges. These songs are known as "thaeraeden," which means "life-laments," and they tend to be melancholy complaints and then shrugging "but I'll go on" acceptances of troubles in love, commerce, and reputation in the eyes of the "greatspells" (powerful Thayan wizards).

This musical "scene" in Thay is fairly static: there are no great breakthroughs in terms of new sounds, instruments, or styles (except on a private individual basis, among the tastes of the powerful wizards), only new compositions among the thaeraeden (and in a club or tavern, an essential conservatism of the populace is revealed: "new" thaeraeden are all very well, but give us some standards, and be sure to build to an ending of three or four "old favourites").

So saith Ed.

And there you have it: the musical "scenes" among the social classes in three areas of the Realms, complete with notes on instruments (and along the way, a partial, passing answer to Neriandal Freit's question about music-recording magic, too). Great Realmslore.

Oh, and Jamallo Kreen: Ed's a Canadian, so it's "Zed." Except when he's talking to Americans (most of his publishing contacts and co-designers, at Wizards and elsewhere), whereupon out of courtesy he pronounces it "Zee." (Remember, Americans usually only "sound out" letter names when they're rhyming, so it's a little pointless to wreck an American-penned rhyme or lyric.)

love to all,
THO

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May 22, 2006: Hello again, all. This time Ed makes answer to Never, in the matter of "I have a few queries for Mr. Greenwood. The first is about non-slave, possibly lethal pit fighting. How popular, and legal, is it in the Realms? Are there any well-known circuits or venues? How much would a prize purse usually be for small locales (such as the basement of an alehouse), middle size locales, and the largest ones (such as a large arena in a metropolis)? The second is military foodstuffs. What would the average meals of an infantry conscript consist of? Thank you for your time and answers."

Ed replies:

Pit fighting and arena contests, except as non-lethal tests or rites of passage of warrior training, aren't very popular in the Realms, because tavern brawls are the usual way of letting off steam. Locals sometimes bet on the outcome of fights between local "thicknecks" and truculent visiting outlanders, yes, and tavernmasters who want the ale business and value it over the "get out of here before you break my furniture and crockery" factor often offer, as prizes to winners, free meals (or if it's an inn, free lodging, stabling, and food for the night). There are also, of course, occasional groupies who want to spend the night with the brawl-winners.

Such contests are rarely illegal (unless a brawl rises into the "endangering the peace" category, particularly if there's a risk of fire spreading or feuds arising), simply because there are no specific laws against them. There is no "circuit" of professional fighting, but there are some venues (the arena in Hillsfar, the Field of Triumph in Waterdeep, and various outdoor amphitheatres in Calimshan). In places such as Luskan and Athkatla, folk like to bet on fights between humans or trained beasts (often quite small creatures), but such contests are usually held in taverns, clubs, or the private homes of aficionados. In any place in the Realms, prisoners of war or captured raiders (such as orcs) may be allowed to fight for their lives, or fight each other to the death, for local sport, and across slaving areas of the South slaves are often forced to fight each other for the entertainment value it affords their owners and the friends and guests of their owners (blindfolded and oiled nude slave-girls flaying each other with dagger-blade-studded whips, for instance). In Dambrath and other places, honour-duels may become public sport, but we're straying far from circuits of professional fighters making a living fighting each other.

As for military meals, the answer usually is: whatever the army could forage, almost always thrown into a stew. Cookwagons carry great cauldrons of leftover stew, firewood and kindling, not-yet-peeled potatoes, and all game and livestock (blood and all) slaughtered along the way, for use in cooking when camp is established. So frequently a 'wartrail' meal is: watered-down ale (to mitigate fighting and to stretch the drink farther), some hardbread, and stew that the Common saying "armies march on bread and the bowl" has become well-known and lasting. Wealthy realms with well-trained and -equipped troops (Cormyr, for instance) try to feed their warriors on a diet of handloaves of bread, salads drenched in tasty spiced sauces that the men will like and that can be used to cover the taste of food that's going bad, sausages, and handwheels of cheese. Add those to water (shaken with mint to kill any muddy or swampy taste), and your well-fed men will march and fight for days. Common army cooking trick: roast any foraged meat (livestock or small furry things) over fire and let the drippings douse warming handloaves laid in pans underneath.

So saith Ed.

Not a brawler, but a staunch trencherman, to be sure.

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love to all,
THO

May 22, 2006: Verghityax, here's a long-ago note from Ed to me, about that very same error:

#27 is missing, but refers to both buildings south of ("below" on the map, also fronting on the triangular "square" where the roads meet) the Kryson horse farm (#9)

"The Cup" is the inn proper, and is the larger and more southerly of the two buildings. "The Spoon" is the stables, but used to be a local feast-house (restaurant, in this case specializing in soup), hence its name.

So saith Ed.

There you go! Instant answer!

love,
THO

May 23, 2006: And right back at you, Foxhelm!

Hi again, scribes. This time Ed turns to Trace_Coburn's post: "Quick vocabulary question for the Bearded Bard: what are the Faerûnian equivalents for the word-concept 'Reaver'? I'd imagine that there are all manner of words for bandits and marauders, of course - including quite a few that probably don't bear repetition in polite company - but I'd like words/phrases which convey a real sense of dread and an impression of truly bestial, over-the-top brutal savagery. An especial focus on Chondathan, elven, and Damaran terms would be nice, but you're probably a little too overloaded to be so specific, so anything you can throw my way would be appreciated.

Thanks muchly."

Ed replies:

Sure, here we go:

Common gives us the relevant terms "darkblades" for irresponsibly violent mercenaries and warriors (apt to "get out of hand" when given orders, lovers-of-violence and cruelty), "bloodhilt" and "proper bloodhilt work" for butchery and kill-everyone-for-the-satisfaction-of-it sprees, and "bloodstorms" for large and terrible slaughters (massacres that wipe out villages, genocide-like executions of everyone of a race or gender in an area, and so on).

Chondathan has "rakrathen" for professional pirates, mercenaries, and outlaws-through-choice who kill wantonly, and "garrathen" for their raids, but it also has "culdur" for berserk or maniacal slaughter.

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Damaran uses "sturrulk" for senseless slaying, "lultaur" ("lull-TOR") for massacres or large-scale butchery, and "lessaelen" for wanton destruction (burning good shelter in winter or when winter is approaching, despoiling wells or food, leaving bodies to attract monstrous scavengers and so endanger others, and so on).

Elven provides the word "essraul" for enthusiastic slaying (and the resort to killing over diplomacy or other means of dealing with foes or conflicts), and "arkhdrauth" for willful, wanton, care-for-nothing destruction. "Hahlorkh" are butchers: non-elf brutes and savages - - or (as a deadly insult) elves who behave that way (which is why some elves call drow "lorkh," implying they're all savage butchers who lost their elven nature long ago through such behaviour).

And yes, "a little too overloaded" describes my life very well, these days. :}

So saith Ed.

Linguistic master of the Realms. Not that there are all that many other candidate...

love to all,
THO

On May 23, 2006 THO said: Hi Foxhelm and Scarabeus,

In 2nd Edition there's much more information about Song Dragons, by Ed, under their old (and better) name of Weredragons. Ed was planning to expand their 3rd Edition data, but [NDA, I'm afraid].

love,
THO

May 24, 2006: Hello again, candle-bearing scribes of Realmslore.

Indeed, Kuje, DoF is exactly why Ed dodged behind his NDAs re. song dragons.

Jamallo Kreen, I can certainly send your query off to Ed re. who's influenced him, but it is something he's answered many times before.

However, be not downcast: back in October of 05, Jamallo Kreen asked: "From what is drow "green wine" made?"

Ed now replies:

From subterranean fungi, distilled in a mix of water and the juice of another sort of subterranean fungi.

The first-mentioned fungi is orbloren, an abundant, "greenish blobby growth" fungi that grows on certain sorts of rock walls where moisture is present. Orbloren is distinctive (and so not mistaken

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for other sorts of fungi), and is disgusting in taste and not nutritious, but not harmful either, if simply eaten. To be made into wine, it must be boiled (distilled) in water into which another sort of fungi (the abundant "gray scaly scabs" of marrult (real-world note: imagine gray-hued slices of pepperoni thrown against a stone wall and sticking, in clusters) has been crushed (not much marrult is needed to make the water "right" for distilling the orbloren, but lots of marrult yields the richest, most tasty and valued green wine).

The distillate is captured in a (colder) metal "hood and bowl" affair, above the boiling vessel, collected, and then chilled in the dark (often by immersion of metal containers of it in subterranean streams) for forty days or so, by which time it's drinkable "green wine." If drunk earlier, it burns the tongue and throat. If murky, adding just a few grains of salt will clear it. It keeps for years, unless made to boil, which gives it a disgusting burnt taste and black, oily hue (whereupon it's not poisonous, just horrible).

There are strong drow alcoholic drinks that use spider venom or secretions as ingredients, but believe not the rumours: green wine is not one of them.

So saith Ed, Master Vintner (and Imbiber) of the Realms.

Hail to the bottom of my flagon! DOWN THE DREGS!

love to all,
THO

On May 24, 2006 THO said: JK, SPELLJAMMER and its "crazy physics" was the brainchild of Jeff Grubb, who invited his good friend Ed aboard to write LOST SHIPS, the first SJ supplement.

However, Ed IS a member of SFWA, and hobnobbed with all the hard sf types "back in the day" - - such as Larry Niven (creator of the Ringworld). I know Ed is familiar with Dyson Spheres and many of the other postulated configurations for "created" worlds, and enjoyed reading multigenerational spaceship tales from Heinlein's classic ORPHANS IN THE SKY onwards. I know Ed has read all of Clarke's fiction (he was asked to interview Sir Arthur at the ALA Annual Conference in Orlando, a few years back), and that would of course include RAMA - - but Ed's father is a physicist, and I seem to recall seeing him on a black-and-white university television show (archived from its original broadcast, back in the late 1960s) talking about a space-travelling cylinder being a "configuration with good possibilities" for an "artificial planetary body for humanity to expand into" (and demonstrating this with a toilet paper tube [which in Canada at least is a cylinder of white cardstock!]). So Ed's father would probably be his influence in this matter, not Sir Arthur.

love,
THO

May 25, 2006: Hi again, all. This time, Ed tackles Dargoth's query: "In Powers of Faerun Scylla has a penalty for maintaining troop numbers for the Zhentilar due to their recent loss in Shadowdale.. Should the Town Watch and Town Guard of Waterdeep suffer a similar penalty due

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to the War against the fight Phaerimm in Evereska where probably close to 95% of the troops who served in Laerals and Blackstaffs armies perished?"

Ed replies:

No. If those losses had occurred in Waterdeep or right outside the walls, yes. However, this was an expedition to elsewhere, a "glorious struggle to save all the Realms" about which the Moonstars have been whispering much stirring misinformation, in Waterdeep, since it occurred. The only Watch and Guard members who participated were those who volunteered (wanted) to go, and the result has been that those who didn't have all 'moved up' in the ranks. They "know" most everyone who "went off to war" died, but that doesn't make them not want to be in the Watch or Guard at all: it makes them want to stay at home in Waterdeep and "do their proper jobs" more than ever! (So, no penalty.) Now, if you or I (or Khelben!) started wandering around the city now, calling on Watch and Guard members to join our new "expedition to war elsewhere," I'd suspect we'd face a VERY stiff penalty, yes.

So saith Ed.

Who doesn't want to go off to war anywhere.

love to all,
THO

May 26, 2006: Hello again, fellow scribes of the Realms. Herewith, Ed responds to Kuje's question: "Hiya Ed, I was wondering if you could expand on the reference to the use of numerology in the Tashalar entry in the FRCS. What do they use? Dates/months/years? Their names? Both? How do they do readings? Um. I'll leave you to expand on that because I'm kinda surprised to see a reference to that as a divination tool. :)"

Ed replies:

The main fortune-telling tools in the Tashalar are decks of plaques (thin rectangles of polished ivory, abalone, jade, and other sustances; the poor may use wood, but metal cards aren't believed to "work," and are sold only to outlanders, to be used by children in play, or as adornments or 'shop samples') akin to tarot cards, and DMs and players can use real-world tarot decks if they want to, but I envisaged my own decks of cards that are all different ["major arcana" if you will], and have no suits. Most decks have 44 cards, and most Tashtan adults have their own personal deck (children watch and learn with "family decks"). Teenagers 'coming of age' are often given decks by their parents, either treasured "family vault" decks formerly owned by now-dead ancestors, or new ones (some folk believe the watchful sentience of the dead comes with their cards, and may influence the living to take vengeance, complete unfinished tasks, right wrongs, and so on).

These are known as "oro decks." One card is an "oraun," and multiple cards are "oro." Children can and do play a variety of "for fun" card games with them, but adults keep them out of sight when not in use, and use them only for divination: "scrying the oro."

The decks are shuffled and dealt in a variety of arrays to try to discern different things about the future. Most arrays use 16 cards or less, and the "next sixteen," separated out from the deck

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face-down, are turned over AFTER the array is read, and examined. Most of the scenes on oro cards have elements that can be counted, such as eyes (of creatures depicted on the card), leaves or coins or hands or weapons depicted in the scenes, and so on. All visible instances of a particular element in these "next sixteen" cards are totalled to derive a meaning; counting instances of another element yields another meaning or potential answer (an even number of eyes may mean one thing, and a total above, or below, or equalling the number of full decades the person "laying out" the cards has lived may mean another - - and so on.

I could spend about a year (if I had the time to spare, and we both know the truth about that) just listing meanings of the various orau and of the arrays, to say nothing of what meanings the appearances of particular oro cards in specific spots in an array are said to have, AND to say nothing of these numerological meanings. The astrological mention in the FRCS, by the way, refers to yet another divination method, that combines: the year and month of the card-user's birth, the ascendant constellation or star at the time of the reading, and the stars visible in the scenes on orau in the array (NOT the "next sixteen" or the rest of the deck). So I'm not going to say more about this now, other than to note that matters of health (including "will I survive this day's battle?") are usually examined by means of a seven-card array, and matters of romance with a nine-card array.

So saith Ed.

Who is finally facing the can of worms opened long ago, but not noticed (here and publicly, at least) until Kuje made his post. Kuje, Ed put a few of these plaques among treasure we Knights found early on, and we puzzled over them for almost a YEAR before finding the right NPC to ask about them. Not that knowing that is likely to make you feel better.

And a note to Kentinal: sorry, the Promenade is NDA'd right now. Ed will hang on to your question, though, until such a time as that NDA fades.

love to all,
THO

May 27, 2006: Hi again, all. This time, the Sage of the Greenwood looks at RevJest's recent query: "In the supplement "The North", on page 12, it states that a stone plaque was found on the Star Mounts with the inscription: "iqebaest Vhalraetaerl". Can you shed some light on what this means, and what it's all about?"

Ed replies:

I'm afraid not. That NDA still firmly applies. Sorry.

Sigh. Oh, well, can't win 'em all. Yet I can't offer scribes NO Realmslore at all, so here's another exchange of lore: createvmind: "What type of orcs were present in Faerun prior to the Orcgates being opened in -1075? I'm asking cause to the Imaskari now out and about would orcs be an unknown race to them, or did they travel to the orc world during their reign?"

Arivia promptly replied: "Mountain orcs existed previously to the opening of the Orcgates, and reportedly did not have much contact with the East. See Races of Faerun."

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And createvmind responded: "I knew some type of orc was present just didn't remember where info was, thanks Arivia."

Ed chimes in:

Arivia is right, as usual. Question ably answered.

Well, still no Realmslore. Let me dig into my inbox again. Ah, yes, Ed's reply about elven breeding, and KnightErrantJR's response: "I must say... I missed all of those elven subraces... and I thought Snow Elves and Ghost Elves were a stretch..."

Yes, thankfully Ed is giving us a peek behind the scenes from his (unpaid, off-site) days as a Contributing Editor of The Dragon (or mayhap it was a little later, when he was a Creative Editor of DRAGON), and the proposed races he mentioned were rejected articles.

Purple Dragon Knight chimed in: "Sh*t-Eater hey? ha ha ha! I'm glad to see that even the most noble of gaming groups always have their "direct-descriptive" moments!"

Oh, you'd be surprised (or perhaps not) at how earthy, crude, and blunt we can all be at times (e.g. the famous: "You suck!" with the response: "And not particularly well..."). Ahem.

However, that's still rather paltry Realmslore for waiting scribes, so here's another question (this time from RodOdom), and reply:

"Dear Ed and Lady H., This came up in a recent game: how do Halruaans regard the Chosen of Mystra? There probably is no more Mystra-centric society around than Halruaa. But they are also quite insular. How do they feel about not having Halruaans among the Chosen?"

Ed saith:

The Halruaans regard the Chosen of Mystra as servants of the Divine One, and so obey and revere them. As humans most in tune with the Weave, the Halruaans DON'T envy the Chosen or think it strange that there are no Halruaans in the ranks of the Chosen: they don't presume to understand or second-guess the deeds and thoughts of Holy Mystra.

Certain Halruaans have great personal pride (most evidenced by fighting for status and power against other Halruaans, within Halruaa) but the Chosen are regarded as part of the "great splendor" of Art that empowers and graces all Halruaans, NOT as "humans who got to be more powerful than us, and that we therefore resent." Halruaan thinking is more along the lines of "the Chosen are particularly apt-at-Art and noble-of-spirit humans who undertook a great burden for the betterment of us all."

So saith Ed.

Ah, that's better: a snippet of real Realmslore. Ed will return with more next time.

love to all,
THO

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May 28, 2006: Hello again, fellow scribes. This time Ed tackles this, from Foxhelm: "I was just curious if you could give me some details about Song Dragons, as I am thinking of creating a Song half dragon character and need more details. Unless it is NDA with Dragons of Faerun.

Like what is the colour of their electrically charged gas? Does it spark with juice?

With Kuje's info, I am curious about Half Song Dragons. Is it possible for them to occur naturally? (Creature father/Song Dragon Mother) Or do they just result from mystical sources. (Like the Dragon Disciple Prestige Class.) If so, is Narnra a Half Song Dragon whose draconic nature was suppressed by some method (like a spell from her mother?)

What is the character classes that Song Half Dragons tend to favour? Is it like the Copper Dragons they look like? (In RoDragons, Copper Dragons tend to favour the Rogue and the Bard. With the notes in Monsters of Faerun and their name, I can see the bard.)

This is just some of the questions that have popped up now. I hope you can answer some of these unless they are NDA due to DoF. Thanks."

Ed replies:

Foxhelm, I'm afraid I'm going to hide behind NDAs for now on all of these questions, in part because of DRAGONS OF FAERUN and in part because of some future hopes regarding Narnra. However, I'm keeping this question in my stacks of questions to deal with, because after DoF is released (and a little later, after something else that must for now remain mysterious sees print), I will probably be able to reveal a lot more, either in a Realmslore web column or here at Candlekeep. Good questions, but we must all be patient for now in the matter of their answers.

So saith Ed.

Master of Realmslore AND the Mysterious Hint.

love to all,
THO

May 29, 2006: Hi, again, all.

Wandering_mage recently posted this query: "I have heard and read about the Naturalist guild in the Fall of Myth Drannor and some say that there is a Cormyrian guild of Naturalists. Now due to geographical closeness, and the probability being pretty good that there were survivors from the first Naturalist guild of Myth Drannor (whether by traveling at the fall of Myth Drannor or something like that) are both guilds (new and old) related? How closely related are they if not directly? Are there any guild member families that have worked to rebuild the Naturalist guild from Myth Drannor in Cormyr to continue the work of their earlier family members? Any information you have would be very interesting to know. Thank you very much for your time."

Ed replies:

My pleasure, Wandering_mage. Here goes...

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The Cormyrean Guild of Naturalists is related to the extinct (long, long ago shattered and disbanded) Myth Drannan guild only in name. (Yes, despite what some members of the modern Cormyrean guild may claim.)

The modern Cormyrean guild is a professional fellowship of men who study animal and plant life with the aims of understanding natural cycles fully, and thereby exploiting natural substances (from plant saps and distillates to beast ichor and organs) to make scents, medicines, poisons, spell inks, dyes, sealants, preservatives, cooking herbs, and so on (the simple use of pelts, edible animals, and edible plants is too widespread for the guild to influence or claim any special expertise over). The Cormyrean guild is now evolving "guild families" simply because the chief skill of members is accumulated knowledge, and members' children are the best assistants (aside from fellow guild members), but neither guild has been well-established enough, for long enough, to permit the existence of strong, generation-to-generation "guild families."

So saith Ed, Who Knows All (or at least Fakes It Pretty Well).

love to all,
THO

May 30, 2006: Hi again, scribes. This time, Ed replies to two questions. First, from Verghityax: "Dear Ed and Lady Hooded One, A long time ago I asked you about the placement of some locations in Elturel and not so long ago the same about Iriaebor. You said that this information was under NDA. My current question is: is this info still under NDA? If yes, how long may it take for this info not to be under NDA anymore?"

Ed replies:

Yes, both of these queries are still under NDAs, and I'm afraid I have no idea how long they'll continue in force (their durations depend on publishing and licensing decisions made by Wizards of the Coast, and I sometimes learn about such decisions when all other scribes do: when a product appears, from a computer game manufacturer or Wizards, and I peruse it). As of right now, I'm guessing (and, please note, this is a GUESS) that I will know how much longer I'll have to wait, or even if I'll be able to answer you at all, about one of the two cities in late 2007 or early 2008. As for the other city, I simply don't know. Sorry. I can assure you this is as frustrating for you as it is for me.

So saith Ed.

Who now makes reply to this, from Jamallo Kreen: "I add my voice to those who request Ed to record some Realms music. I really want to hear this ballad of the Veiled Dancer!"

Ed speaks:

My singing voice is largely gone, thanks to a throat operation (and no, I'm not a smoker), but there may still exist a cassette tape of me singing two Realms ballads (one was Trollsong, that appeared in print in a Volo's Guide), that I sent to Karen Boomgaarden so she could practice "singing it properly" with a female friend and a guitar, for presentation at a GenCon (where they did indeed perform it, in one of the "quad" rooms upstairs in the old MECCA in Milwaukee, to a packed audience. I'd be happy to adopt a Realms persona (perhaps Mirt, or someone else in the

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Realms who sounds like a husky Leonard Cohen :) and butcheXXX ahem, essay a few ballads of the Realms, but there's never any darned TIME to do such things. I have fourteen major projects on the go right now (slow down? and how am I supposed to feed my family and pay my taxes? I'm a game writer, and we get paid table scraps!), and they all involve typing brilliant prose at a computer keyboard, not singing. Er, yet. :}

So saith Ed, Master Sage Most Overworked of the Realms.

And owner of far too many books and far too few shoes (that last being, admittedly, a feminine opinion).

love to all,
THO

May 31, 2006: Hi again, all. This time, Ed makes partial reply to Dagnirion's query: "Could you share with us some Elven folksongs? Titles, lyric, translations- whatever you have would be appreciated."

Ed speaks:

This is going to have to be a partial answer, because I stopped work on elven music when TSR decided (rightly) that using Tolkien's elf tongues was a no-no, and we were going to have to invent our own from ground up, grammar and all (up until then, I'd been building my own dialects by coining words, but using Tolkien's linguistic structure). I know where my old notes are but lack the time to dig them out now, to finish any lyrics or tunes.

However, I can give you a list of elven ballad titles, from my long-ago (1978) play session notes wherein the Company of Crazyed Venturers took in a performance by Mintiper at a tavern in Neverwinter:

Laeryn's Lament
My Love Green And Growing
Blood of My Sisters
The Moondapple Stag
Knights On The Ride
Thorn Of Rose
Winterwillow [an instrumental]
Greenhallow Mantle
Stone Fall, Tree Rise
The Lady Laughing
So saith Ed.

Who will keep your question in the pile to remind him to get at those lyrics and give you more. Someday.

love,
THO

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June 1, 2006: Back in January, Jamallo Kreen asked: "This is a question that others than Ed may be better able to answer: Since half the job in getting a new technology (or magic) developed is being aware that it can be done in the first place, what is the DC to be aware it is possible to create a spell like lolaum's Longevity?"

Is it possible, based upon rumors, Netherese remains, and Volo's gossip, to figure out what were the basic Epic seeds of lolaum's Longevity? If so, what would be the DC to know this in the 1360s and 1370s DR?

I'm not asking about the whole formula, only the general framework, which will require research per the rules."

Ed replies:

I'm afraid there's no hard-and-fast specific-DC-number answer to this one, Jamallo Kreen. It varies from individual to individual, depending on these factors:

The individual arcane spellcaster's personal past experience with the Art (what I have done before, what has been done to me, what I have practiced, what I've seen "go wrong," and what thinking I've done about all of my experiences, as well as my attempts - - if any - - to devise new spells, or variants of existing spells, in the past)

The individual arcane spellcaster's observations about the Art (what magics I've seen worked by others, what training I've had [and can I go and discuss new spell ideas with a more experienced spellcaster right now?], what I've observed at MageFairs, what books I've read or speeches [or drunken ravings, for that matter] I've heard)

The current "state of the Art" (what can spells do right now? are there known "impossibilities," areas of great interest or competition, brilliant new practitioners rapidly advancing a certain sort of spell?) I see you already have this factor in mind (your mention of "the 1360s and 1370s DR").

The individual arcane spellcaster's brain (do I get "flashes of inspiration"? can I vividly remember my dreams, and in those dreams do I see unknown magics worked? do I often get inspired by chatting with other spellcasters, or getting angry, or at moments of bliss or prayer - - and if so, do I often have the opportunity, and use such opportunities, to "get myself going" on thinking about magical possibilities?)

All of these factors affect a possible DC. Years back, I explored how to structure and "build" (2nd Edition) arcane spells from already-known spells and known properties of material components, in VOLO'S GUIDE TO ALL THINGS MAGICAL, and those approaches are still useful in 3.5e.

Of course, it's easy to "wing" a DC by basing it on the DC of a known spell, if what's being contemplated, or the problem being considered, is similar to the effect of a spell already known to the published D&D rules, and / or already known by the PC.

To answer you specifically about lolaum's Longevity: no. Characters in the Realms don't have any idea what "Epic Seeds" are. What could be deduced from Volo's gossip and other lore-sources (assuming those sources aren't seriously in error, and we all know what Volo's like, and how often someone's distortion gets picked up and embellished and repeated, spawning ever-larger errors) is ONE approach to crafting a new spell, not necessarily "THE" or THE ONLY approach. A DM must take "known" DCs and apply them to the research and spell-structuring

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approaches of PCs to arrive at DCs for the "milestones" along the way (which is publishing-speak for all the sub-deadlines scattered throughout a long process). The "warmer" the PC is to what the DM decides is the "right" process or spell elements, the easier the DC; the "colder" the PC's approach is, the harder. Sorry to be so "basic" in my reply, but in the home Realms campaign I never have to worry about stuff like this: it's all roleplayed, so if "Eureka!" and "Watson! I need you!" moments arise, success is happening, and if they don't... success isn't. :}

So saith Ed.

Who has run fascinating "locked in my spell-chamber researching magic" sub-campaigns in the Realms that had no monster-fighting or dungeon-delving - - and I can assure you that they were just as compelling as the save-the-Realms-with-our-blades-cleaving-huge-dragons adventures.

love to all,
THO

June 2, 2006: Hello again, all. This time Ed tackles Jamallo Kreen's end-of-March queries: "Re. Ed's novel "Shadows of Doom" from the 'Shadow of the Avatar' trilogy: I read the section set in Spellgard (Saharelgard) and it has sparked a few questions which I hope Ed will please answer: During the Time of Troubles, how did Saharel keep her magic functioning normally when it was ferblondget everywhere else? Also, she states that she doesn't have the heat-draining ability of other liches. I notice that descriptions of archliches do not emphasize a connection to the Negative Energy Plane which other liches possess. Do they have such a connection, and if not, what "fuels" them instead?

Finally, does Spellgard have Netherese inscriptions which would contribute to a character's Spellcraft knowledge even without having a conversation with Saharel? I eagerly await your brilliantly illuminating responses, Ed!"

Ed answers:

When reading this reply, please remember that there are "many roads" to lichdom, endless variations in the process of attaining unlife whilst retaining one's own mind and arcane spellcasting abilities, and that the game rules (in every edition) have of necessity simplified down to one sort of "classic" lich, one sort of archlich, and so on: almost any "lich" encountered (listen in, DMs!) can be subtly different from "most other" liches in how it takes damage, "regenerates", its unlife (if at all), and so on. That was one of the points edited out of my writings in the (original, 2nd Edition) LORDS OF DARKNESS, although careful readers of that text can see that some hints are still lurking there.

Okay, here we go...

During the Time of Troubles, there were some "bursts" and "shockwaves" of magic going wild, and divine magic had its ongoing problems, but for the most part, in most places, cast spells functioned normally (newly memorized spells were another matter; they had higher chances of functioning, when later cast, in unexpected and unforeseen ways). This was due to the Weave still functioning; there may have been 'no one home' at its heart, but the Time of Troubles didn't go on long enough for the vast, intricate tangle of power flows to collapse entirely (remember, the

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Weave is a way of harnessing and channeling the natural power flows [wind, heat convection currents, tides, kinetic, etc.] of the planet), and/or Ao quietly "held it up" for the duration.

All of this means that a lone, isolated undead of great arcane power, doing very little in the way of active spellcasting as she remains "at home" within an ancient fortress-city, experienced little problem with her magic. The nickname of "Spellgard" comes from its magical defenses, which are rooted in many magic items hidden within and behind its stone walls (both interior and outer), and linked in a spellweb of Saharel's own devising: in short, a miniature local Weave. If this is 'set,' as it always has been, to try to cling to its own shape and survive as a durable, flexing cage in the face of magical attacks or floods of magical chaos, the physical structure survives (rather than collapsing) - - and so does Saharel, sitting in the middle of it. And being very careful to work a minimum of small-scale magics, when absolutely necessary, so as to do nothing to threaten the stability and survival of her web.

Archliches don't have a negative plane energy connection, and don't need one (neither do skeletons or zombies; unlife doesn't require negative energy, only level-draining powers do). The spells that transform living beings into archliches are strong, and can persist for thousands of years when an archlich "shuts down," going motionless and falling into dream-torpor (archliches who try to remain awake and alert when, say, entombed or buried alive, will eventually go mad if they don't lapse into dream-torpor). Archliches can (but don't need to) eat, drink, or breathe. The spells that sustain their unlife will, whenever possible through contact, automatically absorb trifling amounts of sunlight, heat energy, and magical discharges of all sorts (spell effects, fields, the emanations from glyphs, etc.) to maintain themselves; an archlich who feels loss of control and strength in a hand (as the bindings of unlife start to fade and the hand begins to collapse) can cast a spell and thrust that hand into it; many archliches conjure a continual radiance of some sort and center it on a limb to carry around a personal, non-burning source of illumination (that they don't need for vision, but that may aid mortal creatures needing light to see) and at the same time 'renew' (re-invigorate) their unlife. Please note that "trifling" in the seemingly-endless preceding sentence: this is what robs the grasp of an archlich of the "chill touch" power of a "classic" lich: Saharel can embrace you and will feel cool against your skin because her body is colder than your living one and is indeed "stealing" a tiny amount of surface heat from your body, but she can't take enough (unless she casts a spell to do so) to cause you hp damage (remember, all living creatures radiate excess heat from their bodies constantly, so infinitesimal losses don't have to be, and aren't reflected in the game rules).

And, finally, yes: Spellgard does have Netherese inscriptions that will contribute to the Spellcraft knowledge of a character who examines them at length (time to ponder, illuminate them all properly, and see enough of them). There aren't many, and they tend to be graven into just a few interior walls (look for small chambers, deep within networks of chambers that look like they might have been dwelling-apartments); often the presence or casting of spells that cause radiance will make additional words temporarily "appear" on adjacent walls. In rooms that look like they might have been sleeping-chambers (dome-shaped ceilings, above huge circular platforms), look up: Netherese lying abed in Saharelgard liked to look up, and think about, favorite magics and their possible uses, and put such inscriptions on the ceiling. By the way: Saharel will "know" (be able to feel) when such "hidden inscriptions" are activated, anywhere in Saharelgard. The spellweb that runs through the great fortress is part of her; she can feel awakenings of it and changes to it (destroying parts of it causes her discomfort, but doesn't directly damage her), and can even "hurl" parts of herself into it if her archlich body is facing destruction, so as to 'live on' as an ghostly, able-to-speak-and-briefly-become-visible sentience in her own web, that could even "drift into" a living being and "ride" them as a "whispering in your head" presence, and in that manner depart Spellgard and travel throughout the Realms.

So saith Ed.

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Who has introduced several rather capricious "unseen passenger" spirits into the 'home' Realms campaign, over the years. Sometimes creepy, sometimes hilarious (as in: disembodied voices making sarcastic comments, audible to both parties, during moments of PC-on-NPC romance or lovemaking), and ALWAYS interesting.

love to all,
THO

June 3, 2006: Hello again, all. Back in April, Kaladorm posted: "After happening to glance upon a (possibly misprinted) passage in City of the Spider Queen I noted that Randal Morn mentions a Temple of Tyr in Dagger Falls. The Sage pointed out for me that it was either a misprint, or could be a reference to Tunfer the Stout, here
http://www.candlekeep.com/forum/topic.asp?TOPIC_ID=6688

Please could you tell me a little more about Tunfer the Stout, particularly his relations to the Knights of Holy Judgement and the Hammers of Grimjaws (or even better if there is an actually temple of tyr that's not been written about yet). Thanks for your time."

Ed replies:

There is indeed now a temple of Tyr in Dagger Falls, and it is indeed headed (and was founded) by Tunfer the Stout, only about a year before CITY OF THE SPIDER-QUEEN. Tunfer is an amiable, rotund glutton of a man who is one of the "rocks upon which Tyr's faith is built." By which I mean: he came to Daggerdale, a war-torn region "ruled" by an exhausted Randal Morn (who spent much of his time in the saddle galloping here to butcher orc raiders, there to quell brigands, over here to slay a monster that had prowled down out of the Spiderhaunt or the wilds, and then right back up the realm to fight more orcs again), and concerned himself ONLY with Daggerdale, and making it a safe, civilized, just place to live, by establishing local justice.

Tunfer began with a tent and a lot of (low-level) priests who were willing to serve as his eyes and ears, lecturing folk on "what was just and right" and arresting those who defied them. At first, his presence and presumption (some fat outlander, judging us!) were resented, but as person after person saw and heard his reasoned judgements - - and Tunfer ALWAYS explains his rulings, in open court - - and saw that he wasn't asking for much in the way of offerings ("bring me a stone, shaped for building, that I may in time raise a temple"), and had no desire for power ("a good man rules you, and you dwell in a wild garden that in time - - if we all work hard enow - - will be stunningly beautiful; I am but the gardener, doing these least pleasant tending, for the enjoyment of all") and had little interest in wider politics, but only in settling disputes large and small (childrens' fights over beautiful stones, or kittens, as well as knives drawn over dispute boundary-fences and livestock), his popularity grew. He has no shred of pomposity or personal aggrandizement, and will readily admit when he's been wrong, and apologize and seek to mend matters.

Randal Morn met with Tunfer, got to know him, and regards him as a godsend: Tyr's favor upon Daggerdale, Randal's divine reward for fighting so hard and long for the land he loves.

So with the help of all folk in Daggerdale that Randal could persuade (most of the populace), a temple was swiftly built: a large, simple stone building with a thatch-and-pole roof, housing a central dirt-floor court (long table at sunken center, surrounded by concentric seating, gently

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raked up so all can see) and meeting-place surrounded by simple sleeping-chambers all around the inside walls, to be used by persons who've traveled there to seek justice, and by Tunfer and his "Hands of Tyr" (priests). So we're not talking about a large, grand, or ostentatious temple, but rather a public meeting-house, used by Randal Morn to meet with envoys and delegations from around the dale, to make laws and policy in the presence of Tunfer (who points out "holes" and nails down definitions). Tunfer's Hands travel the roads constantly, as safety-patrols (they have capture-hoods, leg-manacles, and cudgels) and to ask folk about disputes or troubles, and those still at home tend ever-growing vegetable and herb gardens, chicken sheds, and piggeries, selling what they produce to support themselves (and, in their spare time, digging out and lining with stone ever-expanding granary-cellars for times of need). Most of these priests are 3rd level or less.

Tunfer himself has no time for "crusading" Tyrrans, or requests to join in larger battles for justice elsewhere: he concerns himself only with Daggerdale, and equal justice for all who dwell there. He will enlist adventurers as "hands to fight the defiantly lawless, and drive them forth or give them death, that they not trouble good and just folk longer," but he expects them to abide by the rules he verbally gives them (along the lines of: "we have laws here, and you must follow them: no wanton slaughter or wounding, no thefts or seizures by force, no pillaging, rape, or arson, and nothing gives you any greater right or authority than the dirtiest child you meet"). Tunfer, by the way, doesn't believe in imprisonment as punishment. The unrepentantly evil are to be killed or driven off (exiled from the dale), and everyone else is to make redress, by work at the temple or on the roads under Randal Morn's direction if they can't repay their victims directly.

So saith Ed.

Embroidering another little piece of the great tapestry that is the Realms.

love,
THO

June 4, 2006: Well met again, fellow scribes. Back in April, RodOdom asked: "is the son of Dove Falconhand still living on Evermeet? Or would he be grown and living on the mainland now, in the current game year (1373?)" and Master Lorelord George Krashos replied: "The novel "Evermeet" notes in passing that he is a ranger who roams the wild areas north of Shadowdale."

Ed would just like to add this:

George is correct, and I'm afraid (NDAs again) that his reply will have to suffice for now. I can only add this hint: I Have Plans for this character that may well happen offstage but bear future fruit in the Realms, in years to come.

So saith Ed.

Well, now...

Well, well, well (sploosh) Well!

love to all,

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THO

June 5, 2006: Hi again, all. Verghityax recently posted: "I've just got one quickie about Red Raven Mercenary Company. Is Rayanna the Rose still the leader of the group? And what impact had the war brought to Cormyr by the Devil Dragon on the Red Ravens?"

Ed replies:

Please see my answer to Mkhaiwati on page 12 of this thread (yes, the 2006 vintage). To that, I'll add: yes, Rayanna the Rose (badly wounded in that war, and a long time recovering) is still the leader.

So saith Ed.

The brevity of his reply makes me think he knows or suspects NDAs related to the Red Ravens. Hmm.

P.S. Kaladorm: big kiss duly delivered. Made Ed smile happily.

Oh, and sorry about the joke. Sometimes I'm bad... and sometimes I'm worse.

love to all,
THO

June 6, 2006: Hi again, all. New scribe Miri - Jala recently posted: "Dear Ed and THO, First off, I would like to thank you Ed for the wonderful characters you have brought to us! I have become an avid reader of the Forgotten Realms since I found them last year. I have a lot of books to catch up on!

I have a question on one of my favorite characters, Elminster. Does he have any sons? I know he has daughters including Narnra, Laspeera, and Queen Filfaeril. If so, who were the mothers? Maybe a son by Mystra herself hidden somewhere? Maybe he's got a son almost as old as he is.

On a side note...Could you give us any detail about the Gen-Con convention. When you'll be signing and doing seminars? Are there going to be any D&D gaming you'll be participating in? I've no experience in it but would like to see what its about."

Ed replies:

Well met, and welcome, Miri - Jala. I'm glad you've found the Realms, and I hope it remains a warm, inviting home for your dreams for years to come!

Elminster does have sons, yes, and a few of them are still alive. Over his thousand-some years of lusty living, he's sired quite a few offspring, though not nearly as many as he would have done if Mystra hadn't been applying her silent "you're one of my Chosen, and I don't want you to father anyone just now, so here's my birth control" powers so often.

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Narnra is a "direct" daughter of Elminster; Laspeera and Filfaeril were bending the truth a little to make her feel better when they spoke thus: they're among Elminster's many grand and great-grand, and great-great-grand (and so on) -children.

Elminster's seed seems to favour female offspring over males, but yes, it's quite possible he's got a son almost as old as he is. I would say more, but I'm dodging NDAs like crazy here. Let me just note that MYSTRA decides when or if any of her Chosen will "cause" children, and if any such offspring will have any aptitude for magic or become Chosen. If you can get access to THE SEVEN SISTERS sourcebook (a 2nd edition tome I wrote some years back), more of this is hinted at; THE SECRETS OF THE MAGISTER sourcebook I penned is also fun related reading, too. SISTERS has some fiction snippets, SECRETS very few, so if you're enjoying the Realms for fiction and not gaming, try not to spend much to get a glance at these; I'll rely on the moderators and veteran scribes of Candlekeep to pass on to you if either of these books is a free download, and where such e-sources may be found.

As for GenCon: the "original" GenCon, now GenCon Indy, is a huge convention; so big that I tend to recommend to first-time attendees that they don't try to sign up for much of anything, but just see the exhibit hall, the art exhibit, and attend seminars and new game launches and just gawk and have fun. Then they'll know EXACTLY what they want to try to get registered for in their second year. As usual, my schedule (set by Wizards of the Coast, the GenCon staff, the friends I want to see and dine with, and usually a few other companies I'm writing for [this year, that might well mean that a teaser or two for a little something of mine called "Castlemourn" is finally seen at the con], or - - as in this year - - the lovely Elaine Cunningham working tirelessly to set up a signing schedule for game fiction authors, at the con) isn't "set" yet. Here are my preliminary plans: no actual gaming that I know of, yet (at GenCon, such events usually end up being "auction seats off for charity" sessions, and I only run 2nd edition "roleplaying not rules," gaming novices very much welcome so I can draw newcomers into the hobby and show local mayors, police chiefs, and other dignitaries that we're NOT dangerous security risks and crazies, but amiable fun crazies :)); my usual Spin A Yarn the audience- provides-story-elements-and-I-write-a-website-Realms-tale (with Linae Foster as my "straight woman" this year, I believe, rather than Mary-Elizabeth Allen, who's retired from Wizards - - I should warn you that this seminar tends to get rather, ahem, lewd); PERHAPS a Secrets of the Realms or Realms All-Stars panel or something of the sort (with Wizards staff and me sitting with them, saying as little as possible about forthcoming products), and the aforementioned author signing. I'm afraid my schedule seldom gets finalized until mere days before the con, but I go to GenCon to meet people and have fun, I hang around for all of it, and I don't charge for autographs; I'm happy to hang out and just talk with gamers who want to talk with me, if I haven't already promised to be somewhere specific at sometime specific and do something else. So if you do make it down and see me, stop and say "Hi!" I don't bite (er, at least on the first date :)).

I urge you - - and every gamer - - to attend GenCon at least once. It's a huge trade fair (more games and game "stuff" like glowing dice and T-shirts and fantasy art than you'll ever see anywhere else in one place, for sale) and gamer conflagration, usually hectic, overcrowded, and lots of fun. Some love it, some don't like the experience - - but everyone should give it a try. See you there, I hope.

So saith Ed.

Who hopes to see more of the Candlekeep stalwarts at GenCon this year, and his old friends from the Realms-list, too. He didn't mention how FULL his schedule gets, every year: don't be surprised if you see him hurrying everywhere, when you do see him.

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I just might attend for a day or two, myself (in disguise, of course).

love to all,
THO

June 7, 2006: Hi again, all. This time, Ed tackles this query from the obsolete: "i asked elaine this question but she wasnt sure about it. so maybe you can better help me. do you know who the two persons on the front cover of, city of splendors novel are?"

As it happens, I've already asked Ed the same question, and he revealed that he'd gently and teasingly asked Peter Archer the very same thing. No answer has been forthcoming from J.P. Targete thus far, so Ed concocted an answer for we players "to suffice until something more definitive comes along."

Here it is:

The darkly handsome male is Baldovar Zulpair, a young noble fascinated by adventurers. He's showing a visiting Silvaeren adventurer, the knight protector Charrara Snowriver, the splendid view of Waterdeep afforded by the highest balcony in Piergeiron's Palace, trying to impress her so he can bed her.

It isn't going to work.

So saith Ed.

Who didn't think the characters looked sufficiently like any of the protagonists in CITY OF SPLENDORS to pass for them, but that the male was wealthy and quite possibly noble (it MIGHT be Beldar Roaringhorn, but then again...), but that the female couldn't be a Waterdhavian native, who could get an even more impressive view of the city on any clear-weather day by simply climbing the higher trails up Mount Waterdeep that feature briefly near the end of the novel. Ed would have wanted to see Beldar or Taeros showing the city to Naoni or Lark, but one can't have everything.

Though I, for one, am not going to stop trying.

P.S. HunterOfStorms, Ed did tour the eastern coast of Oz, from Brisbane in the north down through Adelaide (conventions in Brisbane, Melbourne, Canberra, ABC television and radio, bookstore and gaming store appearances in Woolongong, Toowoomba, Sydney, and I'm sure some other places he forgot to mention to me), in a five-week stint in 1994 with "Uncle" Wes Nicholson, touring for ELMINSTER: THE MAKING OF A MAGE. He'd love to return, but he's so blamed busy writing that he can't see a chance to for at least five years, and maybe ten. Sigh.

love,

THO

On June 8, 2006 THO said: Good point, Scarabeus. Very good point.

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I think Ed would acknowledge the paradox but at the same time point out he was speaking of infallible predestination, whereas what Mielikki did was meddling: trying to set up mortals to do thus-and-so, but not necessarily guaranteeing they'll do it, or guiding them along the way (after the initial commandment), or escorting or protecting them. (Who knows how many other matings she's tried to arrange, in hopes one of them "bears the right fruit"?)

Hi again, everybody. This time, I'm going to tackle a query myself (after consulting with Ed, of course). Swordsage recently posted: "Noticed lately that many authors are selling old gaming material (notes, outlines etc.) on places such as E-Bay. Would Ed ever consider doing this? Can he do this given he sold the rights to the Realms to TSR/WotC?"

Ed wouldn't consider doing that, no. In his mind, TSR (and so, of course, WotC and now Hasbro) owns everything he sent to them - - not the stuff still in his house, because Bruce Heard, then Acquisitions Manager at TSR, at one point said, "Stop sending us stuff! The cubicles we're dumping it all in are full! The rest is yours; keep it!" and both Jim Ward, Creative Manager of TSR at the time, and V-P Mike Martin confirmed (I'm paraphrasing here): "If we didn't ask you for it, it's yours. However, you can't publish anything in the Forgotten Realms anywhere else."

TSR has on several occasions asked for copies of original novel manuscripts or the "big" Waterdeep maps or other maps to give away as prizes at conventions, and Ed has obliged. So give away, yes. Sell on e-Bay: never.

love,
THO

June 9, 2006: Hmm, yes, let's say that, indeed.

Hello again, fellow scribes. This time, Ed makes answer to this query, from WalkerNinja: "In the 2E boxed set, great effort was taken to show how members of different regions viewed each other (i.e. Dalelanders think "X" of Sembians). I note that Cormyr is mostly made up of ethnic Chondathans and Tethyrians. How Cormyreans of different human subraces view each other? Is there any racial tension between these groups, and do stereotypes exist about/between them?"

Ed replies:

No, because the divisions in Cormyr are so strongly class-based (nobles versus commoners) and geographic (Arabel and Marsember have revolted against the rule of the Dragon Throne often, and resent "smug Suzailans," while most of the rest of Cormyr regards the folk of Marsember as "decadent, crooked slavers and smugglers, more like those pirates of Westgate than REAL Cormyreans" and the people of Arabel as "greedy backcountry thicknecks who bully the Court into giving them far too much coin and attention and their own way, by threatening to revolt every summer or so!"). These divisions are usually submerged in the "we must all stand together" national pride that comes from worrying about Sembian expansion constantly, and the recent war against the Devil Dragon (see DEATH OF THE DRAGON), and that national pride overrides any racial tensions. Remember that Cormyr is a trading nation (and so constantly sees a lot of outlanders from afar in its major settlements and along its major trade-roads; see my reply to Sarkile in an "omnibus" reply on page 17 of the 2005 vintage of this thread), and that any hatred or fear of these strangers is weak in cities (for whom such cosmopolitan living is the norm) and in the rural backlands, gets lumped in with the resentment of the big cities seen in the ballad "The

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Cormyte's Boast" (see p. 165 of VOLO'S GUIDE TO CORMYR), which epitomizes that nationalistic spirit I mentioned in my preceding sentence. Moreover, much racial intolerance is rooted in unfamiliarity, and service in the Purple Dragons (plus the postings of Dragons all over the realm), and visits to the festhalls of the large cities, both bring Cormyreans into the (sometimes intimate) company of "other races," and break down those attitudes quickly.

So saith Ed.

Who has written elsewhere in the past that while geographical rivalries and even hatreds are just as strong in the Realms as in the real world, racial tensions among human sub-races are much less - - because almost all humans grow up rubbing shoulders with dwarves, elves, and other intelligent races markedly more different from themselves than a human from several kingdoms away whose dress, customs, and skin colour differs from theirs.

And a postscript to Neriandal Freit: ahh, all this talk of rolling down hills, bathing nude in babbling creeks, indulging in lustfulness... you tempt me sorely. You do. I just may take you up on that. Up, indeed.

love to all,
THO

June 10, 2006: Hi again. Kentinel recently posted: "A question about "The Promenade", looking at 176 where there is clearly indicated that many live there (very few numbered or described). What was the population then and what is it now? The question seeks to understand how Eilistraee communities work/evolve."

Ed replies:

Due to the secrecy of the priestesses (born of their very real fears for security, in a hostile Underdark close to Skullport, where worshippers of Vhaeraun and others who might hate or desire to eliminate or at least raid them are often seen), no one can be certain about how many folk dwell in the Promenade. Laeral judged not more than 170 lay worshippers (that is, not including the actual clergy) at most, and the number was generally closer to 60 or so, which is about what it might be now.

"Now" meaning before [NDA].

You're not looking at a community of Eilistraee as much as you're looking at an abbey or monastery that just happens to be underground, so my answer can't hope to address any trend or process within Eilistraean communities in general. Most such communities have grown in population and then declined again more recently, as worshippers have spread out, no longer feeling as threatened and therefore no longer banding together so strongly. However, [NDA] may bring about [NDA].

In one sense, NDAs prevent me from giving any really useful answer, and in another, the question is too broad to receive a useful answer. It's like trying to understand how real world Christian communities work/evolve: there are so many different communities, on different continents and following different sorts of Christianity, that the communities can be as different as chalk and cheese. The same follows for Eilistraee: despite the fact that she can personally

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appear to faithful to express her will and her tenets (and so avoid a lot of the sectarian violence or disputes that mar our real world), she can still be worshipped in very different ways, and her followers dwell in all manner of communities. The Realms is polytheistic, remember; scribes won't get the "real feel" of the Realms so long as they persist in thinking of the majority of Realms inhabitants (as opposed to just the clergy, fanatics, and the minority who dwell in lands dominated by one or just a few faiths) as worshipping "One True God." Everybody believes in, and worships (if only in appeasement) LOTS of gods.

So saith Ed.

Who understands the desire all scribes have to better understand the Realms, but wants to keep underlining the fact that it's a complex place, with no clear, juicy "here's the Secret Way All Things Work" private lore to share with scribes.

The more complex, nuanced, everchanging, and confusing it is, the more "alive" it is. The more abstract and simple it is, the easier it is to handle. That's the teeter-totter all designers balance on, and Ed's stance farther from the pivot point on the complex side is one of the things that has kept the Realms alive as a published game setting for more than twenty years now.

P.S. to cloraxe: Ed says:

Sure it's a Realms question: that campaign WAS set in the Realms with me as DM, after all. I do plan to drop in to Brookbanks some day (my parents only live five miles or so away), but probably just for a 'flying visit' to see my old co-workers. My life is just too damned busy for more than that, right now, and the years are passing...

So they are.

Ed's now thirty years older than most high-school students (he realized with a shock yesterday, whilst giving a talk to an audience of students about being a writer).

love to all,
THO

June 11, 2006: Hello again, all. Dargoth recently mused in this thread: "I wonder if Blackstaff will deal with Khelbens recent loss of status (At least on the eyes of some of Waterdeeps residents)"

Ed makes reply:

I can't, of course, reveal any of the contents of Steven Schend's completed, accepted, and soon to be published novel BLACKSTAFF. So I'm afraid you're just going to have to wait to learn the answer to your query.

In the meantime, a peek at the (brief) scenes involving Khelben in CITY OF SPLENDORS will give you a strong hint as to how much Khelben would care about any loss of social status (and has he lost any, really?).

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Khelben will also have a cameo in SWORDS OF EVENINGSTAR (the first Knights of Myth Drannor novel, out in August of this year), but its events are set in the past.

So saith Ed.

Creator of Khelben, who reported to me that he enjoyed Steven's novel immensely, and can't wait for the next one.

love to all,
THO

June 12, 2006: Hi, all! createvmind recently asked: "Are there any plans to reveal what is in Myth Rhynn in the Wealdath, if no NDA could you give us a snippet of what may be or have "recently-1372 to current" traipsed/reside through/in the corrupted Mythal and it's ruins?"

Ed replies:

Although it's looking increasingly less likely that published Realmslore will get around to exploring Myth Rhynn, there are in fact TWO NDAs (one rooted in Wizards' Book Department, and the other part of a computer game license) preventing me giving any lore-answer about Myth Rhynn at this time. I have no real idea how soon I'll know otherwise, though I can speculate: 2008. Perhaps.

So saith Ed.

Who's up to his proverbial beard-roots in Realms work as I post this. We'r working him hard, scribes, rest assured! (See? This whip is brand-new; I had to replace it, I wore the last one out on Ed's backside, in less than a year...)

love,
THO

June 13, 2006: Hello again, scribes. This time Ed makes reply to RodOdom's queries: "In the Realms adventuring seems to be the path for meteoric social advancement for many men and women of common birth. Is there anything that prevents virtually any young person with a dagger or cantrip from running off in search of adventure? On a larger scale, what problems would hordes of wandering, hungry adventurers with foreign loyalties present to local rulers and how do they deal with those problems?

P.S. there are only so many dungeons to go around!"

Ed speaks:

createvmind and TheHermit quite rightly pointed out that fear of death, and a known high mortality rate amongst adventurers (after all, what do you think most peddlers and caravan

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merchants stopping at the local tavern talk about, after monster sightings and politics of lands distant enough to be "safe" discussion topics?), discourage many.

Folk in the Realms live in a world where violence is very real, most folk have seen monsters (even if only in cages or as carrion), and there's much talk of spectacular uses of magic, dragons swooping out of the sky to tear castles or ships at sea apart, and so on.

As for preventions of runaways: having an accepted social place, and the support and aid of family (with a reliable supply of food), is a big one. Lots of bored or dissatisfied younglings TALK about running off and having splendid adventures, and they may dream about it nightly - - but very, very few of them ever dare to do it. My next novel, SWORDS OF EVENINGSTAR, will show you one of the rare success stories, and how another obstacle ("You need a charter to bear arms here in Cormyr, or it's the dungeons for you!") is overcome by those younglings. Yet they are one of the rare exceptions. Most runaways aren't like Shandril: they don't "fall in" with companions who treat them well, they don't have something like spellfire up their sleeves, and they don't survive for long. And you can be sure that fearsome tales of the gruesome deaths of those who did run away are preached by priests of Chauntea and other deities who want youths to stay at home and remain with their families, and by minstrels and anyone else seeking to "entertain," everywhere.

As for the problems adventurers present to rulers: lawlessness and an armed challenge to their authority, of course, guilty of "driving monsters to where they savage innocent folk" and "raiding a few hogs and andering livestock" at the very least. The aforementioned charters are one way strong rulers regulate adventurers; most rulers regard adventurers as dangerous brigands or even rebels who must be slain, disarmed, exiled, imprisoned, or at the very least given "honest work" (go slay that dragon for us all, or become my envoys to those distant and dangerous orc holds). Adventurers are also handy scapegoats to blame anything bad on (poor harvest? the gods were angry with yon adventurers, and wanted to be sure they kept moving by having too little to fill their bellies! murders or monster depredations? the work of yon adventurers, or their carelessness in riling up lairs of beasts but not killing them all!... and so on), and the very best sort of strike force to manipulate into a fight with known local problems (gangs, cultists, thieves' guilds, and rebels). They can also be hired as your new mercenaries, and promptly given the most dangerous patrols or forays (after all, they're completely expendable).

So saith Ed.

Who whilst roleplaying various ruling NPCs in the home Realms campaign has done (or tried to do) all of those nasty things to adventurers. Including us.

love to all,
THO

June 14, 2006: Hi again, all. And now, Ed tackles this, from Neriandal Freit: "Ed, simple question: Someone stumbles into your vast library of Realmslore and happens to read stuff. Oops, some of it happens to be NDA!!! Ahh! What happens?:P (I thought it was time for a fun question)"

Ed replies:

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It is indeed time for a fun question! I'll go get the wheelbarrow and shovel, to bury the remains. 'Tain't pretty when mere mortals read That Which They Were Not Meant To See, and their brains blaze up like bonfires, their eyes pop and sizzle and run down their chins like wet-cooked eggs, and the smoke and tongues of flame billow up out of their ears and vacated eyesockets, heading for the nearest ceiling in a roaring hurry, until all that's left above the neck is a blackened, collapsed shell. Even Volo can't salvage anything for one of those horrible recipes of his.

This doom only strikes down those who KNOW they're perusing NDA material, of course. Like all the cartoon characters who run off cliffs and don't fall until they look down and notice they're sprinting along on empty air, they're safe as long as they're innocent.

Yet I can't take that chance. There's only so many gamers who buy Realms stuff, and Wizards doesn't want me to decrease the supply of customers - - so I have to control access to the library. By putting it deep in my unlit, low-ceilinged, haunted basement, the Cellar of Grim Doom, where glowing (and no doubt radioactive) spiders scuttle, boxes upon boxes of books sag back into the dirt from which they came, and unlabelled boxes of faint pencil scratches upon thousands of scraps of rotting paper contain my vital Realms writings. To translate requires teams of highly-trained scientists (and I just don't let anyone in a white lab coat who comes to the door in past me; instead, I misdirect them to the local cathouse where the local highly trained amorous grannies distract them for a year or so each).

Unless, of course, The Hooded One is visiting. No man alive (and precious few women) wins past HER distractions. She's famous at a certain university for distracting some policemen who were trying to enter a domicile in search of someone who didn't want to be found, by sitting down and (blocking a stairway) licking herself like a cat (yes, legs thrust out in succession so her tongue could reach certain warm regions, with the same air of languid, aloof disdain). However, that was years ago and her back is no longer quite so supple, she tells me (never mind under what circumstances she tells me).

There are also, of course, the house gargoyles and certain other defenders, including [NDA]. Whoops, now I've let them out, and they'll no doubt [NDA] and [NDA] and, I suppose, [NDA] too. Darn. Guess it's better not to stumble into my vast library, after all. I mean, look how it's affected ME! :}

So saith Ed.

Reminding me of an episode that I shall be proud of for the rest of my life. (Especially the comment from the oldest cop: "Geez, lady, will ya stop it? I've gotta wear these pants for the rest of my shift, ya know! Gawd, will ya stop? Please? Awww!") Sigh. No, I can't bend like that anymore. Which is why I need males.

love to all,
THO

June 15, 2006: Hello again, fellow scribes. RodOdom asked: "Dear Ed and Lady THO, Is there one name that covers the peninsula that the Vast and Implitur is on? Thank you."

Ed replies:

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No, I'm afraid not.

It's true that in the latest (3rd edition) projection maps of Faerûn the region wherein the Vast and Impiltur are located LOOKS somewhat like a peninsula. However, in older projections it doesn't - and to folk dwelling in Faerûn it REALLY doesn't, thanks to the mountain ranges curling through it. So the thought of that chunk of mainland being a peninsula never enters their heads (they live on it rather than in the water in the middle of the Sea of Fallen Stars [or several miles straight up above the waves], remember, and can't "view it from afar" except as this band of land, then a range of mountains, a scattering of independent ports, more mountains, and then another realm over here... hence, they've never come up with a collective name.

Faerûnian world-views tend to be far closer to the land and localized than ours are, because of the natures of their lives (rural farming or ranching, or locale-based work like mining, logging, or artisan and crafting work out of a fixed-location workshop). Only a relatively small part of the population (rulers and their envoys and advisers, sages, priests of high rank, adventurers and mercenaries, merchant costers and sailors, power groups like the Harpers, and a few other folk that we roleplayers pay a lot of attention to) regularly has occasion (beyond speculating on the latest gossip from far-off lands) to think of their world in terms of strategic overviews ("looking down on a mental map from above"). Most folk think of the Realms in terms of the little bit they know, and trade routes extending in various directions through an increasingly-misty string or sequence of fabled far-off places that they've been told those trade routes lead to.

So saith Ed.

Bringing a timely reminder of a very interesting point to us all.

love,
THO

June 16, 2006: Hello again, all.

Taelohn recently posted: "Some time ago, Ed mentioned that he originally intended for spellfire-wielders to be unable to use teleportation magic, or have it used upon them, as it would cause them to explode.

Though I don't remember where it was mentioned (one of the Spellfire novels?), I seem to recall that Elminster (alone amongst the Chosen?) has not only silver fire, but spellfire as well. Is that the case?

If so, how does that coincide with the teleport = explosion bit? Elminster's been teleporting around for centuries... would he have somehow been exempt from this issue? Or was he not given spellfire at all until after the explosion idea was nixed?"

Ed replies:

Elminster figured out how to manipulate the Weave to call forth spellfire. Any of the Chosen who became sufficiently attuned to the Weave (by using it for centuries), and took the time to experiment and study, could theoretically duplicate what Elminster did, and end up with spellfire too. Several of them (no, I'm NOT going to reveal which ones) already have. Such Chosen can

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avoid being blown apart by balancing Weave energies around themselves (and so teleport AND have spellfire). However, it's important to remember that just because a Chosen of Mystra CAN figure out how to do something, it doesn't mean they will ever have time or inclination to do so. Most of the Chosen are like very, very busy house painters: they COULD learn to paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, but they're REALLY busy with all of these other projects, over here, that are far more pressing and interesting - - and then this crisis hits, and that one... and so the centuries pass...

So saith Ed.

I'll also remind everyone here and now of Ed's many less-than-gentle hints about the sanity of the Chosen who last for so long.

Also, a public service announcement to all scribes: Ed will (probably) fall silent from now until Monday night, because he will have a very good friend (and Realms master) as visitor. Ed tells me that they'll be [NDA] and [NDA], too, and the friend may or may not say more... unfortunately, I won't be there, or we'd undoubtedly indulge in some [NDA], too!

love to all,
THO

June 20, 2006: Back in March, Mkhaiwati posted several questions. Ed now tackles the first and easiest of them: "I am not sure if you have heard of the phrase in show business "Will it play in Peoria?" meaning, will middle america like the play. What Realmsian equivalent will that be? I figure Waterdeep would be a close approximation of Broadway, but what about the smaller cities?"

Ed replies:

The expression is of course familiar to me; your question was, in fact, one that Jeff Grubb specifically asked me back in 1986. The Faerûnian equivalent is: "Will it make the village smith smile?" (Which has been shortened in everyday usage to: "But will the smith smile?")

So saith Ed.

Short and sweet.

(By the way, here's an addendum from my notes, of Ed DMing us years ago: the Realmsian way of asking "Will the locals approve?" is "Ah, but will THAT pass the old crone by the well?")

love to all,
THO

June 21, 2006: Hi, all. Ed tackles RodOdom's questions: "One of bits of Realmslore I find really interesting is the ondonti, those pacifistic orcs currently hiding out north of the Ride. My question

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is, have there been any attempt by elves or humans to "civilize" the goblin races? By peaceful means such as cultural exchange, or even less enlightened methods like conquest?"

Ed replies:

Yes, repeated attempts by humans, but none by the elves (except magical experimentations on the minds of individual captured orcs, by some elven spellcasters seeking a way to make orcs more "useful" or at least less fecund and warlike, and hence less dangerous as neighbours). Human attempts have included everything from attempts - - all failures - - to conquer and govern (small, newly-settled hamlets of orcs, with a firm human rule, laws, and police, using the orcs as paid grunt labour in mining-work), to train (by taking orc slaves and using human slaves to exhaustively tutor and oversee them in "civilized" dress, speech, and work; the orcs could obey very well, but were always just waiting for a chance to break out of their slavery and butcher everyone involved in their oppression), and even by trading "ensure good behaviour" Court captives (I'll send you my son and you send me yours) to try to foster better relations (the orcs always tortured and slew such exchanged humans, not caring what reprisals the humans took).

That doesn't mean such overtures won't be tried again, or that they won't eventually work. Obould and other smart orc leaders have seen the value of "blending in and playing nice" - - for a time. It remains to be seen how far they can move their race in that direction; orc obedience tends to last just as long as tyrannical leadership (over them) does.

So saith Ed.

Who has, he tells me, no plans to include experiments with orcs in any of his novels anytime soon.

love to all,
THO

June 22, 2006: Hi again, all. This time Ed makes answer to TheHermit, in the matter of: "In the entry for Essembra in Volo's Guide to the Dalelands, the statue of the Mantled King is mentioned as having been enchanted by a mischevious wizard. But the promised detail is never given, as far as I can find. Have I missed it all these years, or was it something that got caught by the heavy hand of editing?"

Ed replies:

Hi, Joe. Yes, the details I gave were caught by that editorial heavy hand you mentioned, even though I tamed them down quite a bit from what I originally wrote, which follows:

The statue of Aencar Vigilant has an illusion cast on it that makes it seem to respond to those who touch any part of it while examining it, and to those who try to cast spells on it.

The statue appears to wink at most people, blow kisses to some, or turn its head and grin (some have described it as a "leer"), or swing open its breastplate to reveal a very voluptuous - - and faintly glowing - - pair of bare and decidedly feminine breasts, or do the same with its codpiece to appear to urinate into the air (upon which occasions its male member glows brightly). Other, rarer

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illusory actions have also been observed, but they seem to correspond to specific spells cast on or in the vicinity of the statue.

The statue also has a power that seems rooted in another, older magic: it can emit the call of a warhorn, sounding far off but drawing nearer.

Many passing mages have tried to remove the illusory enchantments from the statue, but all have failed. More than one has said even stronger magics protect the statue - - and that it may therefore have great powers, as yet unrevealed, that await Essembra's time of need.

So saith Ed.

Who had the statue exhibit some of those powers during our visits to Battledale. Torm amused himself greatly, of course.

love to all,
THO

June 23, 2006: Hello, scribes. Herewith, Ed tackles RevJest's queries: "Master Greenwood, Two questions in regards to the previously mentioned Volo's Guide to All Things Magical.

1. If Elminster doesn't know how to create a safehold, how did he acquire his?

2. Who or what is The Sorceress in Grey? Can you tell us more about her?"

Ed replies:

1. Elminster was given his Safehold by a grateful Azuth, in thanks for services rendered. The god led Elminster to a safehold created by someone else (who was deceased; only Azuth knows who that someone was), and attuned it to El (to try to keep him sane longer, by giving him a place to "get away" from Mystra, whilst being her lover). Curiously, Elminster's memories of this are very hazy, and slipping away swiftly...

2. I am very sorry, but the all-too-familiar NDA wall is up again. Hopefully I can reveal more in a year or so. Sigh.

So saith Ed.

Sigh, indeed. We Knights have seen the Sorceress, but it was not a happy occasion.

Ed tells me he'll fall silent for one day, or at the most two, but then return. In the meantime, he'd like to propose a question to all of you: before the Knights of Myth Drannor trilogy ends, which Knights-related characters, situations, and events do you most want to see?

He makes no promises, mind, but he DOES want to know what you'd all like to see.

love to all,
THO

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On June 23, 2006 THO said: Ah, I can answer this one.

One touch of realism that Ed had in the original Realms, that TSR largely expunged for the sake of clarity and simplicity, was lots of characters with the same first names (how many "Johns" do you know?), a demon and a devil with the same name (Astaroth, if I recall correctly) so those making the SLIGHTEST mistake in the ritual for one could end up with the other arriving, not under their control at all (!), and, of course, lots of children named after gods (Torm the thief being one of those - - and, yes, his personal character, as played by Victor Selby, tending to make this a mockery of what the god stands for). So in the "home" Realms there are LOTS of name confusion incidents; it all makes for more and better roleplaying.

love,
THO

June 25, 2006: Hello again, scribes. Back in March, Wooly Rupert asked this: "We know, thanks to the City of Splendors: Waterdeep book, that Waterdeep's navy consists of 55 ships, of various types and functions. What we don't know is anything about the ships, other than their types. So, are there any ship names, noteworthy captains, or bits of other naval lore you can share?"

Ed makes reply:

Certainly. The navy is increasingly being "taken for granted" in Palace decisions; considered "part of the furniture" that's "always there," of proven competency and strong enough for the city's needs, so requests for more funds, new ships, and the like can safely be ignored. This will inevitably mean a decline in the navy (as ships age into dangerous unseaworthiness, and founder or get drive onto the rocks if they end up fighting naval battles in onshore storms) if this thinking doesn't change.

However, right now the navy is strong, and we know the name of some ships and notable captains:

The Witch of the Waves: Raker, currently the ship with the most elite reputation in the fleet, due to superb performance in boarding and battling pirates. Its crew are swaggering "seabloods" (veteran sea fighters with "masts" ["kills"] under their belts), and they are captained by Master Amandas Talkurr (CG male Illuskan human Ftr9/Rog4). A fast, sleek, newly-rigged, dark-hulled ship.

The Kissing Mermaid: Raker, an old and patched veteran of many sea-battles that groans and yaws when under sail, but somehow weathers the fiercest storms and keeps on battling. Its crew has a reputation for lawbreaking, roguery, and reckless tactics - - but they also have a reputation for victory, and for appearing when most needed to aid sister ships and "win the day." Lady Master Baerestra Mooncastle (CG female Tethyrian human Ftr 7/Ari2) captains a crew of misfits, from disfigured former slaves to half-orc "shes" to mongrel folk. "Lady Castle" is scarred and homely, but dresses like the most beautiful of fashion-conscious nobles, and cursed and jests and plays pranks as outrageously as any legendary pirate or minstrels' tales.

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The Sword of Storms: Raker, the slowest and largest ship in the navy, its upperworks rusty-red and sheathed in overlapped, hammered-down old shields and armor plate because it's still fitted with a lone heavy catapult constructed to hurl loads of rocks coated in flaming pitch. The Sword bristles with railings, has a ram reinforced by more timber bracing than any other ship in the fleet that has pierced far more enemy vessels than the rest of the navy combined, and a crew of old stiffnecks and gray-tusks (a term equivalent to saying in our real-world terms: "stiff-upper-lip, walrus-moustachioed stalwarts"). They consider themselves the iron backbone of the navy and the true "best ship," and are encouraged in this belief by the "Old Rock" who captains them: the monacled, grizzled, wintry-eyed Master Izidd Rocklar (LN male Chondathan human Ftr10/Exp4: maker of catapults and bombards).

Ed saith more, but I've chopped his reply in half to avoid the post-size limits, and will present the second and concluding bit tomorrow.

love to all,
THO

June 26, 2006: Hi again, all. Ed concludes his answer to Woolly Rupert's request for more information about Waterdeep's navy with details of another seven vessels:

The Ready Gauntlet: Striker, a "small but fast and energetic, pouncing" ship of the city's navy, battered but many-times-repaired, and typical of the bulk of Waterdeep's strikers. A veteran crew of casually-dressed misfits is captained by Master Araskro Minthul (CG male Chondathan human Ftr5), a grizzled and garrulous sort who is of the firm opinion that if he fell overboard, the crew would just carry on without him, as "they're all more than ready to captain or helm any ship in this fleet."

Sarran's Sword: Striker, named for a long-ago bold captain of Waterdeep, who loved to chase down, board, and slaughter pirates. An unlucky ship, with a history of sideswiping docks and moored vessels, crew deaths from rigging falls at sea, and a crazed sailor who stealthily murdered comrades aboard for most of a season before being caught (and executed). A fast vessel, captained by Master Halthos Belkairrel (LG male Tethyrian human Ftr6, of a fast-rising, wealthy, "wannabe-noble" merchant family specializing in horsebreeding, cured meats, and brass musical instruments).

Blackasyre's Revenge: Striker, named for a long-ago member of the City Guard who desperately wanted to captain a naval ship. When he got the chance, he was so disabled by uncontrollable, high-constant seasickness ("lying on his face retching onto the decks from beginning to end of the voyage, except when he tried to get up and fell right back down again," as one seahand put it), that he had to give it up. Heartbroken, he resigned from civic duty, hurled himself into mercantile trade, and in a bare three years had assembled a profitable merchant shipping fleet. Whereupon Usmro Blackasyre commissioned shipwrights to build three "fighting caravels," and gifted them to the navy. Both he and they are gone to graves with the passing years, but this new striker was named in their honour. Master Rhantaeros Naullaer (LG male Illuskan human Ftr6) captains it ably; he's a calm-in-battle veteran of more pirate skirmishes and chase-down-smuggling-ships-and-board actions than anyone else currently on active navy service.

The Floating Axe: Striker, sailed by an all-shield dwarf crew (the lone one-race ship in the navy; Admiral Hornwynd frowns on "single-race crews" and the heightened rivalries that might develop in his ranks because of this, but Piergeiron accepted this donation from a wealthy Waterdhavian dwarf merchant, Lorlan "Stonesides" Duraxe, because it was politically expedient to do so. Thus far, the dwarves have proven to be clumsy but fast-improving sailors, and the best board-and-

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brawlers in the navy, under their captain Torsan "Burntbeard" Hailstone (LG male shield dwarf Ftr7).

The Gallant Lady: Transport (cog), newest and largest of the naval transports, the Lady was built as a supply ship only, although one cabin roof was reinforced to take a mounted catapult if one was ever needed in future. Veteran Lady Master Valla Dorminthar (LG female Chondathan human Clr4[Valkur]/Exp3: sailmaker and rigger; Str18), a huge, beefy woman of prodigious strength but kindly, motherly disposition (affectionately known around the navy as "the Cow," but never to her face) calmly and patiently trains (and retrains) crew after crew of recruits, taking them out into the teeth of line squalls and gails to give them experience in rough-seas fighting and escort work. The Gallant Lady rolls worse than any other ship in the navy, but has two sealed sidehulls (pontoons) mounted on arms thrusting out from either side of the ship (Valla's innovations), that (like a catamaran) check the worst of its rolls and keep it from capsizing. Crews love Valla but hate her ship.

The Mount Waterdeep: Transport (cog), the closest thing to a "typical" transport the navy has, marginally the largest and sturdiest of eight very similar ships built at the same time by Arnagus the Shipwright for the navy, at a time when blockades had been threatened by both Luskan and Amn, some sages were warning of an imminent orc horde, and the Masked Lords wanted to make certain that Waterdeep could provision itself by sea if it was besieged. Like its sister ships (which include The North Wind, The Mount Sar, The Mount Araddyn, and The Mount Hellimbrar), this cog is usually bristling with catapults as it sits docked in the naval harbor, or wallows along the shore participating in mock battles. It is captained by Master Ghorkan Daznar (LN male Calishite human Ftr6), who is typical of the capable, laconic naval men promoted from the ranks for their calm competency.

The War Whelkin: Transport, a shallow-draft, broad-beamed, wallowing vessel that's almost a barge (once it was a huge "sterncastle cog," but it was topheavy, kept heeling over and capsizing, and was abandoned by its foolish Amnian owners [who'd ordered all the extra decks be built atop what the shipwright had given them] in Waterdeep harbor, upside down and full of water; the authorities claimed it, dragged it to a city shipwright, and had it cut down to its lowest deck, to yield the Whelkin of today). The "Wallop" (as all the navy calls it) has metal-clad crenellated sidewalls for troops to fire from behind, metal plates hammered at odd overlapping angles all over its decks to inhibit fire (from enemy incendiaries), and six light catapults mounted on its decks. Admiral Hornwynd recently gave orders (after it almost sank in rough seas) that it was never to sail out of the harbor again (in some of the naval defense plans, it is to sail into a "sea gap" in the breakwaters and anchor there, blocking passage for other vessels, and it carries six anchors and chains for this purpose; these orders still stand). Its crew is a mix of the rawest recruits and the most ailing, leathery old salts, captained by Dallance Askalur (NG male Illuskan human Ftr5) a foppish wannabe-noble of great good looks and elegant wardrobe and manners, who's in disgrace with Admiral Hornwynd for running a fast raker onto rocks during a mock battle, and has been reassigned to the Wallop as punishment. His drawling ease hides his rage and frustration well, but the entire navy knows it's there.

So saith Ed, who's thrown up over the side of a wallowing vessel or two in his day, and ALMOST been hit on the head with a boom while racing. He did once, in his youth, find himself hanging on to the high rigging of a tall ship with one hand during a sudden gust of wind, with nothing under the rest of his body but a lot of wind, rain, and a long, long drop into cold waves below. Luckily for gaming fans everywhere, he didn't let go.

love to all,
THO

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June 27, 2006: Hi again, all. This time Ed gives a hearty "you're welcome!" to Wooly and to RodOdom, e-shouts to Quinton that his Maalthiir and Hillsfar query should now be answered by MYSTERIES OF THE MOONSEA (and to post a followup query here if that source isn't sufficient), and forthwith tackles Asgetrion's March request: "Could Ed provide us with the elven words for 'realm'/'kingdom', 'falcon', and 'city'/'citystate' (one without a mythal). I know '-ar/-aar' means a great realm, but is '-reier' (as in Shantel Othreier) also another word for a realm/kingdom?"

p.s. Would it be possible for Ed to write "additional" (as in "more words that have not yet been published in any sourcebook" :) elven and dwarven vocabularies for the WoTC 'Realmslore'-column? I mean, when the Bearded Master only (if ever, considering all his projects ;) had the time to do it.

p.p.s. I absolutely love the Power of Faerun and the Border Kingdoms => I think we may be up for some of the juiciest Realmslore ever published, and I am yearning to know even more about the 'Folly-realms of the Madmen' ;D"

Ed replies:

Glad you loved Power of Faerûn (Eric did much heavy lifting on that one) and are enjoying the Border Kingdoms. I'm really enjoying the BK entries; I just wish I had more TIME to do all of the stuff I'm expected to do now. Tidbits of both elven and dwarven vocabulary are upcoming in future Realmslore web columns, and the elven ones include several names for different sorts of places, so I'll just give you the word for "falcon" right now.

Remember, elven is a mature language, and so (like modern real-world English) has both local dialects and formal and informal styles and many SLIGHTLY different words that can be used to describe a given item, situation, or event. So if you dislike what I write here, make up something else and consider this a dialect in use "somewhere else" in YOUR Realms, okay?

The elven word for falcon or hawk is "gyrlaszthraen" (in everyday speech, just "gyrlass"). The derivation is "swift strike hunting bird," where "gyrah" is bird, "tal" is swift, "lasz" is stab, slash, or attack (natural beast savagery or combat; the word is never used for matters involving weapons or military 'deliberate war'), and "thraen" is hunt.

So saith Ed.

Whose tongue doesn't slip as fluidly around syllables as it used to (and I'm going to firmly suppress the NEXT comment that leaped into my mind)

love to all,
THO

On June 27, 2006 THO said: Mystra IS the Weave. If another deity wants power over magic and permanently eliminates Mystra, that deity would theoretically gain power over magic - - but not the Weave, which would collapse with the permanent removal of Mystra (she and it are one and the same).

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The Weave doesn't go blooey when Mystra dies, if she's soon replaced, precisely because she has portions of her divine power in her Chosen, as stopgap "anchors" for the Weave, and because Azuth drops all else to balance and maintain the Weave if anything "happens" to Mystra.

Source for this: Ed himself. I'm quoting his notes to his original players here.

June 28, 2006: Hello again, all. This time, Ed tackles an etymological request from Zanan: "More recently, a traveller related to me the story of Bhaal's fall near Boareskyr Bridge. While the history of the event was quite interesting, the name of the place itself roused my interest. Is there a story giving away the history of the bridge's name, maybe stored somewhere in the scrolls or annals of the Realms? Aluve, Zanan! (And what does Boareskyr mean if there ain't, please?)

[after Kuje provided Ed's earlier post about there being no connection between Boareskyr Bridge and the Obarskyr ruling family of Cormyr, Zanan responded, adding: "Could anyone who knows relate to me whether "Boareskyr" means something real, like a telling name? Example given, "boar" could stand for boar (the animal), but the second part of the word is more obscure. To me at least. Now, before I bury myself in etymological dictionaries or the like, maybe some scribe or the Hooded One herself may have the answer. (The alter ego of mine is writing a book about ancient Scottish place names, hence the initial interest.)"]

Ed weighs in:

Zanan, you've hit upon something. There is indeed no social or blood connection between the adventurer Boareskyr and the Obarskyrs, but there is a common etymology.

In what is now referred to as "Old Common," "skyr" meant "blood of" ("of the blood of" in full, meaning kinship). So Boareskyr means "Blood of the Boar" just as "Obarskyr" means "Of the Blood of Obara" (As for who Obara was, ah: that's Jeff and Kate's to tell, not mine)...

Boareskyr was a family name (like Obarskyr) by the time the adventurer for whom the Bridge is named bore it, but its origin is lost in the mists of time. It may have had any of these origins: real [or popularly suspected (or spoken of, either as an insult or a flattering compliment) in a community] actual human/boar interbreeding or practice of bestiality; shapechanging blood or one of Boareskyr's ancestors was a wereboar; or someone in the community thought that ancestor had the qualities of a boar (fought like a boar, rutted like a boar, charged like a boar, smelled like a boar, whatever).

So saith Ed, and there you have it.

I'm reminded of someone once telling my mother that her high school nickname meant "randy little bitch," and her responding tartly, "Not so much of the 'little.'"

Ahem.

love to all,
THO

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June 29, 2006: Hi again, all. RodOdom recently posted: "Dear Ed and THO, Currently I'm running a game taking place primarily within Evermeet and Evereska. One thing that we have largely glossed over is money in elven society. Currency and market prices aren't mentioned in the Evermeet sourcebook. How are elven economies structured? Are they any different than those of humans?"

Ed replies:

In general, elven society has shifted from gems, wine, and food as barter tokens to gems as currency, and in the last three centuries or so, to the coinage used by humans, with gems "standing in" for large amounts. Elves prefer electrum and silver to other trade-metals, but will use all manner of coins.

However, all non-drow elven society follows these firm social mores: personal honour is deeply rooted in fairness and prompt repayment. No "gouging" during shortages (charging excessively high prices when demand outstrips supply), and family always pays a shade less than clan, clan or community always pays a shade less than outsider, outsider elf pays less than any non-elf.

Otherwise, it's coins. Medicines or food barter between friends, and spells or magic item exchanges between rulers and the haughtiest nobles, but for everyone else: coins just like humans (valued according to the metal of the coin, not the minting: i.e. elves quite happily use coins issued by human kingdoms long gone and forgotten, so long as the coins are in good condition, and of acceptable purity and size.

So saith Ed.

Who wishes he had a few more real-world coins to call his own.

love to all,
THO

June 30, 2006: Hello again, scribes. Ed herewith tackles a query from HunterOfStorms, viz: "Hi again Ed, just doing my bit to keep adding to the piles of questions, no doubt stacked extradimensionally by now, in your queue. I've been looking at compiling a descriptive list of woods suitable for carving etc. for a player of mine and my first stop has been with the Volo's guides and Ecologies. And a wonderful source of detail they are too :) The newer editions don't have quite as much information, but still useful. However, I'm intrigued by the passing references to Barausk and Rosecork trees in Elminster's Ecologies (the Settled Lands Chapter). Barausk (found in Harrowdale and Deepingdale) is well described as a tree and has the property of drying iron hard. Rosecork is only described as being native to the Isle of Prespur and "virtually fireproof and becoming increasingly popular with builders". Lovely stuff, but I'm greedy, I want more :) Would you be so kind as to expand on these two varieties perhaps? The colour and grain of the wood and whether it suitable or useless for carving, inlay etc.?"

Ed replies:

Happy to expound. :}

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When cut into, to expose its grain, Barausk is dark brown mottled with gray-green to the casual glance. When more closely examined, the gray-green tinges come from places where the grain is "folded back in on itself" very tightly. Rather than the wavy but tending all in the same direction, sometimes widely-spaced bandings of most woodgrains, barausk looks like a maze, or meatballs resting in much-folded spaghetti, or the "crazed" banding that surrounds burls in other woods. It dulls or breaks blades when dry, but can be readily cut when "wet and green," or soaked (immersed or very frequently doused or sprayed) for a day or so to make it wet again (this latter sort of wetting penetrates only about a fingerwidth; once this is carved, exposed surfaces must be wetted again to soften the wood more deeply, if deeper carving must be done. Dry barausk turns (and stays) brittle if heated, but otherwise is both iron-hard AND durable.

Rosecork, on the other hand, is useless for detail carving-work, because it splits on internal planes readily and cleanly, making it ideal for inlays, building panels, and the like, but tends to collapse and crumble when cut in other directions. It has a pleasant light, reddish, "speckled" woodgrain appearance (akin to the more numerous and familiar cork tree), and absorbs and holds moisture (one of the reasons it resists fire; think of a wall that emits its own steam-sprinkler, all over, when faced with heat). This makes untreated ("raw") rosecork horribly susceptible to molds (and thus a good base for deliberate growth of fungi for food or medicine, or for that matter as dungeon traps [at the bottom of pits, for example]), so certain herbal-water concoctions (brushed or "doused" [buckets thrown] on) are used that forever prevent spores from growing within rosecork, but retain its water-holding qualities. Note that rosecork, while spongy to the touch, DOESN'T "leak water" if sucked or crushed or prodded, though a thirsty person could slash a rosecork panel and glean a few drops from each wound.

So saith Ed, who describes himself more as a "woodbutcher" than a woodcarver.

Having seen his handiwork at his cottage, I must concur.

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