

# So saith Ed

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

## *Part 12*

*Oct - Dec 2006*

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**Candlekeep**

October 2, 2006: Hello, all. Dargoth recently asked: "Which of the following types of criminal activity does Elaith Craulnober run in Waterdeep?"

Protection rackets  
Prostitution  
Drug dealing  
Gambling  
Kidnapping for Ransom  
Robberies  
Counterfeiting  
Murder for Hire  
Smuggling of legal and illegal goods  
Slavery  
Anything I missed"

Ed replies:

All of the above.

Or to put it another way: Elaith runs various "toughs" (street thugs and more intelligent agents) who handle such things for him, "such things" being everything on your list and then some (the "anything I missed"). Personally, Elaith sees to problems that arise with these various operations (see CITY OF SPLENDORS for a glimpse of some of his agents; there are usually at least three, and more often six, layers of operatives between him and the thug in the alley with the dagger), and otherwise personally attends to: sophisticated blackmail (and "hidden manipulation") of wealthy merchants, so as to influence goods supplies and therefore prices (so he can sell his goods at maximum profit), and so as to provide "fall guys" and "cover" for his smugglings of legal and illegal goods. He almost never personally has anything to do with slavery, drug deals, protection shakedowns, or murder for hire (though he does do murders, as part of the aforementioned "problem solving"). Elaith is becoming both bored and jaded with "brute force" criminality, and increasingly skilled at, and interested in, developing his means of covert influence, so he can control things in Waterdeep WITHOUT open (and illegal) uses of force. He long ago discovered that the guy who robs someone gets away with stuff he can carry, and gets hunted down - - but the guy who buys several houses, causes a few "accidental" fires in adjacent properties so as to buy them cheaply, and then sells the block for far higher prices, gets away with huge amounts of coin, and gets considered "smart" and "successful."

So saith Ed.

Who has plans of his own for Elaith, but will defer to Elaine in matters Elaithian.

love to all,  
THO

October 4, 2006: This reply was delayed a bit, BTW, because (disagreeing completely with the interpretation of Ed's reply to Dargoth that Dargoth has just expressed in his latest query) I wanted to get Ed's take on this.

Here it is:

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No, I would NOT agree at all that: "So basically Elaith doesn't care how or what rackets his agents run so long as he gets his cut?"

On the contrary. Elaith cares very much what his agents do AND how they do it (how much evidence they'll leave behind, profile they'll earn with lawkeepers, and effects they'll have on their reputations with the public, and therefore their influence). What I was saying is that Elaith carefully shields himself away from certain activities through several layers of agents. It's not that he's trying to get his "cut" from everything, it's that he wants some of his agents to have sideline businesses (that he can reveal to rivals or even the authorities if need be, to eliminate no longer wanted agents; and for their own performance, allowing them to have their own "secrets" and beliefs they can "get away with something, even against Elaith"). Elaith WILL move swiftly and ruthlessly to stop activities he doesn't want happening, at a particular time, in a particular manner, or involving particular victims. I want to be very clear on this.

So saith Ed.

love to all,  
THO

October 9, 2006: Well met, Lady Cunningham! Drop in and comment more often, please!

Ed's overwhelmed by visiting family right now (and probably waist-deep in turkey, too), but in reply to WalkerNinja he sent me this brief response, using Dargoth's list, with what's specifically illegal added where necessary:

Protection rackets: Code-illegal

Prostitution: legal, but illegal to employ shapechangers to appear as other than their real shapes without informing clients, illegal to employ prostitutes under duress (physical threat, threat of doing anything to them, kin, or property)

Drug dealing: some substances illicit, illegal to deal in any that taxes and duties haven't been paid on, or to make false claims of ingredients to avoid relevant guild involvement

Gambling: legal, but illegal to "fix" games or odds, or to employ "ringers" as players, who (covertly, acting) work together to dupe other gamblers

Kidnapping for Ransom: Code-illegal

Robberies: Code-illegal

Counterfeiting: Code-illegal

Murder for Hire: Code-illegal

Smuggling of legal and Illegal goods: illegal (by definition, smuggling is tax evasion)

Slavery: Code-illegal

So saith Ed, and there you have it!

love,  
THO

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October 3, 2006 THO said: Hi, all. I should have another Realmslore reply from Ed in five or six hours, to post here, but a quick tackling of some matters I can address from in-game experience as a player in Ed's "home" Realms campaign:

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To DavidTrim: YES, Sembians (or any other outlanders who aren't visibly drow or other "no-nos") can indeed be members of chartered Cormyrean adventuring bands.

To Lenora Ilvastarr: re. #5; are you familiar with the relevant short story in THE BEST OF THE REALMS, Volume 2: THE STORIES OF ED GREENWOOD?

This is actually a topic Ed would LOVE to explore more fully, someday, but... the Knights trilogy has to be finished first, and then there'll be something of a surprise, Ed has hinted. Not that he's said one word of useful details, mind you...

love,  
THO

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October 4, 2006: Hi again, fellow scribes. Ed continues to be tearingly busy, but has time to say to kalin agrivar that he did, indeed, plan prevalent wind and ocean currents in the Realms, and hopes to be able to provide a proper answer in the fullness of time (remember, folks, he's fighting to get three novels, a game product, and a heap of web columns and DRAGON articles done before year-end!). He also wanted to say a hearty "you're welcome" to RevJest for the kind words about CITY OF SPLENDORS and BEST OF THE REALMS Volume 2: THE STORIES OF ED GREENWOOD, and to hope RevJest is enjoying SWORDS OF EVENINGSTAR (Ed is enjoying penning the sequel, SWORDS OF DRAGONFIRE).

Modesty forbids Ed to comment on DavidTrim's amazement "with Ed as a person and an answer font," but hey, as one of his longtime players, I firmly agree. He is an amazing guy, and one of kindest and most understanding human beings I have ever met.

Ed did, however, tackle DavidTrim's question: "My question (and I am strictly a 1e&2e player): If a priest were to have their holy symbol tattooed on their body in a consecrated ceremony in their church would said tattoo work as a holy symbol for turning and spell casting. Like say having said tattoo on the back of their hand or palm and not wearing gauntlets. Thanks."

Ed replies:

It depends on the deity.

For Gond: no, absolutely not, because Gond is represented by a (usually metal, preferably made or partially made by the priest) device (usually with moving parts, such as cog wheels), as his holy symbol.

For most of the nature deities: yes, though please note that the holy symbol would only "work" if the tattoo incorporates a sacred substance associated with the deity, that has been "blessed" or "sanctified" to the deity in a devout ritual. For example, a powder of ground acorn and/or crushed oak leaves for Silvanus, ground cultivated grains for Chauntea, shards of ice for Auril, and so on. These substances are typically introduced under the skin, through wounds made by other priests during the ritual (and typically bathed in holy oils), and then "seared" by a brand that may or may not destroy them, the tattooing then being done (by devout worshippers or priests of the deity) "over" or to incorporate the brand.

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For Mystra, the incorporated item is typically a gem or metal token bearing the dweomer of a magical spell (a light spell or faerie fire will suffice), and the tattoo will be a rune with magical meaning, though it CAN'T be an actual spell-effect symbol (as in the various "Symbol of" spells given in the PHB) and still function as a holy symbol.

In general, a DM should ensure that this use of a holy symbol does incorporate an actual holy symbol (and is thus a way of carrying it around "under the skin"), rather than just being a drawing. Note that the nature of some deities, such as Moander, means that doing this will harm or even destroy the body of the priest over time.

So saith Ed.

Who sounds from the tone of his reply as if he's writing rules at the moment (one of his current projects would definitely involve doing so, but NDAs keep him mum about the details).

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October 5, 2006: A pleasure, DavidTrim, a pleasure...

Hi again, fellow scribes.

This time Ed tackles some elf-related queries from Vangelor: "First, is the word "ardavanshee" singular or plural (or both) in construction? And is it gender-specific? Is the useage limited to "citified" elves, as in Myth Drannor, Evereska, and the towns of Evermeet, or would the green elves in their hidden glades call their delinquent youth by this term as well?

Second, regarding those aforesaid green elves: Am I correct in assuming that, however "primitive" their woodland societies may seem by comparison to the high civilizations of Evereska and Evermeet, green elven culture has its own richness of traditions and customs that in its own way rivals that of their less reclusive cousins? What are some noteworthy features of wild elf culture, in various areas of Faerûn?

Third, imagine a young lore-singer of a remote green-elf tribe who, led by visions and the decrees of his tribe's seers, sets out to familiarize himself with the other cultures of the Realms, and enrolls in the bardic college at Silvermoon. Obviously, he would have little coin for tuition. Are scholarships available? Would the tales and songs of his own people (mostly unknown even to other elves) be valued enough to help pay his way?

And finally, how would the locals be apt to react in Alustriel's city when said elf stubbornly prefers to go naked, or in as little as the climate permits, and forsakes his dormitory cot to sleep in some accomodating tree, and occasionally catch his own lunch if he spies a juicy rabbit? Would the constabulary object? (Yes, this is my character - I simply am curious as to how the locals might respond in Ed's Realms).

Best of luck to Ed in unearthing himself from an avalanche of deadlines, NDA's, and other busy-ness, and to Her Hooded Grace in avoiding gunshot wounds and hot pursuits in inconveniently long gowns!"

For my part: thanks for the wishes of good fortune. As scribes can probably guess, I usually peel offending garments, or hold them up in my teeth (THAT makes policemen's eyebrows rise, let me

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tell you - - or perhaps it's what they can see, that's no longer "underneath"). Ed also says thanks for the good wishes, and passed on to me these formal replies to your queries:

The word "ardavanshee" is used both in the singular and plural, for elves of both genders, and is used among all elves (though its usage is most popular among more urban elves). So, yes, green elves might well use it.

And yes, green elven culture is rich in tradition and customs, though rather than fashion and sculpture and books, these are centered on natural cycles of life (the weather, populations of flora and fauna the elves live among, and so on), living things (training growing things into shapes, rather than carving them), and also involve long sung (often with harp and other instrument accompaniment) oral histories of families (all members mentioned, emotional reactions to deeds and characters of the individuals incorporated, in what sounds to most human ears as long, wandering, often atonal vocalizations; if you want an example of an atypically orgasmic passage from such a "laeralae," play the wordless female vocal part of "The Great Gig In The Sky" from the Pink Floyd album DARK SIDE OF THE MOON). As for "noteworthy features of wild elf culture," these tend to be tree planting and nurturing, and "reclamation by the wild" plantings and encouragement of wildlife, all over Faerûn. (In other words, features that many other races and cultures won't even recognize as the actions of a culture, as opposed to "nature growing wild.")

Now, as for your character: the laeralae would be valued (as, indeed, they are "mostly unknown even to other elves"), and he wouldn't be belittled as a "savage" or the laeralae or his culture as "crude music making" or anything of the sort. However, they wouldn't be payment, either.

Your lore-singer would be offered room and board (and allowed to perform in the city's clubs, taverns, salons, and at various private feasts or even, if he can attract one, for a personal patron, to earn extra coin) in return for service to the college, of two sorts: teaching other students, and going on "tasks" (missions) for the college, to find valued instruments and written or recorded music, establish contact with/negotiate with/deliver messages to known instrument-makers, composers, and music collectors of note, and to escort students (or students-to-be) between their distant homes and the college.

As for his garb or lack of same, and "wild" habits: Silverymoon is COLD for most of the year, but if he wants to go naked or nearly naked, that's his business. Some establishments and some citizens will refuse him entry or welcome if he doesn't cover his privates, and others couldn't care less. Personal cleanliness (smell) would bother them more than unclad condition. If he owns the tree he wants to sleep in, that's fine. If he wants to sleep in someone else's, the local lawkeepers will react according to the owner's reaction. And as for catching rabbits: no rabbit running around inside the city is going to be "wild." It's going to be the property of someone, and if it's a pet, he can expect great hostility. If it's a "meat rabbit" or breeding rabbit, he's going to be expected to pay "top coin" replacement costs, if he's seen eating it. However, there's "wild" forest, with plenty of trees to sleep in and bunnies to devour, right outside the northern city gates (Northbank Silverymoon), and the folk of the city are quite used to rangers and others who go out the gates on many nights to hunt, tryst, travel, stroll and think, meet others, and so on. If he doesn't expect to get back inside before dawn, he'll encounter no problems at all from the authorities. (If he always sleeps in the same tree, it's easy to find from local trails, and he takes no precautions, a local thief might visit him - - but then, unless one has a ready market for elf meat or organs, it's hard to derive profit from robbing a naked elf sleeping with no possessions.)

So saith Ed.

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Creator of Silverymoon, laeralae (no relation to Laeral the character, BTW), and (oh yes) the Realms.

love to all,  
THO

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On October 6, 2006 THO said: Huntsman was the "undercover investigator" of suspect lineages and rulers breaking heraldic rules, and Manyshields was the keeper of the rolls, responsible for the updating and making and distribution of copies (including hidden "backups") of heraldic registries used by all of the High Heralds in various locations.

The others, you'll have to ask Ed about in his thread, and I'll pass your query along to him.

love,  
THO

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October 6, 2006: Hey, no need to blush. It's not as if there aren't literally hundreds of Realms fiction pieces. The book's a treat, though; don't miss it.

Hello again, all.

Back in (this) April, Neriandal Freit asked: "Ok, so this is like the 4th question I have and I feel weird for asking another one but I thought it was worthwhile, while listening to Enya. Is there any sort of spells known that can 'record' music? Say does the music (or chanting) get 'recorded' into a say gem or other magical device, and allow for play back of it? My thinking was what if a Cleric was sort of by himself and wanted to hear his or her songs to their god being played while they where in a area that made them anxious, and knowing that the music would help themselves.

Edit: Or perhaps if they were the last of their group, and they know they needed to keep their morale up and hear music they knew and loved. Thanks once more"

Ed replies:

Hey, you're very welcome. Yes, there are spells that can record music and other sorts of sounds, though almost always NOT so that a magic can be unleashed. Ghost pipes (as I originally created them, and as various bands of original Realms players encountered them, in the Haunted Halls) had this power, and various published and unpublished Realms magics (and, yes, items), have had the ability to "record" and then "play back" sounds. They could thus be used to provide music, relay speeches and written messages, and even allow others to listen to "this weird sound I heard in the ruins; what is it?" or "What beast makes that call?"

In the vast majority of cases, these magics don't allow spells or even activation words to be transmitted; attempts to record them APPEAR to work, but simply fail on playback. Also in the vast majority of (recordable-now, as opposed to "ancient found magic") cases, these magics are single-use: play the sound back once, and it's gone and the magic is exhausted.

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As various helpful scribes have already posted, published Realmslore contains a variety of artifacts and magic items that "sort of" do such recording, although as pointed out, some of them record memories of what was overheard, and therefore may introduce inaccuracies. A TSR and now WotC design dictate has been to avoid or sharply limit "spell recording" means, so as to cut down on non-spellcasters being able to hurl magic EXCEPT by use of limited-use magic items that are sometimes limited to certain classes or alignments or both.

So saith Ed.

Who's probably created, over the years, more monsters, spells, and magic items for the D&D game than any other person. (And I'm just considering published material, not his reams of personal notes.)

love to all,  
THO

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October 6, 2006: Hi, all. atlas689 recently posted: "Dear Ed and THO, First off thanx for everything you do here at Candlekeep as I'm sure it takes up much of your time and effort. My question is simple are any of the following NPC's still alive currently in Faerun?

Aesperus: Male Human Lich  
Kyristan the Dead King: Male Human Lich  
Darien: Male Human  
DelRoy Harpell: Male Human Wiz 23  
Arconi: Male Human Wiz 30  
Baden: Female Human Wiz 31  
Kyllyrd: Male Half-Elf  
Mellomir: Male Human Wiz 27  
Nchaser: Male Human Wiz 27  
Thanx for everything!"

Ed replies:

You're welcome. Hmmm, quite a body count. Well, as you know, death is not always "final" in the Realms. I know that Nchaser is undead and active, and that the others are, ahem, "currently dead." That could, of course, change. :}

Ah, I'm such a subtle hinter...

So saith Ed.

Who in the last sentence above means "subtlety" spelled "brick in the face"

Please note that he said nothing more about Nchaser in his reply. That's deliberate, I'm afraid, as in: NDA.

love,  
THO

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On October 8, 2006 THO said: Be aware that there are two contradictory birthdays in published Realmslore. Ed's explanation for this is the English monarch's one: the Queen has an "official" birthday (public feasting and ceremonies) and her own, "real" birthday (celebrated in private seclusion with close family only).

Well, so did Azoun.

love,  
THO

Be assured I will pass it along to Ed.

However, I believe he has Realmslore articles written and handed in for months to come. (And Waterdeep News, too.) 'Tis the Border Kingdoms series in which he's only a few instalments ahead of the WotC online staffers, I believe.

Ed has many, many topics that "need more delving into" on his platters - - and a number of novels and sourcebooks right in front of him now.

BTW, Castlemourn is not among them; in other words, Ed's work on Castlemourn isn't delaying his Realms projects at all (because Ed's work on CM was essentially done years back).

NDA's prevent Ed telling me specifically what he's up to at the moment, but I suspect we'll all read the results in the fullness of time.

love,  
THO

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October 8, 2006: Hello again, fellow scribes. In Canada, it's Thanksgiving time, which means family visiting, which means Ed's replies may get slow or sporadic for a day or two.

However, he's sent me one now.

This time Ed considers these queries from RodOdom: "Dear Master Ed and Lady THO, What is the general attitude in the West and Central Heartlands on the issue of charity? A household falls on hard times, what would be the response of the community? To what extent have attitudes of social generosity been influenced by the churches?

Also how would people feel about outsiders to the community? For example, starving adventurers, human refugees of famine, or dwarves fleeing orcish invasion?

Much thanks!"

Ed replies:

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Food, water, and shelter (firewood for warmth in winter, shade from hot sun, basic barrier protection from beasts) are "all" folks in hard times need in most places in the Realms, because temporary "disappearances" avoid most tax collections, and there's usually "free" land one can squat on, rather than pay rent. Most folk live close to the land, knowing how to glean basic foodstuffs, and there's not much overly polluted water in the Realms, so access to drinkable water (outside of "hard desert" areas that are uninhabited for precisely that reason) is usually readily available, too. So charity is a matter of tending the sick, and providing food, water, and firewood to the disabled. Community members who aren't surly or known thieves or known bullies will usually find gifts of meals and such on their doorsteps; outsiders will be more warily treated, or directed to local temples.

Almost all rural temples (and monasteries) provide basic food and water for handfuls of "half-wits," the disabled, orphans, lepers and other disease-sufferers (and even, in some cases, lycanthropes) in return for basic labour (splitting and stacking firewood, dung-shoveling and transport, watering and tending crops, peeling potatoes and other crops for kitchen cooking, picking of fruits, vegetables, and herbs), and sometimes also the destitute or outlaws claiming sanctuary. [This should partially answer your earlier query about treatment of the mentally ill, too, though I'll answer it properly when I can.]

Local treatment of adventurers, the displaced, and those who've fled battle or been left behind, wounded will depend on existing local attitudes ("these some of the dwarves who've raided us for years? Well, kill them!") and on what's happened recently (is the community overwhelmed by refugees? have other adventurers marauded locally in the past?) If locals don't try to kill such "problems" outright, or direct them to areas of danger where a known monster will eliminate them (or they will dispose of it, making them therefore worthy of aid), the locals will either provide aid (shelter in my barn, and here's some stew and water and bread; please be gone in the morning) or bring local priests to examine the "problems" and decide if the church will provide aid. Note that adventurers and outlanders of known "enemy" lands are treated very warily, but that some individuals may want them to "stick around" to help provide protection against expected raids - - especially if winter is approaching; every "good sword" is needed against wolves in some northern locales, and the able-bodied can go hunting or firewood-gathering in deep snow where others cannot.

So saith Ed.

Who has thought about all of this (one of the reasons the Realms is so realistic and enduringly popular with gamers).

love to all,  
THO

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October 11, 2006: Hi again, all. This time Ed tackles (in the wake of Kaladorm's excellent posting on the matter, all of which Ed and I both agree with) Reefy's query: "Hi Ed (and THO), I appreciate this question could probably be answered by others (any input is welcome), but I wanted to take it to the top as it were (I hope you understand why, I have no desire to take up any more of your time than necessary).

One of my players has expressed concern about Mystra's ability to strip power away from wizards. As a wizard, obviously losing this power would be disastrous to the individual.

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My opinion about this is that Mystra would not do such a thing except in the most extreme of circumstances (she was directly threatened, the Weave was directly threatened, maybe the entire world). Such circumstances are generally rather unlikely to happen, to say the least. Other than that, as the Goddess of magic, why on Toril would she want to stop an individual casting spells? She allows anybody to use magic, from the lowliest apprentice, to Alustriel and Manshoon, individuals who use magic for very different ends.

I don't think any character would be possessed of this mindset, there is no evidence to suggest such a thing might happen, certainly if the character doesn't do anything deserving of such a punishment.

I have also tried to rationalise it in terms of the far more pressing problems a character may face on a daily basis - when you have orc hordes, rampaging dragons, fearsome mothers-in-law, or where the next meal is coming from to deal with, worrying that Mystra may decide to strip away your Art on a whim pales into insignificance to me. Plus, if you're worried about that, why aren't you worried about Bane striking you down or enslaving you to his will for a bit of a laugh?

Finally, in game, such a thing would be subject to the will of the DM anyway, and handing out such a punishment would be grossly unfair unless the character did something worthy of having the power taken away, which I would say is incredibly unlikely.

Yet the player says it's the knowledge that it *\*could\** happen, however unlikely, that is the problem to her. Could please confirm or deny my thoughts on these matters, expand on them if necessary, and share any ideas you may have on how to reassure my player? Many thanks."

Ed replies:

Reefy, I tend to agree with Kaladorm here: this is a player problem, rather than a character problem.

A character in the Realms would know about Mystra's governance of the Art from her infant dreams (which, if she has aptitude for the Art, she would receive from her earliest days), and about Mystra's ability to cut mortals off from the Weave from when she's old enough to understand the speech of others. In other words, it's a "given" (as in, the sun rises in the morning, and darkness comes after the sun sets, and if you just let go of a stone in your hand it'll fall to the ground).

So to anyone roleplaying "properly" in the Realms (thinking as a creature of Faerûn would think), it shouldn't be a source of anxiety at all - - except to a character who is, say, actively trying to harm Chosen or other servants of Mystra BECAUSE they're servants of Mystra (in other words, a Shar-worshipper seeking to harm the causes of Mystra).

To everyone else, it's just "one of the things we all know about the world."

Your opinions on the unlikelihood of Mystra stripping access to the Weave from a mortal PC are dead-on correct: to someone who doesn't deliberately set out to harm widespread magic use (in Biblical terms, a King Herod figure trying to butcher everyone who's a wizard or a sorcerer - - or, in Realms terms, someone trying to change a Mythral into a huge explosive or toxic force so as to obliterate thousands or start a mythral "chain reaction" or deliberately feed or create new wild or dead magic areas), this is just NOT going to happen. Mystra's portfolio is to increase use of magic (all magic, by everyone). If you show your player this response and promise as a DM that

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you are going to follow this view (and, therefore, almost certainly never even think of stripping her character's Art away), that should provide real-world assurances.

Also, there are other forms of magic than Weave-based, so a character could seek (yes, lesser or more limited) alternatives, should that "unthinkable" ever happen. But then again: if it does happen, losing magical use is probably going to be considered a minor problem by a character already well over her head in REAL troubles.

So saith Ed.

Who created Mystra, with this particular power, and the concept (if not the word; it was Julia Martin's, I believe) of the Weave, too.

love to all,  
THO

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On October 11, 2006 THO said: Sigh. All scribes, please be aware that The Green Road is NOT part of the Grand Duchy of Shantal. Ed has no idea where that spurious header came from, beyond that it appeared (obviously) after he submitted this entry to WotC.

Let's see if they fix it...

Hawkgarth, promised to follow, isn't in the Duchy, either.

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October 12, 2006: Hi, all. Ed answers Uzzy this time, re.: "Hello again Ed! I've been wondering about the Harper Pins, and after some help from the other scribes here, I thought I would ask you. Is there any set size for one? I'm guessing that it's small, but how small exactly? Are there any protections against it being discovered from a 'pat-down', or is it up to the agent to make sure its kept very well hidden? Are there stacks of them in safekeeping somewhere, or do they only get made for when a new member is joining the Harpers? Do they even get passed down through the generations, from Harper to Harper?"

Any lore you could share with us on the Pins would be greatly appreciated. Thanks in advance."

Ed replies:

creativmind has the right ideas in his post, but let me tackle things, as he anticipated, in a little more depth:

\* "Is there any set size for one? I'm guessing that it's small, but how small exactly?"

I'd say "usual size" rather than "set size" (there are a few exceptions, mainly tiny "charms" worn on anklets and other fine chains or as earring pendants by ladies, that serve for Harper recognition and have a few limited powers [can be magically traced by other Harpers, cover wearer entirely with a magical aura that makes all of them seem magical, and foils alignment-

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reading and all surface-thought-reading attempts] rather than the usual range. Most Harper pins are about two inches across, though there are also a few larger "show" pins, up to twice that size.

\* "Are there any protections against it being discovered from a 'pat-down', or is it up to the agent to make sure its kept very well hidden?"

Most pins can be touched and a word spoken, to make them seem (to everyone not employing magically-augmented, illusion-piercing vision, except the person activating this power, who sees the pin as a "glowing Harper pin") like a set "other thing" (usually an old, slightly shabby brooch, usually with a flower or butterfly motif; in other words, an obviously "family heirloom" piece rather than something worth stealing for its intrinsic gem or metal value; some pins resemble battered personal holy symbols). This illusion lasts until the activator de-activates it again (or anyone else who knows the right word does so, by touch and speech), but doesn't fool the fingers of anyone. Yes, Harpers usually keep pins hidden rather than displaying them disguised, except in Berdusk or at Storm's farmhouse or "open Harper functions." A pat-down will discover them, so bearers fearing discovery will hide their pins somewhere (not on their persons), or if they have long hair work the pins deep into hair above the back of their necks, or if female and well-endowed will slip them up and under the curve of their breasts, or if fat will ditto with belly overhangs, or even wrap them against pain and slip them into body cavities.

\* "Are there stacks of them in safekeeping somewhere, or do they only get made for when a new member is joining the Harpers?"

There aren't "stacks," no, but there are caches of pins ready for new Harpers. If love or deep regard or friendship is involved between an existing Harper and a new one, the veteran Harper may well help make a pin for the new one. Pins with a large range of powers do of course require magically-gifted crafters of sufficient levels.

\* "Do they even get passed down through the generations, from Harper to Harper?"

Yes, many Harper pins get passed down, their powers sometimes decaying over time or being augmented or altered by various owners. There are even "haunted" Harper pins that bear the whispering or mind-speaking sentiences of former Harper bearers, that communicate with later wearers.

So saith Ed, revealing something juicy right at the end there! Run with it, lads and lasses, run with it!

love to all,  
THO

P.S. Ed's off to be a Guest of Honour at the Alliance Open House in Fort Wayne, Indiana (at the Grand Wayne Center, which has hosted so many superb Pentacons over the years), so he'll fall e-silent until Tuesday. Hang in there, scribes: laptop under arm, he'll still be busily turning out Realmslore for us all!

\*\*\*\*\*

On October 20, 2006 THO said: Not well at all. I'm MUCH prettier than that.

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No, seriously... as I said earlier in another thread here at the 'Keep, the likenesses aren't good at all. I had to guess at which characters are shown on the cover.

Cover art is, of course, a matter of much personal taste, and in some cases, what one scribe loves, another will struggle against nausea or hurling the tome across the room. So, YMMV. \*I\* just get cheesed off that Ed sketched all of the Knights very well, and provided endless descriptions of hair color, eye color, style of dress, etc., and TSR has had these since 1986 at least

- - and no one seems to bother to follow them. So much for consistency being the bulwark of the illusion of realism.

In other news, Ed is more tearingly busy than I've ever seen him before (with rush WotC Realms work), but will get back to posting Realmslore replies just as soon as he can.

love to all,  
THO

\*\*\*\*\*

On October 20, 2006 THO said: Highknights are a special order of knights that can best be thought of as a cross between James Bond and the most trusted personal royal bodyguards.

Purple Dragons are the enlisted soldiers of Cormyr, and can be anything from impressed militia to lifetime professional soldiers ("Blue Dragons" are the naval equivalents).

Some knights have land, most do not (unless they've bought or inherited it themselves, not through their title), unless they're hereditary knights ("baronets" in English real-life parlance).

love,  
THO

\*\*\*\*\*

On October 20, 2006 THO said: When Ed ran Sword Coast barbarians, they used a sword planted in a bonfire as a centre of worship. It would follow that a simple flaming sword would do as holy symbol.

love,  
THO

\*\*\*\*\*

On October 20, 2006 THO said: Ed's idea, when creating the Realms (pre-D&D), was that "natural source only" potions, ointments, etc. have a lower level of efficacy (except for certain poisons) than substances that incorporate either spells in the creation process, or use as an ingredient material that has been enspelled (or both).

love,  
THO

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October 22, 2006: Hello again, all. This time Ed tackles a fairly depressing (to hopeful adventurers among us, at least) query from Hoondatha: "Hi Ed. I'm part of the way through Swords of Eveningstar, and it's gotten me thinking about the life expectancy of new adventurers (as well as a greater appreciation why most people equate "fool" and "adventurer").

So, what are the chances of your average new adventurer surviving his/her first month of adventuring? Their first year? To make things somewhat simpler, I'll limit the question only to good and neutral adventuring bands (internal maneuvering in evil groups I'm sure ups body count), and also to groups that didn't have much formal training before starting adventuring (no former mercenaries, or experienced cat burglars, or whatever). However, ill luck and rampant stupidity are fair game.

So yes, in effect, what I'm asking is, for every Knights of Myth Drannor who survived the first year, how many others died?"

Ed replies:

The chances aren't good. Percentages are, of course, meaningless, but the majority of adventurers are either killed or imprisoned, maimed, or just scared into retirement within a season. Of those that "make it" through a season, many more "retire" as soon as they land a "relatively much safer" job as a bodyguard, caravan escort, "drawn-dagger agent" (spy, hired killer, or outside-the-law facilitator for a wealthy patron) or envoy. Still others retire the moment they make a "big strike" (taking the loot and investing in a farm, tavern, or other "business to support them" - - an increasingly-popular endeavour is for the adventuring band, or some members of it, to become landlords of a number of city buildings, getting their own accommodations paid for, plus monthly money for food, taxes, and diversions) or achieve whatever they first set out to do (become famous, unseat an unpopular ruler, settle a score, or avenge something really bad).

Now, "for every Knight of Myth Drannor who survived the first year, how many others died?" IS really a different question, and one that I can't properly answer, for two reasons: when writing the Knights trilogy, BECAUSE it's only a trilogy (and not sixty or so full-length novels), I'm having to omit, simplify, or gloss over a LOT of "Realms history" - - and because some members of the band died and were brought back to life by various means without all of the other player characters knowing. As we're still playing, some secrets must remain secrets. So let me just say that those who began as the Swords and became the Knights suffered a very high body count, and it would have been a LOT higher if they hadn't been lucky enough to blunder into situations where Elminster and other Chosen, and the Harpers, and the War Wizards, found it useful to try to keep them alive (and so, rescued their behinds on many occasions - - sometimes without the Knights even knowing about it!).

So saith Ed.

Who, yes, even has secrets from me (but no important, real-life ones).

love to all,  
THO

\*\*\*\*\*

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October 23, 2006: Hail, fellow Realms scribes. This time, Ed would like to say, "You're welcome!" to both Wandering\_mage and Chosen of Moradin, and reply to the latter scribe thus:

I'm afraid there's only one instalment of Daily Dwarf Common. For now. There are SO MANY little facets of Realmslore I'm trying to get before the eyeballs of scribes, you see, and poor Azoun and Filfaeril have been stuck in that place for some time, and will quite likely be there for a while longer. However, worry not: I fully intend to impart more dwarven lore, linguistic and otherwise, in several small, subtle ways and places, in the year ahead. Bear with me, please; there's only one of me, and I'm getting older and slower all the time. Someday I might even start to act grown up.

So saith Ed.

Who's joking in that last line, there, of course. He plays (especially at conventions) like a little boy (er, a dirty-minded little boy), but is one of the most kind, mature, and understanding people I know. So in some ways he acts VERY grown up. He might not seem so, of course, when he's delivering lame gross-out jokes that were old when he was in diapers.

love to all,  
THO

\*\*\*\*\*

October 24, 2006: Hello again, all. This time Ed dredges up something more for scribe Dagnirion's plea: "Could you share with us some Elven folksongs? Titles, lyric, translations- whatever you have would be appreciated."

Yesterday Ed found some Realmsplay notes wherein Sharanralee taught a PC some "safe and traditional" fireside elf ballads (in Common translation), including this fragment:

"Lost And Away"

Even the sun, it looks for my love  
Where lies she now, where can she be?  
Cruel hawk's talons a-downed my dove  
Look in valley, deep glade and lea

Even the wind is calling my love  
Crying mournful, crying high  
Cruel hawk's talons a-downed my dove  
Laughter lost e'er, in silence die

Even the moon, it weeps for my love  
Lost and fallen, oh so far away  
Cruel hawk's talons a-downed my dove  
Where she lies now, none can say

Even the deepnight remembers my love  
Cold of the tomb, patient the grave  
Cruel hawk's talons a-downed my dove  
Too late too late her life to save

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Even her sword it sings for my love  
Singing, sighing, echoing her name  
Cruel hawk's talons a-downed my dove  
So I'll fall on it now, this sadness to tame

Even the forests will miss our love  
No more our dancing, no more our glee  
Cruel hawk's talons a-downed my dove  
I'll join her in silence, from sadness be free

So saith Ed.

By no means deathless poetry, but lyrics that sounded fine when he sang them, as I dimly recall from a play session in the winter of 1980.

love to all,  
THO

P.S. createvmind, Ed is readying some troll query replies for you (about twelve or fourteen down the row, I think). Hang in there!

\*\*\*\*\*

October 24, 2006 THO said: Expect the Undermountain tome to be over 200 pages, too. Ed hasn't said one word to me about this, but one of my spies in the industry tells me someone has been whispering at Hasbro. Remember, if it was Ed doing a "proper Ed job," 250 or so pages wouldn't even cover just the level right under the Yawning Portal. So I suspect it's going to be covering a lot more, a lot more lightly.

Which still means a "must buy" for THIS girl.

love,  
THO

Edit: They're missing an author in that entry. Who? Well, does "Hungry Little Monsters" ring any bells?

\*\*\*\*\*

October 25, 2006: Hello again, fellow scribes. This time Ed tackles one of two queries Kajehase asked in the same post (the other Ed will get to on another occasion): "1. Continuing my (or Ed's, really) exploration of the Chondathan language, would it be possible to get the Chondathan names of the various noble titles used in Cormyr (along with the English word they most closely equate to)?"

Scribe Jerryd, this peripherally touches on your current query about Cormyrean titles, too.

Ed replies:

Certainly it would be possible.

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I'll even do it. :}

A list follows, with each entry taking this sequence: Common Tongue title (with usage notes, if applicable), Chondathan word, pronunciation (only if possibly confusing)

King: Astrel ("Az-TRELL")  
Queen: Arauna ("Arr-AWN-ah")  
Prince: Ardyr ("Ar-DEER")  
Princess: Ardess ("Ar-DESS")  
Duke: Storn  
Duchess: Staerra ("STAIR-ah")  
Marchion: Mahrsar ("MAR-sarr")  
Marchioness: Mahrsara  
Earl (always used, instead of Count, because of possible confusion with "Corount," a Common Tongue word meaning "courtier or military commander sent in by a ruler to serve as a temporary acting noble when the real one has died suddenly, gone missing, or gone mad/fallen gravely ill/otherwise become incapacitated"): Velm ("VEL-mm")  
Countess (never used, except by heralds and court scribes: just "Lady"): Velana ("Vell-ANNA")  
Viscount: Tlarvelm ("TAH-lar-velm")  
Viscountess: Tlarvelana ("TAH-lar-velanna")  
Baron (in Cormyr, includes Baronet): Taen ("TAYN")  
Baroness (in Cormyr, includes Baronetess): Taenya ("TAY-nyah")  
Knight (title is unisex, but as a form of address, females are styled "Lady Knight"): Tahar ("TAH-har")  
Lord: Aro ("AIR-o")  
Lady: Arauna (AIR-on-ah")  
Sir: Saer ("SAY-ur")

So saith Ed, busily building languages everywhere.

love to all,  
THO

\*\*\*\*\*

October 26, 2006: Hello again, fellow scribes. This time, Ed tackles a mid-August request from Mkhaiwati: "In case I have not said anything before, a big thank you to THO and Ed for the responses to my previous questions. And I have another to throw onto the huge pile of questions (it is like a hydra, finish off two and five more grow back!)"

While reading the Volo's guide to Cormyr, specifically the notes on Barandos Hawklin, it states the clan has prospered, among other things, from adventuring and sponsoring adventurers. Could you elaborate on that last part. I see possibilities of profiting from anything political (embarassing or eliminating a political rival, though I doubt if he would do this), to making use of "monster cleared land" as areas for money making venues (inns, mines, etc), to making a trade route clear of monsters for caravans, to the ever popular taking a percentage of the loot from adventuring parties.

What does "sponsoring" entail, anyway? Paying part of charter fees, arranging material and supplies (food, rope, mounts, etc), access to special government personalities and offices that are hard to reach, and funneling good adventure opportunities to the chartered groups are obvious examples, but would it take any other forms?

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I dunno, maybe I hit on all the high points

Thanks"

Ed replies:

Mkhaiwati, you're very welcome - - and quite correct in sponsoring: it can mean paying charter fees and/or providing equipment and supplies and/or dealing with courtiers and bureaucrats on behalf of the adventurers and/or hiring or recommending said adventurers, or spreading word of their capabilities at nobles' revels, et al. In the Hawklin case, "sponsoring" has meant all of those things. Other examples of sponsoring include buying guild memberships or making "task offers" (the Realms equivalent of tendering for a job) on behalf of adventurers, promising courts or rulers to monetarily compensate for all damages done by the adventurers or fines incurred by them, establishing a "healing fund" at a local temple to pay for future medical (and raising) needs of the adventurers, and paying travel costs for long voyages.

There are scores of ways any sponsor can profit from the activities of adventurers, from the ways you mention to defeating trade rivals in the marketplace because rivals (or their suppliers or customers) have been hampered or intimidated by the adventurers, to escaping debts because the adventurers kill creditors and destroy all documentary evidence of outstanding loans (including killing witnesses). In the Hawklin case, trade rivals have repeatedly been hampered or intimidated by hired adventurers (in one case, the shipments of rivals' goods were destroyed by "bandits" who were really disguised hired adventurers). Such 'dirty tricks' can work in several ways, from the adventurers following direct orders, or hints ("See what you can do to see that X or Y is kept busy this month, and at the end of it sees very few coins in profit; I don't want to know how you do it, but don't get caught"), to manipulating the unwitting adventurers into damaging rivals while they're trying to pursue other goals or missions. In the Hawklin case, the "I don't want to know how you do it" was the favored approach.

So saith Ed.

Who had various NPCs try all of those on the Knights, over the years, to continually remind us that we were small-town neophytes in an already-crowded field of adventuring. (Which is quite realistic, after all, given the activities of the Zhents, Lashan, Cormyr, the factions in Hillsfar, and so on.)

love to all,  
THO

\*\*\*\*\*

October 27, 2006: Hi again, all. This time Ed replies to Baleful Avatar's question: "How close is the look and feel of the Realms in Ed's novels to its look and feel when Ed's DMing his home campaign?"

Ed replies:

The way characters talk and look: identical. The sense of whimsy and humour: as close as the editors will let me. The feel of actual play: not close at all. My players have always loved (as have I) tons of subplots going on at all times, and PC freedom to break and go shopping here, wander off to see something else there, drop in and chat with NPC friends and business contacts, and so

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on - - and if I try to dwadle and tarry through such "real life" events in a Realms novel, the editors ruthlessly prune it all out, to bring us back to a single driving plot. Peter Archer used to call this "avoiding a book that's too shrubby" (meaning, like garden shrubbery that's been left to grow wild, it throws out branches untidily in all directions). I don't get the chance to write self-indulgent, don't-care-about-wordcount, no-need-for-tidy-resolutions or allowance for philosophy, poetry, and the like in place of fast action books. I'd like to, but it hasn't happened yet, in twenty years of writing Realms novels for TSR and then WotC.

So saith Ed.

I happily confirm that Realmsplay sessions in the "home" campaign are character-development driven, heavy roleplaying, not battle or game advancement oriented.

love,  
THO

\*\*\*\*\*

October 28, 2006: Heh. Well said, Faraer! (The popularity of Martin and Kay, and for that matter Jordan, suggests fantasy readers DO like "fat fantasy" with many subplots and umpteen characters. Pity no one at WotC seems to read enough bestselling fantasy to cotton on to this.)

Hi again, everyone. A quick reply by Ed this time, to Malcolm's question: "At a recent convention, Ed mentioned he was writing something called DARK WARRIOR. Is this a Realms project, or something else?"

Ed replies thus:

DARK WARRIOR isn't set in the Realms. It's the first of two linked swords-and-sorcery novels for Tor Books, centered on a human who escapes from slavery under the surface of the earth (and that's probably all I should say right now, except to note that the "world" they present is of lore interest to all Realms fans as the way the subterranean Realms would have been, if D&D hadn't given us Loth-worshipping drow down there).

So saith Ed

(and, no, I haven't seen a glimpse of this book, and so can't add a word about it). Ed also wanted to warn The Sage that he was handing out copies of the already-released Player's Guide to Castlemourn in Fort Wayne, not the core hardcover setting book (which due to editing delays that Ed's quite happy with, saying he's very pleased with the attention to detail the setting is receiving from Margaret Weis Productions and the freelancers, will probably be released in December). Ed did rave about the Donato cover painting (he got to drool over the original overnight, in his hotel room). The Player's Guide is available on-line as a free download, BTW. (Provide the link, someone? Please?)

love to all,  
THO

\*\*\*\*\*

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October 29, 2006: Hello and well met again, fellow scribes. This time I bring you Ed's reply to a query from Broken Helm: "A question for Ed, if I may: if the Swords books can't follow what happened in your campaign, are you going to use them to explore what would have happened IF the players had done something different, or do whatever works best as an entertaining story, or - what?"

And if you don't want to tell us, that's fine. I'm hoping, however..."

Ed replies:

I'm afraid space limitations prevent me from trying to explore what would have happened if my players had "done something different" with their characters, because I tried as a DM to let THEM decide where to go and what to do, every play session - - and to give them scores upon scores of real choices, NOT "you can die in this dungeon, or that one; I've got just the two ready." Obviously, I can't write a novel crammed with all of those chaotically-unfolding subplots and expect Wizards to publish it. They want a coherent story.

As do all readers, I presume. However, I had to decide SOMETHING about where I was going while writing this trilogy, and in the end decided to paint a portait of how one group of teenagers who wanted adventure and dreamed of being famous chartered adventurers fared, when they actually tried it. The fictional Knights had to start out being slightly different from the PC Knights, and have already begun to diverge quite a bit. I think of my fictional characters in the novel (as opposed to the fictional PCs I created all those years ago, and then handed to my players to "make their own") as salutes to the "real" (PC) Knights.

So telling an interesting tale is foremost, and bringing you fictional echoes of the Knights I love is second, and having fun writing it is third, and showing you a little more colour and depth of Cormyr at this time period is fourth. I'll probably add more goals to the list as I go...

So saith Ed.

Who's done us proud thus far.

love to all,  
THO

\*\*\*\*\*

October 31, 2006: Hi again, all. This time Ed answers RodOdom, re. this question: "Dear Ed and Lady THO, Thanks so much for revealing that relationship between the shape-changers. I am very suprised about their cross-breeds and hope to find out more about them one day.

Here's a question about Elminster, but not really about Elminster. If I understand correctly, the Old Sage is not so much Superman, zipping around saving the day, as he is the Kevin Bacon of the Realms. All the good guys are linked to him somehow, and he uses his connections to put the right people together for the right challenge. Has there ever been anyone in history who comes close to Elminster's role in the forces of good?"

Ed replies:

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Certainly. As of right now, Alustriel in the Sword Coast North. Recently, Khelben (by different diplomatic means), Laeral in Waterdeep, and several Harpers. In elder times, Mentor in Myth Drannor, and there are at least four others I can think of, that NDAs prevent me from identifying at the moment.

So saith Ed.

Who was aching to say more, but dare not. Yet.

love,  
THO

\*\*\*\*\*

November 1, 2006: Hi again, fellow scribes. This time Ed tackles another question from RodOdom: "Dear Ed and Lady THO, Thank you so much for taking time out of your busy schedule to answer our (merciless?) barrage of questions. Here's another for your consideration:

What's the geologic age of Toril? The earliest date mentioned in the Serpent Kingdoms sourcebook -35000 DR, the start of the Age of Thunder. Were there billions of years of unrecorded history before that period?"

Ed replies:

You're very welcome. Whenever I have time to actually sit down and deal with e-mail, I love sharing Realmslore with everyone who's become a fan of my world. Warm fuzzy pleasure for me, so thank YOU. As for the geological age of Toril, we don't know for sure. However, I can say that the eldest elves and dragons who've considered the matter, and the best-informed human sages ditto, all tend to hold opinions that suggest Toril is twice as old as the Age of Thunder... or perhaps a LITTLE less.

So saith Ed.

Hmm. That's a LOT more Realmslore to write, big boy... you are planning to live forever, aren't you?

P.S. DavidTrim, Ed says you're welcome. He hated the lack of wordcount he ran into on that project, but a lot of the spells that "didn't make it" went into AL-Qadim.

love to all,  
THO

\*\*\*\*\*

November 2, 2006: Hello again, scribes. Ed essays a reply of sorts to Longtime Lurker this time, re. this query: "Dear Ed and THO, How much does the average worshipper of Bane know about the top hierarchy of its church? Do they know Fzoul's rank, or anything about him? Do they know how he got there? Do rumors circulate, do the clergy spin rumors and news like in our modern world? And is there "1984"-like rewriting of past history when new priests rise to the top?

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And how different is it in, say, the faith of Tyr?

Thanks!"

Ed replies:

I'm not sure that there is such a thing as an "average worshipper of Bane." Even among laity, there are backcountry bumpkins, and citizens in news-filled crossroads cities like Waterdeep, and everything in between. Leaving out ordained priests and novices in training to become priests, I'd say that MOST worshippers of Bane have heard of Fzoul and are aware that he's "head of the church, or close to it," just as they are aware that for years the church was headed by the High Imperceptor of Bane, and have heard something of the chaos and infighting among the hierarchy during the time of "Bane's Silence," the Time of the Godson (Xvim), and so on.

Yes, there are indeed rumors aplenty, swirling constantly among the clergy and leaking out into "public" circulation - - and there are indeed attempts to "spin" or control what information priests let slip or officially impart. There are also continual 1984-like attempts to rewrite church history, but thanks to long memories and the use of magic, these have only limited success among the clergy. They do, however, form the basis of what lay worshippers are taught, and punishments and the passage of time have a way of "changing memories" airily effectively among the laity - - unless they are nobles, wealthy, and otherwise well-informed or involved in church power struggles in some way, and take care to keep themselves informed. To such folk, forgetting little details about the past can swiftly prove fatal...

Not so in church of Tyr. They can be harshly repressive, too, but changes in "official" church doctrine are discussed beforehand, and everyone in the clergy is solemnly and officially informed several times (with "clarifications from on high"). So any rewriting of history is slow, ponderous, and clearly warned-about.

So saith Ed.

Creator of Bane, Xvim, Fzoul, and for the matter the High Imperceptor, Waterdeep, and the whole blamed Realms around them. Tyr, however, he's guilty only of borrowing.

love to all,  
THO

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November 3, 2006: Hello again, all. This time Ed answers Skeptic, re. this question: "Now that the Border Kingdoms are well covered, maybe Ed could talk us a bit more about the Unicorn Run? (The others are well-covered in published realms)"

Ed replies:

Maybe I could. :}

Seriously, I intend to provide a little more detail about the Unicorn Run, but there are at least two NDAs that prevent me from doing so just yet. When certain other projects are finished or brought much farther along, I'll know if I can say more.

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So saith Ed.

Swords out, ladies and gentles; the darned NDAs are on the prowl again!

love to all,  
THO

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November 4, 2006: Hi again, all. This time Ed tackles a question from October 1th, 2005, posed by Lord of Bones: "Hello there! I have a question regarding the Simbul and her animosity towards the Red Wizards.

We all know that the Simbul is something of a loose cannon, and a bit of a crazy lady, but do you think she would attack (with intent to kill) a wizard she knew to be Thayan upon sight, or would it be more likely that she'd send him or her back to Thay via a handy spell, or alternatively capture the wandering Red Wizard?

Obviously this is going on the basis that a Red Wizard would be strolling through Aglarond, but I don't think they're fools enough to wear the ceremonial robes and reveal their complex tattoos at all times.

In addition, are we to presume that there has been any sort of relationship between the Simbul and Lauzoril since the book 'The Simbul's Gift'? It would seem that his personality has changed somewhat from "I believe Thay is destined to rule Faerun, but not a Faerun drenched in blood" to "let's march our armies upon our enemies" (at least according to the new FRCS.) The relationship between the two archmages was interesting to say the least. It's a pity it's never really been picked up on in any other book than that novel.

Any thoughts would be appreciated.

Thanks in advance,  
LoB"

Ed replies:

Sorry I've taken so long (and I'm even sorrier to the scribes who've been waiting since 2004!) to get to your post. As for a known Red Wizard strolling through Aglarond in disguise: unless the Simbul was already very angry (due to events befalling in, say, the previous twenty minutes or so, or a day or so after a death of someone she loved), she would very much want to know WHY the Thayan was in Aglarond, and what they were up to, before she cut loose and destroy them. So use of a magical disguise (remember, the Simbul spends more time flitting around the Realms as a bird or otherwise shapechanged into "nondescript fauna" form than she does in her own shape, something recent Realms chroniclers often seem to forget) to shadow the Thayan, and then a magical invasion of his mind when he's asleep if he doesn't do or say anything enlightening before taking slumber, may be what she does if she doesn't have pressing emergencies elsewhere.

If she's enraged or in a hurry, she just might cast a delayed-blast chain meteor swarm or similar "Simbul special" battle spell into the unfortunate Thayan's innards, and use another spell to fling

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him back to Thay charged to cry out that he has to get an important warning to the nearest zulkir...

Yet she CAN love Red Wizards, as her relationship with Lauzoril proves. A relationship that continues, sporadically, though not as "close" in nature as it was in THE SIMBUL'S GIFT. I agree that it's a pity we haven't seen more coverage of them, after that lone novel (and a greater pity that Lynn Abbey, whom I consider a great writer and a good friend, hasn't written a lot more Realms books!) Lauzoril's character continues to change, but it's important for everyone to distinguish between the "public act" every Red Wizard puts on, to further their own standing (and survival!) within the Brotherhood and in Thayan society, and what they truly (and very privately) feel. Even Szass Tam has his soft side, and they all have their own little secret plans, diversions, and activities, from growing flowers to innocently burping little lasses and singing songs to them. (Trust me about this; I created almost every one of them, old Szass included.)

So saith Ed.

Yes, I recall a certain dalliance between several Knights of Myth Drannor and powerful Red Wizards, circa 1982 or so... Szass wasn't part of it, but I have always strongly suspected he was manipulating several of the Red Wizards involved, and spying on them and us through the eyes and minds of his puppets...

[delicious shiver]

love to all,  
THO

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November 5, 2006: Hello all scribes, hello! Pray heed: big answer time! Ed has finally produced a reply to Zandilar, Kentinal, RevJest, GothicDan, Zanan, Faraer, Wooly Rupert, warlockco, The Sage, bearsden, and divers other scribes, about the contentious matter of non-drow and male clerics of Eilistraee, the nature and status of the Dark Dancer among drow and pantheons in general, the role of males in rituals and among the clergy of this deity, and so on.

Here's Ed's answer:

It is true that for some decades in the Realms (the time covered by the Realms boxed sets of both the 1st and 2nd Edition) there were apparently no male clerics of Lolth and no male clerics of Eilistraee, and no non-drow clergy of either goddess.

However, matters have changed.

Some (not all!) priestesses of Eilistraee believe the Dancer is worried about something dark she's foreseen. Others disagree - - but all admit the Goddess has, for reasons she's not divulged, changed the directives she gives her clergy and lay worshippers, to become far more inclusive. For one thing, the "dream visions" she's sent to senior established clergy have begun to direct them to accept both males and individuals of many races into the ranks of her clergy. (So, yes, Kentinal, a goblin priestess, gnome priestess, silver dragon, hill giants, and male priests of all stripes now ARE possible. We still don't know [not being able to personally quiz Eilistraee] if there are any races that remain unacceptable as her clergy, but whereas before the answer was: all of

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them except drow, and female drow at that, the answer now is: possibly; all certainty is gone.) There are even apparently lycanthropes and shapechanging races among the clergy of Eilistraee.

Yes, you heard me right: there now ARE a few males among her church, but to enter it they have all "Danced The ChANGEDANCE" and spent time as female, just as Mystra caused Elminster to spend time as Elmara - - and for the same reasons: greater understanding and sensitivity of "the life of the other gender." One cannot truly feel the Divine Dance of Eilistraee PROPERLY except as a female, and so her (still very rare, few, and generally secretive about it) male priests must spend some time as a female (not just for the duration of a ritual, but they must do some everyday living as a female). The most accomplished drow, elf, half-elf, and human male priests seem to feel the need to take female form for some days every few years or so (if they wish to "cleave more fully to the Goddess" and thus rise in levels), and most spend longer and longer times in female form. Not all female priests of the Goddess fully trust the males, and they don't tend to rise much in the church hierarchy (no matter what character levels they achieve).

More than that, many drow priestesses of Eilistraee are unhappy about this, and may prove hostile (not to the point of violence or refusal to accept or aid, but with a coldness in manner and a wary "always watching over" any males, until they achieve acceptance on a personal level [e.g. "I still don't hold with allowing males - - males! - - to join the dances, but Elorand can be trusted; he's proven himself over and over, and don't think we haven't tested him. Other males, I still don't trust!"]). Eilistraee has always had enough personal contact with her clergy that none of them would think of disbelieving that she truly means this "new way" to occur and to be followed - - and no established priestess of Eilistraee will renounce this new order, either. ("Reluctantly accepting and unhappily coping" is a good description of their state; "defying the goddess and rejecting males or trying to trick or lead them into fatal mishaps so we can be rid of them" would NOT be an accurate characterization.)

There wasn't a single date or clear moment when the acceptance of males and non-drow began; it seems to have been slowly and almost secretly occurring over a decade or so. However, as of 1373 DR, "everyone" among the clergy of Eilistraee now seems to be aware of it.

Zandilar, Eilistraee has always gained converts and made herself known to drow through dream-visions and personal appearances (usually dancing in moonlit woods). Many, many drow long to return to the surface and live among trees (it's a race instinct, that some recognize for what it is - - whereas other drow just feel always unsettled and edgy, and usually turn this into fighting amongst themselves, and family and/or trading rivalries), and Eilistraee has far more worshippers than the drow who dwell under the firm influence of Vhaeraun or Lolth (who is by far the most powerful of drow deities) would have one believe. I'd say a little more than 22% or so of all drow in Faerûn worship Eilistraee - - although I must again remind scribes to set aside any modern monotheistic thinking: in the Realms, the vast majority of intelligent beings worship many or at least several gods, NOT just one. It's not easy to truly believe in and worship Lolth and any other drow deity, but a particular drow individual COULD venerate both Eilistraee and Vhaeraun (though they'd serve neither well, in trying to follow or honour both). Drow who ONLY worship Eilistraee are almost entirely her clergy, and are probably between 10 and 12 percent of all drow.

(I would echo Zanan in ranking the "popularity" of drow deities as: Lolth by a long shot, then Vhaeraun, but thereafter I would put Eilistraee ahead of Selvetarm, and Ghaundaur last of all. As of this moment, that is; faiths and their deities rise and fall over time, and right now Lolth is the only one I would bet on being around in the far future, if one purely considers divine power. Faraer is quite correct, however, to remind us that "worship isn't the sole determinant of godly might, or Waukeen would be far greater than Mystra and Shar." Wooly Rupert is also dead-on when he observed "If Lolth had her way, there would be no drow pantheon - - just her.")

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Every drow who sets out on an expedition to the surface, to raid, gets "tempted by Eilistraee in their dreams" (visions sent into their minds, whether they're asleep, in Reverie, lying wounded or bored, singing or otherwise concentrating on something, or daydreaming alone or working on some repetitive task like painting or weaving). She also sends visions, in exactly the same manner, to drow who never go near the surface.

Many drow literally don't understand the visions; they feel but don't "feel" the Goddess. Others find Her troubling, or reject Her - - but about a quarter of all drow yearn for what she shows them. They may never do anything about it, or may never seek Her or Her worship, but they certainly feel Her.

So almost all drow learn of Eilistraee's existence, and even receive a true picture of what it is (Lolth can't stop that, because she too uses the dream-vision approach, and to try to block others from using it would rob her lay worshippers of much sanity, her priestesses of much daily control over those lay worshippers, and herself of much control over her priestesses). Not all that many reject Lolth and cleave to Eilistraee, but many secretly yearn (meaning they might spare a stricken worshipper of Eilistraee if they think no priestess is watching, or fail to pass on to other drow something they may have seen of the activities of faithful of Eilistraee, or stop to watch a dance of Eilistraee worshippers rather than disrupting it).

As for which pantheon Eilistraee belongs to: pantheons are a purely mortal frame of reference, or way of classifying and speaking of divine beings they can never wholly understand. Eilistraee clearly began as, and primarily remains, a drow deity - - but has exiled herself from the formal company of all other deities (though she's friendly to Selune and Mielikki, and at least polite to all of the major surface elven deities).

No mortal can be certain why Eilistraee is now embracing males and non-drow as worshippers, but we do know it's been going on for some time, and is now openly Her policy (NO clergy of Eilistraee can fool themselves into passing this off as an idea promoted by this or that high-ranking priestess; they KNOW the Goddess Herself is promoting this). There are still certain church "offices" (Sword Dancers and other prestige classes) that seem restricted to females only, but this may only appear to be the case because no males have yet attained those offices - - we literally no longer know if there's a divine prohibition.

So saith Ed.

Who will return next time to say more about the roles of males in Eilistraee's rituals, et al. (Remember, folks: Ed created the Realms, Eilistraee, and Vhaeraun, and did a lot of detailing of Ghaundaur and Lolth - - and by the Realms agreement, what he says is canon until contradicted in print in Wizards of the Coast products.)

love to all,  
THO

Ed returns, as promised, with more replies about males and their roles within the faithful of Eilistraee. Heeeere's Ed:

In reply to RevJest's Jan06 query: "Ed, I would be interested in anything you might wish to say concerning the social order amongst the faithful of Eilistraee. Do they marry? Specifically, what role do males play in Eilistreean communities / households?" let me say this:

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I define "faithful" as individuals who most strongly identify with, and believe in, Eilistraee. Lay worshippers, in other words, rather than just clergy (and clergy-in-training or wannabe clergy). There is no Eilistreean prohibition on marriage (or sex) among either lay worshippers or clergy, and never has been. There are many female drow clerics who prefer to remain single, either because a lesbian or other facet of their personalities makes them most comfortable being partner-less (as opposed to having a steady partner of either gender), or because they see married life as a distraction (or time-stealer) from their whole-hearted devotion to the Goddess. Eilistraee has never deemed either married or single worshippers as "preferred," and has never regarded (as far as mortals know) either sort of worshipper as disfavoured or second in rank behind the other sort of worshipper.

Except among clergy dwelling together in a temple (or forest "temple" community; I'm not speaking here of holy buildings or even a fixed worship site), I don't think there are any such things as "Eilistreean communities." (Remember, individuals in the Realms worship an array of gods, not a single deity.) Eilistreean-DOMINATED communities and Eilistreean households, yes. In all of those, females tend to govern (formally make decisions and be consulted in decision-making as the individuals with most social "weight" and influence), involving males primarily as "spot experts" (e.g. "You saw the attack, Phaerold, so tell us - -" and "You've dealt with that human more than the rest of us, Phaerold; please give us your opinion as to - -") Males tend to be daily-bread-winning workers, guards and warriors, and have tasks related to their generally superior physical strength. They do not tend to be supervisors and high-ranking decision-makers. (Please note the word "tend." I'm speaking in gross generalizations here, not of "a rule that holds true in all cases.") Many males - - even clerics of Eilistraee - - become spies, scouts, patrolling guards, or leaders of lawkeeping or defensive military forces for Eilistreean-dominated communities or Eilistreean-dedicated holy communities. (To answer Kentinal's Jan06 query: "Some wonder how Eilistraee reacts to Wizards as followers as there has been little mention of Eilistraee following mages and the one of note is female, where do males fit in?" I can add that male wizards (of any race) accepted as worshippers of Eilistraee also serve in such capacities (and as "resident experts in arcane magic").

Kentinal also asked: "It has been said the Eilistraee societies there is gender equality, and it appears reasonable that they do not take slaves. Some argue that such communities are Cleric dominated, they rule perhaps?"

Yes, Eilistraee forbids the taking of slaves. Prisoners of war can be made to work in return for their food and shelter, but they are not "property" and cannot be ordered around by anyone: only by supervisors assigned by the decision-makers among the Dark Dancer's worshippers. (Such cases are rare, and generally consist of Lolth-worshipping drow or beings of other races who have "learned too much" and so are being detained for a few months, to prevent the specialized knowledge they've gained from being brought to enemies of the Eilistraeens.

As I noted above, one can only speak of "Eilistraee societies" if they are clerical communities. Scribes must try to set aside real-world monotheistic views of settlements or lands or racial groupings that only venerate one god: in the Realms, beings believe in, and worship (or at least try to appease, through worship) many, many gods. Far too much of the discussion here and elsewhere betrays thinking that "this family or group of [fill in race] worships Deity X, whereas these over here worship Deity Y." Please, when dealing with the Realms, move away from that viewpoint, and reflect that any family with children old enough to think for themselves and express those opinions will likely include family members who choose different (or no!) primary deity, and "weight" their personal worship of the mix of deities differently from fellow family members.

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Kentinal also posted: "Another question came up in another place that asked if Monks would take Eilistraee as a Patron deity?"

Yes, monks (of any race) can revere Eilistraee as their patron, but very few do. Just as a drow ranger could turn to Mielikki. Neither case is likely to be numerous or popular; we're talking of handfuls of individuals, not a groundswell of hitherto-neglected-by-the-rules thousands of folk.

And to Kentinal's "In past answers it is clear that followers are located throughout the regions, some even in "Drow free" zones like Waterdeep and Silvermoon (disguised of course, most likely as fair elves) and there are followers of other races as well. Are there any estimates as to how far and how many races do take Eilistraee as a Patron deity?" I reply: yes, those who "look to Eilistraee first" are found all over Faerûn, and can be of almost any race. (However, the great majority of Eilistraeans are surface-dwelling female drow, who usually make their homes in wooded wilderlands.)

Kentinal also asked: "If the High Hunt is always the End of the month? (I have played it as when an evil dangerous creature came near enough for the Goddess to call out alarm). How long does a Run last?"

The High Hunt is celebrated as a ritual at least once a season (once each summer, and once each winter). One may also be mustered whenever senior clergy of Eilistraee deem it needful, which means whenever the Dark Maiden sends them dream-vision warnings or urgings to do so. What triggers her to do so isn't known, other than yes, causes of such urgings often seem to include the alert, armed approach of large and powerful foes of Eilistraeans (or marauding monsters) to Eilistraean rituals, places of worship, and Eilistraeans engaged in the work of the Goddess. A Run usually lasts a month to a month and a half, but sometimes for a season or an entire year (longer Runs, unless the participating beings are detained or severely wounded, are rare).

Back in Dec05, bearsden asked: "I would like to know the role of male Eilistraean worshipers in Eilistraean rituals. Do the males participate? Are the males excluded from any? Any insight into these questions would help me out immensely. Thanks in advance for your time and help."

Yes, males participate in almost all rituals, as lay worshippers (as Zandilar quite correctly pointed out). This includes the High Hunt, the Run, and the Circle of Song. Yes, there are rituals that males are excluded from, AS MALES (such as almost all of the longer, more passionate dances). However, increasingly males openly plead with Eilistraean priestesses to be magically shapechanged so as to take part in such rituals, and the priestesses (if they have the means to do so), oblige them (sometimes the change is brief and temporary, fading out as the ritual ends, and sometimes it lasts for days or much longer, while the shapechanged being undertakes a service for the clergy).

However, The Sage was also correct when he posted "Males do not have a specific place in Eilistraee's clergy." That is, males aren't given roles in rituals or in the church hierarchy because they are males. They are blocked from serving in some rituals and church positions because of their gender, but that's a different thing. Most males step into roles in rituals, and rankings among Eilistraean clergy, as if they were novice or inexperienced females. They may not advance up and out of those roles and rankings because they are males, but even this isn't a "rule." Some males have advanced on their own merits or because Eilistraee has favoured them to others in dream-visions or because they have chosen to remain (or beg to remain) in female form, and this choice has been admired by female clergy as a mark of dedication.

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It is true that many long-standing female clerics of Eilistraee are very suspicious of males (and usually see males who take and keep female shape as power-hungry individuals who will "stop at nothing" to rise in the ranks). This means they watch (and instruct) these males VERY closely, and may even devise tasks for them that are both tests and designed to "break male spirit" and cause the changed males to cleave to increasingly female points of view (for example, they might order a changed male to serve under, or take a day job working under, a chauvinistic and authoritarian male).

However, these gender matters can be overstated and overemphasized. On the whole, all clergy of the Dark Maiden welcome an increase in worshippers of the Goddess, and the fellowship (and working with) more and more Servants of the Dark Dancer.

Specific in-ritual roles of "unchanged" males include dancing, singing, having spells cast ON THEM as part of rituals, taking part in collective spellcastings led by female clergy, intoning prayers in unison and responsively with other devout of Eilistraee, and in the tending of fires, braziers, drawn barriers, vestments and tools handed to or taken from, and used by, female worshippers, and so on. Nothing stops anyone, of any race or gender, praying to Eilistraee, including dancing and singing prayers - - and NO clergy of the Dark Maiden would frown on a male exhibiting such behaviour except when they thought it was being done to deliberately disrupt a larger ritual. Many males who worship the Dark Dancer find a moonlit wooded place, pray to Eilistraee to notice and smile upon them, and then disrobe and dance as they sing a deeper prayer (of thanks, and for guidance). Some human hunters who aren't drow or elves, and otherwise have nothing to do with such folk do this, and may dance around a silver bastard sword, and even (when the moon is full) sacrifice live-captured animals they've hunted down with a silver bastard sword. Others gash themselves with the sword while dancing around it, either in lieu of an offering or as well as an offering, as a mark of devotion. Such dances are sometimes undertaken by several males as part of a larger ritual led by female clergy, who heal the males as they wound themselves (and go on dancing and singing).

In short, things are changing among those who worship the Lady of the Dance. Recently, she has taken to manifesting (as a lure to non-believers, or a signal to her faithful) as a handful of dancing moonbeams or moon-motes, that play about a favoured person or an item she wants handled or attention paid to - - or that move about in a way that guides those who see this manifestation.

So saith Ed.

Who I know would like to say more, but future plans (and NDAs) prevent. I hope this has helped to answer some long-standing questions; I KNOW, dedicated scribes being dedicated scribes, that it will spark new ones.

love to all,  
THO

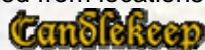
Hi again, all. This time Ed tackles RevJest's recent followup query to Ed's Eilistraee lore-replies: "I am aware that the Realms are polytheistic. I just don't know what other gods a drow elf who worships Eilistraee would pray to? While I can understand humans trying to appease evil nature deities such as Umberlee and Talos, I don't understand why a drow who worships Eilistraee would pray to any other drow god given their dispositions. I can understand a drow elven wizard praying to Mystra, or even Azuth. Assuming they were familiar enough with their faiths. But who else? Would goodly drow worship the Seldarine? Would the members of the Seldarine ever respond to a drow?"

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That's where I'm confused. The polytheism in general in the Realms isn't confusing to me. It's the idea of polytheism in this unique circumstance. ie. What other gods can/do good drow elves turn to?"

Sian weighed in with: "hmm ... as far i'm aware then, if the drow proves themselves the seldarine would respond"

and Faraer added: "RevJest, Checking Demihuman Deities, we see that most of the drow pantheon are Eilistraee's foes, so they aren't likely candidates for worship. Her listed allies are: Callarduaran Smoothhands, Haela Brightaxe, Lurue, Mystra, the Seldarine, Selûne. Elven and Faerûn gods that they come across on the surface. But I imagine, given her mythology of rescue, Eilistraee is a larger presence than usual in her worshippers' religious consciousness."

Ed replies:

RevJest, Sian's right, and Faraer nailed it. Eilistraee does loom foremost in the minds of most of her faithful (and of the drow gods, sometimes they "appease worship" Vhaeraun if they dwell in settled areas and are trying to find a secluded moonlit place [rooftop, interior courtyard, walled garden] to worship Eilistraee). In general, the most popular other deities for Eilistraee's faithful to worship (listed in order of diminishing popularity, most to least) are Selûne, Lurue, Mystra, Milil, the Seldarine, Lliira, Eldath, and even Sharess. Followed by Callarduaran Smoothhands, Haela Brightaxe, and other human deities as individual preferences and situations suggest.

So saith Ed.

Who's done his share of naked dancing in the moonlight, down the years (though when I teased him about it, he said, "These days, if we danced together under the moon, it'd be more like you dancing around this shuffling, hairy, moonlit blimp"). Ahem.

love to all,  
THO

December 24, 2006: Hail, fellow scribes of the Realms! This time, Ed responds to Kentinal, re. this: "The number of followers of Eilistraee was rather stunning. You said "I'd say a little more than 22% or so of all drow in Faerûn worship Eilistraee" and "Drow who ONLY worship Eilistraee are almost entirely her clergy, and are probably between 10 and 12 percent of all drow."

There was some discussion about this in some other threads and some were wondering if the percentages perhaps over stated?

It would also be interesting to know percentages of worshipers of other races if you have an estimate. Something along the lines Eilistraee worshipers are percent Drow, percent fair elf (perhaps separated into the sub surface races), and so on.

The overall percentages of Drow would appear to make Eilistraee Drow a powerful force in that they would not war amongst themselves and do have at least some surface allies. Is it your vision that in time that Eilistraee will become the primary Drow religion any time in the future?"

That last question prompted Zanan to post: "What a shocking thought. And pretty unlikely, as I doubt that numbers alone make a deity, even though you may get this notion relying solely on the

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info in F&P. Yet, we'll wait and see. The drow scrolls from further above have yet to caught the archmage's attention."

Ed replies:

Please, everyone: ALWAYS remember that except for fanatics, clergy, or the oppressed (such as, in this case, many drow in cities dominated by Lolth-worship), all intelligent beings in the Realms worship - - if only in appeasement - - many deities. In other words, that 22 percent (or so) includes drow who also worship other gods (as is obvious from the second percentage I gave).

Now, if some were wondering if I overstated the percentages: Nope. Don't think that because Lolth-worshipping drow are the "sexiest" to readers, and therefore almost the only sort of drow that feature in WotC fiction and game lore, that they are "the only" drow. They ARE the most aggressive, and ambitious, and successful, yes, and that's why I think it's more likely that Lolth will end up as the 'last drow deity standing,' not Eilistraee. (In the Underdark, of course, Lolth-worshippers are by far the most numerous and dominant drow.)

The percentages of Eilistraee are high because there are so many surface-dwelling, Eilistraee-worshipping drow. And why not? They don't suffer the heavy daily losses due to constant warfare, the perils of the Underdark, and so on that the Lolth-worshippers do. Just because published Realmslore neglects them (and don't forget, gnomes are very numerous but also VERY neglected in Realmslore, as are pixies, sprites, etc. etc.), it doesn't mean they aren't numerous and flourishing. I always try to think of the Realms in terms of ecosystems, life cycles, and constantly shifting population strengths. To someone who just reads fiction and sourcebooks, it might seem that "all drow worship Lolth except a few fringe crazies," but that's far from the case. If Lolth ever issued strict orders that her followers must never kill any fellow Lolth-worshippers, the numbers of Lolth-worshippers would soar, because right now, they slaughter each other so enthusiastically that they must breed like bunnies to have anyone left alive at all in cities like Menzoberranzan except members of just one surviving house. Think about it.

Yes, surface-dwelling Eilistraee-worshipping drow face attacks from other woodland creatures, Lolth-worshippers, Vhaeraun-worshipping drow, and humans, just to top the list of their foes - - but as you say, they're not busily daily wiping out each other! So they are numerous, and rapidly growing more so.

However, Kentinal, it's wrong to think of them as a "powerful force." Eilistraee-worshipping drow dwell in small, scattered woodland bands all over the temperate Realms and well down into "warm forest" regions, they almost never work together or even communicate with each other all that often, and they have no interest in dominating, growing militarily or politically, and so on. Wargamers tend to think of "like" populations as large, closely-allied or even single-minded conglomerates, but that's rarely the case.

I'd say Eilistraee's worshippers are around 88 percent drow, 8 percent half-elf, 3 percent other-than-drow elf, and 1 percent human and other - - but that's a VERY rough estimate, with the half-elf, elf, and human worshippers all rising in numbers.

So let me state it again: no, the percentages I gave earlier are NOT overstated.

Try to bear in mind that Lolth-worshipping drow daily do either dangerous drudge-work (males) or scheme and train (females), or go on armed patrols in the Underdark - - and often engage in all-out war. Eilistraee-worshipping drow daily go hunting in the woods, patrol woodlands in a stealthy

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avoid-the-foe manner, gather nuts and berries and other wild edibles, and - - dance. Now I've heard of deaths from heart attacks and falls during dancing, but in general it's gotta be safer than engaging in pitched battle with either monsters or with other drow who have poisons, hand crossbows, spells, and extensive fighting training!

So saith Ed.

Demonstrating once again the "long view" of the Realms he takes so effortlessly. For what it's worth, I agree with him.

And you don't want to rile me... do you?

love to all,  
THO

\*\*\*\*\*

On November 6, 2006 THO said: The Year I Spent as Khelben's Chamberpot

The Year I Was First Elminster's Pond Ornament

... and so on.

As I recall, Volo the character was Jeff Grubb's, named after the real-life Volo Bog (south of Lake Geneva). Ed gave him his "real" name of Volothamp Geddarm, and always wanted to do some humorous Volo-fleeing-angry-husbands tales. The closest we'll get, probably, are his appearances in the Spin A Yarn stories. Oh, and a hint to all of things soon to come: Volo's literary career isn't over yet.

love to all,  
THO

\*\*\*\*\*

November 8, 2006: Hello, all. This time Ed replies to Kuje's May 2006 request: "What can you tell us about Alamanther of Aglarond? In what year did he die? What was his short stats? How long was he the Simbul's consort? Did he invent any other spells? What did he look like and what was his race and how did he dress, in general? What was his personality? Is there any other history about this NPC that you could share? Did they have any offspring? And as usual, I'll leave it open ended so you can add anything that you think you might want to share. :)"

I found the reference in Magic of Faerun under his spell. :) See, it pays to actually finally sit down and read 3/3.5e FR sourcebooks cover to cover, which is what I've been doing. :)"

Ed replies:

Alamanther of Aglarond was a tall, thin, black-haired and -bearded, blue-eyed NG male Chondathan human of shy, stammering, silent-footed manner who was born in Corth, in Aglarond, circa 1299 DR, showed a natural aptitude for the Art that caused him to be snapped up as an apprentice by an ambitious traveling wizard, Ustragus of Telflamm, trained to be a

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researcher and spell-crafter - - and more or less walled up in a spell-hidden tower Ustragus owned in Altumbel. He spent his days working creatively with magic, padding around the tower in simple robes and soft slippers, frowning over experiments and details of possible incantations, writing meticulous notes, and "trying" ever-more modified castings. He kept no secrets from Ustragus and did nothing for himself or against his master, devoting himself to crafting spell after spell that he presented to Ustragus. Most of them were modifications of existing spells (Ustragus gently "steered" Alamanther into examining certain sorts of spells without ever giving him direct orders), and Ustragus took and used them to his own profit and advancement.

Where the Simbul, nosing around to see what Ustragus was up to (she correctly suspected him of being in the pay of some folk of Aglarond who wanted her overthrown), discovered Alamanther in 1330 DR (by which time "the Shy Mage In The Tower" was about a Wiz12). She took the shape of a common bird (a grayfeather, something akin to a real-world junco), and posed as Maerauna Steelsharn, an entirely fictional courtier of Cormyr who'd been spell-trapped in bird form by an evil wizard of Westgate, but was still able to speak as a human does. She pleaded with Alamanther to keep her a secret from Ustragus, and tried to befriend him (to try to find out all she could of the doings, secrets, and schemes of Ustragus).

She succeeded, and when Ustragus was blown apart in a dispute in Telflamm with the Red Wizard Vhalaun Trarr in 1331 DR, Alamanther turned to "trying to free Maerauna from her spell-prison." As Maerauna, the Simbul steered Alamanther's spellcrafting work more subtly than Ustragus had ever done, and finally "allowed" Alamanther to succeed in freeing her - - not only from avian -form prison but from the "controlled memory persona" of Maerauna, revealing herself as the Queen of Aglarond.

Alamanther was both awed and shattered, fearing her wrath and thinking the woman he'd grown to love as he worked to free her would now destroy or dismiss him. The Simbul was aghast at his reaction, for she'd grown to love and trust him, and she promptly seduced him and took him as her consort, wanting to forge strong love and loyalty between them before he withdrew from her or sought to flee. Alamanther remained shy and gentle, preferring seclusion to public appearances and court intrigues, and remained in the tower. The Simbul visited him almost daily, cooking for him and teaching him magic she judged him ready for (between passionate bouts of lovemaking). So precise was her tutelage that Alamanther rose swiftly in ability and accomplishment despite almost no real-world "field experience" in spellcasting, and was a Wiz20 (and crafting increasingly useful and powerful spells) when three Red Wizards stormed the tower in the Simbul's absence and slew him, late in 1331 DR.

The Simbul's grief drove her mad, and she was hurt even more when Mystra forbade her to work great magics on the Weave in attempts to "bring Alamanther back" (his body had been vaporized, along with most of the tower, and many Thayan trap-spells cast on the magical chaos of the spell-battle and the destruction of the building). Despairing of ever identifying the three murderers properly, she decided to slay almost every Red Wizard she found - - and set about doing so in a frenzy that Mystra did not prevent (and that shook all Thay).

The Simbul's rage has abated over the years since, especially since finding comfort in Elminster's arms and with Red Wizards too young to have possibly had a hand in Alamanther's murder, and she often spares Red Wizards these days who haven't actively been harming her, Aglarond, her friends, or Harper activities. Nor did her Thayan-slaying begin with avenging Alamanther; rather, it fueled flames of enmity that had been burning in her (and causing her to blast Red Wizards from time to time) for many years.

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All that is left of Alamanther today are his notes; a few garments that the Simbul still keeps hanging in a closet, carefully spell-shielded against decay and insects; and his spells, of which the only widely-known one is Alamanther's Return (MoF p76-77).

So saith Ed.

Your everpresent Realms historian.

love to all,  
THO

\*\*\*\*\*

November 9, 2006: Hello, all. Back in October 2005, Thysl followed up on an as-yet-unanswered query from Master of Realmslore George Krashos about grape varieties used in Faerûnian winemaking by asking: "What fruits - if any - are commonly added to grape wine? Is mead in the Realms always 100% honey, or mixed with apple (cyser), ginger, orange (Ethiopian), etc?"

Ed replies:

"Mead" in the Realms IS always honey, but wine is 'doctored' all over the Realms in various ways: in cold countries of the North, it's often set out to freeze (so the ice can be sieved out, removing water so as to make the remaining drink stronger and stronger), and in southern Realms (Southern Tethyr and more southerly locales) sugar and various fruits are added to wine bottles to (partially) dissolve and affect the taste of the wine. Ginger and spices such as cinammon and nutmeg are among the substances added to wine, and there are apple and orange fortified wines (what we would call brandies or sherries; in the Realms, such concoctions tend to have many local names, such as "nerrim" for a raw-tasting sweet pear liqueur (I've written about some of these drinks before). Local experimentation (adding crushed fruits or their juices to wine, beer, and even water) goes on constantly, but the results rarely achieve more than local popularity. The heavy and leakable nature of drinkables means that except for VERY valuable substances (such as elverquisst) enterprising merchants prefer to transport recipes and perhaps a sample flask rather than kegs, and try to "make their own" in or near local markets (cities).

So saith Ed.

See Page 5 of his replies in the 2004 version of this thread for more.

love to all,  
THO

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November 10, 2006: Hello again, all. This time, a reply to Blueblade about Ed's U-Con schedule. Ed doesn't have a "final final final" schedule, but as of right now, it seems he will be participating in the following:

Friday, 2pm-6pm: Ed is DMing a FR 2nd Edition session (as for spectators "hanging out" and watching, Ed doesn't mind, but that's entirely up to the U-Con staff)

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6-7 pm: a Welcome seminar or mingle (of some sort; Ed's a bit vague on this, so he may not have full information on it yet)

Saturday, 2-3 pm: Secrets of the Realms seminar with Ed, Eric Boyd, Steven Schend, and Paul Kemp (free event)

Saturday, 7-8 pm: Bringing Fantasy Worlds To Life seminar with Ed (free event)

Sunday, 10am-2pm: Ed is Ed is DMing another FR 2nd Edition session

2-3 pm: Storytelling ("come to chat, ask questions, or just hang out") with Ed (free event)

Ed wants you all to know that he'll be happy to sign things whenever it doesn't hamper some event he's taking part in - - and he's ALWAYS happy to talk to Realms fans. So don't be shy; he's an approachable guy! (I've approached him in all sorts of ways, over the years, but perhaps none of you had better try some of my gambits; I've no idea as to the specifics of Michigan state law)

P.S. To Jamallo Kreen: I will of course send your post straight on to Ed, but MY opinion is: the Libertine is "close," but a little too downbeat for most urban Realms upper-crust life. There's more mirth, whimsy, and high spirits in, say, Waterdeep than you saw in that flick.

love to all,  
THO

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On November 10, 2006 THO said: As a player in Ed's "home" Realms campaign, my principal character faced and fought battle horrors almost a decade before any Neverwinter Nights game (or for that matter, the computer company that created those games) existed.

They are indeed more powerful variants of Helmed Horrors (and of course, Ed created both; not to mention Neverwinter, and even the name "Neverwinter Nights," which referred to a racy "talk of the town" chapbook circulated in Neverwinter. I recall Ed telling us about Jeff Grubb phoning him and asking if he minded a computer company "borrowing" the name.)

love,  
THO

\*\*\*\*\*

On November 10, 2006 THO said: Ahem, "Zitra" would be Zirta, and it fell nowhere: it's now part of Scornubel (they "grew together" over time).

Nor would I call the tale that we know it by a "failure." For a story written by an eight-year-old, it stands up very well. It's not every young kid who can get their novels published, and make themselves spending money (enough to buy cottages and cars) all through school and university.

love,  
THO

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November 11, 2006: Ah, another great question. On to Ed it goes.

Ahem. Hi again, all.

This time Ed answers createvmind's query from June: "Since I've hit the NDA wall, are the Troll Hills and more exactly the ridge line from Lizard Marsh to Trollbark Mountains NDA as well. Because I would like to know what if any minerals and gems I could mine out of there if I were able to evict the trolls and any other possible tenants. Are there other tenants within those mountains? And are the Bowshot, The Way Inn, Liam's Hold and Gillian Hill still there, occupied along the Trade Way? Thanks in advance."

Ed replies:

To answer the easy part first: YES, the Bowshot, The Way Inn, Liam's Hold and Gillian's Hill all still exist, flourishing (meaning they're SLIGHTLY larger/busier than they were when described in VOLO'S GUIDE TO THE SWORD COAST: e.g. Liam's Hold is now home to 62 or so people, not 50, but the description Volo gave is still "correct").

No, the Troll Hills and the shoreline from Lizard Marsh to the Trollbark Forest (note: no "Trollbark Mountains") aren't NDA, as far as I know.

That's what that "ridge line" really is: a line of cliffs, where the mainland drops away several hundred feet into a strip of "broken land" rarely much more than a mile wide. This broken land is damp, salt-rimed country (so vegetation is either lichen or stunted), and consists of seacaves, hills of heaped-up seabed rock hurled ashore in the worst storms, rougher hills of rock broken off the cliffs and piled up below at their feet, and flowerpot-shaped "sea stacks" of hard, layered stone left behind in misshapen columns when the wind, water, and winter ice have carved away the land around them. All manner of creatures dwell in this shoreline strip of land: leucrotta, outlawed and fugitive (or washed ashore from shipwrecks) humans, amphibious creatures of all sorts, all sorts of monsters, and countless seabirds (whose eggs offer a plentiful food source for much of the year).

Veins of iron and dark clays that contain many sort of gems are exposed on the treacherous, crumbling cliff-faces (which sport hollowed-out caves here and there, some of them peryton, eagle, or other don't-mess-with-me aerial creature lairs). Lava vents under much of this shoreline warm the rocks (and fresh water, percolating up through them) from beneath, making this coast a place of winter mists and survival for many creatures, rather than a region most life must vacate for the cold months or perish. In other words, if you can fight off the competing monsters, you can winter over in caves that get quite comfortably warm in their innermost, deepest corners.

Those same lava vents make deep mining in this region well-nigh impossible. The warmth also makes trolls avoid the area, which is why they keep inland, in the Trollbark Forest, and to the south, in the Troll Hills, and leave this area alone.

No one rules this desolate shore, which has no good landing-places or harbors, and there have never been large settlements hereabouts, so the land is relatively verdant and unspoiled. Atop the cliffs, and inland as far south as the northern half of the Trollbark, the most prevalent life are those same seabirds, small wandering herds of wild horses and other cloven-hoofed grazing animals, and hags. There are over a dozen known coveys of hags (trios of one annis, one green

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hag, and one sea hag) in this region, and they dominate local life. It's rare indeed for them to fight each other openly (and they will in fact band together to battle formidable intruders like adventuring bands), but they carry on longstanding rivalries in which status is linked to performance in disputes with each other (i.e. getting your own way or besting the other covey is a small, bloodless victory, and those who "win" more often increase their influence). Werebats (lycanthropes whose non-bat form isn't drow, but rather several sorts of giants) are known to dwell in cliff-face caverns near the northern end of this shoreline; their presence prevents the lizardfolk from expanding south along the entire shore, and they are in turn prevented from expanding south by the presence of wild foulwings, who lair along the southern end of the shore.

Adventurers have found various sorts of constructs of ancient make (Netherese?) half-exposed in the crumbling cliffs, that move into action (usually attacking living things near them) once freed enough to break free of their rock prisons. Small parties of Gond-worshippers from Lantan make frequent explorative expeditions along the broken country, searching for constructs they can disassemble and study; often they are forced to hire adventurers to protect them from monsters that stalk them (as food that's obligingly strolling within reach).

I'll leave the Troll Hills themselves for another day. As their name suggests, they are dominated by many, many trolls.

So saith Ed, whose habit of mentally strolling around his created world, "seeing" it in his head, is awesome to hear when he describes his imaginary surroundings. He makes great chip-dip, too.

love to all,  
THO

\*\*\*\*\*

November 12, 2006: Hello again, fellow scribes. Ed herewith makes reply to MaskedOne's recent "semi-related questions," to wit: "What would probably have occurred if the Karsus Avatar spell had been permitted to reach completion rather than Mystril suiciding to counter-act it?

What did Mystryl believe would occur if the spell was permitted to go on?"

Dagnirion posted a suggestion, but Ed's reply differs:

Ascension to godhood under those circumstances would have stolen power from all of the gods (to achieve the ascension and make Karsus a god, and to give him divine power), in a surge that Mystryl was very much afraid (and probably rightly) that Karsus would have been unable to handle, mentally and physically, so he'd have promptly been ruined and the magic would have "surged" back and forth around Toril, doing great damage and spawning many wild magic "storms."

She was also afraid that if Karsus succeeded in any way (survived, no matter how damaged), all of the other Netherese archwizards would have tried it too - - and collectively torn the fabric of the Prime Material asunder, destroying Realmspace and everything in it, or at least twisting it beyond all recognition and smashing all life cycles and ecosystems, dooming uncounted millions of living things to slow extinction. And all so one demonstrably proud, foolish, and cruel madman could have the shining toy he wanted, but couldn't understand.

So saith Ed.

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Who after all, knows more about all of this than anyone else.

love to all,  
THO

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On November 12, 2006 THO said: Ed's original Blue Alley is longer and more eccentric - - and it includes Weave "feedback" areas in the dungeon that glow as they completely heal (and regenerate, and restore) PCs who touch them. The nature of publishing Ed's Realms has always involved shortening for print, I'm afraid, and the published Blue Alley is a mere shard of the original.

They left the dancing undead in, though. You haven't lived until you've slow danced with a hip-grinding skeleton.

love,  
THO

\*\*\*\*\*

November 14, 2006: Hail once again, fellow scribes of the Realms. Ed this time tackles RodOdom's recent questions: "Dear Ed and Lady THO, I must apologize for not thanking you both for the last few answers. I never take for granted what a privilege it is to be able to ask the creator of the Realms any question at all, and receive such generous, informative replies!

Have the sages and bards of the Realms heard of any romantic relationships between the civilized races and full-blooded orc or goblin-kind? Of the perhaps thousands of such individuals out there, could a few of them come from, er, voluntary unions?"

I replied in the simple, unvarnished affirmative, and promised a more extensive reply from Ed.

And here it is:

RodOdom, I echo dearest THO: you're very welcome. I owe the life of the Realms (and certainly its continued existence as a published setting) to the love and attention of its fans, and intend to continue spinning lore for all of you as long as you want it. Now, I do have to eat, and the workload of paying writing jobs often forces me into short- (or even longer-) term hiatuses from lore-replying, but rest assured I'm not going to abandon the helm for good. Until death or mental incapacity stills my hands at the keyboard forever, that is.

And let me echo THO again when I say: yes, indeed, there are many romances between goblin-kind and other races, and, ahem, "voluntary unions" (I wish you'd provided that handy term when I was a randy high school-aged lad) aplenty, too.

That's not to say that "everybody's doing it," it's just that orcs will mate with anyone and anything, and there are thousands upon thousands of orcs (they DO breed like the proverbial rabbits), so it doesn't take many "unusual" unions to add up to many, many cross-species relationships and births (hence all the half-orcs). In some cases, willing human females "pass off" half-orc offspring as the result of being forced by orc raiders, but in many backlands where orcs are NOT a strong raiding threat, but merely scattered local dwellers, local tolerance of them is high unless they

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indulge in eating humans or demi-humans (and favored mounts, pets, et al). Orcs are strong and instinctively tribal; male orcs fight other males (of all races) to establish a pecking order, but hunger for someone to tell them what to do AND a family grouping to "belong to." More than a few widowed women living through hard winters with their adult-age daughters have "taken up with" an orc male who hunts for, gathers firewood for, and defends all of the females - - and makes love to them all, too. [And before I hear those outraged moral cries, please remember that this is a fantasy world we're talking about here, of my creation, and with quite different morals than "modern real-world Western" societies.]

There have also been instances of lone orcs encountering lone human or half-elven females (or males) and falling in love with them. Usually these relationships end badly, but some result in stable partnerships that last for decades. Most orcs tend to be dominant lovers, but some partners enjoy a submissive sexual role, while at the same time enjoying a dominant "you may bluster and do as you please in the small everyday things, but \* I \* have the real vetoes and underlying 'first and last say' in important matters" role in the relationship. And finally, there are masochistic and submissive orcs who can enjoy relationships with non-orcs without the merciless baiting and bullying their fellow orcs would give them (some orc warrens are like some real-world penitentiaries, wherein dominant males or females sexually enslaving weaker members of their own gender), and even a few orcs who hunger for the gentleness and sophistication of "civilized" races, and who sneak up on dancers venerating Eilistraee or elves dancing in forest glades just to watch, and weep at the beauty they cannot join. A VERY rare few have managed to join it.

I'll give just two examples of such unions, one tragic and one not.

Amaundra Faeroethyr, a CG female moon elf Rgr7 of the High Forest, orphaned in childhood, was sorely wounded in a battle with orcs. A lone, outcast orc of a rival tribe found her, nursed her back to health, and they fell deeply in love and became companions, Amaundra eventually dying (willingly) of the revages of childbirth (they both knew birthing half-orc after half-orc child was harming her internally, but she refused to stop making love with her beloved Urthorkh, and neither of them dared to try to seek out anyone with magic - - who might well try to slay them out of disgust - - to try to "put things to rights" in her innards.

Dathanæ Oumrau, a CG female human Wiz16 of Everlund (formerly of Neverwinter) was an adventuring wizardess who mastered shapechanging spells, and used them both to experience things she couldn't as a human, and ultimately to escape being killed when her adventuring band got slaughtered in a winter battle with orcs (she took orc shape to "hide"). The orcs captured her, assumed she was an orc of another tribe, "enjoyed" her - - and one of them, Aeriskul by name, took a shine to her, took her as "his," and defended her against the others. Eventually Aeriskul (who hungered to learn more of "civilized" life and ways, seeing nothing he liked in raiding every winter out of cold caves when he could live peacefully [he hoped] down in the farms year-round) parted ways with the others, but kept the shapechanged Dathanæ - - and deliberately changed his behaviour from "you are mine" to wooing her. Whereupon Dathanæ revealed her true nature to him. Aeriskul was scared of her at first, and tried to flee and hide, but Dathanæ followed him, and a tentative courtship began that ended with the two of them happily in love, and using the shapechanging to both enhance their lovemaking and to enable them to accomplish many things (from reaching down high-in-trees fruit to changing shape so as to pass among humans without trouble) as they try to make a life together. Dathanæ and Aeriskul are still together, after some twelve winters, and are very happy (they do not have any children, but Aeriskul doesn't particularly want any, and so has never even asked Dathanæ if she might be barren, or if she's using magic to prevent conception).

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None of this makes orc/other species relationships tolerated everywhere, let alone welcomed. Most elves (who dwell only with other elves, not in cities with humans) react with revulsion and hostility to an orc trying to woo them, or an elf/orc couple. Most dwarves find it hard to overcome their instinctive suspicions of orcs. And so on.

Yet as I said earlier, such voluntary unions can be rare indeed, and still add up to an impressive total when one counts them, across the Realms.

Traveling traders are tolerant by nature (or they don't last long), and most other commoners only know local conditions: EVERYTHING may seem strange to them if they travel too far afield. So if an orc/human or orc/half-elf couple dwelling together in a cottage seems locally accepted, then... they'd guess it was all right. In this locale. They'd keep their mouths shut, in public at least (and might avoid the couple), but they wouldn't run around crying, "That's NOT right! Aren't you going to DO something about those filthy crossbreeders, before I do?" (There's no one-deity underlying moral system to back up that sort of reaction, for one thing, and all folk in the Realms grow up knowing about, and in many cases working and living close to, or actually with, individuals of other races. There is racism, but it's based on specific grievances, sometimes "family-history" slights or complaints, not on fear born of ignorance.)

So saith Ed.

In a VERY interesting and extensive answer. That for obvious reasons, would probably never appear in an official WotC Realms publication. As always: ask for Realmslore, and ye shall receive.

love to all,  
THO

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On November 14, 2006 THO said: Besshalar, I'm AMAZED if the campaign book (the big fat hardcover setting book, not the Players Guide slim softbound) is out already, because I have a fair idea of when the "final final final" text was done. That would be one lightning-fast printer's turnaround.

Picture Castlemourn as a section of mountain-ringed seacoast crowded with more than a dozen lands (all sorts of governments and racial makeups), facing an arc of ore-rich islands enclosing a bay. It's three centuries after a hellish magical war that brought down civilization, so magic is still feared and mistrusted (except that every ruler wants to have some, up his/her/its sleeve). There are monster-roamed, "haunted" ruins everywhere, and questors who seek the lore of the past. Enter your PC adventurers...

For those used to Ed's detailed histories and colorful NPCs: check. For the feeling of realism and lots of play opportunities: check.

I can't wait!

love to all,  
THO

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November 15, 2006: Hi again, all. This time, Ed answers GoCeraf, re. this: "Hello Mr. Greenwood. I've been toying around with writing as of late, and I've been wondering what sort of process one has to go through to have FR related novels published. Although I don't consider myself to be anything of an expert in this area, I think it would be very fulfilling to have work done in such a well-traveled area of literature. Thanks, GoCeraf"

Ed replies:

Wooly Rupert put it very well. I'm afraid Wizards doesn't accept unsolicited Realms novels. I echo what Wooly said: write fantasy short stories for DRAGON, REALMS OF FANTASY, and BLACK GATE, contact Phil Athans (of the Wizards Book Department; see the WotC website) and tell him you're interested in writing Realms short stories for the next Realms anthology that comes along, have prose samples e-ready to send him (IF he asks for them; don't start hurling files at him without his invitation), and keep on reminding him of your interest, every 6 or 8 months or so. In a polite, friendly, non-pushy way. Prepare a short list of plot concepts you think would make good Realms novels AND fit the direction of the current novels series; each concept should be a maximum of three sentences long, and don't build any of them around well-established Realms characters being the lead characters.

Here's an example that you should NOT use, just to show you how brief I mean: "One-shot novel: Sembia invades Cormyr with mercenaries, Sembian envoys deny it's anything to do with Sembia as a country waging war on anyone and say they're as surprised by the attacks as anyone else, and as skirmishes in the Hullack and Thunder Peaks drag on, the book centers on a trio of new-character Highknights, sent undercover into Sembia to find out who hired the mercenaries, why, and how they can be persuaded to stop."

Please remember, that's very much Step Four. Step One is write some fantasy short stories, Step Two is get them published, and Step Three is contact the Books Department, wave your published fantasy fiction as samples of your writing, and express your interest in writing in the Realms. Good luck. I always want to see new faces at the ongoing revelry that is Realmslore talespinning.

So saith Ed.

Go for it, GoCeraf and all interested Realms scribes - - and DON'T be discouraged. Ed's been chatting privately with at two fans I know of for years, encouraging them to try to get their Realms tales into print.

P.S. Good questions, scribes! Keep them coming!

love to all,  
THO

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November 16, 2006: Hello again, fellow scribes. This time Ed responds swiftly to The Sage: "Now, recalling what few tidbits we've been told about "specific" chapbooks previously in the Realmslore, and through some of your earlier replies here at Candlekeep -- like the chapbooks dealing with social and court life in Suzail... I was wondering whether you could provide me with a brief synopsis of two-or-three other "city-specific" chapbooks that may be in circulation in two-or-

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three other well-populated cities throughout the Realms. In other words... chapbooks other than those that have already been mentioned both here and in existing Realmslore."

Ed replies:

With pleasure! I can't remember which of the many "city newspaper" -equivalent chapbooks (as opposed to broadsheets) I've mentioned in print, so I may occasionally duplicate something you've read elsewhere.

NEVERWINTER NIGHTS is a perfect example of the sort of chapbook I was specifically describing: something published regularly covering local culture and high society. NIGHTS is published every six days to a tenday (with rare "special issues" to cover really exciting news or sudden events), and is a short magazine full of gossip, reviews of local musical, theatrical, and oratical performances, and news of forthcoming events (such as tours by visiting musicians, eateries about to open, books soon to be published) and events of cultural interest (e.g. a ruler bans something, artists feud or marry or announce a collaboration, or something interesting happens to an artist [from a murder or pregnancy to a drinking bout or the utterance of a bon mot]). Some such chapbooks last for decades, but many rise and fall abruptly with changing public mood or moves to silence them by harrassing the writers or threatening the printers.

Here are a few such publications, by city:

ALAGHÔN: Hambra's Horncall (a dignified, neutral publication that is less a critical review and more of a series of what we would call press releases and culturally-relevant public service announcements; [correctly] suspected locally of being used by several shady groups to send out coded messages to their members through mock announcements)

ATHKATLA: Gaela's Glittersar

BERDUSK: The Twilight Tome (long-established; famous for sly satiric poetry, often features lyrics and short fiction)

ELTUREL: Stars Seen, Tales Told (usually short, with more glowing praise than hard news or nastiness, but prints letters from locals that occasionally erupt into nasty in-print fights)

EVERLUND: Hawkblade's Evenhorn (lighthearted, no-holds-barred, and witty commentary on local events and luminaries, with occasional reviews of what's new or current gossip in nearby Silverymoon; Hawkblade is a onetime lover of Alustriel who pines for her, but prints everything he gets concerning her beauty, what she wore or said at every occasion, and even detailed accounts of her current lovemaking [some of which MUST be fictional, and are probably his own wishful-writing])

HILLSFAR: Beldrouk's Bright Banners (very new, but rapidly gaining a strong local following because of its frank commentary - - which has made its anonymous authors folk hunted by the authorities; no one quite knows who prints it, but bundles of it get substituted for legitimate supplies bought at the docks, so merchants pay for it in bulk and then usually sell it to brothel- and tavern-keepers, to resell to clients)

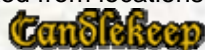
IRIAEBOR: Malanxer's Tongue (known locally as "the Black Tongue" or just "the Black," as in: "He's in the Black, this time around;" known for rants against local public figures, corrupt officials, and less than scrupulous merchants)

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RIATAVIN: Dansarra's Delights (Dansarra was a local dancer and prostitute who died, rose as undead without any intent or preparation of her own part, and went on dancing despite her body being less than appealing; though she long since fell to dust, the writers of this vicious chapbook adopt her voice and purport to be Dansarra as they gleefully skewer local eateries, plays, and public figures)

SCORNUBEL: Sarander's Tellings (famous for gossip, and lovingly-detailed salacious accounts of dalliances and pratfalls of locally prominent folk, that often approach "you are there" porn)

SECOMBER: The Dancing Dwarf (whimsical, features witty gossip and biting satirical pieces, includes lots of mocking commentary on Waterdeep that goes farther than Waterdhavians would dare to, when ridiculing guildmasters and nobles - - and so is steadily gaining popularity in Waterdeep, where it's bought and sold surreptitiously in Dock Ward festhalls and taverns)

WESTGATE: Ambritur's Whip (anonymously-authored "hatchet job" reviews and gossip avidly read locally for the eloquently nasty writing more than as any sort of serious guide to anything)

So saith Ed, presenting another bright platter of Realmslore for us all.

love,  
THO

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November 16, 2006: Hello again, all!

As you may have heard, Ed's off to Ann Arbor for U-Con, which sounds like it's shaping up to be a dynamite "small local" convention. As a result, he'll be falling e-silent until Tuesday, so I will also take a short vacation (no, I'm not going with Ed, or Stateside at all).

However, PLEASE keep posting questions, and I'll replay them to him the moment he's back.

Mindful of this imminent dreariness of Realmslore, Ed surprised me by sending ANOTHER lore reply, hot on the heels of the one I just posted. So here, without further ado...

Ed says he was delighted to receive this recent post from Chosen of Moradin: "Hello Ed and dear THO, Three of my female players want to know a little more about dresses, clothes, and how much a rich adventurer will have to pay to stay attuned with the latest "noble fashion" in Waterdeep or Silverymoon. The PHB says that a royal vestment will cost 200 gp, but I think that some rich adventurers can spare something more to stay "at the best!" We already know that in Hethmeir's Highboots, in Everlund, they can pay 1,000 gp on a pair of boots (Volo's Guide to the North). To complement, we are talking about a New Olamm bard, a Shadow Thieves rogue, and an Everlundian sorceress, all in the Silver Marches."

Ed now replies:

GREAT question! To begin, let me say that fashion in Silverymoon is far more a "do your own thing, care nothing for others" affair than in Waterdeep. Both cities see constant new styles and reintroduction of older styles, and have a tolerant, cosmopolitan, sophisticated local population that sees almost constant visiting outlanders except in the harshest winter months. Both places are wealthy. All of which means both have healthy, everchanging local "fashion scenes," far more

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so than in most other places in the Realms (large trading centers will always be the most "fashion-lively," but in some places, such as Athkatla, that's tempered by a strong local preference for something; in the case of Athkatla, demonstrating one's wealth is paramount).

In Silverymoon, newcomers wanting to be noticed in society and individuals desiring to raise their social profile and influence in politics are usually the most fashion-conscious.

In Waterdeep, many nobles use fashion to divide themselves from commoners (and younger or 'black sheep' nobles use fashion to rebel or make a statement), whereas the wealthiest wannabe-noble merchants try to dress like the nobles, and most guildmasters and wealthy DON'T-wannabe-noble merchants adopt expensive but clearly different fashions, to show they're "as good as, or better than nobles, and certainly don't want to be nobles or mistaken for nobles."

Right. Stage set. Now, on to specifics for females. The impression one is trying to impart is of course paramount (REALLY rich, or beyond-caring-about-coin rich, or conservative, or I'm an adventurer above all this "society" nonsense, or I'm the special guest wanting to stand out or surpass everyone, or I belong here) is usually the dominant factor in deciding what to wear.

The cheapest way to dress is the conservative look: basic black gown with high collar and/or plunge front, matching sash and boots, and a few pieces of small, tasteful jewelry (moonstone or pearl earrings and perhaps a pendant and/or finger ring). Some adventurers have, or can borrow, or can buy secondhand, all of these very cheaply. (This is the Realms equivalent of the "little black dress.") Truly wealthy nobles have their own seamstresses, and go to the best designers, to achieve the same look for as much as 4,000 gp (plus the cost of the jewels). Most women wealthy enough to "buy new, in a hurry" can put together the same look, jewelry included, for 150 gp (50 gp/boots, 80 or so for an off-the-peg gown and sash, and the rest for jewels), IF they're a fairly standard size (if your hips are literally four feet across, NOTHING off the peg is ever going to fit you). Almost all "new" clothiers in either city are used to doing small on-the-spot alterations to make a sale.

Someone shopping a secondhand shop, who gets lucky on finding something unsoiled, untorn, and more or less their size, who can touch up scuffed boots and wash everything, could put together the same ensemble for about 65 gp (25 gp/boots, 20 or less for the gown, and 20 gp for earrings).

The conservative look is never "out of fashion" except among a wild revelry gathering of the rebellious young, and even there it can be "dressed down" by exchanging the black sash for a flame-orange one, pinning the gown (to the inside of the sash) half-open to expose skin or a racy chemise (lace-trimmed white silk for classy look, almost anything to present other images) and jewelry (such as nipple clamps with tassels, and a gem set in the navel).

MOST well-to-do shopkeeper's wives in both cities have the following:

- \* The "black look" discussed above, plus a matching cape and cap (for funerals, solemn ceremonies, and "not sure what to wear but sure don't want to offend" feasts and meetings with nobles or social superiors).

- \* At least three evening gowns (ankle length), of varying degrees of daring (plunge front and/or back, cutouts, or none) and various hues, usually at least one bright red. These are for guild dinners, meals and moots with social equals (and the more of these latter they attend, the more often they'll buy new gowns to add into the mix, so those who see them often will know they're

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wealthy enough to buy a gown whenever the mood strikes them). Endless accessories (hats, purses, belts, baldrics, garters, chemises, chathra [= petticoats; the Realms term implies trimmed so as to be partially seen], furs [usually "wraps" that are draped artistically], underthings [see Page 21 of my 2004 replies, here at Candlekeep] and jewels) are mixed and swapped with these to create different looks.

\* A wild costume, or two, for costume balls and really daring revelry (masks are ALWAYS a feature of these, but they range from piratical garb to strap-on gossamer silk "fairy wings" to strap-on furry or scaled serpentine tails, and so on; by daring revelry I mean feasts and other gatherings where sexual activity or at least physical flirtation is expected; Waterdhavian matrons of a certain age often refer to these as "one of my plough-me-please outfits").

\* At least one VERY expensive and dramatic gown by a famous local designer, that will pass for being "in fashion" with the latest tastes. These can be almost anything, will come with full matching accessories (e.g. face-veils and/or half-cloaks), and tend to get "put away" in a wardrobe for a decade until they're in fashion again. "Dramatic" is the key word here: many of these gowns have shoulder fins, daring cutouts, and impractical trimmings.

The northernmost four wards of Waterdeep bristle with shops selling overpriced clothing and footwear; personally-designed gowns (involving a "name" designer and usually many "fittings" [fitting sessions where the wearer is measured, muslin mockups and later the gowns themselves are pinned on to them, cut, and re-pinned]) can easily cost 6,000 gp each for a really rich noble and 2,000 for someone wealthy (many designers set their prices according to a client's ability to pay, but are utterly uninterested in taking on poor clients unless they fall in love with them or are discharging a debt). Most "good" shops sell and alter close copies of the less outrageous designer gowns, and "classic" garments, for 400 gp up to 1,200 gp. Off-the-peg garments at the "less glittering shops" can often serve very well, and can be had for 80 gp up to 600 gp at most, with the majority of gowns running around 100 gp.

One recurring "fashion fallback" is to wear a simple, cheap gown, and a very "showy" trimmed slip or chemise (made for someone larger) OVER it, with a sash or belt of contrasting hue to "bind the whole look together." Such showy undergarments cost a maximum of about 80 gp (unless custom-made), and even the classiest sash or belt is seldom more than 40 gp.

A bard may well want clothing she can most elegantly perform in; a rogue (or for that matter, all three characters, depending on what adventures they intend to get up to) often wants a dark gown that can be shed swiftly and easily, and wadded up and stuffed somewhere without being lastingly wrinkled or harmed; and a sorceress may (or may not!) want an outfit that looks mystical and darkly impressive.

I hope this reply is of some help; even without mentioning scents and cosmetics, this is a vast topic that sourcebooks often neglect, and players can have hours of fun with.

So saith Ed, who once solemnly painted my nipples with cherry chocolate for a post-Realmsplay-session party. Two other someones got there faster to lick them clean, however.

love to all,  
THO

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On November 16, 2006 THO said: Neriandal Freit, you've gotta believe.

Like the song says, "But it wouldn't be make-believe/If you'd believe in me."

Ed's mild in behavior compared to SOME of the guys (and gals) I grew up with in the Sixties. The time of nudity, free love, hippies, communes, no AIDS, Playboy and the "swinger" lifestyle, and so on. Myself: I'm a tease.

As you (cough) just may have noticed.

I'm sure Ed's fantasies only involve white-bearded men once a year: on Christmas Eve. (Oh, by the way: don't miss the forthcoming movie Hogfather, in which one of the white-bearded men is Terry Pratchett himself.)

And just to give you a Realms tidbit in all of this: Torm once befriended a pleasure-lass in Waterdeep who went by the name of Cinammon, because of what she put on HER nipples.

So there.

love,  
THO

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November 21, 2006: Hello, all!

Ed has returned from a delightful convention in Ann Arbor, Michigan (U-Con, which he highly recommends to gamers looking for a small, fun, well-run convention [and where he got to spend at least a little time with Eric Boyd and his family, Steven Schend and his family, Paul Kemp, Colin McComb, longtime Realms fan and current Castlemourn editor Brian Gute, and friends such as Tim and Calye "Chainmail Girl" Calhoun, as well as making lots of new ones), and tossed a Realmslore answer for Dargoth to me, to post forthwith.

Accordingly, here 'tis; Ed's reply to this, from a June posting by Dargoth: "One of my players will be running a Illuskan (Northsmen) barbarian in my next campaign so I've been reading some of the material old 1ed/2ed material on them and have a few questions.....

How closely do the Northsmen resemble the Viking/Danes? (They come across as being very "Vikingsque" in FR2)

Are Northsmen PCs and NPCs likely to be treated with a level of hostility in the Sword Coast region due to their history of raiding? In FR2 Moonshae it says the Northsmen usually raid the Folk Kingdoms in the Moonshae islands but they also launch raids against targets on the Sword Coast. Presumably modern fortified cities like Neverwinter, Luskan, Waterdeep and Baldurs Gate would be too powerful so where have the Northsmen raided in recent years?

Under the Gods of the Northsmen in FR2 it says that after a particularly successful battle the Northsmen have been known to sacrifice prisoners to Tempus. This would seem to conflict with Tempus code of conduct in F&P. Are those Northsmen who practicing Human sacrifice actually

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worshipping Gargos instead of Tempus? or Do the Northsmen worship a heretical version of Tempus dogma? (ie Heretic of the Faith)

Thanks in advance"

Ed replies:

The Northmen as published thus far do seem very Norse, but I'd caution any DM against making them close copies of the Vikings of lore (and especially of the movies, except for perhaps the 13TH WARRIOR; I say this for the usual reasons, of the pitfalls of extrapolating specifics drawn from real-world knowledge, and applying them to fictional people in the Realms).

Thumbnail description of the Northmen: a hardy people who farm and rear sheep and rothé on their stormswept islands, and who are hardened against wet and cold (they can die of exposure like anyone else, but succumb more slowly, under much harsher conditions; many swim or wash in arctic waters as a matter of course, and don't catch chills as they bundle themselves into their furs (still wet), and trudge home. They tend to wear big, shaggy boots that extend up to the knee and are warmed by furred pelts wound around them and bound in place. The males are bearded and wear chainmail shirts when they go to war, they brawl with each other but VERY seldom draw steel or use magic on each other (those who do are apt to be cast out).

They raid for four reasons: in desperation (for supplies), to settle scores with mainlanders (kill one of them, and you'll be paid back), to prove themselves (insecure or ridiculed younglings only), or to settle scores with each other: serious disagreements are settled with violence, but instead of fighting each other, on their own islands, the disgruntled parties go raiding and seek to outdo each other ashore, in dangerous feats, to settle the matter in the eyes of the others along on the raid (who will judge, assisted by some "wise old women" among the Northmen who can farscry what's going on through hereditary powers of sorcery that seem keyed to four things: foretelling and influencing weather; healing by body contact (prolonged touch; they often go to bed with the wounded or sick, though please note this means getting naked under the furs together, NOT sex); calling and "gentling" fish and wild beasts (summoning them and keeping them from attacking, so they can be milked, marked, captured for taming, or slain); and farscrying).

Many "raids" engaged in by Northmen now and in the past aren't attacks on people so much as they are woodcutting expeditions to plunder coastal forests (which they firmly believe belong to all people, not any one "owner"). Often mainlanders arrive to dispute their taking of timber, and they'll certainly fight any such.

Armed Northmen who come ashore from longships and attack people will certainly be treated with hostility; individual Northmen wandering such ports as Luskan, Neverwinter, and Waterdeep won't be unless they start attacking others - - but Northmen appearing in Port Llast or similar smaller coastal communities, holds, and inns will be assumed to be raiders, and treated as such, unless they can instantly show other intent (such as being with a traveling priest, and behaving in matters of dress and deportment like devout worshippers engaged in worship).

Traditionally the Northmen raided up and down the Sword Coast as far south as Mintarn and the Velen peninsula, but their raids have become few (and their raids on large cities a mere memory) over the last century or so. Hard weather and monster attacks have kept them too busy to raid and often too militarily weak to spare the warriors for raiding in recent decades. Also, the heretical cult of Tempus that sacrificed prisoners of war and preached that the ultimate glory and fulfillment of a true Northman was attained through prowess in raiding collapsed thirty or so summers ago, leaving only a few scattered believers (who, yes, would be Heretics of the Faith), no social

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support among the Northmen - - particularly among the women, who will typically refuse to dwell with, cook for, or engage in sex or marriage with someone who loudly wants to go raiding for such reasons - - and no surviving temples or truly organized priesthood (the few clerics are all "laws unto themselves" and denounce the other clerics, strengthening the belief among other Northmen [save a few lonely, power-seeking younglings] that they're all crazy).

Please note that I've been speaking in gross generalizations here, describing a people in sweeping stereotypes and simplified blanket statements. Individuals, and particular families, among the Northmen do differ in lifestyles, beliefs, and behaviour from what I've said here (giving DMs freedom to make SOME Northmen as close to - - or as far from - - Vikings as they'd like). Myself, I always think of them as more akin to the Geats of Beowulf (for more, see my tale, and those penned by Jeff Grubb, Lynn Abbey, and Wolfgang Baur, too, in THE FURTHER ADVENTURES OF BEOWULF, CHAMPION OF MIDDLE EARTH [just published by Carroll & Graf, and edited by ex-TSR Book Department head Brian Thomsen]).

So saith Ed, a bearded, occasionally-chainmail-wearing guy who I don't THINK has raided any coastal communities in his life. I'd better go ask.

(So if I don't come back, you may have to assume something.)

love to all,  
THO

P.S. Great question, Faraer. I'll take it to Ed while I'm doing that asking.

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November 22, 2006: Hello, all. I return with a reply to Faraer's very recent question "Ed, Look, I put my hand up. I raise my arm and extend the fingers, like this. What are perhaps six of the dozen most common spells that have never been written up in print?"

Ed replies:

As usual, I'm WAY too tearingly busy to do proper, full 3.5e (or any edition!) spell writeups, but if I can just describe the spells, here's a swift answer. Six of the most common "not yet seen" Realms wizards' spells include the following:

Ambra's Kiss: named for its half-elven creator (a sometime Waterdhavian prostitute), this silent spell is cast by the caster thinking of its incantation while biting, kissing, or sucking on the flesh of the intended target creature. There is a "stiff" (see the end of the Whirlblade note, below) saving throw to avoid its effects, but if successful, it causes the recipient to go blind for 1 round and suffer a drastic loss of strength for 2 rounds (-14 Str on first round, reduced to -7 Str on the second); there are various levels of saves that either reduce the effects to blindness only, or the strength loss to 1 round only; the spell is often used to escape a captor of superior strength, or prevent them doing something for long enough for the caster to ready another weapon or spell to deal with them, or for aid to arrive.

Fleshmask: instant, silent illusory alteration of caster's or a same-race recipient's (who must be willing, and face-touched by caster) face, affecting eye color, hair color, and shape of nose, cheeks, and jaw. Can't affect teeth, length and style of hair, or skin color, can't change voice or affect lisps and the like. Caster must concentrate on either a known face, or features (nose, hair

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color) they have previously seen, and spell confers these features (exact duplication not possible, but could fool someone who hasn't recently (or has never closely) seen "the real" person being duplicated; lasts 1 round/caster level for caster, and half that (to a minimum of 2 rounds) when cast on a recipient.

Nantha's Bladeseek: detects [conveying rough idea of size and location of each one] edged and/or pointed metal weapons within 20 feet of caster (can "see" through only 1 foot thickness of stone, 3 foot thickness of earth), or on the person of a single target creature, who must be visible to the caster during casting and within 90 feet of caster; the spell is easily blocked by many magics, but tells its caster it's being foiled).

Swordwood: transforms a single sheathed or "bare" single-bladed metal weapon, of maximum length four feet, into shaped wood or a tree bough. Spell ends instantly if the bladed weapon draws blood (deals any damage) in battle, but otherwise lasts 1 hour/caster level, and is a transformation that foils metal detecting magic, allows the bearer of the transformed weapon to handle it without getting cut, makes the weapon temporarily non-magnetic and heat-conductive as wood is, rather than metal, and confers the texture and weight of wood, rather than metal; if weapon struck against metal or stone, sounds like wood thudding, not metal clanging; "shape" choices are a shaped wooden rod, scepter, table-leg, walking-stick for short person, etc. that is of simple wood, NOT adorned with paint, gems, etc. but appear as fantastically-carved or a replica of a known item - - and a rough, ends-hewn but bark-on piece of tree branch (so can be hidden in a bundle of firewood). Magic weapons can't be affected by a swordwood spell, and using successive swordwood spells on the same item in a short space of time (i.e. applying a second spell soon after the first has expired) forces an item saving throw (that most swords will fail, collapsing into shards).

Whirlblade: cast on a weapon the caster handles, this magic lies quiescent (not affecting the caster's use of magic; to the caster, it's cast and "gone") until dispelled by other activity (e.g. a dispel magic that affects the weapon), or activated by the weapon-bearer speaking a word (which can be any nonsense syllables, and must be uttered by the caster during casting) at some later time. When thus discharged, the spell makes the weapon +4 to hit for a single round, and allows it to make an extra attack during the round (and the magic then ends). The spell doesn't affect the damage the blade makes, and anyone touching the weapon who says the word launches the spell (so it's wasted if they do so when not in combat). The weapon need not be a bladed metal weapon, but must be a melee (not ranged) weapon. Multiple whirlblades can be cast on the same weapon, but their effects don't "stack" (one word launches one whirlblade, leaving the other magics unaffected), and the third and every additional whirlblade spell forces a "stiff" (i.e. usually destroys item) item saving throw on the weapon.

Word of Valor: when cast, the caster or any one touched recipient creature is empowered to function (fighting and moving as if unharmed and unhampered) for 1 additional round when injury or loss of limbs would ordinarily disable them; this occurs automatically at any time within 1 hour of casting the word of valor (its swift incantation is a single spoken word). It doesn't mitigate damage in any way, but merely delays death, unconsciousness, or collapse for a round (enabling, for example, a mortally-wounded fighter to battle on, a rope-climbing character to reach a ledge or battlement, or a dying character to speak a last few words or hurl an item).

Faraer, I hope these are of help. I have many more, but still have two novels, divers short stories, and many web columns on my "to do yesterday!" platter. Sigh.

So saith Ed, exhibiting the "run ragged despair" I've heard from him often this summer, as he struggles to get too many projects done at once. Partly this resulted from him being too kind to

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say 'no,' partly it came about as him rushing to the aid of those who asked, and partially it's due to him wanting to eat and facing low or delayed payments for everything and so taking on too much work.

However, he assures me he'll keep on sending me Candlekeep replies as often and as swiftly as he's able.

To David Lázaro: great questions! I know some of the replies (for instance, the quick/oversimplified answer re. Southbank's big buildings is that Southbank is a much newer expansion of the city than Northbank, so when big headquarters were desired, it was where they could be built easily; citizens tend to yelp if you try to demolish their homes just because you want space for your building), but I'll wait for Ed to give you proper answers.

love to all,  
THO

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November 23, 2006: Yes. My nipples go sproing.

Ahem.

Hello, all. Ed makes reply to David Lázaro, in the matter of: "Hi Ed and The Hooded One, I've got some doubts in my mind about the maps of the Silver Marches that I hope don't cross NDA barriers.

In the maps in the back of the Silver Marches sourcebook there are some maps for some of the cities of the Silver Marches. I've been comparing them to other maps (like the ones in the latest Waterdeep sourcebook) and I think that the scale is wrong. I'm betting that all of them should say 1000' instead of 500.

Another doubt is regarding the number of buildings in the Silverymoon map. Is it right? I've counted 818 buildings for 37,073 inhabitants, which gives about 45 people per building. Is that okay?

Also regarding the map of Silverymoon: what are those four towers in the westernmost part of the walls of Southbank? And why there are much, much more big buildings in southbank?

Thank you beforehand for sharing your Realmslore with us."

Ed wants everyone to know that he isn't neglecting older queries; he's just clearing his desk of the easily-answered recent ones - - and accordingly makes reply:

Regarding the map scale: you're guessing right: the scales should indeed say 1000 feet instead of 500.

The Silverymoon map gives a false impression of dwellings. You're counting right, but please look at the illustration on page 173 of the FRCS. See how many folk live UNDERNEATH others, how ramps and streets and hanging bridges between (inhabited) trees link stacked dwellings, and so on? Also, refer to my article "My Slice of Silverymoon" on the WotC website, if it's still "up" there.

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Northbank Silverymoon, speaking in very general terms, has buildings of four storeys or so at its western end (two floors of apartments above a floor of either offices or apartments, which is in turn above a street-level shop, with a cellar beneath that's either shop storage or yet another apartment[s]), but ranges up to soaring six- and seven-floor apartment towers as one gets closer and closer to the High Palace (yes, there are even some eight- and nine-storey towers). So densities may average out to 45, but have a wide variety.

Our Lovely Lady Hooded gave you the correct reason for Southbank having so many more large buildings; it's the "new expansion neighbourhood" that has room to build big structures (offering, of course, swift access to travellers who don't have to struggle through as much crowded street traffic to reach them, when arriving from outside the city, as they would for a central Northbank address).

As for the five linked towers jutting out into the water at the downstream (west) end of Southbank, those are armories, stables, a training-yard, and barracks for the Knights in Silver, with fortified housing (and healing/sickrooms) for any mustering or visiting Argent Legion troops. The "jutting out into the water" bits are fortified docks, for receiving supplies, military personnel, and VIPs who must be hidden or protected upon arrival, rather than parading through the streets to an inn or an audience at the Palace, seen by all.

When I say "fortified," I mean covered: picture stone buildings on stone pilings; the docks have stone walls and slate roofs, and offer access to the river through sliding, metal-sheathed doors like those found on many large Faerûnian barns, or real-world railway boxcars) docks. They also have "just-under-the-eaves" firing ports, for ballista-gunners to rake the river with large (and fiery, if desired) bolts. Though for security reasons few citizens know this, certain of the pilings also serve as anchors for large submerged cages in which aquatic beasts can briefly be imprisoned, or fish kept "live" for timely harvesting and devouring by troops (one of the five fortress towers houses many chimneys for a forge and for a smokehouse; butchered oxen, rothé, and fish are often seasoned and smoked for "trail use" by armies on the move. The tower cellars serve as one of the city's state granaries (storing food [e.g. bulk flour, grains, dried fruits, potable water in kegs, spirits of various sorts, and pickled vegetables galore] for troops (and, in the event of a siege, the populace).

So saith Ed, the creator and master builder of Silverymoon.

Who may someday, if we ask him in JUST the right manner, tell us more about Alustriel's orgies. The heated, scented pools in which she lounges, swims, and engages in caresses and more with all sorts of visitors and courtiers. I'm purring, just remembering.

love to all,  
THO

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November 24, 2006: Hello again, fellow scribes. Ed reaches back to September 2005 this time, to address Gerath Hoan's query: "But did I make a point of asking about Knighthoods in the Realms? How they were granted, what nations granted them, what duties were involved and what the common-folk thought of Knights in general? Is the romantic ideal of Chivalry alive and well in the Realms with many great adventurer Knights roaming the land?"

Ed replies:

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Tiny nitpick first: "nation" means a people, although most modern-day Americans misuse the word to mean a country. Lots of countries in the Realms have knighthoods granted by rulers, and most of these same countries also have hereditary knighthoods AND courtesy titles for the offspring and siblings of nobles that can be easily be confused with knighthoods (e.g. are styled "sir"). Just as in the "Western" real world. The specifics of how one earns and keeps a knighthood, and what duties are involved, vary from place to place, time to time, and ruler to ruler, but in general "bestowed" knighthoods (in which a commoner is "created" a knight by a ruler, in some sort of ceremony) are rewards for service (usually military), and/or attempts to bind the loyalty of someone charismatic or skilled at arms or both, who resides in the realm (or whom the ruler wants to stick around). Some churches also confer knighthoods. Chivalric behaviour is associated with knighthoods in some places (Silvermoon, Cormyr, and to a lesser extent Tethyr and Impiltur, in particular), and public attitudes to knights depend on the personalities of the individual knights, and the duties or constraints placed upon them. In other words, if your local knight butchers anyone who disagrees with him, rapes every female within reach that he happens to like the look of, and seizes all property he can, then the locals may well hate and fear knights in general - - because the ruler is obviously allowing this knight to behave like this, so it follows that ALL knights are allowed to behave like this, and so all knights are a potential danger. Bards and minstrels keep the "general public belief" in chivalry and personal nobility of knightly character stronger than it should probably be (considering that the majority of knighthoods handed out these days seem to be personal rewards for aiding the ruler, that obligate the knight to go on serving - - and more knights may be well-fed, self-serving merchants and investors than daring combatants on any battlefield), and so in well-ruled, ordered lands, knights may be well regarded. Independent "knights errant" will usually cause a wary reaction among locals, however, because they may be seen as 'free lances' operating outside of the ruler's law and authority, who are liable to commandeer food, remounts, bed and board, arms, armour, and even feminine companionship "as a knight" (and turn self-righteously violent if any of these are refused). Note that adventurers are very much seen as this sort of potential danger, unless travelling with a royal charter (in Cormyr), or are members of the Knights In Silver or Argent Legion (in Silvermoon), or accompanied by respected courtiers or clergy.

In short, your query applies to too great a variety of situations to give a neat, universal answer. Most Faerûnians WANT to believe in gallant, just, loyal, high-minded knights, yes. Most Faerûnians have to settle for local examples that are somewhat less.

So saith Ed.

Now, as it happens, my main PC in Ed's home campaign is a knight adventurer, with the title of a "Knight of Myth Drannor," no less. Though we try to act for good, we are adventurers, with all of the tricks, jests, pranks, and suchlike that successful adventurers often resort to - - NOT high-nosed, shining-coat-of-plate knights. We've met a lot of those, mind you, and sometimes I've ridden them hard for my own pleasure - - but they do tend to be rather boring "straight-ahead, my-sword-speaks-for-me, I-have-this-hammer-so-all-problems-are-nails" sorts, as a general group.

love to all,  
THO

P.S. to David Lázaro: you're welcome, and your followup questions are on their way to Ed. Re. elven architecture: correct. In my character's visits to Silvermoon, I never remember coming across any formal nobility in (or of) the city - - but as usual, let's wait for Ed to answer properly.

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November 25, 2006: Oh, KALADORM! Wandering mage's notion is just fine, but...

Hi again, all. Ed returns with ANOTHER Gerath Hoan reply, this time to the question: "Also, you may remember some time ago Ed posted a lot of useful info on what Manshoon was up to, who his common allies were and some helpful roleplaying notes. Well I was wondering if the same thing could be done for Hesperdan? I haven't read Hand of Fire yet, so I could be missing much lore, but I would be interested to read what his situation was in the Zhentarim and which faction he supports (is he a Fzoul supporter now, or does he rue the end of the good old Manshoon days?). Who are his agents and allies and who are frequent antagonists of his? Any character traits to bring out in Roleplay sessions would also be appreciated. Also, in very vague terms (not too tied to either 3.x or 2nd Edition rules, what type of character and what sort of level would he be?"

Ed replies:

Hesperdan is a wizard of a high level and much experience. He has keen wits, shrewd judgement, a sense of humour, and a strong ruthless streak. He is a "backrooms" Zhentarim, has some sort of connection to Elminster (some scribes have speculated he may BE Elminster, in disguise), and beyond that, the answer to your query must be: no, not yet. I can't reveal more of him (beyond what snippets of lore are unfolding in the current Knights of Myth Drannor trilogy), because his story hasn't really been told yet, in print, and I reserve the right to do so. He's much more fun as a mysterious figure than as a known quantity. Sorry.

So saith Ed.

Whom you must admit knows how to keep readers and avid gamers interested for over thirty years, and so must be doing the "tease, slow reveal, speculate about mysteries" thing right. (I, too, enjoy practising the 'tease, slow reveal, and speculate about mysteries' technique, but that's another story.)

love to all,  
THO

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November 25, 2006: Whipswords come from the fantasy literature of Barsoom, via Lin Carter's Callisto novels. Ed Greenwood and I long, long ago discussed how they could be made practical, and he put them in the Realms forthwith.

Ed sees them thus: 4 to 5 foot (or for tall wielders, even a 6 or 7 foot) long sword: conventional hilt and blade configuration for about 8 inches down from the hilt (for parrying). Below that, a diamond-shaped cross-section (so, very thin) blade that narrows almost to a wire or ribbon for two feet or more, widening again to a "barb" (big enough for a conventional swordpoint) at the end. They must be made of a special alloy so as to "whip" without breaking, and are obviously useless for stabbing, and (a la Carter) require great skill (training) to use effectively - - but can be devastating if the wielder can leap upwards and swing with precision, simultaneously. The closest real-world experience would probably be flailing at something with banded steel (of the sort that used to be used to fasten bundles, in various industrial processes).

The secret, of course, lies in the alloy. Otherwise, they're impractical, break-at-first-real-use toys.

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Hope this Realmslore helps.

love to all,  
THO

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On November 25, 2006 THO said: Yes, we Knights DID meet Volo. Several times, and (usually) very amusingly. The funniest time was when he staggered home drunk and exhausted (having been chased by angry folk for a reason I won't bother to go into here), and entered the wrong bedroom: mine.

Shedding clothes everywhere, farting, and scratching himself in the manner of too many men everywhere, he staggered into bed, flinging himself down on top of me (and my bedmate, whom we also won't go into here, beyond saying it was a VIP who had many bodyguards).

Volo shrieks, springs bolt upright, and hits the floor running hard, banging out the door and through the inn, thereby raising the alarm. Inn staff, bodyguards, and still-hunting-for-him angry mob converge, pitched battle in the darkness ensues... and Volo crawls back under the covers to hide: mine again.

As you see, the man's an accident-prone dolt, of his own making. Engaging, though.

love to all,  
THO

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November 26, 2006: Well met again, scribes. This time Ed slides just one question out of a recent barrage of related queries from WalkerNinja (the rest of which he WILL address, in time to come): "no matter how much I read, I keep getting the mental picture in my head that the Thar is a swamp. Can you give me a better description of that region?"

and answers it, thus:

Thar is a largely fallen kingdom of "beast-men" (ogres) north of the Moonsea. It has long been called "the great gray land of Thar" for its many gray (granite) rock cliffs, slopes of scree (loose stones, from gravel to boulders), gray-green lichen, and frequent (dawn and dusk) heavy mists, caused by all that exposed stone absorbing and then radiating heat so it ends up at a different temperature than the surrounding air.

Thar has a few bogs, but very few open-standing-water "swamps." The best way to picture it is to think of Dartmoor in England, or high moors anywhere in the British Isles: frequent severe wet weather, few trees (and stunted ones, when they are seen), and few roads and habitations. Long-vanished glaciers sculpted Thar into rolling drumlin country (like Eastern Ontario), with endless rolling hills, and then cracked a lot of those hills so that landslides and long years of melt-freeze-melt cycles caused exposed cliffs.

Vegetation was always plentiful, and so were certain cold-tolerant reptiles (lizards and worms). These are very rare now, because the ogres hunted and devoured them to near-extinction, tearing apart (usually: hammering in wedges and breaking) many, many rocks in the process.

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So Thar today is a wet, rather bleak hilly country roamed by monsters of all sorts, and traversed by well-armed caravans and mule-trains of rough-smelted metals moving between the Moonsea ports and the mines near Glistar (primarily in the mountains north and east of that trade-moot).

Thar has occasional deep ravines (narrow, deep stream-gorges), and their relative shelter means they are crowded with shrubs, trees, and all manner of life. It's also a land riddled with sinkholes, springs, natural underground caves and stream-tunnels, and "shelter crack" caves in the exposed cliffs, used as lairs by successive beasts-and outlaws from the Moonsea.

There are still ogres lurking about, too, though the "kingdom" of ogres was shattered long ago (notably in the battles with humans, in what are now known as the Cold Fields, near Scardale; the ogres had for many, many years raided the elves, who fought them off and then ignored them - - but when humans moved into the area, the ogres regarded them as a swarming, fast-multiplying threat, tried to exterminate them, and reaped a whirlwind for their pains).

Thar is not a place to expect to find civilized amenities of any kind, nor a place for any human to enter unless well-armed, garbed against windchill, and ready to fight and handle danger.

So saith Ed, creator of Thar.

I recall my character spending an uncomfortable night lashed to a slaver's branding-frame in Thar - - with the slaver's underlings dicing for the sequence in which they'd enjoy her charms. Then she spent an uncomfortable morning half-suffocated under the bodies of dead slavers. And then she got rescued, and enjoyed sharing her charms. And then her rescuer turned out to be Azoun IV of Cormyr, and - - no, I'll save that story for another time. (For a very good reason, so don't wheedle, scribes.)

love to all,  
THO

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November 27, 2006: Hi again, everyone. Ed's answers this time are to one of a handful of queries from createvmind, posed back in early May (of this year): "Maybe I've overlooked it and someone else can point me in right direction, but does a form of "Rabies" exist in the Realms and if so how is it dealt with?"

Ed replies:

Yes, rabies is called "foamjaws" ("darrdartha" by elves) and can be completely cured by forcing victims to eat certain herbs (four are effective, two almost instantly; one of the other two can be boiled in water to provide an effective drinkable quaff when the victim can't be made to ingest in other ways).

Intelligent creatures who've had rabies in the past and get it again will recognize its onset (a "red fog" settles over the mind, affecting "around the edges" of sight); if they can eat some of the right herbs in time, they can drive off the effects completely.

The two most effective cures are the herbs "foambane" (which resembles the real-world dandelion, and is found from Amn south to the Tashalar, growing wild in rocky places) and the broad-and-very-dark-green-leafed "quarrada" (which grows abundantly in the wild of the

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Heartlands and north as far as about Triboar). Amthannas is the lichen-like "flat flower" (hugs rocks, not growing "up" off them) that can be boiled; the fourth known cure is the tiny orange cave mushroom known as "fire eyes" for its appearance.

Magical curing works on both the disease and the mental ravages it causes.

Foamjaws isn't widespread among either humans or beasts, because 9 in 10 or so creatures are immune to it. They can, however, carry it and pass it on to others (which is why human lore insists orc and goblin bites "carry poison").

So saith Ed, master of Faerûnian herblore (which should NOT be confused with real-world herblore).

love to all,  
THO

December 20, 2006: Hello, scribes. Another Realmslore reply from Ed of the Greenwood, this time in response to Swordsage's: "Just a quick supplementary question to Ed's rabies response, are any of these 'cures' edible in their own right or are they eaten only for curing purposes?"

Ed says:

Foambane, quarrada, and amthannas (which must be scraped off rocks, to be harvested) are all edible but not very pleasant (too bitter) - - and eating them BEFORE one gets rabies DOESN'T build up any immunity or prevention. Fire eyes are small mushrooms, with a heavy, oily flesh that's variously described as "waxy" and "soapy." They can be eaten, but make most mammals queasy; the stomach revolts if too many are consumed in a short time (they aren't poisonous, do no real damage, and don't cause "the runs," just involuntary vomiting).

Some southerners steam quarrada in butter that's been herbed (that is, mixed with a secret mixture of powdered herbs), transforming its bitterness into a "smoky" taste and its texture to something akin to artichokes. This means of preparation is little known north of Calimshan.

So saith Ed.

Who seldom misses a chance to increase our collective Faerûnian culinary skills.

love to all,  
THO

\*\*\*\*\*

November 28, 2006: Hello again, all. To Faraer's comment "An ironguard is worth more than any 10 Elminster's effulgent epurations (or 100 Proctiv's move mountains)," Ed and I both confirm our hearty agreement.

This time, Ed feels moved to tackle another recent post, this one from Uzzy: "Hello Ed and THO! (:)) Don't know if its considered rude to have more then one or two questions up at a time, but here goes anyway.

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What would a Cleric of Kelemvor do for someone who is dying? Would they do their own version of the 'Last Rites'? What about other Religions? Do followers of other gods go to their own clerics when they are dying, or do they try to get to a Kelemvoran? Thanks in advance for any Lore you can share with us (and for all the Lore you've previously shared too!)"

Ed replies:

You're very welcome. And no, of course it's not rude to pose multiple questions. Please pile them up (everyone!) and (eventually) I'll get to them. Promise. I've done all but a handful of the 2004 ones!

Now, as for these current questions: Uzzy, the Realms is pantheistic; everyone believes in almost all of the gods they've heard of, and worships most of the relevant gods of their own races' pantheons (by relevant, I mean Auril isn't worshipped much in hot deserts, and Umberlee not all that much by folk dwelling inland, far from a sea, who never travel near one). So unless you mean "followers of other gods" to mean just clerics of those gods, or clergy-in-training, or fanatics, no one's "tied to one god."

With that said, dying Faerûnians who have time enough to do so (i.e. they are conscious and dying slowly enough to have time to "go" anywhere, or pray, will turn to the deity they feel closest to, or feel they owe the most to, or who can best aid their loved ones/heirs. So, no, dying folk don't go seeking clergy of Kelemvor per se.

"Last Rites" and burial customs are matters I've given just a glimpse of here at Candlekeep, for reasons of design time pressure (I'm still turning out two novels at once, two short stories, and three online columns all at once, as you read this), but to put matters very briefly, a Cleric of Kelemvor does this for someone who is dying: performs the Passing, which is a swift, simple calling upon Kelemvor, to alert the Lord of the Dead that this particular mortal is now moving from life to journey down the Final Road (the Passing is replaced by the Lament for the Fallen if mass deaths occur, in cases of battle, massacre, or plague). Kelemvorite clergy are responsible for informing heirs and relatives of the deceased of deaths, of helping such folk grieve (in the Remembrance, a ceremony in which the deeds and accomplishments of the dead are lauded), ensuring that any last wishes are carried out (if possible, and if they judge the dying weren't "maddened" by pain, bitterness, or desperation into making "insane" demands), and that the goods of the deceased are distributed in accordance with the wishes of the dead (so long as no laws in force upon the place of death are broken in doing so).

The Lament is a long dirge, best performed by at least three and preferably five or more Kelemvorite clergy, who perform a low-pitched, droning chant and strike their ash staffs (weapons or walking-sticks of the fallen will do if they lack ash staffs, or boughs fresh-cut of other wood in lieu) rhythmically and in unison upon the ground throughout the chant.

So saith Ed.

Creator of the Realms, which I guess makes him the Father of the Gods.

Oooh, now THERE'S something you don't see everyday on a resumé.

love to all,  
THO

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November 29, 2006: Hi again, scribes.

Turox, I sent your post to Ed, and he replied in a flash (along with the lore query he was sending me):

turox, Elaine Cunningham is one of the most talented, articulate, and astute people I know, and so perfectly captured Waterdeep as I saw it in ELFSHADOW, so long ago, that I have felt honoured to work with her at every chance since. (May we have many more chances in the future, though at the moment none seem to be offering themselves soon.)

With that said, I would never dare to presume to speak for her, and so for my own part I say: you're very welcome.

The same book strikes every reader differently (and for that matter, the same reader differently at various times in their lives), so the enjoyment you felt in CITY OF SPLENDORS isn't universal. Yet this is the true delight and reward for every writer: of knowing when you've really "reached" someone. So, thank YOU for enjoying it - - and saying so. Your reaction is why I write novels, instead of doing something easy (like, say, brain surgery or applied rocket science ;)).

And we dedicated the book in the same spirit: to recognize and thank friends who make us feel at home.

Writers tend to look at their books and see shortcomings and "shoulda woulda coulda" changes and edits, and I think in CITY we started to tell too big a tale and ran out of wordcount to wrap it properly (especially the passing of one character near the end, and the consequences of that). It hurt like heck to trim a bit here and a bit there, shortening the book.

Yet I'm still glad we wrote it, and I would leap at the chance to write another one.

So, thanks for your thanks. I deeply appreciate the friendly and bluntly honest criticisms scribes have offered here, and would never want anyone to hold their tongue for fear of offending, and in doing so offer nothing but praise - - but writers are human, and it certainly feels good to feel the love, and not just the sniping.

So saith Ed.

To Kaladorm, he added this:

I, too, would love to write more about Pendelope. Be assured that if I see a good chance, I will!

So saith Ed, again.

And now for that aforementioned lore query. This time Ed replies to Jamallo Kreen's recent query about Ed's mention of bombards in Waterdeep's navy: "Are these "bombards" what WE would ordinarily consider "bombards" (i.e. size Large cannons) or are they the size Huge(+) Thayvian bombards mentioned in Pirates of the Watchamacallit? Are they the more ordinary sort of bombards, the smokepowder users, used to fire stone or metal balls -- or both? Inquiring Gondians want to know! (An aside to those who haven't read the book -- Thayvian bombards fire

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hollow stone balls filled with a flammable liquid of secret recipe, and {if I recall correctly} their propulsive force is also a Thayvian secret, because it isn't smokepowder. {Could it be... gunpowder?!?!}"

Ed replies:

To answer your last, first: No, it could not. Gunpowder doesn't (yet, anyway; NDA NDA NDA) work in the Realms. Thayvian bombards work by means that remain secret for now, which suggests that if they aren't a combination of magic and "natural" (i.e. chemical reaction) means, magic IS applied for purposes of concealing the true nature of their propulsion and functioning.

The Waterdhavian naval bombards are indeed "ordinary" bombards (large cannons), in which smokepowder is used to fire stone or metal balls (and for which [as Jim Ward suggested in print, lo these years ago] certain necromancers have been known to craft "bone balls" of skeletal undead to be fired onto the decks of enemy ships, that if not magically protected simply become cones of lacerating bone shards rather than undead that can peel themselves apart to fight). A Thayan bombard fired aboard most ships would do the ship it's mounted on great damage, tearing up its deck mount, felling masts and crew, and perhaps even holing it and causing it to sink!

So saith Ed.

Who briefly helped crew a tall ship in his youth (when the Pathfinder and the Trident were sailed out of harbours around the Great Lakes; the Pathfinder's still going, but the Trident that Ed remembers has been replaced by another tall ship).

love to all,  
THO

\*\*\*\*\*

November 30, 2006: While he was polishing off Jamallo Kreen's bombards questions, Ed shrugged, smiled, and penned a reply to his next question, that followed on its heels: "After decades of gaming with almost no one having a familiar, my current batch of players have ALL decided to have familiars. What, prithee, Master of the Green Wood, would be the Elven term for a normal (i.e., non-sidhe) riding dog which is a familiar for its rider? That, at least, is how the player would probably like the question phrased. Others might phrase it as, "What is the term for a big, stupid, vicious, paladin-biting, cannibalistic mongrel?"

Ed replies:

The applicable elven words here are:

dog = taryaryah

large = raun

dangerous/vicious = gabreth, glaeth

(gabreth literally means "likely to turn on you, cruel in battle" whereas glaeth means "formidable in battle, well armed or having the capacity to do much damage")

riding, hunting, trained = irbryn

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However, as is often the case in matters linguistic, speakers found "raun-gabreth-ibryn-taryaryah" way too much of a mouthful to use as a term (an explanation, yes, but a term, no), and so coined a word for the hunting dogs they often encounter (such as the war dogs many humans use): the word "raegar."

Note: this is never applied to wild dogs, just to trained dogs.

Pronunciations:

gabreth: "gah-BRETH"  
glaeth: "GLAY-thh"  
ibryn: "IB-rin"  
raun: "RAW-nn"  
raegar: "RAY-garr"  
taryaryah: "tar-YAR-yah"

So saith Ed.

Who's not the linguist Tolkien was, but does his best (given the scant time he has to deal with all the Realmslore queries hurled at him, in the crazily crowded endless omnibus of a farrago he has of a "life"). Or as he once put it, "Why can't \* I \* have the time to be an Oxford don, and go strolling out of an evening to drink and debate with friends? Nix on the smoking, but I'd stick an unlit pipe in my mouth all night if it was demanded of me!"

love to all,  
THO

\*\*\*\*\*

On December 1, 2006 THO said: Ed is busy reading a Christmas story (he writes a new one every year) at a public library, and may not be back home in time to send me the lore reply he promised before end-of-day.

In the meantime, I can tell Wooly this: Tessaril adventured with Azoun back in his days with the adventuring band that was known for a time as the King's Men. They have a long history, and no, it's not JUST sex.

love to all,  
THO

\*\*\*\*\*

December 2, 2006: Thanks for the assist, Blueblade, dear.

Hi again, all. This time Ed replies to David Lázaro's followup re. Silverymoon: "Thanks Ed and The Hooded One for such an inspiring piece of Silvaeren lore. There are many things in the Realms that I find fascinating, but currently (Ed's version of) Silverymoon is one of my dearest. I have some related questions that I hope you can answer when you find the time.

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In relation to the illustration of Silverymoon by Sam Wood, I love it (FRCS, p. 173), it's a wonderful depiction of Silverymoon. I suppose that most of the trees are inhabited by elves and the underground dwellings are occupied by dwarves, gnomes and halflings, am I right?

I also remember from the time I read Elminster in Myth Drannor, that some of the elven houses there were real buildings and that old blooded elven houses tended to be very, uhm... imaginative with the architecture. Is it the same in Silverymoon?

With (around) 10,751 elves and 4,448 half-elves, Silverymoon is as much an elven city as it is human. How are Silvaeren elves different from their cousins? In the Silver Marches sourcebook there is information about a dwarven establishment, The Hammer and the Helm, but there is no information about elven establishments, is there any remarkable elven establishment in the city or with that many elves should I suppose that the other ones are mixed-race? And in a related note, is there a local elven nobility or even a local nobility at all? The only reference to a powerful and influential Silvaeren not related to the government that I could dig is Draevin Flarwood, from the Silverfall novel, who seems to be related to the Braeder Merchant Collective of Silverymoon (whatever that is).

Regarding the Argent Legion towers, I wonder if the local jail is also there, but I remember you writing that long term imprisonment is a modern concept not applicable to the Realms, and there are also cells for the use of the High Guard in the palace.

I have even more questions remaining (that idea of Alustiel's orgies seems to good to pass by, my Lady Hooded One \*wink\*), but I suppose that it is best to leave them for later. I must say (isn't it clear already?) that I love the Silver Marches, one of the best things 3rd Ed. realms has brought to our table, the other one being Power of Faerûn."

Ed replies:

I would have loved a Silver Marches that was at least three times as long, so as to have room to do PROPER city detailings for Silverymoon, Sundabar, Everlund, and so on. However, I was pleased to be able to squeeze in as much of Silverymoon as I could. I love the place (glad I created it :)), and it probably shows.

By and large, yes, most of the trees are inhabited by elves and half-elves, and most of the underground domiciles by gnomes, dwarves, and halflings. However, there's a LOT of intermixing in Silverymoon ("mixed race longterm relationships, formal marriages and otherwise"), and folk party and visit back and forth, so you're more likely to see an elf who's gotten used to caves, and dwarves scampering around tree boughs (to halflings doing so in second nature) in Silverymoon than elsewhere.

Yes, elven architecture is inventive in Silverymoon, much given over to sweeping curves, growing plants, courtyards with "sunshafts" and angled surfaces and mirrors to catch and direct moonlight down into interior rooms, rainwater cisterns redirected into interior waterfalls and "Fallingbrook"-like [the reference here is to the Pennsylvania, USA private home designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, which every student of urban affairs and architecture in Ontario, Canada, at least, gets coverage of, and which I later visited] interior descending streams. Elven residences ALL have "green growing things" of some sort growing indoors.

Yes, elves and half-elves do form a slight majority in the city, though they don't vote, think, or act as any sort of unified bloc. Silvaeren elves, however, are not distinctly different from other elves,

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elsewhere, except that the xenophobia and superiority (that some other races think of as "arrogance," when thinking of sun/gold elves in particular) are almost entirely absent. Individuals may exhibit it (and in private, roll their eyes at the incompetencies and lack of forethought some races, such as halflings and humans, often seem to exhibit, or the "humourless stubbornness" of the stereotypical dwarf), but in general, Silverymoon is home to the "young, tolerant, swinging" elves, mainly moon elves with a scattering of others, including avariel.

The reason why there's coverage of The Hammer and the Helm but no "elven establishments" in Realmslore is that (most) dwarves feel most comfortable in a dark stone warren of a place, drinking with other dwarves, but most other races in the city (the elves in particular) like consorting with other races, humans in particular - - so, yes, the "other establishments" are indeed "mixed-race." Elves who want to remain exclusive tend to form private clubs that meet in private residences, not found their own elf-exclusive inns, taverns, or businesses.

And no, the city has no local formal nobility (beyond Alustriel) at all, elven or otherwise. Some families have "leading" reputations, but no formal rights, privileges, or powers.

Merchant Collectives are akin to costers, but rather than operate caravans, they buy and sell as a group, which helps to keep prices the costers (and other importers) charge them down by giving them marketing clout. They also establish and enforce local business rules, standards, and "best practices" far better than any constabulary ever could (if you break the rules, others just won't trade with you, so you can be ruined [forced to depart the city, or starve] in short order). Silverymoon has seven or eight large collectives, but they cross the lines of fields of trade (preventing the formation of guilds, and being fundamentally different in that they don't contain all [or only] the coopers, all the chandlers, and so on).

There are holding cells under the Argent Legion towers, yes (and large spellcasting chambers/"parade ground halls", too), but they are very rarely used. They do have massive and plentiful manacles set into the walls for restraining very dangerous captives, and some worshippers of Loviatar once had to be evicted after sneaking in to chain each other up and ritually flog each other.

Glad you like the Silver Marches, thanks for the great questions, and yes, I suppose we'll get around to discussing Alustriel's orgies sooner or later. Can't I delay you for now by mentioning that Our Lady Hooded's character couldn't resist being stripped, chained, and flogged in those aforementioned manacles as a lure to draw out some still-hidden Loviatans? No? Well, ask her how she plays "Hide The Whip" sometime...

So saith Ed.

Mentioning something VERY indelicate at the end, there. No, I think I'll just leave scribes to guess at how that's played. They're all FANTASY fans, after all...

love to all,  
THO

\*\*\*\*\*

December 3, 2006: A pleasure.

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As for why a heal spell couldn't restore Elminster's sanity enough for him to "go on functioning normally," the reasons are these, according to Ed:

With the death of Mystra, much of her root memories survive in two entities: Elminster and Azuth (and some are held only by Azuth, whereas others are held only by Elminster). The dynamic nature of the Weave means its "anchors" are ever-changing, but must be numerous, and scores of Elminster's memories were among them.

So a heal spell couldn't fix him. It would be like trying to pull a screwdriver out of a lug nut on a fast-spinning car wheel, whilst racing the car at high speeds, to try to tighten ANOTHER lug nut on the same wheel. Bootstrapping, in other words.

What was needed instead was loving fellow Chosen "walking the pathways of El's mind" with him, stitching here and refocussing there, knitting it all back together.

So saith Ed.

Make sense, fellow scribes?

love,  
THO

\*\*\*\*\*

December 3, 2006: Hello again, fellow fans of the Realms. I bring Ed's latest answers, this time to RodOdom's recent queries: "When Waterdhavians look out east from their towers or mountainside homes, what do they see between the city and the Ardeep forest on the horizon? Is this area mostly clear-cut farm and pastureland?"

In "Elminster's Daughter" when the Old Mage gives Caladnei the magic bracelet he tells her a command word "amalumystra." What language is this? What does it mean?"

Ed replies:

They can't properly see the river, because it's down in a hollow. The terrain is gently-rolling, grassy hills, cleared of everything and kept that way by the endlessly arriving, departing, camping, and mustering caravans. Directly east of the cliff that forms most of the eastern boundary of the city are meadows where (in a brief morning scene in CITY OF SPLENDORS [the novel Elaine Cunningham and I wrote], the nobles fly their raptors).

In a long-ago DRAGON article (issue 128, I believe; please correct me, someone, if my aging and way-overloaded memory is failing), I detailed the Environs of Waterdeep, and Eric Boyd recently updated and expanded that coverage in a web enhancement for the CITY OF SPLENDORS: WATERDEEP sourcebook.

The immediate vicinity of the city is heavily patrolled, is used by Waterdhavians for picnics and "family outings" (yes, kite-flying, galloping of owned or rented ponies, digging up flowers and herbs [and often, surreptitiously burying stolen goods or other "must hide" evidence], lovers trysting by night, and younglings "proving themselves" to their peers by staying out for the night in groups, and so on), and is kept clear by order of the Lords (to give caravans - - and citizens willing to avoid some of the crowding in the streets by going out a gate and "around" much of the

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city - - ample room to travel, muster, meet, and camp, and also to deny any attacking armies cover). Clerics from Goldenfields use magic to prevent "bare-dirt" trails from developing where they aren't wanted (they exist bounding the east side of the city, of course).

So, think "endless pleasant green hills" (or in winter, endless white snowy hills), and you'll have it right.

As for the command word "amalumystra," it's not a proper word in any language at all (command words are usually meant to be sounds people are unlikely to utter by accident, and so tend not to be words that have other meanings), but rather an amalgam of "amalum" (which means "awaken" in Loross, the Netherese noble tongue) and the name of Mystra, goddess of magic. A Chosen of Mystra (or Azuth) might say, "Tal-amalum-Mystra," meaning [in Loross] literally, "Awaken to my presence, Mystra," but really meaning, "Mystra, I'm here." However, no other entity in the Realms is likely to speak so, making amalumystra a fairly "safe" choice as a command word.

So saith Ed.

Patently painting in little corner of the Realms after little corner of the Realms (these days, with much help from a growing legion of other talented creators, from Steven Schend and Eric Boyd and Elaine Cunningham to Paul Kemp, Rich Baker, and the "Young Dragons"). To say nothing of George Krashos, Tom Costa, Brian Cortijo, and a host of other more-unsung scribes.

For which I say: thank goodness. Ed's brain was getting tired.

love to all,  
THO

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December 4, 2006: Hi, all. This time, Ed responds to Wandering\_mage (and yes, to Kaladorm, too!) re. this, from WM: "I would speak on a subject of humor for but a moment. While reading Elminster in Hell, which by the way is an excellent read and should get 5 stars, my son who is but learning about Santa Claus just now really pointed at Elminster on the cover and referred to Elminster as Santa Claus. And Elminster was fighting a snake and pumpkins (he refers to anything scary as pumpkin, thus the imps were pumpkins). I didn't have the heart to tell him that Elminster was not Santa Claus, however I almost wonder if mages around Faerun don't view this powerful mage as a Santa Claus of sorts at times. Thought you'd get a laugh from that Ed and THO."

[to which Kaladorm added: "That would make Lhaeo....Mrs Klaus?"]

Ed replies:

I got TWO laughs, thanks to the both of you. The Hooded One is discreetly failing to mention the infamous "Santa Elminster" moment, in which she sat on my knee, asked for things, and, er, got them - - but never mind. Perhaps the less said about that, the better.

I often get mistaken for Santas Claus when I'm shopping (and I always smile, lean close, and murmur, "Hi! Don't tell anyone else except Mummy or Daddy [whoever's with them], because I'm IN DISGUISE! Okay!"... which seems to delight them), even to having little kids pull on my beard to be sure it's real.

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Oh, and by the way: every year I write and read a new Christmas story for the annual Christmas Open House at the Port Hope Public Library (where I work as a part-time circulation clerk), and delivered this year's on Friday just past. Once I've done enough of them for a book, we'll collect them all into a book, and donate all royalties to the library.

Yes, many mages of the Realms DO see Elminster as the equivalent of Santa Claus (a term and concept unknown to them, of course). Perhaps he's best described as "Mystra's Gruffly Whimsical Fairy." :}

And please tell your son that Elminster IS Santa Claus and he and I both have to fight a lot of pumpkins.

(However, that's "No claus for alarm!" [Sorry])

As for you, Kaladorm: HOhohohohohohoho! A jester after my own heart! (And gizzard, and chittlins, and so I'd better shift them all around a bit, so I don't lose them...)

So saith Ed.

"Mystra's Gruffly Whimsical Fairy"? Geez, Ed, you nearly made me wet myself! ("Hello, there, Mystra's Gruffly Whimsical Fairy! What've you got up your old beard for this naughty little lass, THIS time? Hmmm? Oh, the usual? [Yawn]" etc.)

Rolling my eyes, here.

love to all,  
THO

\*\*\*\*\*

December 5, 2006: Hi, all. This time, Ed favours us with replies to a raft of questions (and responses to earlier Ed replies) from Zandilar, from March and June of this year. He chose to interleave his responses, so the quotation marks are Zandilar, and double square brackets are Ed. I've chopped this in half due to length, and will post the rest on the morrow.

"Ah, that makes things much clearer. So basically Alusair knows nearly everything [about Vangey's spells to keep her from conceiving as a teen], and has probably guessed at the rest. \*nods\* Why, then, hasn't she asked any questions to ascertain whether or not the spell(s) has faded/failed/been removed? That would seem logical, especially if she's not yet ready to stop being promiscuous (and I don't mean anything negative with that word)."

[[She has, indirectly, of her mother Filfaeril and of Laspeera, getting both of them to magically check her (Fee via outside Harper mages, Laspeera directly). She neither wants to ask Vangey nor trusts any answer he may give her. This has occurred 'offstage' in published Realmslore, of course (I say 'of course' due to the subject matter), and she remains suspicious of Vangey, recognizing that he'll do ANYTHING and sacrifice ANYONE (including himself, as we saw in EL'S D) for the strengthening and survival of the realm. She sees that this very much includes her, and she hates being anyone's pawn.]]

"There are lots of reasons why I think Cormyr is a patriarchy... Mostly to do with it being a patrilineally emphasised primogeniture (hence why Alusair having a bastard child is less

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acceptable than Azoun, since you KNOW the mother, but not the father - and KNOWING the father seem MORE important than KNOWING the mother!). Inheritance definitely favours males in Cormyr. That's why I see Cormyr, particularly the nobility, as patriarchal."

[[Correct: the nobles are VERY patriarchal. The heralds are not, and the 'ahast' guiding mages do or support whatever is best for the realm at the time (e.g. the weak male king abdicating in favour of his stronger sister). The patriarchal bent has APPEARED stronger in recent years due to the personalities involved, Vangey and the philandering Azoun in particular, but legally the various churches, the heralds, the law of the realm, and the regulatory administration of the Royal Court scribes (bureaucrats) has been balanced, in terms of gender, when it comes to lineage, inheritance, legitimacy, and status.]]

"Quick question to start with: Is there divorce in Cormyr? Or are two people, especially nobles, who find themselves not in love anymore (or in the case of an arranged marriage - in a situation untenable to both) expected to stay together once married? I was under the impression that marriage was variable from "one night only" to "one year and a day" to "as long as love lasts" to "while this vase remains whole" to "forever."

[[There are 'annulments' in Cormyr (yes, these are divorces), for specific reasons recognized by various churches, and for a few state legal reasons (usually involving deception involving shapechangers, etc.). There are NOT divorces in the modern real-world "I got tired of my partner, so we'll file on the grounds of mutual incompatibility or whatever" sense. And it's VERY hard for royalty or nobility to get annulments, which is why unwanted spouses tend to get murdered in 'accidents.' For most Cormyreans, marriage is until death, after a trial year-and-a-day handfasting, with fourteen summers of a spouse being absent automatically being considered "death," if the abandoned spouse petitions before a magister for this consideration - - even if "everybody knows" the missing spouse ran off to Sembia and is quite openly living with someone else. By the way, there's no society-wide stigma to living with someone else (regardless of gender), married or unmarried, although various faiths and particular families may well disapprove. As a result, a lot of commoners never marry. Such a couple CAN own property jointly, without being married, just as mercantile business partners do.]]

"And to respond to the quote: Yes, they are a serious problem to succession, if it mattered who the father was (which is only the case when the male is the sole determining factor of the royal bloodline, which it's not in Cormyr - otherwise the first female Orbarskyran ruler of Cormyr would have been the last Orbarskyran ruler of Cormyr, since the throne would have shifted to her husband's line! This, of course, is an exception to the male favoring inheritance rules of Cormyr's nobility). In the case of Alusair, it would be blindingly obvious that the child was hers (and she'd be the one carrying/passing on the line in this case), simply because the physiological changes a female body undergoes throughout the process of pregnancy are hard to hide! (It could be done magically, but why?) Simply put, the child would obviously be an Obarskyr.

Likewise, it's easy to accuse a male of being a child's father... But there's no proof. A blue eyed male who was about the right age could be presented as a Son of Azoun IV, without it actually being true. That is the why bastards present a threat, because there will always be pretenders to the throne... Except, of course, that this is a magical world, and there are magical ways to prove or disprove the parentage. So pretenders would be less common (though probably more common than the circumstances would make us think, since there's also countermagic and the like).

If it \*really\* mattered who the father was, why wasn't Azoun IV's eldest male bastard even in the running against Azoun V? Or why wasn't Alusair the more legitimate heir?

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To expand on that: Tanalasta's marriage to Rowan was only witnessed by Chauntea herself - what proof is there to everyone else that the child is not a bastard? Certainly the Chaunteans would say he was legitimate (since their divinations could prove it for themselves), but some nobles would point to the Chaunteans "political aspirations" (imagined or supposed from Tanalasta's public (but refused) gift of Chauntean priests to her father) and say that they had an agenda (maybe to make Chauntea the state religion) in saying that Azoun V was a legitimate son. Also, surely people who hated (or even just mildly disliked) the Cormaerils would have protested Tanalasta's son becoming the next king! And ooooh I can only imagine the backlash/outcry if Rowan was ever revealed as a Ghazneth! An elder bastard son might be the perfect thing to hold up as an alternative (except, of course, people would laugh because Azoun IV had so many of them!)... And surely some would have (or are still) pressed (pressing) Alusair herself as an alternative to the "bastard son of a Cormaeril"?

I suppose some of these things are "behind the scenes" things... Things that have been happening off the page, so to speak. I suppose not all gamers are as interested in the intricate intrigues that surely plague the Throne of the Purple Dragon. To me, what's in print seems to be "Oh, Tanalasta had a son, he's the heir, and that's that!"

[I quite agree that what ended up in print did indeed seem to be: "Oh, Tanalasta had a son, he's the heir, and that's that!" - - much too pat, much too short, and not properly explored onstage. Again, that's largely due to the subject matter; TSR and now WotC just don't want their books to focus overmuch on who beds who, rules of inheritance and legitimacy, and so on. I agree that there would be a HUGE backlash if Rowan was ever revealed as a Ghazneth.

I agree with all you say about the discontent with Azoun V's legitimacy, and it does exist as behind-closed-doors mutterings in some houses. It isn't open, public, widespread, or lasting because of two factors:

1. The general populace desperately WANTS the reassurance of "an Azoun on the throne," and so are VERY willing to accept Azoun V.
2. In order to prove (in the face of immediate accusations) to the Cormyrean leaders of other faiths that they were NOT making a play for power (state religion status or just "power behind the throne"), the senior clergy of Chauntea invited, and allowed, Harper mages and Vangey and said Cormyrean leaders of other faiths to "watch" the testimony of Chauntea from their memories, and see it for themselves. They then turned right around and prayed to THEIR gods for confirmation that what they saw was "truth" and not a deception of mortals by Chauntea - - and received it (presumably those deities checked with Chauntea directly). You see, there are rules that all of the lawful and the good deities play by, in mortal politics, because they all "stand and fall" by the results. Only crazy deities like Cyric try to kick over the whole agreement - - and that very disregard for common consequences is why they're viewed as mad.]]

So saith Ed, and that's enough for one post.

More next time.

love to all,  
THO

Hi again, all. Sorry I've been silent for a day or so; the site wouldn't let me in (grrr). Herewith, the rest of Ed's responses to Zandilar (double quotes are Z, double brackets are E):

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

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

"Basically I had a desire to see more of certain characters, and it seemed to me that they were cut down too far in favour of things that seemed inconsequential to me. Like those two smugglers, for example - they took up too much page space, when I actually wanted to see more of Narnra. For a book where she's the title character, the only thing we ever saw was her spending almost half the book running along the rooftops of Marsember, and then she seemed to hmmm.. be of less consequence than I was expecting given the title of the book."

[[Very good point. I needed the two smugglers both for comic relief and to ground us, however briefly, in the stinking, down and dirty, everyday grime of criminal life in Marsember. The editors loved the comic relief and so kept more of them than the other scenes, when it came time to trim. My fault, not theirs, for overwriting. One of my essential points was to illustrate that in the Realms, low-powered characters ARE cogs in large, ruthlessly-grinding apparatus, not unrealistically "champions and heroes out of nowhere," and Narnra is an illustration of that. However, you're right, after the trimming, she's "barely there" in the latter three quarters of the book. Moreover, an important detail of her maturing and development was edited out of the end of the book, against my wishes.]]

"Ed quote: [[As for lack of detail, please tell me more, so I can avoid going too light on lore or in-passing description in future books.]] Well you're always saying that the editors cut out a lot of your words... It's hard for me to explain. Maybe once I've read the book a second time I'll have a better idea of what I'm trying to say here. (And I think there was a bit much of the "it just so happens that these bad people Narnra smashes in on ALSO happen to be involved in THIS plot with the creature that COINCIDENTALLY just so happens to be..." And yet she doesn't exert any influence herself on those situations... Ends up going out with a whimper without really doing much at all.)"

[[Very fair criticism: I DO love to do the 'incredibly long arm of coincidence' shtick far too much. The "ha ha, it just so happens" smartass narrator. I'll try to cut this back in the Knights books. As for Narnra's lack of influence and action, see my previous answer. Maybe, if I can liquor up a WotC editor enough, someone will someday let me write a "Narm meets Narnra" book, and if they're the only heroes, we'll HAVE to see them doing things and growing as characters and having impacts - - however, please note that I don't intend to have every "good guy/gal" character be a Conan-esque hero; I want weaklings, indecisive and shy types, too.]]

"On another issue of detail - I have to say that I admire your ability to write descriptive passages so lushly and with great attention to detail. It fits in seamlessly with the action that is going on... Some parts of Narnra's chase through Marsember are just breathtaking. If I could just fit half the descriptive detail into my own stories, I think I'd be doing very well indeed. My novel teacher, Delia Falconer, used to emphasise the inclusion of such detail to an extreme point, but she never gave us a good enough example of what she meant for me to truly understand what she was

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talking about - most of the stuff she showed us was overly full of detail, but you got the balance just right in Elminster's Daughter."

[[Thanks. It's ESSENTIAL to work in Realmslore - - after all, it's the one thing I can trump other writers in doing, so if the editors put Ed Greenwood into the saddle for a Realms novel, I'd better deliver some Realmslore, yes? - - but doubly essential NOT to stop or seriously slow the action in doing so. As for non-Realmslore detail: if I don't give it, you don't get pulled into the scene so you fully see, smell, and feel the "you are there" experience - - and then I'm giving you a cartoon outline, not the full, rich action movie you are paying for (hey, if you live in Oz, you're REALLY paying for it!).

"Ed quote: [[And as for Caladnei: when writing the outline for EL'S D, I noticed that the (very brief) notes I had for Caladnei from Rich Baker (her co-creator, I believe, along with Sean Reynolds) were at odds with Troy's text, so I "checked in" for a definitive response from WotC, and got this: "As per her racial origins, should have dark hair, dark brown eyes, middling height, average build (not buxom, adventurer-active so not fat). Give her some unusual trait to suggest magic-wielding in her genes?"]]] Hmm... Interesting. Caladnei is half Chondathan half Tumeri right? Is that middling height for those races, given they're both described as tall, or middling height for the average human of no specific origin? The 5'03" given to her in FRCS seems to be short, at least to me, especially for tall races.

Ed quote: [[Not wanting to have her skin glow with runes or anything that 'obvious,' I devised the shifting-in-hue eyes as that visible trait of aptitude for the Art.]] I definitely like her eyes as you described them."

[[I'd say it's probably middling height for an average human. With her height a given, I didn't worry about it, but set out to build her character. Didn't manage it enough in EL'S D or in my REALMS OF SHADOW short story, but when you put the two together, it's a start. You can probably tell that I'd happily write a Cormyr novel every year, for about the next twenty years, as long as they let me also write a second Realms novel each year that wasn't set in Cormyr, so I could tell all the other tales I want to tell. :)]]

"Ed quote: [[Roedele Thornmantle, knighted by Azoun for her services to the Crown (some have cattily referred to these as "personal services," but they seem to center around alley-fighting in rebellious Arabel, not anything romantic with the Purple Dragon), uses as her arms a circular white unicorn, head to the sinister, on a circular field of dark green bordered with white flames, and is a CG hf W9 who dwells in Suzail with her two lovers, the War Wizards Abrult Morglam (CG hm W6, darkly handsome, short, whittling wooden caricatures and dragons is his constant hobby) and Jakanna Bruen (NG hf W7, short-tempered, energetic, tanned, loves to climb trees and play pranks); the three are inseparable. Roedele's known for a polite public manner that displays a very dry humour. [I don't think TSR was ready to show the world two bisexual ladies in 1986].]] Not just bisexual, but a true triad if the two women are both bisexual... A full on polyamorous relationship. So I can see even more reason why they might not have appeared in print. Hard enough to get people to accept sexualities other than heterosexual, let alone true polyamory. Though I suppose if it was somehow presented as the two women being Abrult's wives it might have been marginally more acceptable to some, since polygamy has a long history... Particularly in the judeo-christian faith (though it has fallen out of favour in recent times... there are still some Mormons who practice polygamy, so I understand - not sure if there are any Jewish or Muslim sects that still practice it)."

[[I have heard that there are, but yes, I agree that it developed into a true triad, and that such a thing would have been verboten in TSR novels at the time, except as a very 'hidden and

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inexplicit, in the background, buddy movie' sort of way. I tend to be so matter-of-fact about such relationships that I'm often surprised, even after all this time, when editors gasp and say, "We can't include THAT!" about various matters. After all, I work in a library in a town where two wrinkled and very 'proper' ladies in their eighties, unmarried and living together, can openly stand in the most public spot in the town library, as I, about a foot away from them, check out the library books they've chosen, and angrily tell a third lady that they've just driven all the way to Toronto and back, and their favourite shop in which to buy dildoes has closed down and gone! The general local attitude is "Live and let live" and "None of my business what X and Y do, so long as it don't scare the horses," but local attitudes in other locales around the world can, of course, be VERY different.]]

"Ed quote: [[So my "in game" explanation would have to be that Caladnei borrowed Roede's appearance when crafting the incantation for a spell that was probably also some sort of defensive mantle - - and that this borrowing may originally have been intended to conceal her own presence, so the Mage Royal could officially be elsewhere, and uninvolved. When the events related in THE SIEGE befell, Caladnei may have hastily cast this spell she'd developed, because she had need of its powers, and forgotten or not cared that it temporarily gave her the appearance of a fellow War Wizard. Or the spell may well have been one given her by Vangerdahast, that gives the caster someone else's appearance, and he had set the 'other' to be Roede (and Caladnei used the spell in hasty need, either not knowing it altered her appearance or not caring).]] Oooh that's an interesting explanation... Would Caladnei have got permission to use Roede's appearance first? I know Vangerdahast might not have, but Caladnei seems to be a little more considerate of other people and their feelings."

[[I'd say she would have sought permission whenever possible, but in an emergency would have done what Vangey does: whatever's necessary to achieve their goals, for the good of the realm. When push comes to shove . . . But otherwise, yes, Caladnei does want acceptance and agreement far more than Vangey, who'd long since decided scaring people into yielding to him was swifter, easier, and more gratifying (for him).]]

"Also, what do you see as the differences between Wizardry and Sorcery? If Caladnei can come up with mantles like that on her own, does that push other spells out of her "known spells" list? Or is it just something she scribed down on a scroll to use at a later date (reading it straight off the scroll)? Or is it just one more thing she's taught herself to do with magic (which would mean it would be on her list of "known spells" at the expense of another spell)? Sometimes the way you describe magic sounds to me a bit like psionics... This mind ream ability that mages (of both stripes) seem to have is definitely more psionic in appearance than magical since it doesn't seem to be a particular spell they cast, just something they do... Not sure if that's making much sense.

I guess it is difficult taking into account the game mechanics when writing a novel... Which is why people always seem to have great trouble translating novel characters into game mechanics. According to FRCS, Caladnei has no mantle like spells or even polymorph like spells... And she's only just high enough in level to be able to cast teleport (and cone of cold, which is her other listed 5th level spell)... She just appears, in the novel, to be able to do a bit too much for her stats to truly be a reflection of her (things that can't just be explained away as magical items, since she doesn't appear to use any or read any scrolls)."

[[The problem here is that too much of my fiction has concerned Chosen of Mystra, or Shandril, who can "feel" the Weave and experiment with molding it to their will either out of long experience and understanding of it, or just sheer naive power. So what I've written tends to give a false impression.

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Vangerdahast, as an -ahast wizard, and Elminster's sometime apprentice, got some inkling of Elminster's 'creating spells' approach, and full access to what his predecessors in the role achieved magically. Caladnei has that, too, but she's like a bright, quick-witted kid who's just inherited a huge library; she's still racing around discovering what she now has. The mind-ream and -meld is part of the powers of her office, and note how vulnerable using it leaves her, and how much of her encounter with Narnra involves superb acting on her part.

In like manner, a lot of the spells she apparently calls out of thin air are powers of the office: Vangey handed her a lot of swift, often silent little spells that essentially awaken a magic item in a vault, somewhere in the kingdom, "fire" it, and translocate the magical effect from the vault to issue from her at a target she's facing. Yes, we should cover this in game terms. No, the designers will always resist doing so, for two reasons: ties other fiction writers down to specifics, and some clever gamer will find all the loopholes and turn this into an "every time" D&D gamebreaker. Yet this IS the way I've considered a lot of wizards in the Realms, from before there was a D&D game (and why some lucky lout with a stick can't just walk up and bludgeon a learned wizard to death that easily, after throwing stones at him from behind trees all afternoon, and getting him to waste all his spells at said trees): in his lair, with time to prepare, darn near EVERY wizard can call on a wand that's hidden up on a shelf, or a ring still in a box under his pillow, to blast unwanted visitors. What he can't do, except in rare cases of Chosen or being the Royal Magician of Cormyr, is stride around attacking others with all of the same prepared firepower. That's why the Manshoons of this world, who can wave a hand and open a dozen gates all around a foe, with wands firing through each one, are truly to be feared."

So saith Ed.

Handing us all a stellar nugget of Realmslore at the end, there!

love to all,  
THO

\*\*\*\*\*

On December 8, 2006 THO said: Please remember that the authors can't freely choose where to set their books; WotC's Books Department approves everything. The aforementioned Mark S is, of course, an editor in said Books Department. So it's not that he's "doing the right thing" whereas other writers are "doing the wrong thing."

Ed has for years decried the concentration on the best-covered areas (which means they get RSE'd again and again, just because they get used again and again) at the expense of "covering the entire map." Which caused certain WotC staffers to take scissors to the map in the move to 3E (surely one of the most ridiculous "design decisions" of all time).

love to all,  
THO

\*\*\*\*\*

December 9, 2006: Hello again, all. Ed responds this time to Jamallo Kreen's recent query: "Again, answers provoke more questions: are there any religions which flat-out deny the divinity of some other "deity"? For example, does the Church of Lathander flatly state that Orcus is not a deity, whether he can grant spells to his clerics or not? Perhaps a deeper question would be: are

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there "Powers" who are active on Faerun who do not have access to Cynosure because they aren't "real" gods? (My question doesn't take into account Cyric and Bane and Iyachtu and all of the troubles they have had with each others' "genuineness;" Cyric, we know, thinks that he is the only One True God, but Cyric ... has issues....)"

Ed replies:

There are no churches that as a whole, as a matter of doctrine, deny the divinity of any other deity. Individual priests, on rare occasions, have stated that this or that "Chosen" of another deity is in fact an ordinary mortal using magic to deceive, or that this or that act was not the work of a divine avatar (or direct divine intervention) but of some other force. Those who persist in such denials and denunciations run the risk of being deemed "insane" or blasphemous, because (again, he said rather wearily) "everyone knows" all the gods are real.

There are often disputes as to whether this or that happening is the work of deity A or deity B, but that's a different matter.

There are many powerful beings native to Faerûn or "just visiting" who may be mistaken for gods, and those who pray to them may even be granted spells (by another deity, "standing behind" the supposed divine one for their own purposes). One of the ways dwindling faiths are renewed is by adopting charismatic new "powers" and co-opting their popularity and worshippers (the new power gains real power and a high rank in the church of the adopting deity, and the deity gains their service and the "glow" of their popularity).

Gods, powerful individuals, and "just plain folks" are all capable of deluding themselves and others on occasion, but such deceits are usually short-lived (except, of course, with Cyric as a prime example, the self-delusions of the insane).

So saith Ed.

Creator of most of the gods, herald of many kingdoms, and chief bottle-washer and latrine-emptier of wider Faerûn.

love to all,  
THO

\*\*\*\*\*

December 10, 2006: Hi again! This time Ed answers Bahgtru, re. this query: "Hello Ed. I just finished reading City of Splendors and loved it. I would love to see more of the character, Madieron Sunderstone. Do you think he will ever take a greater role in any future stories or game material? Thanks and Happy Holidays!"

Ed replies:

Glad you enjoyed it. I'd love to write more, but there are only so many hours in any day, and I'm heavily overloaded as it is. Madeiron Sunderstone is a long-neglected character whom I created back in 1968, as the Champion of the Open Lord (bodyguard), and I'd love a chance to tell more tales of his deeds and life. At the moment, however, there don't seem to be any "soon" opportunities to do so, what with all the already-scheduled Realms projects on the go. However, please be aware that You Are Not Alone in wanting more of Madeiron. I'll see what I can do...

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So saith Ed, champion of the Champion of the Open Lord of Waterdeep.

See his teeth gleam?

love to all,  
THO

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On December 10, 2006 THO said: Sage has it exactly right: it's a working orphanage. It's consecrated as a temple, and has a simple altar, so that daily services of worship to Helm can be performed for the "charges" living there, and for and by the Helmite staff, so they need not leave (often and daily) in order to venerate the god "properly."

We Knights visited it once, seeking a lost heir among the charges (she wasn't there). The charges are of both genders and all "good" races, BTW, though the vast majority are human.

love,  
THO

\*\*\*\*\*

December 11, 2006: Hello again, fellow scribes. This time Ed makes a proper response to Kaladorm, in the matter of this recent post: "Ed, Despite hardly knowing Pendelope, Starragers new lady friend in CoS, I felt a quite sad when she died. It seemed like an out of place feeling for a character who I knew hardly anything about, which leads me to believe that there must be more to her story than was told in the novel.

If I'm correct I'd very much like to hear some of that story.

Thanks"

Ed replies:

I would LOVE to tell some more tales of the lady, and will start looking for ways to weasel them into print. She's a spitfire after my own, uh, heart. I had great fun with her, despite her all-too-tiny role (though, yes, I created her for the express purpose of having more "deaths of the good guys" to slam readers with). There are, however, more where she came from: wealthy, sophisticated, intelligent, strong-minded young women of Amn and points south that "wintering" Waterdhavian nobility come into contact with, and often take up with. I could see a novel starring a group of friends/rivals of such ilk, a sort of Sex & the City collides hard with Golden Girls. :) Hmmm...

So saith Ed.

Uh-oh, Kaladorm, you've gotten him started!

In years to come, they'll know who to blame, you know...

love to all,  
THO

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December 16, 2006: Hello again, all. Ed is still encoiled in the depths of crafting Realmslore, Realmslore, Realmslore, but emerged long enough to reply to Tamtararamtam:

Yes. :}

That is: yes, the cult of Garagos is thriving and preparing for Great Things. As for when and how such schemes will manifest, NDA. Sorry.

And sorry to all scribes for my silences. More "proper" Realmslore replies ASAP.

So saith Ed.

The overworked workhorse of the Realms.

love to all,  
THO

P.S. to The Sage: still nothing. (?)

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December 17, 2006: Ah. SageOS may well be quite astute in that respect.

Ahem. Hi again, fellow scribes. Herewith, Ed's latest reply, this one to RodOdom's question: "Dear Ed and Lady THO, Here's what I hope is a quick question: when mages invent spells, are they creating something that has never existed before in their world, or are they discovering something that already existed in Mystra's Weave?"

Ed's response:

Mages are creating something new (though of course in many cases they are unwittingly creating slight variations on spells first created by someone else, earlier, in another land - - spells that are sometimes forgotten, and sometimes still in use, "improved" and sometimes altered greatly; and in some cases of training, are deliberately tinkering with known spells to create variants), but the new spells will only work if they properly tap into natural energies. In other words, the Weave is a way of controlling and ordering those energies (or a way of understanding and expressing those forces), and to succeed, all spells must call on the energies in one of many ways that are compatible with the Weave. Incompatibility means either failure or the generation of a spontaneous wild magic discharge.

So saith Ed, master of all magic in the Realms.

love to all,  
THO

\*\*\*\*\*

December 21, 2006: Hi again, fellow scribes. Ed just send me a Realmslore reply, so...

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Hearken this time to Ed's words about Jamallo Kreen's queries: "Well met, Master of the Green Wood!

I have some question about Divine Salient Abilities and how they relate to some of the Faerunian deities, and another, more general question about the Torilian divinities. ("Not another question about the gods!?" Yes, another question about the gods....) I'm addressing this to your busy self because it is the Powers of Faerun about which I want specific answers -- other crystal spheres, other rules -- it's Realmspace's gods upon whom I want the skinny.

There are three specific Divine Salient Abilities whose workings amongst the gods and goddess of Realmspace particularly interests me: Divine Recall (which Oghma and Tyr both have) and Know Secrets and Know Death (both of which Shar has, and the latter of which Kelemvor -- and probably Jergal) have.

Does a deity's Divine Recall permit the deity to "remember" portfolio-specific events which occurred before the arrival or ascension of the deity? For example, does Tyr "remember" the enactment of laws made prior to his arrival on Faerun in -247 DR?

Can a Faerunian Power use the Know Secrets ability upon another Faerunian Power? For example, can Shar look at Mask and instantly know his latest scheme, or eyeball Kelemvor and learn Mystra's Truename?

Can a Faerunian Power use the Know Death ability upon another Faerunian Power? For example, would Shar have known which deities were going to get their eggs scrambled in the Time of Troubles (or who was going to get it before or after the ToT if the ability wasn't functioning then)?

If Faerunian Powers can use Know Secrets and Know Death upon one another, are they bound by Ao (or grudging courtesies) not to reveal what their abilities reveal to them?

More generally, do the human-like Powers of Realmspace dream? There is a supposition in Planescape that even dead deities from other crystal spheres and different planes can dream (if nothing else!), but do the non-Elven humanoid Powers of Realmspace dream at all? (If dead Torilian gods sleep lightly, one can imagine that Auppenser is probably sleeping lightest of all, but quien sabe?)

Ed replies:

No, a deity's Divine Recall does not permit the deity to "remember" portfolio-specific events which occurred before the arrival or ascension of the deity. If deities can find mortals or other gods who did witness such events, they can compel (mortals) or cajole (deities) sharing of these memories, which are gained with the viewpoint (and 'slant') of the original rememberer.

No, a Faerûnian Power can't successfully use the Know Secrets ability upon another Faerunian Power. They can try it, but it won't work, and they will know that it's failed. Greater Deities will "feel" attempts to learn their secrets in this way, and if the spy is sufficiently inferior in abilities (power ranking) to them, they may be able to successfully fool the spy by "leaking" false "secrets," to manipulate the lesser deity.

No, a Faerûnian Power can't successfully use the Know Death ability upon another Faerunian Power. Attempts to do so will sometimes (if a greater deity tries to use the ability on a deity of

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much less power) reveal glimpses of mortal deaths that have already occurred, and 'mattered' to the deity being spied upon for some reason - - but the deity being spied upon WILL be aware of the spying.

Yes, the human-like Powers of Realmspace DO dream, a topic about which future Realmslore from my pen will say more. For now: NDA, sorry.

So saith Ed.

Who dreams about the Realms when awake and asleep, and luckily for us all, writes a lot of it down.

love to all,  
THO

\*\*\*\*\*

December 22, 2006: Hi again, fellow scribes. Ed answers Foxhelm this time, re. this: "I have some hesitations on asking these question as they tend to be morose, but it is of importance to Realms fans.

If something was to happen to happen to Ed (God Forbid!), would would happen to the Forgotten Realms? Would alights be reverted to Wizards or whomever owns it? Or would it go to Ed's heirs like certain works of fiction (like Tolkien)?

Has Ed been training an apprentice/s that might be able to help keep his spirit alive in the Realms for years to come? Does Ed ever think of what might become of one of his greatest literary creation after his passing? Does he see it as one of his legacies to future generations?

Sorry for bring the spectre of death or illness in, but it was a question that has been troubling my mind and likely some of the players of the realms in the dark of night.

Let's just hope that Ed lives to be over a hundred."

Kentinal then posted: "Foxhelm, WotC owns FR now, no death would change or transfer ownership, unless the rights are sold to an individual. Ed has the right to provide canon that has not made print, as the creator of the Realms, however if current owner disagrees their printed material is canon not Ed's words."

And Foxhelm responded: "Sorry, I wasn't sure how much control that Ed had. I am still curious about what Ed has done to prepare the Realms in case anything had happened to him.

It's just in many ways, Ed is a security blanket. Many people might not like aspects of the realms (the new planes, the number of gods), but many take comfort in the fact that Ed has some major input in the events as creator. He created the realms and has the ability to enhance it as well. Well, thanks for the partial answer."

Ed replies:

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If I fall over dead tomorrow (I'm not planning on doing so right now, but one never knows, does one?), the Realms remains in the hands of the current copyright owner, TSR, Inc. (now a wholly-owned subsidiary of Wizards of the Coast, Inc., which is in turn owned by Hasbro, Inc.). Legally, the owner of the Realms is TSR, unless or until a year passes without print publication of a new, novel-length work (fiction or game lore) by me, except when I agree to such a publication not occurring within a year. If that "no publication" ever occurs, all rights to the Realms revert to me.

Trademarks complicate this, of course (though under Canadian law, they'd remain, and move with, the copyright), and in some jurisdictions that means the Realms revert to me a year after TSR sells it, regardless (unless they reach some agreement with a new owner that allows them to publish something new and novel-length by me), but in most jurisdictions they can sell it but the new owner is bound by the same agreement.

Please note that I'm not a lawyer, court judgements change details of law all the time, and I fervently hope that I never, never end up in any such dispute; I just want to go on writing about the Realms forever. :}

Certainly I think of the Realms as a legacy to others. Otherwise, it'd still be just my private fantasy world, and I'd never have entered into an agreement with TSR in the first place.

As for training successors, the Realms does that for me. As of right now, Eric Boyd could step in and do what I do in a second. So could Steven Schend. Jeff Grubb is probably a little rusty on current Realmslore, but could with work step in. George Krashos, Tom Costa, Ian Hunter, and perhaps Rich Baker could all "do what I do," though they'd probably all bring their own styles of doing things to the task. Please note that I haven't asked any of these esteemed gentlemen if they WANT to, before listing them here. It's not a job so much as it is a life calling; it consumes my life, snatching every second I let it take. I already know THO wouldn't want the job, or I'd have listed her here, too. It might well drive anyone nuts (I know it has me!).

So Kentinal's answer is essentially correct. And by the way, I don't mind discussing this in the slightest, though of course I'd prefer we discuss the Realms here instead of, say, having scribes chase after all of the people I've listed here and try to get commitments or statements from them. (It would be less than polite, irrelevant [I hope!] anyway, and some of them are almost certainly constrained by their current employment from freely giving answers in any case.)

So saith Ed.

I can confirm that I certainly wouldn't want to be "THE Lorelord of the Realms" (and of course only Ed can be the Creator), and I can also confirm that it has taken over his life. I'm not his wife and don't live with him, but I've seen and heard enough to know that it does.

Poor long-suffering stand-in for Elminster. I must remember to soothe him, when next I see him, in my own special way...

love to all,  
THO

P.S. Wooly, of COURSE you can share that info.

As for me under the tree, someday... who knows?

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December 23, 2006: Hi again, all. Nice question, Malcolm! Off to Ed it goes...

And speaking of the Great Bearded One, Ed herewith makes answer to Sage of Stars, re, this query: "I have a question for Ed regarding Cormyr, and the next two Knights books. Specifically, how much lore is Ed planning to "sneak in" around the edges of the story?"

Ed replies:

As much as I can, so as to give readers the "feel" of some slice of life in Cormyr (scenes in taverns, alleys, a Watch lockup, an inn in Halfhap, glittering court events in the Palace and Royal Court, and so on). So you won't see large chunks of "oh, here's game lore I can take out and use," but words and descriptions here and there that can be worked into a Cormyrean campaign, yes.

As always, the story is the important thing; no info dumps to break up the sweep and flow of the narrative. I'd love to stick little Realmslore articles in the back of my novels, as appendices, but that's not likely to happen, because I just don't have time to write them, and I don't want to lose one word of story to put in a word of lore (I have plenty of other outlets for lore, including Wizards' website support at the time of publication for the novels - - but fiction, not so much).

So saith Ed.

We'll have to wait and see just how much and how juicy the Realmslore gets, obviously.

love to all,  
THO

\*\*\*\*\*

December 25, 2006: Hi again, all. Ed promises another Realmslore reply on (yes) Christmas Day!

A little swift housekeeping, first.

To AlorinDawn: 'tis a pleasure to provide you with Realmslore. Ed will answer both of your questions properly, but I can tell you the reason the Loudwater area has been somewhat neglected in published Realmslore thus far was the "Legacy of the Green Regent" RPGA campaign (now ended), and Ed's reluctance to hamper or introduce inconsistencies with the designers thereof.

Zanan, you're quite welcome.

Rolindin, Ed will reply to you as soon as he can get around to it, but yes, Cormyr was his creation and long predates the published Realms. It's not quite as real-world feudal as you seem to be envisioning it (re. land ownership), but I'll let Ed reply to you properly.

And to A Publishing Lackey and all fans of Cormyr, Ed just telephoned me with a shocking (well, not to me, but probably to many of you) reply:

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Yes.

So saith Ed.

Ho ho! THERE'S a Jolly Santa gift from Ed to those who want to scheme and speculate about cormyr's unfolding future! Wheeee! (Ain't we got fun!)

love to all,  
THO

\*\*\*\*\*

December 25, 2006: Hello again, all, and Merry Christmas "on the day," this time!

Ed has just sent me a response to Thauramarth, re. this: "Dear Ed and THO, Is it possible to divulge any lore on Sarthor, the Harper infiltrator in the Zhentarim, who sacrificed his life to allow Shandrill to create a Crown of Fire? Amongst other things - did he start out as a Harper and infiltrate the Zhentarim or was he a Zhentarim "turned" by the Harpers? So long and thanks for all the Realms..."

Ed replies:

You're very welcome! Enjoy the place, I'm constantly expanding it. :}

I'd love to really delve into Sarthor's story some day, but all I can say right now is that you'll see more of him "at work" in SWORDS OF DRAGONFIRE, the second Knights of Myth Drannor novel (which should see print next August). As to whether he started out as a Harper or was "turned," that's specifically under NDA because of some not-yet-related earlier events. I hope to get the chance to tell his tale some day!

So saith Ed.

I know a lot more than he's saying here (from Realmsplay going back more than twenty years), but I'm certainly not going to spoil it for all scribes; it's better if we learn things like these more dramatically, at the right moments.

love to all,  
THO

\*\*\*\*\*

December 25, 2006: Rolindin,

Ed has added your Cormyr lore request to his long, long list, but to provide a "quick and dirty" (ahem; a specialty of mine) reply to you:

The only similarities between real-world feudal systems (and there were many) and Cormyr's social organization is that in Cormyr, gentry (large-holding landowners) and nobles (titled persons, from knights up to dukes, usually also large-holding landowners) do owe military service to the Crown: they must send themselves, hired or on-staff armsmen (men-at-arms), or their sons

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or daughters for regular weapons- and battle-training (the latter is what we might call "military exercises" in the modern real world) and service (guard duty, serving on garrisons at High Horn and elsewhere, going on road patrols, missing-person-searches, and brigand-scouring expeditions out of such bases, upon order) and so on. These armed persons must be paid by them, and equipped by them (weapons, armor, and mounts, though they can send the Crown money to allow the Crown to do so). The Crown provides room/shelter (including firewood and cooking gear), board (spending money, food, and drink), and medical aid (including magic, via serving priests and War Wizards).

In Cormyr, everyone can be a landowner (and pay taxes). There are social classes, but they aren't "hard status" (individuals can readily move from one class to another). There isn't a single faith with standing as a state religion (some of the recent royals wanted Chauntea to have that status, but it was not achieved), and most of the other parallels with real-world feudalism are shaky at best.

Ed is of course busy with family right now, but should weigh in with a Realmslore reply before the end of the day. It probably won't be about Cormyr yet, however. Please be patient; Ed has about eighty questions waiting, still to answer - - but he loves answering Cormyr questions, and will probably get to it soon.

love,  
THO

\*\*\*\*\*

December 26, 2006: Hello again, fellow scribes. This time Ed answers Longtime Lurker, re. this: "Another lore question for the Master. A long time ago, at a GenCon (Parkside, I think), Ed said there was a "big, crucial-to-Realmslore" story involving two of the Seven Sisters. Are we ever going to see this story? Or hints about it, at least? Thanks!"

Ed replies:

Hints, yes, definitely ( watch for them :) ). I'm still hoping I'll get the chance to tell that tale properly, some day, but the time seems to be slipping away.

And yes, it was back at Parkside, with Jim Ward frowning in the audience because the way I phrased it made him fear it was some sort of lesbian tryst or affair between the two Sisters.

So saith Ed.

Say, Ed, does that last line of yours mean it wasn't? An affair, I mean? Because that would explain so much... (just kidding, folks; I'm trying to goad Ed into revealing more, I really don't have any inside information on this)

love to all,  
THO

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On December 26, 2006 THO said: Rolindin, the Realms as you see them today are essentially Ed's, with the following differences:

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Ed had a "western" continent, but not Maztica.

Ed's Moonshae Isles were a cluster of many small Hebrides-style islands.

Ed had a glacier where Vaasa and Damara and the Bloodstone Pass are.

Ed had steppes, but not the Hordelands.

Ed had no Shou Lung (overt Oriental area).

Ed had mysterious southern lands, but not Zakhara.

Many designers have locally detailed things (e.g. Menzoberranzan, in the Underdark) differently than Ed, but Ed has usually been called in to "Realmsify" things. In general, if it resembles real-world Earth history closely, it's not Ed's work.

However, almost all of the lands, cities, and place-names Realms fans are familiar with came from Ed.

Including Candlekeep.

love,  
THO

\*\*\*\*\*

December 26, 2006: (snip)the Realms has lyrewings and good old familiar nightingales as "beautiful singers" amongst birds.

(snip)

Hi, Wooly, here's a reply from Ed:

Hi, Wooly! Lyrewings haven't yet appeared in published Realmslore. They are long, slender, mist-gray birds with gray-blue wings and pinkish-gray underbellies, and they get their name for their calls, which sound like descending runs (slow chords) being played on a lyre. Very pleasant, laid-back melodic.

When these calls are answered by another lyrewing, a lyrewing switches from them into a liquid warbling that sounds like a high-pitched human or half-elven soprano singing wordlessly, in a liquid, always-have-breath-enough manner (think the female vocal from Pink Floyd's "Great Gig In The Sky" from the classic DARK SIDE OF THE MOON, only about an octave higher and with no rough or "panting" passages). Lyrewings are highly intelligent (and emotional), and can converse in this language for long stretches of communicating quite complex ideas, statements, arguments, and responses.

Sages know this, and have communicated it centuries ago to bards, wherefore bards see lyrewings as transformed human lovers, or able to witness human love and report or even advise humans on love, and so on (or at least, they depict lyrewings thus in many ballads and laments).

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The approval or befriending of a lyrewing is said to betoken near-future success in love; meeting a sad lyrewing presages doom or bad times for one's relationship or lovers or loved ones, and so on.

Hope this helps.

Love,  
THO

\*\*\*\*\*

On December 27, 2006 THO said: And Chataro's Choice Number Four would be right on the money. Or so we Knights discovered, one memorable afternoon. (For variety, two archmages able to shapechange are highly likely to explore lovemaking in other shapes than their own - - and then start cycling through shapes, swiftly, as they cliXXX attain physical rapture.)

Don't ask me how I know that.

love to all,  
THO

\*\*\*\*\*

December 27, 2006: Hi, all! This time Ed tackles a "short and sweet" question, this time from Blueblade: "In Cormyr, do Blue Dragons wear uniforms or badges that are blue?"

Ed replies:

They wear blue shoulder-flashes and forearm badges of a rich, "royal blue" hue, yes. Their dress uniforms are standard Purple Dragon uniform tunics, with the additional adornment of a royal blue sash (left shoulder to right hip). The flashes and badges denote rank by their shape, but in the dress uniform the sash is identical for all ranks; a pin on it denotes the specific rank of the wearer.

So saith Ed.

Hmm, these quickie questions are fun. Bring 'em on!

P.S. AlorinDawn, no garments. Just a little shaving of the body, here and there. Oh, wait, I almost told you a falsehood: I WAS wearing one of those lovely assemblages Ed bought me at a GenCon: a finger ring attached by fine chain to an ornamental be-gemmed plate that lies upon the back of the hand, and is in turn connected by fine chain to a bracelet worn above it on the forearm. Oh, and I was also wearing a ribbon choker about the throat, and a jeweled anklet. And a smile as catlike as I could make it.

love to all,  
THO

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December 27, 2006: Hello again, all. I bring you once more the words of Ed (who is up before his visiting family for once, and trying to make up for missing sending me an answer on Christmas Day, he tells me), specifically a response to another of Blueblade's short-n-sweet questions: "If Dove or Laeral walked up to the gates of Silverymoon, or along its streets, would she be recognized by the general populace?"

Ed replies:

By the general populace, probably not. About one in every sixteen longtime inhabitants of Silverymoon would recognize Dove as someone they'd seen "in town" before, but it'd probably be one in thirty-eight or forty who knew who she was. For Laeral, about one in two hundred would recognize her from having seen her before, and one in four hundred and sixty or so who would know who she was, on sight (most of them being individuals who'd visited Waterdeep often, or who have come from Waterdeep).

Of the Seven (not including Alustriel, of course) Storm's the best known in Silverymoon, Dove next, and the rest of the Seven are far less known (The Simbul actually visits the city the most, but rarely in her own shape).

So saith Ed.

Short question, not so short (but, hey, definitive!) answer.

love to all,  
THO

\*\*\*\*\*

December 28, 2006: Hello again, scribes. I bring you Ed's answers once more, specifically to Malcolm's request: "Dear Ed and THO, how good is "intelligence" in Athkatla, in Amn? If someone is caught cheating as a merchant in Waterdeep, how soon and how widely do average street merchants and shopkeepers in Athkatla hear about it?"

P.S. When are we ever going to see your second City of the Realms in DRAGON?"

Ed replies:

As for the city: I don't know; that's up to the good folks at DRAGON. They've had it all for months now (the maps, being physically mailed, had to follow the e-mailed text), but the mag only has so many pages, and at times there's lots of worthy stuff competing for them. I know the Cities were originally announced as a new column, but it's my own busy schedule that torpedoed my sending them a swift and steady flow of articles, not anything DRAGON staffers did.

Now, as for how good the grapevine is, inbound to Athkatla; it depends on where events occurred. If in Amn or Waterdeep, fairly good. If elsewhere, only the most powerful merchants (who can call on established networks of spies and "sources") have any hope of hearing the truth in a timely fashion - - and they certainly don't share what they learn with the "merchant in the street," unless they want to sway his opinion. Said merchants are very cynical because they hear slanted or outright invented propaganda so often, and therefore tend NOT to believe what they hear except from caravan masters and travelling traders they personally trust.

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All of which means a cheater in Waterdeep won't be heard about for an entire season (summer to the next summer) by an "average" street merchant, except in cases of wild news that sweeps Athkatla as gossip (princesses kidnapped, dragons pouncing on nobles in their gardens, multiple murders - - that sort of dramatic thing). Everyone sells information in Athkatla if they can, but the only reliable sellers-of-lore your average merchant can afford and access tend to be higher-ranking merchants in costers. (Wizards can be an exception, because spells and crystal balls can communicate quickly across long distances - - but wizards tend to be secretive and not communicate often with rivals.)

So in general, if Ralthuk the dealer in hides and monster organs and relics swindles someone in Waterdeep AND the ruse is promptly AND dramatically uncovered, word of it will usually reach Athkatla the next year. If Ralthuk's ruse causes a guild battle or involves a Lord of Waterdeep or a noble, or gets someone dramatically murdered, word might filter down to Athkatla's streets in a month and a half, or a little longer.

So saith Ed.

This is fun! Good query!

love to all,  
THO

\*\*\*\*\*

On December 28, 2006 THO said: MerrikCale,

It's Elminster, not "Elminster."

And as for your contention that El's power and near god-like abilities being Gandalf ripoffs, I refer you to the post from Sage of Stars.

Or to put it more bluntly, it follows that Gandalf's power and near god-like abilities are plainly Merlin ripoffs.

Just as Merlin's are plainly ripoffs of... and so on. That's what archetypes ARE.

For the record, Ed was once asked to sit on a board examining a doctoral thesis dissertation on this very archetype, questioning a candidate on the differences between Fizban/Fistandantilus (probable spelling mistake there, I'm afraid), Elminster, Belgarath, Merlin, Gandalf, and (if I remember rightly) three wizards from operas. The candidate got his PhD because Ed concluded (and wrote in his judgement) that the candidate clearly understood the differences between all of them as characters - - while still demonstrating how all of them "worked" as versions of the archetype.

As for the "look" of Elminster (Early Version): that was entirely TSR's doing, because they WANTED TO MAKE HIM LOOK LIKE GANDALF to "cash in" on the then-current LORD OF THE RINGS popularity.

So I guess you've got your way, and started an argument. I do hope you have something more to offer by way of argument on your side than drinking Kool-Aid.

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love,  
THO

On December 29, 2006 THO said: MerrikCale, I quite agree that LOTR (through the superb Peter Jackson movies, and the associated games, figurines, annual calendars, and other still-appearing "gear") is more popular now than it was in the mid-1980s.

However, LOTR's "first flowering" (in the USA in particular) thrust modern fantasy from niche popularity into the mainstream, gave it literary respectability, and its Moria scenes may well have inspired Gary Gygax to create the D&D game in the first place (this point has always been a source of debate, and it's clear that Gygax was a long-time fan of all flavors of classic and modern fantasy, not just Tolkien).

So at the time of the Realms being purchased by TSR, the way to desirably define "wizard" in the public eye (moms and dads buying gifts in stores, NOT just young gamers blowing their spending money on the hobby they loved) was to "go Gandalf." (Rather than "go witch," and therefore risk the ire of the Bible belters, and courting the possibility that they could convince "middle America" that D&D was indeed "all witchcraft!")

So D&D didn't have the height of popularity it has recently had at that time, but it was still the defining power of the entire genre. I don't know if you've ever had any experience with, say, a Hollywood "pitch" meeting, wherein ideas for possible future movies are being presented to studios (to invest in), but the pitches are ALL rooted in previously-existing movies (mythical example: "We want to do Gone With The Wind, only on a Robin Hood-era fantasy magic-works planet, with Actor A as he was in Movie One as the lead, with Actor B from Movie Two as his love interest, and Actor C as he was in Movie Three but NOT the way he played it in Movie Four, as the villain").

So (particularly the Hildebrandt annual calendars) LOTR did indeed "define the look" of all fantasies at the time, because it was this sort of reference point.

love,  
THO

On December 30, 2006 THO said: Ah. Well, Elminster predates D&D (yes, the game) by at least seven years. He first appeared (I think; please note that I haven't checked with Ed; Elminster may even be a year older than the year the story was published) in "One Comes, Unheralded, to Zirta," a short story Ed wrote in 1967.

That story was given away in chapbook form at a GenCon, and later reprinted in THE BEST OF THE REALMS VOLUME 2: THE STORIES OF ED GREENWOOD paperback collection (Volume 3, which will feature the short stories of Elaine Cunningham, should be out soon; Volume 1 was a "readers' votes" best-of selection from the various "Realms of" anthologies TSR/WotC printed over the years).

So Elminster predates Dragonlance (and, therefore, Fizban) by at least a decade. As for similar design; as I said earlier, they're the same archetype.

love,  
THO

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\*\*\*\*\*

December 29, 2006: Hi again, all.

GREAT question, Rinonalyrna! Off to Ed it goes, with all haste!

And I have received another Realmslore answer from Ed, this time to Malcolm's question: "Are the people in Daerlun friendlier to Cormyr than their trade rivals in Selgaunt and other Sembian cities, or not?"

Ed replies:

Generalizations of course break down whenever one zeroes in on individuals, but with that in mind, YES, folk of Daerlun tend to feel closer to Cormyr (the fair and gallant green Forest Kingdom, where trade opportunities are greater) than the grasping, ambitious, my-coins-talk-so-bow-down folk in the other cities of Sembia (which tend to be wealthier than Daerlun and to get "the latest" luxury goods first, and sneer at daily staples offered by traders from Daerlun [and so pay "low coin" for them, e.g. "Mutton? I can get mutton anywhere, my man!"])).

So saith Ed.

Short and sweet, indeed.

love to all,  
THO

\*\*\*\*\*

December 29, 2006: Hello again, fellow scribes.

Ed just surprised me by sending a Realmslore reply to this question from createvmind, posted here back in June: "Greetings All, My question today has been on my mind for awhile and I've looked through my tomes, unless I've missed an ecology of Trolls in a past Dragon issue then ignore my post. I'm assuming that Faerun regeneration is now 3.5 and now limbs and parts wither and die if not reattached and not form whole new troll, might be confusing systems... sorry if so.

If a limb is removed from the body does the owner still have control of its movement regardless of distance to say "crawl to me." Kind of going by book depictions which has them crawling all over the place, after foe or back to main body. How long before this limb loses animation if left on its own?

Where is the energy coming from to regrow the bones/nerves, tissue, and organs, does this regenerative ability regrow a brain if removed say by Illithid brain suck? My mage is going with a natural minute siphoning of faerun magic theory of the troll and will test this theory by placing troll in dead magic area and seeing if it heals wounds. If it does then my mage is going to be consumed with how to create this in non-trolls and more importantly learn the significance of fire/acid vul against standard troll. Where the first troll originated and its reproduction and can this regenerative ability be passed on to a creature -sadly, horribly- mated with a troll. Have you any opinion on the topic? Thanks and see you at Gen con hopefully."

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Ed replies:

I indeed (surprise!) have an opinion on the topic, but want to stress that what follows is exactly that: one DM's opinion. You're asking me a D&D rules question that an official Wizards designers' reply would be far more definitive in answering. However, here I go. :}

If DMing in the Realms, I would argue the following: if a severed portion of a troll is within 60 feet of its "owning" body, the body can control it. In other words, the body can direct it to "come back" for reattachment, continue whatever it was doing before being severed (usually attacking a foe), or do something else, such as move to recover a less-mobile other severed body part; move to try to block a doorway, keyhole, or opening; move to recover a coin, gem, key, or other small item; or attack another foe/drag another creature or item. Exception: if the severed part is the troll's head, it can control the torso/rest of the body. The controlling troll can "change its mind" (that is, tell a severed body part to stop doing one task and turn to another) as many times as it wants to, spending a round of the severed part's time to do so, every time (but NOT spending an entire round of the controlling "sentient part" of the troll; in other words, a troll can send different mental commands to a dozen or more body parts as part of its normal functioning in a round [not impeding normal movement and activity, including combat], though the severed parts each take a round to "receive, digest, and start to act" on any new or changed commands).

Beyond 60 feet, this precise control is impossible; severed parts can do only two things: continue to fight a foe they are already engaged with [i.e. do not have to chase or find], or try to get back to their host body for reattachment. No changing of tasks; if they're fighting and the foe departs or they slay it, they lie quiescent until the main body reaches them for reattachment.

If trying to rejoin their main body and foes appear, they will ignore foes (even foes that bash them) as they continue to doggedly move towards the main body. If that main body moves away from them, they will continue to doggedly follow.

If "left alone," unable to rejoin the main body, such severed parts will slowly shrivel and lose mobility. They never "die" until their main host body does (crumbling swiftly to dust upon that death even if the main host body is continents or planes away), but they become like stone one lunar cycle (and yes, in the pre-TSR days, I established the lunar cycle of the Realms to be exactly 30 days, and still operate on that principle; so far as I know, although several designers have made errors, down the years, in alluding to the Realms being "the same as" the real-world lunar cycle, it has never officially been anything other than 30 days) after being severed. In other words, if the host body never comes within 60 feet of them again, they are completely harmless and inert. (If the host body DOES come back within 60 feet, they "awaken" and start moving towards it again, and the host body will "feel" the presence of such nearby former body parts and can choose to move and join with them, perhaps gaining extra limbs in the process [this is how many encountered trolls that have three or four arms or legs got them in the first place].

By "extra limbs" we of course have the situation where a troll that lost a limb and did not regain it at the time regrew the missing limb from its main body torso.

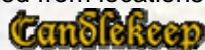
Which brings us to your question as to what powers the regeneration. My opinion is that all regeneration accomplished by means of a formal spell uses the Weave to harness the natural flows of energy (from wind and convection currents to lightning storm discharges and kinetic water flows) of Toril. All "spontaneous" or "natural-ability" or psionic regeneration uses other means than the Weave to call on those natural flows. In other words, the same FORCES as what intelligent beings call "magic," but not the same formal systems of accessing them.

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Fire and acid chemically change the regenerative living matter (in this case, troll flesh) so that it can no longer regenerate.

How specifically trolls can regenerate lost organs, et al: all cell types, and cells containing "master blueprint" DNA for all parts of a troll's body, are scattered throughout the entire body of a troll, so it can lose its brain and grow a new one (any 'nerve node' can assume control as the main brain, if the functioning brain is lost; if some part of that brain remains in existence, within 60 feet, it retains control).

It follows that creatures that mate with creatures possessing "natural" regeneration, if the unions prove fertile at all, have a possibility (but by no means a certainty; in other words, the only way to find out is to try it) of producing crossbred offspring that have the regenerative trait.

Magic-dead areas should make magical (spell) regeneration impossible, and they may SLOW other sorts of regeneration (the key word here is "may," in that we don't know precisely how local inhibition of the Weave precisely affects energy flows that the Weave normally accesses - - and we also don't know if the precise conditions are the same from magic-dead area to magic-dead area, or different every time, or different among a limited number of options).

So I'm afraid your mage is out of luck. He's correct about the natural minute siphoning, but not about it necessarily being "magic." Remember: magic is a name given to various systems intelligent beings have developed to harness natural energies; and specific discharges and effects ARE "magical effects," but the natural energies themselves may not necessarily be "magic" (some spellcasters believe they are, but this is more a matter of semantics and philosophy than accurate labelling; some cultures don't want to believe there's any other way to achieve certain effects except through magic, and so on).

So saith Ed.

Whew. Now THERE'S an opinion. Remember, Ed dislikes giving "hard game rules" answers not because he can't (he's more of a master designer than most of us), but because he doesn't want to contradict "official" answers given later by Wizards staff designers who are privy to game rulings and not-yet-published design that Ed (as a non-staffer who's never been on staff at TSR or WotC) doesn't know the details of.

Please note, Beirnadri Magranth and MerrickCale, that in his reply Ed also touched on answering questions both of you posed about the lunar cycles of Faerûn. This doesn't mean he won't get around to proper answers for you both, of course.

love to all,  
THO

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December 30, 2006: Hi again, all. Ed answers a recent pair of Blueblade "yes/no" questions: "Did Vangerdahast marry or at least have offspring before the events of ELMINSTER'S DAUGHTER? Did any of his predecessors as Royal Magician/Court Wizard have offspring we don't know about yet, in published Realmslore?"

Ed replies:

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Yes, and yes. Specifics? NDA.

So saith Ed.

Well, two definite answers, folks, even if they're frustratingly terse.

love to all,  
THO

\*\*\*\*\*

December 30, 2006: Hi again, all. Hey, I just post 'em as Ed sends 'em.

Herewith, Ed's response to Broken Helm, re. this: "Will Ed, by the end of Swords of Dragonfire, give us a clearer roster of the noble families of Cormyr?"

Ed replies:

A "roster" specifically, "clearer" or otherwise: no. A few names of individual nobles germane to the story: yes.

I don't know when we'll get the chance to "do the noble families properly," I'm afraid; that Cormyr sourcebook idea seems to remain an elusive, ever-receding phantom. However, I (and scribes such as Garen Thal and Tom Costa) remain ever-hopeful. You'll certainly learn a little more about a certain cabal of scheming nobles, but that's about all I can promise, I'm afraid.

So saith Ed.

Who has vividly brought to life scores of Cormyrean nobles in Realmsplay, over the years. We laughed our way through some incredible evenings of Ed portraying monacle-wearing, leering, braying old nobles at feasts as we Knights sought to learn this or that, or persuade, or impart manipulative gossip, from, to, or with them. He'd harrumph and tell old tales and have their monacles popping off into drinks and down the bosoms of females they were flirting with, and we'd be laughing too hard to catch all the lore hints and adventure hooks and leads he was feeding us...

love to all,  
THO

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December 31, 2006: Hello again, scribes. A response from Ed this time to Dargoth's question: "Do the Lords of Waterdeep have an equivalent for Highknights or Purple Dragon Knights (the concept not the PrCs)?"

Ed replies:

The Lords all have their own personal agents (spies, bodyguards, and "active" agents, the latter being the James Bond-style diplomats, actors, killers, and undercover provocateurs, "dirty little task" doers, and information-gatherers that the Highknights are).

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The "Castle" (Castle Waterdeep; reporting to the heads of the Guard and the Watch, and really run by such Lords as Mirt and Durnan) also has its own agents of the same sort. They don't have ranks or titles, and are entirely unofficial, but a few are personally known to high-ranking Guard and Watch officers, and all are given pass-phrases and gestures to use for recognition purposes. Some are street urchins, some are arcane spellcasters, and quite a few are skilled, acrobatic thieves and "confidence men" (and women).

These shadowy groups are different than Force Grey/the Gray Hands, and vary widely in tactics and ethics (Piergeiron runs a far more "good," non-brutal force than certain other Lords do), and yes, they wouldn't easily translate into a Prestige Class. Aside from Madeiron Sunderstone (Piergeiron's Champion and bodyguard) and the few skilled sword-wielders he trains as his replacements, however, the Lords have no near equivalent to the Purple Dragon Knights.

So saith Ed, who created Piergeiron, Madeiron, the Guard, the Watch, the Lords, Castle Waterdeep, Highknights, the Purple Dragons, and oh, yes, Waterdeep and Cormyr. Busy lad.

love to all,  
THO

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On December 31, 2006 THO said: Just had a chance to read some of the recent posts here, and I'd like to add a note or two about Castlemourn: The main setting book should be available as a PDF download (DriveThru, I believe, but of course NOT free) in a week or less, and in "real printed book" form soon thereafter.

Ed is NOT abandoning the Realms or stepping back from working hard on ever-more Realmslore. Quite the contrary.

Those who like Ed's "come to life" flavor of fantasy worldbuilding should like Castlemourn. It's rich, it's inviting, but of course doesn't have the depth of lore yet that the Realms has achieved in forty years.

Those who like Ed's fiction and have access to GAME TRADE magazine (the Alliance/Chessex distributor mag; back issues have occasionally in the past been given away free at GenCon Indy): a four-part serial Ed wrote, set in a port city of Castlemourn, just wrapped up, and I understand he may write another as soon as his schedule permits.

I will be buying the Castlemourn main book (lovely graphics including a Donato Giancola [spelling help, anyone?]) cover, some of the inevitable d20 magic items and spells, but a nice overview of a setting that feels "real"), and I think most scribes who do, won't be disappointed.

And no, I don't get paid for advertising it.

A Realms tidbit: Ed tells me he has future plans for Narnra (El's Daughter). And a tale involving some of the Seven, but probably not a novel, for either.

Apropos of the "librarian" requests, as far as I can recall, the generic Realms term is "tomekeeper." Ed will of course supply formal titles, et al, in the fullness of time (read: next year).

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On December 31, 2006 THO said: Well, now, Blueblade, I don't know. Only you can answer that. So, dare you ask him?

Seriously: I will of course send your post to Ed. You can ask him ANYTHING. He's a librarian, remember?

I've heard him calmly and unblushingly discuss such matters as sexual relations during menstruation, at the public library circulation desk, with "older women" seeking books covering said topic. I'm not suggesting you rush forward and ask him about THAT in the Realms, as I'm sure the moderators would prefer to keep the Forums as family-friendly as possible, but if you did, I'm sure Ed would provide a calm and definitive answer.

I know he LOVES DMing, and game designing, and writing fiction, and helping other writers with their fiction (and despite some of the rather nasty things certain posters have said here at Candlekeep and elsewhere about the quality of Ed's fiction, the fact remains that many writers consider him not only a friend but a good critic and editor, and send drafts of their books to him for "fixing"). But we'll let the man put it in his own words.

love,  
THO

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December 31, 2006: Hi again, fellow scribes. This time, Ed replies to Blueblade about the following: "Another question for the ever-growing heap: names and varieties of a few edible mushrooms of the Realms that might be picked and solid in the Dales or northern Cormyr. Please please please!"

Ed replies:

First, I'm going to assume that "solid" is a typo for "sold." Second, I'm not going to repeat myself about mushroom varieties I've mentioned in earlier Realmslore. So here are four 'new' edible mushrooms:

belkorm (singular "belka"): tall, spindly brown woodland mushrooms (grow singly, under rotting leaves and beside dead, fallen wood) that are dusty brown when immature, tanned shoe-leather brown when ready to eat, and shrivel to black (and give off copious spore-dust) when dead; a frost kills them. Harmless to eat in any condition, but tasteless except when "ready," which is when they have a nutty, rich fried-bacon-like flavor. Can be eaten raw, fried, or in stews. Don't stain upon contact, and travel well in pouches, going to "dead" state in 2 days if wet, but only after five days or so if kept dry. Sell for 1 cp/helm (a bowl the size of an upturned Purple Dragon helmet).

lorval (singular "lorv"): dark red spears of fungi that grow in clusters of three to a dozen, in the deepest woods; picking them all kills the cluster, but leaving just one will keep it alive. Change hue to yellow-gold when ready to eat. Very oily (and can be crushed to yield a readily-flammable, smoky lamp-oil) when immature (eating them makes most humans, elves, half-elves, gnomes, and halflings very ill), but the oil is converted to dense, readily-edible flesh as the mushrooms mature (become yellow in hue). The "spears" are actually made up of multiple overlapping caps, and when mature don't induce nausea, but rather offer a woody, delightful meal that tastes something like a well-made onion-and-boar sausage (cooking them makes them soft - - though

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they go hard again if overcooked - - but changes the taste not at all). Sell for 2 cp/helm (a bowl the size of an upturned Purple Dragon helmet) due to lamp-oil use as well as a food.

murrin (singular "murror"): wide-capped, dark slate-gray-to-purple mushrooms that grow in large masses in deep, always-shaded, always-damp ravines and forest streambanks in the more northerly (and colder, so also on the slopes of the Thunder Peaks) Dales. They are rather tasteless (some have likened them to the potato), but grow in profusion, are quite nutritious, always safe to eat (and difficult to mistake for any other fungi) and can be eaten frozen in winter. As a result, they are a table staple in many Dale households, where they are sliced and fried with various spices and in stews and soups, to flavor their fleshy, nourishing bulk into something more exciting. Sell for 1 cp/3 helms (a bowl the size of an upturned Purple Dragon helmet).

talassa (singular "tala"): a gray, wrinkled, misshapen blob like a small creature brain or a very large shelled walnut. Usual size: will fill a small man's palm. Grow in clusters of up to a dozen between the roots of particular sorts of shrubs; can be "plucked clean" but more will grow on the same spot. Dry out when harvested, going purple-gray, and last indefinitely, going back to "just picked" state if soaked in water. Some chefs soak them in wine mixtures to attain an ingredient of wonderful taste (but in unskilled hands, such treatment can make them taste revolting). Safe to eat in any state, including raw and fresh-picked, but achieve full flavor if boiled, stewed, or fried in beef or rothé gravy. Talassa have a deep, sharp cheddar cheese-like taste, that wanes to mere waxiness if they are too old, eaten raw, or frozen. Very nourishing; eating just two can often make a ravenous person "feel full." Sell for 4 cp/helm (a bowl the size of an upturned Purple Dragon helmet) in the Dales, 2 sp for the same amount in Sembia (where their nourishing and enduring properties have long fostered a belief that they have some powerful gods-given life-sustaining/medicinal properties, that no one's quite discovered yet, but that will of course work beneficially on anyone eating talassa regularly).

So saith Ed.

Culinary expert of the fantastic par excellence. He's not a bad eater, either.

love to all,  
THO

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December 31, 2006: Hello again, fellow scribes.

Sage of Stars, you're most welcome. I'll convey your thanks (and query, of course) to Ed.

As for now, I bring once more the words of Ed, this time a response of lore to Hawkfeather, who posted back in May: "Greetings, Ed! I'm from Brazil and I've been playing (dming I should say) in the Realms for more than 11 years. First of all I'd like to thank you very much for sharing your dreams with us. And I have a few questions for you if you don't mind:

I was reading "Power of Faerûn" (GREAT book) and wondered: Did Fzoul had to ask permission to the Heralds to change the Zhentarim's symbol? And, if by chance, the new symbol looked like a existing one, how did he would react? It would be like: "I don't care! This will be the new symbol anyway!!" or like: "Sorry guys... I didn't know... Do you have any suggestions for a new blazon?". Finally, I'd like to know if the old symbol (the stylish "Z") is still used by some Zhentarims (Cyric's followers, for example)."

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Ed replies:

Glad you liked POWER OF FAERUN; Eric and I had a blast writing it, though we'd both have liked to have had several hundred more pages to fill (and of course more time with which to fill them). I hope you've been checking the Wizards website, where you'll see (eventually) ALL of the Border Kingdoms, not just the ones I was able to squeeze into PoF.

You're very welcome, and of course I don't mind fielding questions, though (as you can see; sorry) it takes me quite some time, these days, to get around to answering most scribes' questions.

Fzoul, like most religious leaders, does not ask the permission of the Heralds for anything. However, he DOES inform them he's doing so, because the gods (with the exception of the insane Cyric) instruct him (as they do all religious leaders) to do so. Politely and fully, without deceit or any omissions. Moreover, the new symbol would never be too close to an existing one, because Fzoul's god (whoever it might be at the time :)) wouldn't allow that. The Heralds didn't just make up this avoid-confusion rule and try to force others to go along with it; the GODS like the rule and support them in enforcing it, to avoid needless strife over mistaken identities, confusion over borders and loyalties, fighting between churches (over errors and mistakes, as opposed to DELIBERATE fighting), and so on.

The Heralds aren't priests, nor loyal to any one deity; they serve heraldry in general, as a sort of "symbol police," not this or that faith in particular.

So Fzoul couldn't have gotten into the situation you describe (nor could a paladin or blackguard trying to muster an army or start a crusade; the gods will direct such individuals to "obey the system."

And yes, the "stylish Z" symbol (actually referred to by Zhentarim as "the Pride of the Brotherhood," or more often simply as "the Pride") will remain in use, because many spells cast on portals, doors in the Citadel of the Raven and Zhentil Keep and the sewers and dungeons of both places, and in Zhent outposts all over the northern Heartlands, are linked to engraved or painted "prides." It would be possible to slowly and laboriously replace all of those "Z"s, though it would take years and much effort - - but no Zhent has started to do so (yet, anyway).

Hope that helps, Hawkfeather, and sorry for my delay in replying. If there was four of me, I could write and design all the things I want to, and keep right up to date with Candlekeep lore questions, but over the years I seem to have mastered clowning, not cloning. :}

So saith Ed.

Loremaster Supreme of the Realms. And everyday wearer of T-shirts with holes in them.

love to all,  
THO

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December 31, 2006: Hello again, scribes of the Realms. Ed's final reply for 2006 concerns Sessrendale and the Dusk Lord, and is in response to scribes Patrakis and EricKRod, as follows:

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Patrakis (posted in April): "Well met Ed, and Lady of the Hood, consider yourself warmly saluted also. I've finally decided to write on this thread (gathered the courage to do it is more like it) and ask the creator of all some questions of my own that, I don't think, have never been addressed in these threads before. I also decided it was more than time to give to Mr. Greenwood (Ed, sorry) my own deep and sincere thanks for sharing his imagination for so many years. In my case, I discovered your words and your world in 1983 or 84, I think, in the pages of Dragon magazine. I had just started playing D&D at that time and was shopping for a world to play in. The grey box found me and I, it, or her I guess :) The first lines for this box felt like an explosion in my head. I was discovering a real world out of my own. I could see the Dales, I could feel Waterdeep. It read like a history book from a time I never knew existed and yet it was as if I was there. It was a very weird experience, I must say. It didn't take very long before I started to add some things of my own though. Little things that filled the gaps and before long sir, your world became my world. Or our world maybe. I thank you for that sir. I thank you for the spark that fired my desire to imagine more.

And now :) for my question:

It concerns Sessrendale and the Dusk Lord. My current campaign involves the descendants of survivors from the genocide of Sessrendale. You see, in my campaign, some survivors from the attacks of Archendale fled not to Battledale or some other dales but they travel toward the east, toward Anauroch and stopped in a little vale between the southern tip of Spiderhaunt Woods and the Desertmouth Mountains. They founded a new dale there called Valedale or some call it the secret dale or the pocket dale :) They were embraced by a dwarven clan who protected for some years, just the time it took to settle in and build some settlements. They've been living there, very out the way, for a little more than a hundred years now.

My campaign starts with the return of the Dusk Lord and since I haven't found that much information about him, I wondered if you could share with me some of your thoughts on what would occur if the Dusk Lord had survived in some way the attacks from Archendale. What could he have become in that time? I am at that stage of designing the campaign and quite frankly, it would be an honour to get your point of view about the idea I put forth and your knowledge of the Dusk Lord. I read somewhere that Archendale were experimenting weird manifestations, hauntings some might say, and it seems that surviving families of the Archendale aggressors are the main targets. Would this be the Dusk Lord manifesting his vengeance? Any information on this part of the Realms would be very appreciated and cherished.

As you can see by now (and that is the main reason I was so hesitant to write before) is my very poor skill in writing in the English language. I am a French Canadian living in Quebec and even though I can make myself understood most of the time, writing to Ed Greenwood was very intimidating for me, considering my skills. Anyway, I took the chance. I hope I haven't offended anybody with some strange phrase construction or something.

Well that's about it then. And as they say in Valedale sir, may your gaze reach the horizon and your heart touch the sky. (sounds better in french)

Patrakis

Valedale, My own little dale on Faerun at <http://patoumonde.netfirms.com>

All in french though."

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and from EricKRod (posted in June): "Mr. Greenwood, I was just wondering what your original intentions were with this dale that had been destroyed so long ago. Was the Dusk Lord really evil and consorting with demons? Or were the other dales feeling threatened?"

I had planned in my FR campaign world to have a very powerful Paladin of Lathander, who claimed a tie to the bloodline of the Dusk Lord, to return to the dale at the head of an army of followers and priests of Lathander and Chauntea. His goal is to start a new beginning by naming the land 'Dawndale' and reseeding the ground with the aid of the priests of Chauntea. At the north end of the dale he will place a keep, run by his cousin, a priest of Lathander. At the south end of the dale, near the woods edge, his other cousin, a powerful ranger, will be in charge.

Not knowing enough of the background behind the Dusk Lord, I was wondering if you could enlighten me? Thanks, Eric in Vegas"

Ed replies:

Sessrendale was a small, vigorous, fast-growing dale community of Arkhen-folk who'd moved out of Archendale after recurring clashes and disagreements with the authoritarian rulership there. Like all Arkhen, the Sessrar were proud, independent, "Don't tell ME what to do!" people, who swiftly established trade successes, exchanging their mined metals with traders from afar (Sembians in particular). They were guilty of being a threatening rival to Archendale far more than they were guilty of any fell evil, and although Archendale invaded and destroyed Sessrendale, doing so broke all trust any other Dalefolk, and the governments of Cormyr and Sembia, may have had in Archendale, and condemned it to being disliked, feared, and largely shunned by all, to slowly wither in isolation. So Archendale today is a shadow of what it once was, and a mere fading echo of what it might have risen to become, if it hadn't treated Sessrendale so brutally.

For one (very interesting, Patrakis, in light of your own dwarven elements) thing, dwarves interested in the Sessren mines and in using humans as a front and buffer between them and the surface human realms were planning to ally and work with the Sessrar (and then continue on to work with strategically-located Archendale) to establish a newly-strengthened dwarven presence in the Thunder Peaks between Cormyr and Sembia (surviving by playing one realm off against the other, if necessary).

Of course, it was not to be. For the record, the Sessren were NOT evil or in league with anyone but each other; they had a few very ambitious mages, and their ruler, the Dusk Lord (about whom I don't want to Reveal All here and now, for good and true future Realmslore reasons I can't divulge at this time) dabbled in arcane magic.

As the hostilities with Archendale increased, and imminent war became more and more certain (Archendale sending divers hired spies, mainly outlander peddlers and merchants, but also sending assassins and using hired spellcasters to hurl damage from afar, sometimes by means of summoned monsters let loose in Sessrendale), the frightened mages started to work together closely, with their ruler, a warrior and increasingly capable arcane spellcaster, to try to develop some defenses for their dale.

They failed to get anything properly ready in time, and almost all perished fighting to protect fleeing Sessrar or to make the Arkhen invaders pay for despoiling favored spots; in many cases, they literally died on their own doorsteps, overwhelmed after their spells ran out and they'd filled their own fields and front yards with heaped-up, dead foes.

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It's Arkhen propaganda that has given us the "evil Dusk Lord" of so many tales, the black cowed sword-wielding, amorphous flying wraith whose touch withers and chills, or burns flesh like a brand if he wills.

The REAL Dusk Lord desperately dabbled in necromancy along with all of the dozen-some most powerful Sessren mages, in the month or so before the invasion began. They were guilty of animating skeletons, dread, and zombies (particularly those of beasts, since they hesitated to animate their own dead and recently-buried older relatives) to fight the invading Arkhen, and of both inadvertently and in a few cases deliberately freeing some wights and ghosts of earlier (pre-Sessrendale) burials in the area. Many of these lurk in the region to this day, adding to its fell reputation.

Several of the Sessren mages, and the Dusk Lord, died defending their dale in such a manner that their own spells, and spells hurled against them, affected them, and they became unique undead of various sorts (DMs should feel free to design their own).

In general, most of them look like curst (see LOST EMPIRES OF FAERUN), but can't be destroyed by a remove curse [only entirely restoring Sessrendale will destroy them]; if "destroyed," they re-form and rise again to fight on.

They tarry in Sessrendale, but do have the ability to leave it if chasing a "foe of the dale." They will usually only strike once at such a target outside the dale, and then return to their beloved former home.

These unique Sessren undead usually look like black-robed men or women, can fly, become visible or invisible, and become tangible or intangible at will, and can see, hear, and think with all the intelligence they had in life (remembering and acquiring new knowledge constantly). They can only animate dead (corpses [including foes they've just slain; they love to employ such servitors against the deads' former, still-living companions], bones, and body parts by touch, into zombies, dread, dread warriors, crawling claws, and skeletons), hurl spells (DMs should choose a roster of spells, that "return" to the undead some hours after being cast), and wield weapons when tangible; when intangible, contact with them chills and causes 1 round of confusion if touched living things fail a Con Check (DC 22), but does no other damage. A few Sessren undead have minor magic wands or rings they can employ in battle, but will drop these if they become intangible, and so rarely use them except where they can dump them in ponds or down dungeons, to serve as a lure for foes so other Sessren undead can have more opportunities to attack such foes. Most Sessren mage undead are Wizard 14s to 17s.

The Dusk Lord himself manifests as a headless (but cowl-wearing, as if he had a head, and able to see as if he had eyes, though attacks on his non-existent head do him no damage at all, as several adventurers have discovered far too late, as they thrust and hacked and fired arrows through the nothingness above the Dusk Lord's shoulders, and dealt him no damage whatsoever) male human torso, with his arms clad in chainmail and gauntlets under the cowed cloak. He fades away into "nothingness" at his waist, and flies about with the perfect, precise control of a hummingbird, and wields a sword that can fire spells as well as hack. The sword is a part of him, not a weapon that can be seized by foes if separated from him (if he loses it in battle, it fades away and reforms back in his hand).

He should be a warrior of 12th level or higher, and a wizard (again, spells return spontaneously) of about 7th level or so.

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All of these Sessren undead are now evil by nature, but hate being so; they succumbed to all temptation in their desperation to defend Sessrendale, and lost anyway, and are enraged. Non-Sessren intruding in their dale enrage them, the sight of any Arkhen enrages them, and the mere continued existence of Archendale (and lack of action of the other dales to destroy it just as utterly as Sessrendale was destroyed) enrages them. These rages aren't "blind," but rather a cold fuel that keeps these cunning, thinking undead going in their energetic bids to slay the living who come within their reach (though they'll neither attack nor disturb the slumber or work of living beings whom they believe are trying to rebuild the dale).

As in life, they are proud, ruthless, and reckless of their own safety beings, but their "natural evil" is a borderline, forced-upon-them thing that they loathe. As a result, they sometimes aid lost wayfarers and others in need, kindly but unpredictably. They NEVER aid anyone they know to be Arkhen, however, and scheme to somehow bring down destruction on Archendale, so that it, too, will be destroyed and sewn with salt.

I hope this helps you both.

Patrakis, your English is excellent (see how little THO did in "correcting" your post, when sending it to me; it's reproduced above); please, never let fears of offending or being misunderstood stop you posting again. I'm glad you found a "home" in the Realms.

ErickRod, the plan for Dawndale outlined in your campaign shouldn't meet with much resistance from these "ringleader" Sessren undead if the PCs conduct things properly. The other undead (the roaming wights, wraiths, and mindless undead) will of course be opponents - - as will elements of the Zhents, Wearers of the Purple, Sembian cabals, Arkhen, and others who don't want to see a new dale rise (or Sessrendale refounded) in that location.

I'd be interested in hearing from you both how things turn out in your campaigns, if my reply hasn't come too tardily to be of use.

So saith Ed, Everlasting Master of Realmslore.

And my friend. We both look forward to answering many more lore queries from scribes in 2007 and the years beyond.

love to all,  
THO

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On December 31, 2006 THO said: Exactly.

Not that there aren't other marauding undead (and evil wizards) lurking on the fringes of the former Sessrendale. For years the Arkhen used to dump criminals (manacled to many chains as long as their own bodies, each ending in a heavy rock, so they had to drag it all around in a clanking, catching-on-things heavy mass) on the borders of Sessrendale, in the wilderlands, to fend for themselves. Some could well have died and become undead not part of the Sessren uber-undead Ed described, who had just the same attitude as the Sessren undead to living intruders.

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