

So saith Ed

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

Part 15

Jul - Sep 2007

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July 3, 2007: Hi again, fellow scribes. This time I bring Ed's response to a query from Rinonalyrna Fathomlin. It was the last of several questions (the earlier ones all relating to paladins), and so, of course (Ed being Ed) the one he tackled first: "My next question is solely my own, and something I've been wondering about for a long time. Is Faerûn much like the real world (the Western world, at least) in the sense that there's a lot of anxiety about aging and the way growing older affects one's appearance? I know that some old characters, like Elminster, don't seem to be uncomfortable with looking old as well as being old, but this doesn't seem to be the case with many others! It's very common, as far as I can tell, to come across characters who look younger than they actually are. I was wondering why that might be the case--it definitely seems to suggest that some people in the Realms, as in the real world, think that a person hits their peak at a very young age, and after that one needs to struggle to erase all signs that one is not a spring chicken. I was also wondering if there are human cultures in the Realms that actually see growing older (and even perhaps looking old) as a good thing, and that people hit their peak in their later years as opposed to when they are young and untried (and kind of stupid).

Thanks once again,
Rinonalyrna"

Ed replies:

Excellent question. I love this sort of query, that peers at Realms attitudes. The short answer is: it varies. There are vain people in the Realms as in our real world, and there are professions (courtesan, clothes-model, and prostitute, for example) where good looks are a must for high earnings). There are also competitive social cliques (such as the Waterdhavian nobility, or the wealth social climbers of Suzail) within which some men and women compete in matters of appearance, and value "real" good looks over magically gained or enhanced good looks. Moreover, within some wealthy human societies (Amn, Calimshan, Sembia, and Waterdeep, in particular) in the Realms (as in our world) naive youths look down upon "old folks" and want to be different in dress, habits, manners, and looks, with wrinkles and fallen beauty being regarded as "curses of the gods" or worse. Such attitudes usually fade swiftly as such individuals mature, and the first blush of unblemished youth starts to fade from THEM.

However, in general, across most of the Realms, folk live close to the land, have harder lives than in our modern "Western" real world, and although striking beauty is still valued and attracts attention, signs of having lived a life (scars, age spots, wrinkles, drooping bust, et al) isn't regarded nearly as negatively as in our real-world Western "celeb media culture." To choose a real-world example and put it into the Realms, Katherine Hepburn in her wrinkled old age would be regarded as sexy by most Faerûnian males. Remember, in the Realms there's no television, nor films, nor even widely-circulated "popular" literature (except holy books, read aloud in temples to the devout, in fragmentary form, as scripture). Bards and minstrels retell popular tales often, but those are verbal image-painting; only a few of them carry little paintings of people to show. As a result, a swift wit and fairly pleasant disposition are standout attractions. In that regard, the aging male or female IS seen as sexy, and is also seen as wiser (as long as the mind is perceived as "open" to new ideas and paying attention to current events, not merely muttering about how good things used to be) than the youth. Far-traveled folk of all ages are valued for "what they've seen" as well as being mistrusted as "outlanders." So, yes, growing older is seen as a good thing.

In Turmish and the Dales (and to a lesser extent elsewhere), females see "the Change" as a good thing because they can be sexually active (perhaps with the minor fuss of lubricants) without the need for trying to avoid pregnancy or (if they're prostitutes) enduring monthly "lost days of earning" from men who find menstruation distasteful.

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Most men see their sexual prowess fade with age, but as this is widely expected, lovemaking becomes slower and gentler and more affectionate (an "evening together" rather than wild, fast lust), and as most females prefer such "style" to rougher manners (and agreeable companionship to athletics), there's little disappointment (less "expectations not being met" than in our real world).

As a result, though many INDIVIDUALS in the Realms may prize youth and shun old age (particularly when one looks across the entire range of published Realms novels, many of which have been written with younger readers in mind, deliberately or unconsciously mirroring our current "youth-crazy" North American culture), the Realms IN GENERAL does "smile upon age and experience" rather more than the real world. In Faerûn, surviving to older ages is rarer, those who do so tend to be "tougher" and more active, and they are seen as having achieved something that makes them "beloved of Tymora" or very skilled, or both. (In much upcountry lore, there are various tales passed about that intimate "Lie in the arms of one who is lucky, and the luck may rub off on you.")

One striking difference between the real world and the Realms: there is no GENERAL disgust or disapproval of older women having much younger men as lovers (not children, mind; I'm speaking here of the seventy-something woman and the twenty-something man). The reverse of course also holds true - - and in the Realms is less likely than in our real world to be seen as "gold digging" or the equivalent.

So saith Ed, whom I know to be one of those real-world men who has never found older women unattractive. Or those younger than himself, either.

love to all,
THO

July 4, 2007: Hi again, all. Once more I bring you the Words of Ed, this time in response to Rinonalyna Fathomlin's paladin questions (oh, and BTW, RF: Ed hasn't forgotten your 2006 Harrowsmouth request; he's just been patiently waiting out another NDA): "My first question is about "paladin love"--what is appropriate behavior for a paladin regarding relationships and love-making? I frequent the forums for the Neverwinter Nights 2 CRPG, and not surprisingly, one of the topics that players love to discuss all the time is the subject of the in-game romances. The romance option for female player characters happens to be a paladin, and there is a particular group of players (mostly female) who love to talk about him (and the other male characters in the game), and a recent topic that came up is how paladins are "supposed" to act in matters of love? Although I'm fully aware that Faerun has very different sexual mores than the real world, I have to admit that I--and many of the other ladies--tend to have an old-fashioned, idealistic view about how paladins form relationships and how they behave towards the people they are in love with. My rationale for this is that since paladins aren't supposed to act like the "average joe" in all the other aspects of their life, they probably shouldn't behave in all the same ways many other people do when it comes to love. I also am sort of a sucker for the idea of "courtly love". I was wondering what your opinion is about this topic: for example, do you think most paladins would be comfortable with the idea of being "friends with benefits" with someone? Or, having a one-night stand if both parties agreed ahead of time that that was all there was to it--just one night of enjoyment in each other's company, but no further obligations besides that? How would most paladins approach the subject? I, and several other ladies, look forward to hearing your opinion."

Ed replies:

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Acceptable "paladin-in-love behaviour" in the Realms varies greatly by faith, but let me begin with (and confine myself in this answer to) the traditional "lawful good, akin-to-Christian" paladin, as exemplified in the Realms by Torm, Tyr, and Helm (with Tempus not too far off in one direction, and Ilmater in the other).

Firstly, this sort of paladin (male or female) must conduct all relationships with complete honesty: not necessarily full disclosure, but no "little white lies" and no breaking of rules, from known laws and social customs of the geographical area, to the paladin's own code. The paladin WILL NOT set aside their principles "for love," unless this love overwhelms their paladinhood (they "fall" to being a fighter, albeit probably still dedicated to that faith, and abandon their holy standing).

A paladin may well keep information from their loved one (see Kipling's *Ballad of Bo Da Thone*: "And little she knew the arms she embraced/Had cloven a man from the brow to the waist") FOR THE PROTECTION OF THAT LOVED ONE (so as not to imperil them by letting them know information that might get them slain, AND so as not to harm them emotionally; please note that "looking good" in the eyes of a loved one or potential partner is NOT sufficient justification for a paladin to withhold information). Paladins do not "tease and deceive" in love; they are "straight arrows" who plainly state matters ("what you see is what you get; this is what I am, and I cannot change what I am; take me if you can accept this").

If a paladin is silent on a subject and the loved one asks them a direct question about it, the paladin can plead not to be made to answer, express their unhappiness at being questioned, or (only if this is the case) refuse to answer because of church instructions (revealing what agents of a temple are planning to do about something, for example), but it will be a sin for them to lie (and if I was DMing and a paladin tried, I'd provide an instant manifestation of divine displeasure, from a roll of thunder that shakes the paladin on up to far more severe things, if the falsehoods or deliberate misleadings continue).

Paladins by their nature stand in judgement of most individuals they meet, but the true paladin does so ever mindful of the harm done by hasty or intolerant judgements, and the inability to give individuals an opportunity to explain, repent or change (somewhat in the way that Peter Pan in the movie *HOOK* repeatedly spares the temporarily-beaten Captain Hook, though not necessarily for the reasons that movie character did his sparing).

At the same time, paladins are very mindful of their own special status, and (unlike a lot of real-world so-called "holy folk" or for that matter law enforcers) are VERY afraid of misusing their status (they are NOT gung-ho, "we're in charge here! Perish, evil one!" bellowers, unless they know exactly who or what they're facing).

This means that a paladin who recognizes their growing feelings for someone is going to pray to their deity (often and deeply, with vigils and perhaps self-imposed penances or self-mortification, from hair shirts to floggings; I have played two NPC paladins in such circumstances, one of either human gender, and both of them secretly applied rough bark and or stinging nettles to their genitals for days, so that pain was a constant reminder of what they should be pondering, and the importance they must place in all decisions regarding their feelings of love) for guidance (are my feelings real? Am I being magically influenced? and if yes, then: Is this for the best? Is it acceptable? and if yes, then: How should I conduct myself? What should I say and do, and do you demand a price be paid on my part?)

These will be private prayers, seeking dream-vision or outward sign responses from the deity or a divine servant (e.g. a eagle or stag or other "identified with the deity" creature or thing, such as a cloven rock or lightning-scarred tree or spilled blood) rather than from priests of the deity. (The paladin may request floggings from a cleric of their deity "with no questions asked" in an attempt

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to aid them in prayer or to pay a price they believe the deity has asked them to pay; a priest should agree not to pry if thus approached, recognizing it as part of a personal process of peity, NOT something that necessarily involves confession.)

Whatever the specific personal responses, two rules should be followed: the deity will never demand a "love-price" that is to be paid by the partner (any task or penance is the duty of the paladin, not the paladin's loved one), and the paladin will always declare honestly their feelings BUT THEN WAIT for the loved one to "go farther." That fear of misusing one's "holy status" means the paladin will not "press themselves upon" the loved one (in the words of Torm's temple teachings: "When loins-fire takes hold of you, rape a rock or tree, never the living one who so excites you"). So the loved one must make matters more intimate, at all stages of the deepening relationship (the paladin can ask them to, and explain that their own behaviour is constrained).

All of this means "one-night stands" are VERY unlikely for paladins (if they truly are one-night stands, as opposed to trysts that happen suddenly after a long time of adventuring or travelling together has built up strong feelings in both participants).

There is a distinction to be drawn here between love and lust. Many faiths understand that paladins and priests have physical needs, and they want love to be given first to the deity, so that "passion" must often be tamed or given an outlet. As a result, there are temple rituals that involve masturbation, and there are approved opportunities for sexual trysts between paladins of the same faith (or in some cases closely-allied faiths), and between paladins and clerics of the same faith. These are "lust, not necessarily love" moments, are usually kept to the privacy of inner temple rooms where non-believers of that faith can't go, and are the closest thing to "friends with benefits" that the Realms allows. They DO involve enjoyment but no further obligation, though many paladins and priests who participate in such activities develop long-term, comfortable, recurring "moments of release when we meet, and the deity seems approving" relationships that are distinct and apart from feelings of love for others (that may, for example, be unrequited or unexpressed for years; Thalamond the Just Blade of Torm could very well lie in the arms of Braelra, Altar Guardian of Torm, after fierce lovemaking, and weep softly to her of his love for another woman, who does not yet know of his feelings, or whom he has "made known" his feelings to but received no positive response, and so on; this would be quite understandable to Braelra, who would honour him for so confiding in her, not be angered or feel scorned).

So you are quite correct in seeing paladins as "different" from most other intelligent creatures, in holding themselves to a far more strict code of personal conduct, even when "overwhelmed with love." Paladins often do indulge in the long-chaste "courtly love" of the romances, though again an important note must be made: it is acceptable to "exaggerate" the praise and charms of a loved one in writing poems and singing songs (comparing them favourably to a famous beauty when the comparison flatters them highly, for example), but during actual courtship (face to face speech and dealings), honesty must trump flattery. If a paladin swears they will be true or will perform a duty, they are bound by those vows; renouncing them usually means resigning their paladinhood. Dying before they can fulfill them often dooms them to become undead until they can fulfill whatever they promised - - and as a result, they will be far more reluctant to make flowery promises than was apparently done (if we can believe the epics) in the courtly love described by real-world historical troubadours.

So saith Ed, who picked his way very carefully around a VERY sensitive topic.

I can add one memory from Realmsplay that he didn't mention: two male NPC paladins who "fell for" the same PC woman, who knew they dare not say or do anything at the time (a time of war against Zhentil Keep in the Dales, when the PCs could ill afford any distractions) whom a certain other PC adventurer stealthily followed one night, and observed them to go to a remote forest

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glade, disrobe, and flog each other simultaneously with furious energy, gasping out their shared misery to each other as they did so. It was a striking contrast to the calm, assured "fronts" the two paladins had presented to the PCs earlier - - and a real jolt to witness.

I've never forgotten that particular scene, and the moral dilemma it handed the PC. One more reason Ed is a superb DM.

love to all,
THO

July 6, 2007: Hello again, all. I bring you a rushed response from Ed (who has been wildly busy once again with future FR fun for us all) to createvmind, in hopes that it's in time for the game session.

createvmind asked: "Sir Greenwood I have a cleric of Azuth who thinks he has the option of when he can pray if at dusk he is doing something like discussing treasure distribution and so when he's done then he will pray even if it's several hours later. The player constantly refers to the text of praying at the next available moment and I always state he can pray at dusk, nothing is stopping him at all from disengaging from talking and show dedication to his deity. I want to know how deities handle those whose piety is somewhat based on convenience, is it an abrupt disconnect from the divine or is he sent a dream letting him know impending wrath or dismissal from the deity is coming? How would you handle this, he's done it for past 4 days straight even though I inform him every sundown is approaching. The next game is friday and if he does it again I want to be able to have some insight as to how to approach it.

Thanks as always"

Ed replies:

Ah, yes, the "just holy enough to get my spells" attitude. GREAT (heavy sarcasm there) service to the deity. Time to adjust that attitude (no retroactive punishments are necessary, but start what follows right away).

Here are the relevant Words of Azuth:

"Neglect me not!

If you are engaged in actually CREATING a spell (including experimenting, but NOT including repeated castings "for practice") and don't notice it's sundown, that's okay, because the acting of crafting magic is itself worship of Me. If you are engaged in keeping yourself alive (midst of a fight, frantic fleeing, hiding and remaining silent so that prayers to me have to be thought and not said), that's also acceptable. Unless you do it repeatedly and I perceive any deliberate intent on your part to schedule things so as to avoid worshipping me. Or you realize you've missed sundown and decide not to bother praying to me.

NO other reasons for "turning your face from me" are acceptable, except personal and direct instructions from Me.

If you neglect your devotions, you stray from my favour. And shall be "rewarded" accordingly."

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So, createvmind, the next time the cleric prays to Azuth, no spells will be granted. Not one. Instead, the cleric will receive a "waking vision" (dream-vision even though not asleep) delivering the Words of Azuth I have just set down here. It will be a vision that everyone else in the presence of the cleric will also see and hear, not just the cleric character. The cleric will see a disembodied, floating man's hand accusingly pointing at him as the words are spoken (the "Uncle Sam Wants YOU!" pose), but everyone else will see a 9-foot-tall, slender, black-robed, bearded man just standing (on air, a few feet off the ground) and looking at the cleric in head-shaking, weary disgust.

The hand (and the image of the man) will vanish in an instant with the deity's last words, which will be delivered after any reaction the cleric makes (no matter what it is). Azuth will say flatly: "[[character's name]], you have sinned. Sins are never forgotten, but they can be forgiven. It all depends on your conduct."

If the player really is careless or defiant, Azuth will deliver the warning (and withholding of spells) thrice (the third time will have an extra sentence added to those last words: "You will receive no more warnings.")

A fourth transgression will be answered with a bolt of blue lightning from the sky that staggers the PC, does no hit point damage at all, but strips the PC of his priesthood (he can still be a cleric, but not of Azuth or of Mytra, for the two deities stand together on such matters), and "brands" him with an invisible Sign that tells all devout worshippers and clergy of Azuth that "This entity was once favoured of Azuth, but is no longer." (Note that they won't shun or be hostile to the outcast, because Azuth's commandments will be to encourage magic use in all, and specifically to offer opportunities to this being to "return to the mantle," but neither will they take commands from or offer unhesitating or free assistance to the outcast.)

A (truly) heartfelt atonement or penance will be necessary for Azuth to restore the cleric to his former position ("testing" [humiliating] tasks must be performed, services done freely for others as directed in holy dream-visions, etc.) after being thus cast out. Restoration will be to the former level and standing, not a "start all over again" situation, and will involve the Sign being removed.

While cast out, the cleric can get NO divine spells (he can use items intended for clerics, but items specific to Azuth will not function in his possession). He will have to actively join another faith (worship, do tasks as requested, etc.) to gain even orisons and first and second level spells.

One of the worst ongoing problems, from the very first edition of the game, has been players who treat clerics as "fighters who can get healing spells, and blackmail or financially rob fellow party members and others with the use or withholding of such magics." Particularly if said players "twist" the principles of the faith around freely to suit their own gain in any given situation, or play in a campaign where the dogmas are vague or undeveloped enough to let them "make their religion be whatever it personally suits them to be." That offends against play balance, not just annoying DMs, other players, and offending ethically. Playing a cleric should MEAN something - - or shouldn't be undertaken at all.

So saith Ed.

Who is really far more of a softie than he sounds here, but I know that he's "saying what needs to be said."

love to all,
THO

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On July 6, 2007 THO said: By the way, all, Ed has apparently spent some time, these last few days, assembling some old, old Realms sketches he did years ago. (He has said not a word about this; I visited and peeked.) I can guess what they're for, but... well, we'll have to wait and see.

love,
THO

On July 7, 2007 THO said: Faraer, off that request shall go to Ed, for a swift response.

And Sage, Ed had dated all of the sketches I saw, and at least one had "1986" on it. They are small, thumbnail scenes and head shots, not "proper illustrations." Black-and-white line, some pointualism, a variety of styles. As readers of the long-ago Dragon know (check out the illustration of the Gaund, for instance) Ed is quite a good illustrator. I have a strong suspicion as to when and how we'll see them (or at least some of them), but Ed will confirm nothing.

Yet. Heh-heh.

love,
THO

July 7, 2007: Hello again, all. This time Ed responds to createvmind's query: "Ed I was rereading the Sembia novel which you wrote with several others and I am trying to understand how UMD works in Faerun, I assume that if a noncaster with no UMD points is told exactly how to fire a wand or activate an item he/she is able to do so regardless of whether it's arcane or divine. If he/she isn't aware of how to activate an item then they must make a UMD check, yes? I'm recalling Thamalon's father letting fly with the magic wands and items during the night attack."

Ed replies:

Those Stormweather "house items" had either been made for the lord wielding them, or he'd been trained by a "house wizard" in their use (training in this case meaning practice under instruction, with actual "firing" or discharging of the item a "must"). As a result, he could use them just fine despite being a non-caster. The same would follow for anyone not of too-low intelligence or seriously-impaired dexterity. And yes, anyone told EXACTLY how to activate an item can do so, assuming the item isn't itself governed by magical conditions that limit activators by alignment, gender, race, or some other limitation the "anyone" doesn't "fit" with.

However, as anyone who has fired a gun or activated a fire extinguisher or tried to drive a car for the first time learns, turning the thing on isn't the same as "hitting what you're aiming at" or otherwise safely and successfully using it (to avoid bloody and horrible examples, let me just remind movie viewers of the tribal chieftan discovering machine guns at the end of the rescue-the-dinosaurs kids' movie BABY). DMs often wear evil smiles upon such occasions for very good reasons. Now, as a DM I tend to be a bit of a softie: I'm not interested in killing or maiming PCs, or ruining good adventuring on their part by plunging them into utter disaster, because of a moment of recklessness or desperation on one PC's part (I WILL "reward" PATTERNS of reckless, careless, or stupid behaviour, however). I tend to have "PC magic item" screwups be

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comical, dramatic, and help the PCs as much as they hinder the PCs, but in unexpected ways (blowing up a castle turret full of treasure the PCs were after, but by doing so blocking onrushing enemies and giving the PCs a chance to escape, for instance... or having the PC blasting away with an uncontrolled "wild" wand damage all sorts of valuables and make everyone run for cover, reducing some PCs to scorched near-nakedness with a loss of their magic weapons and treasure - - but out of sheer chance [Tymora has a sense of humour] toppling the evil wizard from his perch on high, so he can't blast the PCs; that sort of thing).

Please note: familiarity grants fair competence with a particular item or items, NOT "all wands like that one" or "every magic sword of similar heft." UMD comes in when trying to extend trained competence with one wand to being able to use others.

So saith Ed.

Who should really be hit with Realms questions more than rules questions, folks (please understand this is just a general reminder, not a criticism of createvmind, because this particular query is a "how do you run it in the Realms" question, and therefore fits Ed's lap just fine. Ahem, somewhat as I do.

love to all,
THO

July 8, 2007: Hi again, everyone. As promised, I whisked Faraer's query: "O Ed, a person on the Wizards.com boards says they're arguing with people who think Realms priests are monolaters who give absolutely no worship, reverence or praise to any but 'their' god. Pray, a few sentences about that?" off to Ed, and here's his swift reply:

Given the way priests have been portrayed in much published Realms fiction (many fanatics, or single-minded clerics striving to survive and accomplish things in moments of crisis, even divine crises) that's an understandable view of Realms clergy to reach.

Understandable, but wrong.

There are fanatics and other individual exceptions to every statement about the religious behaviours of any group of beings, but in general we can make these general statements:

1. Successful priests in the Realms tend to be beings who are most comfortable devoting the majority of their time, efforts, and attention to one deity.
2. All intelligent, reasonably sane, old-enough-to-understand-the-basics-of-life-around-them beings in the Realms KNOW there are multiple gods, believe in those gods, and respect and worship many of those gods often, and many more deities occasionally, when they deem it appropriate.

To elaborate on this: gamers who have difficulty conceiving of how folk believe and behave in a polytheistic setting are usually those who come from a real-world monotheistic background (Christian, for example, but it could just as easily be Zoroastrian or Muslim); consciously or unconsciously, this colours their thinking.

A priest in the Realms puts "their" deity first, but would consider it "crazed" to deny or ignore the existence of other deities, often works with or actively honours other deities (particularly deities

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allied to their own, in alliances such as the Triad, or the close bond between Azuth and Mystra), and would probably be awed in the presence of the avatar or a manifestation of ANY deity.

The current game approach to godhood unfortunately leads some gamers to think of gods as superheroes or supervillains, that valiant PCs can readily vanquish if they just get power enough (or get lucky, or both), and not something inherently greater than mortals. The "awe" and "wonder" get lost in the rush to check an avatar's hit points so they can be slain.

Let us look at some anonymous sample priests for a moment. These holy folk will have a roster of "duty" or "expected" prayers to their primary deity (always pray to Azuth at sundown, or Lathander at sunrise, and so on). On top of that, they will be moved by their feelings, events, or commandments of their superiors to add additional "heartfelt" prayers.

They will also have moments of personal, private contemplation, during which they will usually strengthen their primary faith by reasoning things through, and by contesting dogma against the teachings or beliefs or divine utterances of other faiths, comparing and contrasting. So they compare, say, Torm's LG law-and-order approach to the "tooth and claw" natural order of Malar, or various CG or NG or NE-based "rules" or legal systems. So a good priest knows and understands at least the basics of other faiths. They KNOW Talos has control over storms, Tymora over good fortune and Beshaba over bad, and so on.

They also know that there are two supports of worship everyone practices, all the time: reverence and appeasement. As do all other beings, they too practice both sorts of worship.

They worship "their own" god reverently, but give prayers and even offerings to other deities to ward off the displeasure or active hostility of that other deity, as daily needs arise (I, Zorsel, priest of Ilmater, have to travel by ship, so Umberlee sink not my ship, Talos send no storms against it, and I'd better pray to Tymora for good fortune, and pray to several other deities for successful navigation and voyaging, too... I shall of course flog myself and then dip up salt water from over the side to wash my wounds while praying to Ilmater, so as to suffer and so venerate Ilmater during the voyage).

In like manner, a devout priest of Bane will still murmur a prayer to Tymora for luck to be on his side when going into a dangerous meeting with superiors, and that is NOT considered an affront to Bane. Cursing by this deity or that is considered blasphemous only in particular contexts. It would a sin for a priest of a primarily LE faith to seek important spiritual guidance in prayers to a CG deity, yes, but not to appease that deity by a swift offering or prayer.

Remember, "faith" in the Realms does not mean "believing God exists without direct evidence." It means knowing ALL gods exist (though some of them may actually be other gods, working through different guises or avatars; priests argue about such things and non-priests tend to leave such debates to priests) and taking on "faith" that this mortal priest's command or teachings or interpretation is in accordance with the god's true wishes (or doing one's own interpretation of dream-visions, and trusting one is right until told or shown different by the god).

There are of course opposed deities (Chauntea versus Eldath, Shar versus Sêlune) and unlikely combinations of clashing faiths, that would make worship of one deity by a priest of another highly unlikely. Common sense will identify these to any DM, but even they can be altered for a given campaign, if desired, by shifting divine alignments and portfolios. However, the published Realms tries to present a consistent "starting basis" Realms for all DMs to trust in.

That same published Realmslore - - except comments by me, here and there, down the years - - has indeed neglected "appeasement" worship, though it's been in print since issue 54 of The

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DRAGON (unless my memory of what got edited out of that article is faulty) in favour of "reverent" worship.

It is also true that religious leaders, novices in the first "bloom" of their fervent desire to serve, and certain "enforcer of the faith" priests all tend to be fanatics or to cleave to "one god matters, ignore the others" views, but such attitudes rarely survive for long - - and many who APPEAR to hold them actually worship other deities in private, either silently and inwardly or in small "hedge one's bets" ways such as a murmured name, touching a flower held sacred, pausing to enjoy a sunrise or sunset to silently honour another deity associated with that phenomenon, and so on.

The Knights of Myth Drannor once examined the body of a recently-slain Zhentarim priestess of Bane, and found that her nipples were scarred with many small burns. Employing magic to learn more, they discovered that she feared becoming too proud and tyrannical, and to guard against this would steal off alone into ruins, to lie down and secretly burn stubs of holy altar candles of Ilmater that she mounted on her own breasts, praying to both Bane and Ilmater as they burned down to gutter out.

Torm of the Knights later learned that upon her death, Bane had through visions sent a dedicated priest of Bane to an altar of Ilmater, to there make a rich and public offering in the name of the dead priestess.

So saith Ed.

Illustrating just how rich and deep his ideas of religion in the Realms are. At the same time, one can understand the practical reasons that TSR "back in the day" would avoid publishing a lot of this material.

love to all,
THO

On July 8, 2007 THO said: No, Ed actually DID create the Asperii. I've seen his photocopies of the original article submission, illustration and all. Not that the concept of a flying steed was new; mythology has given us that for centuries. What Ed needed was aerial steeds that weren't pegasi with all of the existing game details. He needed them for an adventure in which the Company of Crazy Adventurers were hot on the trail of galloping fugitives whose mounts simply "took off" up into the air once (they believed) they were out of sight of all pursuers.

There you go. More potted Realmslore.

love to all,
THO

July 9, 2007: Hi again, fellow fans of the Realms. This time I bring you Ed's response to this from Rolindin: "If you don't mind a quick question Mr. Greenwood. The question is this have you ever thought about writing a book or series with another author?"

Such as Mercedes Lackey, James Mallory, Sara Douglass, L. E. Modesitt, jr, R. A. Salvatore, Philip Athans, Douglas Niles, Lynn Abbey, Harry Turtledove or any other author."

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Darling Wooly (ohhh, to run my fingers through soft, sleek, shining hamster fur! It is to drift into rapture...) rightly pointed out that Ed co-wrote three Realms novels: Cormyr (with Jeff Grubb), Death of the Dragon (with Troy Denning), and The City of Splendors (with Elaine Cunningham).

To that I can add a fourth TSR collab: The Diamond (with Rob King; it's much shorter, but on the other hand was done in a bare day or so), and of course the work Ed did on the Sembia series (the truth is that Ed confers with many, many writers behind the scenes to hand them Realmslore, discuss countries and characters they plan to use in their books, and so on). Ed has of course co-written many, many games products, for Kenzer and Margaret Weis Productions as well as TSR/WotC, and even co-designed the Mornmist (a name Ed came up with) fantasy setting with Lynn Abbey for Vision Books, some years back. He's also working on a still-secret project with various authors, right now...

But enough from me; Ed of course has a reply for Rolindin on collaborations, on his own behalf:

Of course I don't mind, and certainly I've thought about collaborations, have done some, and will probably do more in the future. Despite the extra work (inevitable when chapters must go back-and-forth, a plot worked out or at least discussed together, and so on), I love doing collaborations. They do eat up a lot more time than doing a work alone (a collaboration is very rarely "half the work" of a solo novel), and time is something I rarely have any to spare of, but I do enjoy collaborative work because I always ask the other writer to decide how they want to "handle" the collaboration, so it's almost always a different process from the last time I worked with another writer, and so always interesting.

I have read and enjoyed the work of every writer on your list (I regularly "blurb" Sara Douglass and Bob Salvatore books), have met five of them, and consider four of them friends, seen another (Misty Lackey) across a room at a convention, and wouldn't hesitate to sit down with any of them and try to write a book, if asked to.

"Asked to" by the other writer, or our agents, or a publisher, that is. These days, my time is spoken for years in advance, I have three series of novels on the go at once, and I suspect the same is true for all of the writers you list, and know it is true for five of them. So there has to be a serious arrangement in place, to chisel out time in my schedule for such a time-eating project, because I do make my living as a writer (I don't "write on the side" and live on money that comes from other work), and I do like to eat, keep possession of my home, and so on.

If you'd like to see such a collaboration, please gain control of a wealthy publisher and order them to contact your dream team of collaborators, and we'll leap into the bed together and get to work (on choosing more appropriate metaphors, if nothing else :}).

So saith Ed, who has written or co-written some 170 books now, if my count isn't too far off. I know he lost track long ago.

love to all,
THO

On July 9, 2007 THO said: KnightErrantJr, I know Ed was trying to do two things in DotD with the clerics: show how the War Wizards' and Cormyrean commoners' attitudes rather negative towards priests (the commoners' born from the War Wizards, relayed via retiring Purple Dragons the wizards worked with daily) are wrong at the "average priest" level, and damaging to the realm

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- - but true and confirmed at the very highest level (when Azoun lies near death, the "top" Cormyrean priests are squabbling with each other and everyone else for power, not working with each other or with "mere" wizards and soldiers and commoners of Cormyr. Ed did write some more scenes underscoring the sacrifices and loyalty of the priests fighting on the ground in the battles, but these had to be edited out (except for the seen-at-long-range death of the female priestess leading that doomed charge).

There was SO much going on in that third book, and Ed was worried that Rowan and Tana might not receive enough face time with the reader. As it was, Rowan just sort of... disappears. Sigh.

And as you can see from El's Daughter (and the current Knights trilogy) Ed much prefers to write scenes of intrigue over "the fate of the realm hangs in the balance" huge battle scenes. He does those war scenes very well, but has always thought a reader can't fully appreciate the heroics and disaster if they don't get to see a lot of what life was like before (i.e. what is lost or threatened; what everyone is fighting to preserve).

love to all,
THO

July 10, 2007: Hello again, fellow scribes. Good request, Kuje! Off it goes...

And in the return direction, this time Ed responds to Blueblade's recent question: "Dear Ed and Lady THO, Some DMing pointers, if you will..."

I want to incorporate a murder mystery into a nobles' revel in Cormyr. How should I foreshadow, or should I? Build up characters without being obvious? Etc. Thanks!"

Ed replies:

This is one of those questions that I could write a long series of articles about, and still not cover completely (no, THO, no, DON'T start writing "long series of articles on murder mystery" down on my endlessly-expanding 'to do' list! I've got THREE more novels to write this year, to say nothing of mumble mumble and mumble mumble - - oh, and don't forget mumble mumble, either!).

So I'm going to answer this one in general terms. Urban-setting play works best (when PCs are staying in one city or town for a time) like a TV sitcom or Coronation Street: when there's a "core" cast of recurring characters and a secondary cast of seldom-seen but remembered faces supporting characters, established by the DM and brought back repeatedly in play. Think of how Terry Pratchett handles the Watch-centered Discworld books: there are new characters particular to each novel (and a high body count among them), but "tried and true" characters who dwell in Ankh-Morpork step into each book. If you do the same, and "cheat foreshadow" by having rumors and scandals and juicy stories about some of these NPCs circulate at revels and in the city streets BEFORE the one where your murder occurs, so that the PCs are already forming opinions about this core cast of characters, the death will "matter more," the "suspecting and detecting" will really become workable, and the ongoing campaign will be richer regardless of what happens concerning the murder and the murderer. The secret of any successful campaign is "characters that matter," lively play that builds colorful memories and incorporates PC achievements, and therefore an unfolding history that players identify with, enjoy, and take pride in. All of that begins with your core cast of NPCs. Bring them to life, and everything else will follow...

So saith Ed.

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Who of course speaks from golden experience.

love to all,
THO

July 11, 2007: Hi again, all. Herewith, more Realmslore words from Ed of the Greenwood, this time in response to Rolindin's query: "Mr. Greenwood: I read your answer to the aging question. Here's something along that line; I have a question, too. It seems to me that the answer is more a human answer; what about the other races?"

Do the elves, half elves, dwarves, and halflings have some of the same aspects? Do the other races still try to keep young in certain ways magical and non magical, to stay young. Or do they respect their elders and think that they are beautiful, such as a older dwarf, elf, halfling "woman"?

Has the human element (trying to look young) influenced the other races and they try to stay young and hide their age in certain circumstances?"

Ed replies:

Individuals of all races try to stay vigorous, and a lot of what we think of as "human nature" is (as I postulate in the Realms, anyway) actually "universal nature:" children and youths tend to be reckless and consider themselves invincible; minds tend to become more conservative with advancing age, and so on. However, the demi-human races (elves, dwarves, gnomes, and halflings) and their halfbreeds, too, tend to have lower birthrates than humans, older cultures, and to "live more in tune with nature" as opposed to taming nature as much; even when elves "garden" forests, dwarves and gnomes reshape rock, and halflings weave and craft weirs and the like, they do so with a greater understanding of what nature forces truly are, and their place in harmony with them, than city-dwelling humans in the Realms.

As such, they tend to see aging as inevitable and beauty and worth in all beings of all ages.

This is, of course, a general statement; on an individual level it breaks down.

Vain individuals, or those who see it as necessary for their own advancement or the good of their family, clan, community, or even race to "remain young" or be able to fool others into thinking them young will often use herbs, carefully controlled diet and activity (avoid salt air, winter travel in harsh conditions, hard work that might scar, etc.) and, yes, magic to appear young.

Elves in particular often use magic to wear more beautiful shapes if they want to win the interest of young elves, and of course many of these races will use magic to change their personal appearances so as to appear to be another race (human, for example) so as to escape special notice or racism or even actual persecution when among other races (elves or even half-orcs in a human city, for example), or to increase utility (ugly dwarf who needs coin and is willing to work as a prostitute might want to appear as a beautiful human, to increase takings or even the chance of being "hired" at all).

So, yes, some of these races do try to "appear young" in many circumstances, but it usually has nothing to do with any human influence.

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Human culture in the Realms, by the way, does not place the same emphasis on youth that our modern Western real-world culture does (it may SEEM that way when reading some Realms novels, but on the other hand, remember this: life is so much harder in the Realms that fewer old people survive, and unmarred beauty is prized because it is rarer; most people get scars and wrinkles and sunburnt or mottled skin just through daily living). You can by all means have "your" Realms campaign have the same attitudes as a particular modern real-world country or culture (Hollywood, for example), but the Realms I am striving to show all gamers doesn't quite have those attitudes.

So saith Ed.

Who doesn't control the actual words used in any Realms product (as with any other writer, editors stand between him and the page) and so can't always mitigate the tendency of Realms products to too closely reflect our "changing attitudes of the moment," or the culture the products are published in (modern, Christian-dominated, Hollywood-culture America). He wants Realms products to be easily understandable by, and enjoyable to, we gamers, but to subtly and continually remind them that (I'm quoting Ed here, from a seminar he once gave at a con that I taped) "the Realms isn't Hollywood medieval Earth. It can be if you want it to be, but you'll have to twist it here and stretch it over there, to make it so."

love to all,
THO

July 12, 2007: Hi again, fellow scribes. Ed responds to Zandilar this time, specifically her query: "Heya, A quick question, but probably not a quick answer..."

How do people become clerics (or druids, or rangers, or paladins, or any other class that derives its power from divine favour)? Do people just decide to become a cleric and enroll in the local priest school? Or do they receive some sign from their deity, some calling that they can't ignore? If it's the latter, I suppose it would vary from deity to deity, but are there any sort of common themes to the calling/sign?

Edited to add: Oh, and is it possible for a divine related class character to serve more than one deity? I'm looking at Qilue here, but she's quite different to your run of the mill PC type."

Ed replies:

The short answer to your first question is: it varies. Usually the person (growing up in a world where many deities exist and are worshipped, remember) has reached puberty and started to receive vivid dream-visions from various divine servants. If they respond to some visions (desire to see more, and ask local clergy or deity-tied persons such as temple guards, paladins, hermits, and so on about the visions or about a particular deity) in the right ways, more are sent, and the person chooses to respond. No one is "forced" into worship or holy service.

The person then "steps forward" to contact a temple, passing preacher, or undertake a vigil at a known holy site to receive more guidance (a vigil will result in more vivid dreams or a manifestation [visible sign, such as Lathander's holy glow coming briefly into existence around the person's head and upon the altar or holy stone, marker, or site]). They then make contact with the organized church, and each faith has its own way of taking in supplicants - - in some cases, it varies from temple to temple.

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And yes, it IS possible for a "divine related class character to serve more than one deity." It's rare, both due to the nature of worship/devotion and the rarity of close divine "sharing," and it MUST be a matter of extensive roleplaying. As a result, the DM must want to explore this as much as the player, so for it to successfully be incorporated into a campaign, the DM must have the say over whether or not he or she wants to explore this (allow it). "Serving two masters" is never easy, and should result in ongoing moral dilemmas, tests, and the occasional tug-of-war between the two deities over the deeds and loyalties of the character. It can form a great "heart" for a one-on-one (one player and one DM, or at most two players and a DM) campaign, however.

So saith Ed.

THE Creator, and therefore the expert on the deities of the Realms. (Though Eric Boyd and Julia Martin, to name just two, are no slouches in this regard either.)

love to all,
THO

July 13, 2007: Hello again, fellow devotees of the Realms. I bring you once more the words of the Master, this time a response to createvmind's recent query: "And it's not even my birthday, thank you so much. And yes I am all about realmslore, a fiend for it in fact so on that note, what mutated kinds of trolls and troll blooded creatures dwell within the Trollbark Woods and Troll Mountains is what I want to know? Figured I'd approach it from a different angle since still patiently awaiting a reply on how trolls keep up with the "arms/magic race.""

Ed replies:

Fair enough. I checked my long-ago notes, and updated them, and came up with this: trolls galore, led by double-sized, double-hit dice, two-headed trolls. There are also regenerating (conditions and limits: just like trolls) chokers (see MM) dwelling up in the trees, in uneasy co-existence with the trolls (the chokers have constructed "highways aloft" of vines, toppled and intertwined branches, and so on, trap-nets to drop on foes, and similar perils). There are also leaf- and moss-eating giant slugs of dull green mottled with brown, that move slowly along trailing edible-by-many-things slime, and can be "steered" and used as carry-beasts by the trolls. The Woods also hold a few deepspawn, hidden in deep caverns, that hungry trolls can devour the spawn of (when other food is scarce or extreme harsh winter weather makes travel too difficult), and the high valleys of the mountains are home to a rare species of slow-moving flatworms known as "tree-worms" because of where they are found. These creatures are easily plucked and harvested, but are nauseating when eaten - - except to a troll. Trolls merely find them bland, boring sustenance fare, but can use them to survive because if the head is left intact, a flatworm regenerates the rest of its body at about half the rate a troll does (so when devoured by the trolls, they "grow back" so they can be eaten again).

Aside from insects and plants of various sorts, the Woods and the forested high valleys of the Mountains are devoid of life (notably birds and the "small furry critters" of most woodlands): the chokers and trolls long ago exterminated them. There are also no human woodcutters, so the Woods feature some truly monstrous trees (valuable if they can be harvested, perhaps by magic, and transported well away from the Woods in a hurry).

So saith Ed, the ever-affable provider of Realmslore.

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Geez, createvmind, those two locales sound like great places to stay well away from. Your adventurers will know that, right?

love to all,
THO

July 14, 2007: Hi again, all. This time I bring unto your waiting eyes Ed's response to scribe Thauramarth, specifically to this question: "Dear Ed, In ([url="http://forum.candlekeep.com/topic.asp?TOPIC_ID=9569"](http://forum.candlekeep.com/topic.asp?TOPIC_ID=9569))another thread[/url]) Markustay brought up the question as to which degree the I3-5 Desert of Desolation series was canon. I know that the module was basically a compilation module of modules which had been written before the Forgotten Realms became a TSR-published setting. Some additional material was written to fit the original modules into the Forgotten Realms (reference to Elminster, Durpar, etc.). Although I would never say that it seems a bit like a square peg and a round hole (I'd say the hole was hexagonal), it seemed a bit odd that the first module to be marketed as "Forgotten Realms" would be set in a very peripheral region, which since has not received all that much attention. Were you involved in the creation of the additional material, and if so, can you shed some light on how this interesting decision was reached?"

Ed replies:

No, unlike the "Realmsification" of Doug Niles's Celtic setting into the Realms (swapping his prepared continent for my Moonshae Isles) I wasn't involved at all in "fitting" those particular modules into the Realms.

I know that TSR was concerned that a swift and steady flow of material for the Realms should and indeed must appear to make sure the Realms "caught on." The company had the existing example of Gary Gygax as a "creator bottleneck" (he was too busy running the company to write Greyhawk material as fast as it was needed to feed public demand, or as fast as he wanted to; longtime D&D gamers will remember how long we all waited for the promised Castle Greyhawk). They certainly didn't want me to become another creator bottleneck, and were largely unaware of how much lore I had built up and how quickly I could work.

Starting in 1986, I hurled tons of material at TSR, and (largely through the hard work of Jeff Grubb) it became the original boxed set and FR1 in short order; Steve Perrin was handed my magic items and spells package (it became FR4), and Paul Jaquays was given the "North" stuff pruned out of FR1 (which became FR5).

My campaign had vast, sprawling old-style dungeons (e.g. Undermountain) and "mini-dungeons" (a tomb or cellars of a ruin consisting of a few rooms, that could be explored in one or two four-hour play sessions). I did not have a lot of written-up adventures to hand TSR, because my "home" players were used to a far different style of play (heavy roleplaying, many subplots, a huge cast of supporting characters, lots of "loose ends" that led to future adventures, the PCs choosing where to go and what to do, NPCs reacting to PC activities, and politics, trade, and "day jobs" playing a far larger role than dungeon-delving).

That "32-page dungeon crawl" lack was a hole TSR wanted swiftly plugged. As the sales of the Realms "took off," that hole was filled by grabbing anything and everything (later example: The Great Khan Game), slapping the FR logo on it, and getting it out there.

I have never been a staff member of either TSR or WotC, though in some years of my freelancing

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I wrote as many SKUs as a staff designer, and I have been a behind-the-scenes consultant (paid and unpaid, at various times) from 1986 on. I have never had any direct say in what Realms products were published (when, how, format, who wrote) except to make copious suggestions, provide truckloads of lore beforehand so it can be "turned into" products, or creating or handing over lore when asked to by a designer or fiction writer who's been handed a project and wants to know if I have anything already written that can be of use... and so on.

I happen to like those modules, as adventures (with some design reservations). I don't like overtly real-world historical ties and "style" in the Realms, for reasons I've stated many times down the years, and "my" Realms would never have had pyramids, obvious Egyptian or Arabian references, and so on.

However, TSR bought the Realms as a "home" setting for the 2nd Edition of the game, with the deliberate intent that it accomodate all styles of play (pirate sea adventures, "Lost World" explore jungle ruins adventures, Arabian Nights adventures, cloud castles (and battling skyships) in the air adventures, knights battling the knights in the castle next door adventures, adventures in large cities with sewers and thieves' guilds and haughty nobles - - and so on and on. Wherefore it's not surprising that some real-world stuff appeared in the Realms. As some of the popularity of the Realms can be attributed to "hosting" these styles of play, I can't complain.

After all, here we all are 20 years after TSR start publishing the Realms as a product line, and 40 years after I started creating it. Pull up a tankard, put your feet up, and watch the still-unfolding fun...

So saith Ed.

Who now, with beard gone gray, finally LOOKS as old as Elminster. (Though to quote the Shakespearean T-shirt he often wears: "Though I look old/Yet I am strong and lusty.")

love to all,
THO

And a postscript, from Ed to PDK:

Purple Dragon Knight, I would LOVE to say more, but legally I can't even confirm the existence of the cats or the bags. :}

Let me say this much: you ain't seen NOTHING yet!

Ed then retreated to his third Knights novel, shaking his head and saying, "Oh, I want to say more... OH, I want to..."

love,
THO

On July 15, 2007 THO said: Some answers:

When Jeff said that, he meant the Moonshaes (Ed of course coined that name, long before TSR's involvement with the Realms) were originally intended to be a setting for TSR UK to write a series of linked novels and game products ("modules") set in.

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Ed has forgotten what name Doug gave to his "Celtic England" setting. He'll check, but it may take some considerable time to get you an answer for this one (we also have to assume that Jeff or Doug remember).

The Anchorome campaign refers to a long series (NOT a geological "chain") of islands that a ship blown off-course (roughly SSW) into the trackless western Sea of Swords would come upon, one after another. So they would start about twice the distance off the Sword Coast that the farthest western part of the Moonshaes are, and stretch on from there.

love,
THO

July 15, 2007: Hello again, fellow scribes. A swift answer from Ed this time, to a query from Pardan: "Hello Ed and Hooded One,

For the campaign I am soon starting to play in, I wanted to create a cleric of Sharess, since the goddess has always been one of my favourites (mostly for the strange link between her role as a fierce warrior and as a hedonist, but also because, simply said, i love cats!).

Now, I don't want her to conform to the archetype many might have in mind when they think of the clergy - someone who jumps into bed with anyone.

Rather, I want her to be fierce in combat as well as in the pursuit of pleasure but also highlight her wisdom and her innate goodness, someone who also might live a life of promiscuity but still has wise and kind words for anyone, trying not to hurt those she cares about.

Now i wonder how exactly to put those together in a way that still fits the deity. If you had some advice for me, I'd be delighted."

Ed replies:

Sure, happy to help. The key to playing a "true to the Realms" cleric of Sharess is that such people are the ultimate sensualists.

That doesn't necessarily mean sex (although eventually a veteran cleric of Sharess will have had sex in unusual places, with more than just partners of both genders and her own race, and involving various kinks and athletic positions - - though not necessarily all together in the same encounters - - just for the experience).

Rather, it means that the cleric of Sharess loves to feel and experience things. So she'll walk out naked into fierce storms, to stand and feel the rain or snow lashing her. She'll thrust her hand (briefly) into flames. She'll try new cuisine, with odd combinations of sweet and bitter.

She's all about experiencing things in life. This does NOT mean she'll necessarily be foolhardy ("Stick a knife in me. I want to feel what it's like.") or reckless of the safety of others. Nor will she want to offend against local laws or make things difficult for companions because of her behaviour. If she knows (or it seems likely) it's illegal to have sex draped all over the statue in the public square, she won't try to do so. It does mean that she won't wear underwear (except for "play" purposes), and that her outer garb, even when it covers her from ankles to throat (usually it will bare rather more, to let her skin feel life around her directly), will have slits or unbuttonable darts or the like, so it can readily be hiked up or parted. Again, not just for sex, but so that if she

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has to sit on a stone wall or tree bough waiting for someone, she'll be able to arrange her clothing so that her bare skin is in contact with that surface. NOT for "public display" of her body (the garments may well conceal her skin completely from observers), but so that she can feel the bark or stone directly. For the same reasons, except in unbearably hot situations, a cleric of Sharess will always prefer to sleep nude, with someone, skin on skin, even if no sex is going to occur. (This does NOT mean she'll be foolish enough to deliberately go into battle nude or badly covered, when armor is available - - but it does mean that in an emergency she'll snatch up useful items or weapons, not waste time on getting dressed. It also does not mean she'll insist on trying to sleep with a sick or wounded person, when her presence will cause them discomfort, but it does mean that she isn't embarrassed about climbing into bed nude with anyone or anything. Lonely half-orcs and the maimed and disfigured love clerics of Sharess.)

Textures, temperatures, tastes and smells; clerics of Sharess are all about these things as they go through life.

They are also about pleasure. Again, not just sex, but footrubs and backrubs and scratchings, of both themselves and others (IF they know that whatever activity they're contemplating brings pleasure to those others). Combing out hair, stroking, masturbating themselves and others, and "grooming" (and yes, in the Realms this can mean literal picking of lice or other crawlies off bodies) and other such activities are all activities good clerics of Sharess do without hesitation or distaste (part of the training of novices is to make them embrace this way of thinking and living).

A cleric of Sharess is NOT ashamed of her body or natural processes (defecation, et al; in battle, being drenched in the blood or fluids of an enemy won't bother them, and sucking poison from a wound or holding the innards of wounded self or ally in place won't bring any distaste). If, for example, a Sharessan cleric feels an itch between her shoulderblades, she won't hesitate to bare them and either ask someone to scratch her (perfect strangers if they seem safe, or a companion) or rub herself against a tree as a cat does.

That's why some clerics of Sharess, of high rank, wear garters (bands worn tight and high up on the thighs) adorned with burrs, thorns, patches of silky fur, and so on - - not because they are closet masochists or secret worshippers of Loviatar or Ilmater, but for the ongoing sensations. Such garments are kissed reverently when put on and taken off, because they are in themselves offerings to the goddess.

And yes, many clerics of Sharess signal enjoyment of sensations by purring.

It is important to note that clerics of Sharess are sensualists rather than hedonists; they want to experience pain and discomfort as well as pleasure, and aren't primarily concerned (as a hedonist is) with maximizing their personal pleasure. So a cleric of Sharess wants others around them to experience life to the full, too, and maximize THEIR pleasure and enjoyment of it. That's where the wisdom and understanding of others, and consideration for their feelings in the things your cleric says and does, comes in. A cleric of Sharess is NOT interested in embarrassing or scandalizing anyone, but is interested in getting them to "unwind" and "relax" and "try new experiences." Something as simple as a new sort of food dish, for example.

If a cleric of Sharess is traveling with, say, a paladin of Torm who makes it clear he's NOT interested in sex and regards any attempt to remove his armor as a dangerous distraction, the cleric of Sharess will not make overtures to him. She will secretly wear dildoes to gain her own pleasure, and offer to wash the paladin's hair and his underarmor padding (and scratch his itches) when he disrobes at night, making it clear that she intends no seduction by these friendly aids, and going only as far in these activities as he wants her to. She will NOT be a constant

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tease, a flirt who bares herself to tempt him.

In another setting, with folk who enjoy such behavior, she may be the world's wildest flirt (eating food off the bared body of someone else is a favourite activity, and in fact some temple rites of Sharess involve "calming" homophobes among the novice clergy by having them dine in private with another postulate of the same gender, where all foodstuffs must be eaten off the body of the other participant, so they'll get over difficulties with being unable to separate sensual pleasures from sexual matters). Clerics of Sharess enjoy a good drink, but dislike becoming drunk, because it deadens their faculties for experiencing the world around them (and their memories of having done so).

If a cleric of Sharess is raped, she would NOT welcome the experience, may hate it, and will probably fight hard to avoid it or escape it (if possible), and try to see that the rapist subsequently gets punished - - but she will also try to derive as much physical enjoyment as she can while it's happening. In like wise, if she is wounded in battle, she wants to feel the pain, even while she might desperately want and seek healing. Which is why heat, cold, and floggings are usually experienced by novice clerics of Sharess (again, outsiders may mistake them for Sharrans or devotees of Loviatar, but this is mistaken; they are merely trying to experience all things, and sometimes the whip will be of stinging nettles, but the next time it may be made of feathers - - it's tasting the full range of experiences that clerics of Sharess are all about).

None of this should make your cleric of Sharess an all-yielding, "Hey man, please hurt me" sort of person, or a happy-go-lucky "got to rush out into that meadow and feel the storm lightning strike me" idiot, nor yet a "oh, look, a cadaver or someone who can't run fast enough to get away - - time to have sex again!" ruled-by-lusts sort. She can be ambitious, a fierce warrior (the prowling cat) and pride herself on being able to deal death swiftly and deftly, and she can be a capable adventuress, loyal to her companions and eager to win fame and/or fortune and/or reputation, influence, and worldly rank - - nor do senior clergy of Sharess do anything to discourage such interests and drives.

Clerics of Sharess always look on the bright side of everything. If the party gets lost, or drenched, it's an opportunity to enjoy experiences they might otherwise have missed, not a calamity. If they want to have a group orgy, she'll be the one making sure everyone feels involved and is fully enjoying it. In any group, she'll notice the lonely or unhappy (iest) one and try to "fix that." When someone is confused or grieving or depressed, she'll be the silent or gently comforting companion. She is the one who wants all of life, no matter how uncomfortable, to be enjoyed.

Enough to go on? Enjoy!

So saith Ed.

Who didn't just quote his notes, I see, but rewrote and greatly expanded what's in them. And I certainly recognize the two priestesses of Sharess we Knights met and had dealings with, in his words. (By the way, many folk in Silverymoon venerate this goddess, both as lay worshippers and clergy.)

love (and backrubs!) to all,
THO

July 16, 2007: Hello again, all.

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This time Ed makes speedy reply to Lorelord of the Realms George Krashos, re. this: "Hi Ed (and THO)

Whilst I could bug you in private, that would mean that realmslore might not unfold for the yearning masses, so here is my most recent "Realms ???".

I just got back my copy of 'Crown of Fire' from a friend I'd lent it to, and typically I started reading it again. My query relates to Tethgard and the fact that Mirt's ancestor is the watchghost there. Her claims that Tethgard pre-dates Cormyr sounds a bit like ectoplasmic hyperbole, but I'd love to hear anything you have to share on the place and how Mirt's ancestors got from there to wherever Mirt is from."

Dargoth and The Sage noted two of Ed's previous replies that mentioned Tethgard, and I've quoted them here:

2004:

Thom: Without giving TOO much away to Our Hooded Lady, what can you tell me about "Lost Tethgard" in the Hullack Forest? From its spelling I'm thinking it might be another Irongard mini-dungeon, a lost town a la Gauntulgrym or maybe a lost elven realm? I'll understand if you can't say too much because the Knights may go there someday...

Ed: Tethgard appears briefly in CROWN OF FIRE (Chapter 6), when Mirt guides Narm, Shandril, and Delg to its overgrown ruins. Before Cormyr existed as a realm, 'very long ago,' Lady Duskreene ruled a small area (now deep in the Hullack Forest) from her castle of Tethgard. Her watchghost still roams when 'awakened,' though not far from its crypt.

Today, Tethgard isn't much more than a few tumbled stones, crazily-leaning low walls running among the trees, and a leaf-choked pit (collapsed cellar entrance) or two, with the stone stumps of what were once round towers here, and the heaved and broken-by-trees flagstones of what were once floors over there... yet tiny traces (glades, stone-and-stump farm fences, traces of cart-roads, foundations of stables and cottages and outlying huts) of Duskreene's lands remain, overgrown by the forest. Yes, some of these cellars could well be 'mini-dungeons.'

2006:

Dargoth: In CROWN OF FIRE Mirt says that Lady Duskreene had ruled here before Cormyr was founded. Now before Cormyr was founded Hullocks Forest would have fallen within the borders of The Lands of the Purple Dragon and the lands won by Iliphar Nelneue. Neither of whom are likely to allow humans to setup in their mists... [dates snippage]... Given this I can think of the following 2 options: A) Mirt has Netherese ancestors (The Netherese would probably have been powerful enough to keep Thauglorimorgorus and his dragons at bay long enough to establish Tethgard), B) Mirt has Draconic ancestors of some sort

Ed: Mirt does indeed have some Netherese ancestors (Lady Duskreene and her people). He may also have draconic ancestors that he (and we) don't yet know about (suggesting that Lady Duskreene and her people may have been under the protection of one or more dragons who were romantically linked to one or more of said people). I dare not say more at the present time [big cheesy grin].

Right. That "present time" was more than a year ago, some project plans went in another direction, and Ed is now pleased to comment as follows:

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Certainly. Glad to sweep back the curtain on this essential and too-long-neglected little corner of Realmslore.

Ilyphar Nelnueve had three weaknesses: like many powerful wizards, he was a loner who disliked a lot of social interaction (with anyone, but specifically he detested a lot of his “posing, sneering, hunting and clever-tonguing and socially jostling” elven kin); he was alone for many years, without servants or kin (and so, no one to feed him and no source of income that didn’t involve him interrupting his magical experimentations and wand- and scepter-crafting, and doing things for himself); and once he had won lands from the Purple Dragon, he needed someone to work to give the elves a “neutral ground” meeting-place and heart for the fledgling elven realm (without doing this itself, which would have consumed ALL of his time, from that moment on), or risk losing the realm into strife - - and having the dragons then find some pretext to reclaim it.

During his travels to gain certain substances as ingredients for his magic item making, he had met and befriended a wise, welcoming human woman (Duskreene, who was of Netherese lineage and then dwelling in now-vanished forests south of Evereska), who (purely out of curiosity as to his doings, plus her own warm nature) had assisted him and fed him when he was in need.

Not able to think of anyone else - - for he KNEW that exalting one elf or elven family above the others to be his “hostess” and center of the realm would lead to bitter divisions and an ultimate failure of the realm, with the dragons watching for divisions they could exploit and drive the elves out again, whereas an outsider and non-elf, even one despised by all, could serve as a unifying force [they could all enjoy hating her, together] - - Ilyphar turned to Duskreene and invited her to be his hostess, hub of the realm, and despised-by-elves doormat.

Duskreene was quite shrewd enough to know exactly what she was getting into, and did so willingly, but set some conditions: she was to “rule” a small territory with clearly-defined borders and a stone castle at the heart of it, so that although it remained elven land, her writ governed it and she could thus control elves by denying them access to the “court” or social whirl of the crossroads (they could still meet with other elves freely, all over the elven woods, but they could not negotiate with enemies or rivals in a “neutral ground,” because she was the only neutral ground). Ilyphar could store his most dangerous magics in spell-locked chambers inside the thicknesses of the castle walls (whereas natural caverns were known to others, and growing tree-rooms and homes could readily and tracelessly be magically opened by others and then closed again, using tree-shaping magics most elves knew), Duskreene could dwell in a place that kept the rain out, and could even have human visitors there (where they would find neither welcome nor comfortable accommodations anywhere else in the future Cormyr), and the castle itself could be fashioned as a gigantic dragon trap, with blasting magics set ready into its turrets and spires in case of dragon treachery (as the elves knew draconic minds could not help but regard it, the only stone structure of any size in the woods, as the heart and focus of the elven realm; “the” place to strike at).

So Ilyphar’s magics built the castle of Tethgard, Duskreene and her family and a small hired human staff came and dwelt, Tethgard functioned as a feasting and negotiating moot, and it WORKED; all went well. Duskreene was despised by the elder elves, but many of the younger ones came to regard her as a friend (she mothered them when they were upset, gave them a place to rest, sleep, and hide when they’d done wrong or been hurt in love or were at odds with their families) and even (for a very few of them, including Ilyphar) as a lover.

Duskreene’s family flourished (intermarrying with the hired staff and with other humans who found their ways to Tethgard or who were brought there after Duskreene’s far-traveling kin had met and fallen in love with them elsewhere), but (as all humans do) came to regard the small hold as “theirs.” When Duskreene died, Ilyphar joined the other elves in politely but firmly driving all of the

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humans out, and letting the forest reclaim the castle. Duskreene "rose again" as a watchghost, and the castle was later riven in a dragon attack on the early humans of Cormyr (after the elves had lost control of the lands).

Duskreene's kin went to places that are today Amn, northern Tethyr, Elturel, Waterdeep, and the vicinity of Starmantle. Just who and where Mirt's immediate ancestors hailed from, I'm afraid I'm keeping NDA for now (future fiction plans, of course).

There you are; enjoy, George (I hope), and see you at GenCon! (Good news: American beer is getting better!)

So saith Ed.

Who will indeed be in Indy for the usual annual festivities this year (though I, alas, shall not). All of you will just have to kiss Ed for me.

love to all,
THO

July 17, 2007: Hi again, all. This time Ed makes answer to ziresta, in regards to these queries: "I have a few questions and comments for Ed. None of this is urgent, so take your time responding.

1) Thank you for creating the Forgotten Realms. It's the only setting not of my creation that feels "real" to me.

2) Thank you for putting so much detail into the Realms that I don't feel like I'm a lunatic for putting maybe a quarter as much into my campaign/story settings. (My eventual goal is as much, but I've only been working at creating settings seriously for about three years so I'm still very far from it.)

3) In 1368 DR in Cormyr, what would the general reaction of nobles to the third (or fourth, can't recall) daughter of a lesser noble being part of an adventuring band be?

4) Any details/lore you can share on Lliira or Selune worship in the same time and area?

5) Really weird question, and backstory necessary so it makes sense: In another game I'm running, one of the PCs has invented a time/world hopping device (essentially the continua craft from The Number of the Beast by RAH) and is planning to use it to visit, among other fictions, the Realms. So, my question is how would the residents of Shadowdale (where she most wants to visit... she's enamored with Storm) respond (in the late 1360s, in case it matters) to the following characters landing in a strange craft in their midst:

a) A girl in her late teens with a platinum dragon tattooed on one arm and a chromatic dragon on the other. This is the inventor of the device, a brilliant, but highly eccentric, engineer and physicist.

b) A boy in his late teens in a kilt who has a tendency to say whatever he's thinking, regardless of how inappropriate it is. He's a musician and has come along with his friend to be exposed to different realities' music... and meet hot chicks. Protective of d, his wife, to the point of fool-hardiness.

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c) A teenaged girl, very petite, with a habit of dying her hair random colors, who has come along because her fiancée (a) was so excited about the trip.

d) Another girl in her late teens, a xenanthropology student, who is the only one of this group possessed of much common sense... which is why she insists on coming along, she'd rather her best friends didn't end up in jail in some weird reality. At the time they'll go there, she'll be just beginning to look pregnant.

They're from about 2391 AD and grew up on a planet about 200 light years from here that's guiding moral principles amount to "Don't harm others or their property without a very good reason."

(Yes, I'm assuming the Realms will survive that long... why not? Besides, even if it doesn't, they've already travelled to our real reality and visited a bookstore.)"

Ed replies:

1. You're very welcome. I work at the Realms every day to make it seem more "real," and I hope I succeed more than I fail.

2. You're welcome. Not everyone wants as much detail as I provide, but I would rather that they choose what they want and ignore the rest, rather than have "nothing" when they go seeking lore. (After all, this is a setting people are paying for; I believe in providing harried DMs with my work, so they can concentrate on acting, plotting, and describing to make play memorable and exciting.) Thankfully, there are many dedicated people who agree with me, and have written, designed, and edited for the Realms down the years to back up and augment my lore, giving the Realms far more depth and colour than I'd ever have had time to do, all on my own. Yes, it takes time, as I'm sure you're discovering. :)

3. Most nobles wouldn't care one way or another, except as a source of gossip (assuming she didn't loudly announce any intent to overthrow the Dragon Throne or slaughter Obarskyrs or many nobles, that is). Some of her elder kin (the "gossipy aunt" sorts) might be scandalized, or profess to be (all the while enjoying the juicy gossip, inventing tales if they could get none, and wildly embroidering all they did get). The aging uncles would be gruffly approving, and be just as hungry for the gossip. They'd LOVE it if she was good-looking, and any whiff of hanky-panky surfaced (cavorting nude in bedchambers, seductions, that sort of thing). A few stiff-necked conservatives among the nobles would pounce on it as "more proof" of how "decadent and ill-behaved our younger nobles are becoming, these days!" and would "cut her dead" at social meetings or pointedly exclude her from invitations to their feasts. However, far more nobles would eagerly invite her to feasts and revels, as an "attraction of passing interest." Nobles disapprove of adventuring bands that rob nobles or burn things, but don't care a whit if they break laws or damage Crown property (because they like to see the Obarskyrs "taken down a peg or two"). Young nobles might well become her fans, look up to her, and covertly help her whenever they could - - and the young rakes would be dying to seduce her, "just because" she's now dashing and notorious. More than a few of their bored fathers would fall into this category, too.

4. In Cormyr of 1368 DR, worship of Lliira and Sêlune is flourishing, though neither are among the "foremost faiths" of the realm. As with many other faiths, nobility tend to worship in private chapels, and the public in public temples or out-of-doors services (Jester's Green north of Suzail, for example). Specifically, nobles and the wealthy would venerate Lliira in revels (dedicating them to the Joybringer and inviting clergy to participate), and Sêlune by night, in private outdoor

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gardens or woodland glades at their hunting lodges across the realm. Commoners and rural folk would venerate both goddesses out in the countryside, Lliira around bonfires (with drinking, games, "chases" and lovemaking), and Sêlune in the moonlight (with soft singing and prayer, and the drinking of water that has been gathered in vessels and touched by moonlight). The worship of Lliira is largely noisy and energetic, the worship of Sêlune largely quiet and still (though on a personal level, a lone individual can sing a happy or comedic song to Lliira in prayer, and sing a happy or wistful song to Sêlune in prayer, and both are sufficient). Devout worship of Lliira is believed to lead one into the graces of Tymora (good luck), and devout worship of Sêlune is believed to protect the wayfarer (especially at night) from becoming lost, straying from the notice of others, and from surprise attack by beasts or brigands. Numerous clergy of either faith can readily be found, though there are few really powerful priests of Lliira in Cormyr (and the most powerful clerics of Sêlune tend to dwell in the wooded backcountry more than in the cities).

5. Reactions in Shadowdale to the arrival of such strangers would not be negative unless they wantonly attacked locals, wore Zhent emblems, or loudly professed Zhent loyalties or membership. None of which seems likely from your description of the characters.

Specifically, strangers are "the norm" passing through Shadowdale, and those who tarry are watched closely by the Harpers to make sure they're not Zhent spies, but presumed by most people to be either Harpers (here to visit Storm) or Zhent spies whom the Harpers will soon deal with; either way, they are treated with cautious courtesy.

Character A: The dragon tattoos will attract interest. Storm will be eager to host her at the farmhouse, to learn who she really is. If the character "came on" to Storm or wanted to dwell with her, Storm would readily accomodate; she isn't adverse to the company of bright, not-actively-unpleasant females in either sense.

Character B: His trait of speaking plainly might well get him in trouble on an individual basis, but in general Dales-folk admire such a trait. Nor do kilts seem strange; many men in the Dales often wear skirt-like loincloths, particular when expecting to wade in wallows, streams, and berry-bogs. As for meeting hot chicks, the dale can provide a few, and Storm and her fellow Harpers would be amused by (and generally welcoming of) any advances, leering, or flirtations. Nor would they think ill of him behaving in such a manner when wed; many of them have "easy" unions or multiple affairs.

Character C: The weird hair would mark her as an outlander, and she might of course be mistaken for a child from time to time, at a distance, thanks to her stature - - but otherwise the Dales-folk would merely accept her. Nor would her relationship to Character A bother anyone in Shadowdale; the Dales think such matters are a person's own business, not everyone else's.

Character D: A pregnant young woman with common sense sounds like many Dale lasses. She'll fit right in.

So saith Ed, who always likes to see new visitors to the Realms.

love to all,
THO

On July 17, 2007 THO said: And a postscript, from both yours truly hooded and from Ed: to createvmind, Purple Dragon Knight, Pardan, and Rinonalyrna Fathomlin, you're all very welcome. Glad to be of help or at least entertainment. More Realmslore on the

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way.

love to all,
THO

July 18, 2007: Hi again, fellow scribes. This time I lay before you Ed's words of response to createvmind's query: "What was recently floating through my head was if you could share any info on Crossroads and Guardians if possible, specifically looking if you actually have Crossroads in Reaching Woods or any land region, and are they always above ground?"

Ed replies:

I prefer to keep the precise locations of crossroads and the nature of their guardians as mysterious as possible in print (mainly because doing so really does make them more useful to DMs than otherwise), but let me say this much:

Crossroads are usually (not always) above ground, many of them are now actually OFF the ground (they opened atop mounds or battlements or in rooms that no longer exist, in structures now vanished or fallen into ruin), and yes, there are several in Reaching Woods. Their guardians quite often try to keep unseen, speaking in whispers at a being's ear only when they believe the being is requesting to use the crossroads or trying to address them. Some guardians employ a floating, flying-about skull, empty helm, or light-mote as the apparent source of their voice, but they are in truth hidden elsewhere, nearby; this ruse is done to prevent hostile spellcasters from successfully destroying, capturing, or magically controlling them.

Aside from a few fictional references (some of them mine) MAGIC OF FAERUN details all we know of this subject in canon printed Realmslore. If you sense NDAs standing menacingly all around me, your senses are working quite well. :}

So saith Ed.

Who has used such "hidden ways" thousands of times in our home Realms campaign, down the years, though he never named or described them as MAGIC OF FAERUN does.

love to all,
THO

July 19, 2007: Well met again, fellow Realms fans. This time Ed answers Blueblade, re. this: "Hi, Ed and Lady THO,

ziresta recently asked (among other things) about Lliira worship in Cormyr. I'd like to ask about the Cormyrean worship of the soundalike goddess, "Leira," the illusion and deception one, before the Time of Troubles. HOW was she worshipped? I don't need NPC names or precise temple locations or anything, just some idea of how the faith operated - - and so, what they might have left behind. Thanks!"

Ed replies:

Leira worship still exists, of course (divine spells are still granted, and so some true believers are of the firm opinion that "nothing bad happened" to Leira; her "destruction" was merely her

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grandest deception yet). Veneration of the Lady of the Mists is secretive and "underground," being done in private chapels by the nobility and in "upper rooms" in Suzail, Arabel, and Marsember by "private clubs" of cultists who use chambers above unrelated businesses owned by cult members, at night. Aside from the damage any sort of deception can do, they are not necessarily "up to no good." They merely need to hide and deceive in all things, as an end in itself. See the Fowles novel THE MAGUS or the old TV series THE PRISONER for the "normal" sort of deceit and secrecy among Leirans.

Leirans believe they must personally practice at least one "important" deception (not necessarily something illegal or harmful) per year, so as to always have a large and growing count of personal secrets. As a group, working with other Leirans in a local cult, it is a sin to deceive other "Dedicated" (those who venerate Leira more than any other deity), but the cult must benefit its members (in wealth, rank, influence, and personal achievement) through secret means. This often means smuggling or tax evasion to achieve wealth; giving false testimony or starting spurious rumors or arranging deceptions so as to enhance the reputation of cult members so they are named to higher offices or win stronger reputations; and aiding cult members with alibis, false testimony, and "red herrings" so they escape Crown punishment for mistakes or crimes.

In Cormyr, municipal officials (the clerks and scribes) are riddled with Leirans, but the War Wizards keep their activities small-scale, delighting in deceiving the Leirans as to how much they know about Leiran cult members - - and about the fates of those members they do apprehend (murderers, rapists, and serious traitors to the Crown). For years, Vangey let Leirans get away with small tax evasions, but moved to close loopholes they used after the fact, just to watch how they found and exploited new loopholes (so he could in turn close them, in an ongoing game).

Certain nobles with "grave" secrets to hide often turned to private worship of Leira, and cult members exploited them for funds and aid in deceptions. This ALWAYS attracted War Wizard investigations, but again the War Wizards appeared to "notice nothing," moving to crush real treason or problems that they "seemed" to discover by other means.

This could well form the basis for a fun little "cloak-and-dagger in the shadows" urban Suzail campaign. I ran one thirteen-episode one at the Brookbanks Library back in 1984, centered on this very matter. The participants were initially disappointed not to have bastard offspring of Azoun in the ranks of PCs (as the previous mini-campaign had done), but ended up enjoying this "Whispers In The Palace" caper far more. Hint: the pillars of any ornate four-poster usually contain a hiding place or three, and such hiding places are always hiding something interesting.

So saith Ed, taking us back (flourish of gently-plucked harpstrings, please) into the past. When I was young and beautiful, and thought underwear should be left behind like calling-cards. Ahem.

love to all,
THO

July 20, 2007: Well met again, all. Alaundo, Ed and I thank you very much for passing on the message from Don Lee, and hope that you can get this response from Ed back to him if he doesn't read this forum:

Thank you very much, Don, for letting me know how much you enjoyed the Elminster novel, when you very much needed "good reads." I'm glad I was able to be of help, and I thank you very much for telling me how much you liked the book.

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I write them for folks to enjoy, and very much appreciate it when someone tells me they did. That means a lot to me.

Money from the publisher or not, there's something soul destroying about putting books out into the Great Silence and hearing nothing back. So when you tell me you really liked it, I perk up and really smile for a day or so. And when you prefer it to Tey's THE DAUGHTER OF TIME, I am awed and humbled. Thank you!

So saith Ed.

Who really is, and is doing the happy dance right now. And promising a "longish" Realmslore answer next time, too.

love to all,
THO

July 21, 2007: And now, by'Jove, it IS "next time."

Hello again, fellow scribes. This time Ed responds to Kuje about this recent query: "Hiya Ed,

I was browsing through your replies from this year and I was wondering if you could expand on your mention of finishing schools that are in some of the large cities. You specifically mentioned Waterdeep and Silverymoon, mostly in the reply from Jan of this year.

So could you note a few more details about the schools and maybe those in a few other cities? I know, this might turn into a large topic but I was curious about those places and so I was seeking more lore."

Ed replies:

It certainly could turn into a huge topic, and I have no intention of providing a long list of academies. (Why? No time, and much of this works best if a DM can create just what they need to best suit their own campaign, with PCs having to discover all they can about a given academy through roleplaying.)

However, here are the basics (add this to what I replied back in January, which appears on page 8 of this thread): glib individuals who are literate (in particular down-on-their-luck longtime professional servants or minor nobles; what Waterdhavian society calls the "fifth, sixth, and seventh sisters" or "idle aunts" and "idle old uncles") or have a particular skill (with a musical instrument, or as a singer, or fencing) set themselves up, usually in upper rooms somewhere (in Waterdeep, mainly in Castle Ward or South Ward; in Silverymoon, mainly in the westernmost streets of the city), to teach or provide practice sessions in return for pay. There are inevitably some "mock" academies that are really houses of prostitution or private drinking clubs for young wastrel nobles (and usually last until uncovered in public scandals), but most of these institutions are quite real and never rise above the level of struggling tutors.

A few, however, have the resources or charismatic staff or connections to establish themselves as "refined." The reason there are so many of them in Waterdeep and Silverymoon is because both of those cities have some social mobility within classes (i.e. money can buy you status), and an ambitious, rising upper-middle-class that wants to aspire to nobility or at least the trappings of nobility. These are the groups that enrich academies that can establish an exclusive reputation,

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so that they expand, gain luxurious appointments (beautiful buildings), and can therefore hold revels or recitals or demonstrations to attract social interest and more clients (allowing them to hire more staff, purchase properties to gain rental income and therefore cash flow, expand again, and so on).

Wealthy or noble patrons sometimes sponsor (give some money to, not own outright or bankroll all the costs of) existing academies, and in return use them (on rare occasions) as private armies or agents (spy on this rival for me, rough up that man as he leaves yonder tavern, buy up all the barley you can find on the morrow).

However, the vast majority of academies are comfortable little establishments, such as three widows sharing a house and instructing young ladies on sewing, good manners, and how to act as a hostess (serving wine, directing servants at table, and the art of small talk). They will have a doorguard, one or more maids, and a regular clientele (akin to a modern real-world medical dentist).

Here are just a few academies (by no means all of them, in any city mentioned), to start you off:

WATERDEEP:

- Mother Tamra's House of Graces (clientele: young ladies of ambitious families, being taught how to wash and groom themselves, fashion sense and how to keep a wardrobe looking fresh [including washing and sewing for repairs], etiquette and carriage [how to walk, sit, and hold one's hands], how to write polite messages, how to politely and with dignity encourage or discourage social entreaties, dancing, and the "right thing to say" in difficult situations; secret clientele: prostitutes or male crossdressers or nobles about to appear in drag at a revel, who desire to learn how to look and act like a young lady of quality): Mendever Street, Castle Ward
- Tartel's House of the Sword (clientele: persons desiring to learn how to fence or defend themselves with or against a light longsword or smaller blade, and a dagger; secret clientele: young nobles desiring to learn how to duel, and to meet young ladies for sex [Tartel is a wencher, and encourages young and beautiful women of all sorts as clients by offering them half-rates; prostitutes are allowed to pretend to be either students or maids on staff by paying full student rates; the rest of their "takings" are theirs to keep]): Seawatch Street, Sea Ward
- Corondorr's Countinghouse (clientele: young guild members and unguided shopkeepers desiring to learn math skills and "how business is really practiced" from a cynical, veteran clerk-of-coin retired from Piergeiron's Palace; secret clientele: swindlers who want to learn all about dodges and what clerks like the sarcastic old Corondorr are looking out for, when business is done in Waterdeep): Aveen Street, North Ward

SILVERYMOON:

- Tantathra's (clientele: folk who want to learn to sing or play simple airs on stringed instruments, or at least learn lyrics to popular songs; not-so-secret clientele: amateur musicians, folk looking to recruit amateur musicians for a revel, feast, or other entertainment event [e.g. shop opening, celebration], folk who love a regular musical get-together; secret clientele: romantic folk looking for lovers): Stormwind Alley (sideline: Tantathra sells teas, wine, ale, replacement strings, lyric sheets, and instruments to clients)
- The Risen Moon Academy (clientele: folk who want to learn how to dance and fence; secret clientele: persons desiring to pay for massages or outright lovemaking from several of the more beautiful female instructors employed by the proprietress, a beautiful, one-eyed retired adventuress by the name of Amratha "Redtresses" Dalree) : Alander's Lane

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NEVERWINTER:

• The Starshine Academy (clientele: those who desire to appreciate [and paint their own] art, acquire herblore, be able to live off the land, and know wild animals by scent, sound, and spoor; secret clientele: those desiring to make potions that induce sleep, freedom from pain, heightened sensations, lust, and calm): Blackule Lane (sideline: the tutors sell paintings, herbs, recipes, "animal tracks" reference drawings, and potions [some, it is rumored, even vend poisons])

SUZAIL:

• Mathulk's House (clientele: males from all walks of life, both masters and servants, desiring to learn how to dress, maintain a wardrobe, walk and dance with dignity, and the "proper things to say and do" in most social situations; secret clientele: women wanting to pretend to be a man for a fancy-dress revel, or women needing to fool others into thinking them male for more serious purposes [includes tactics and special garments to hide the female figure and disguise feminine movements and gestures]): Taumurt's Lane

• Dhannaera's School of Deportment And Sophistication (clientele: females from all walks of life desiring to learn how to wash and groom themselves and others, fashion sense and how to keep a wardrobe looking fresh [including washing and sewing for repairs], etiquette and carriage [how to walk, sit, and dance], and the "right thing to say" in difficult situations; secret clientele: prostitutes and servants desiring to "move up" to higher-class employers): Nethnell Alley (sideline: sharp-tongued Dhannaera makes and sells corsets and bust augmentations, teaches the arts of sexual pleasure to a select and discreet few, and hires herself out as an escort specializing in sexually pleasuring awkward and "green" young noblemen and sons of wealthy wannabe-nobles [for their "first time" or even to tutor them to appear experienced, when their parents want this training and are paying for it])

ATHKATLA:

• Rezunder's Academy of the Coin (clientele: investors, speculators, and shopkeepers interested in learning Amn's ways of doing business, how to make and maintain a reputation in trade, "good bets" for investing, and financial foes and pitfalls to watch for): Methquem's Way

So saith Ed.

Who has used dozens of these establishments in Realmsplay with us, down the years. To Torm, these became notorious ("Aha! Another QUIET LITTLE ACADEMY, nudge nudge wink wink") as places of vice, prostitution, thieving guild fronts, and hidden cults specializing in devouring live chickens or coupling with snakes, or bathing in chocolate [all as part of worship]; Torm termed them "nutbrain cults," and several times got in trouble by using that phrase when talking to local Watch officers or magisters or tavernmasters. But then, the terms "trouble" and "Torm" are rarely separated by much more than the width of his tongue.

love to all,
THO

July 22, 2007: Hi again, fellow scribes. Hmmm, great questions coming in.

Ed fields another question from createvmind this time, to whit: "This time I wish to understand Intelligent weapons in Faerun, how are they given sentience, do living beings voluntarily meld with weapons? Can they be bonded with weapons against their will and more importantly can a possessor fiend enter a intelligent weapon and what happens when this occurs, who dominates who, is it a constant conflict between the two "entities" within the weapon and how does this

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affect unknowing wielder? Thanks for all the insight.”

Ed replies:

Whew. Quite a barrage, there. Where to begin? Well, you’ll see one example of a sentient sword in the last book of the Knights of Myth Drannor trilogy, next year: THE SWORD NEVER SLEEPS.

Intelligent weapons are given sentience in many ways. Sometimes the souls or spirits of dying folk drift into waiting enchanted weapons, sometimes they are put there to keep the person’s sentience alive, and in some cases wizards and sorcerers who desire to live “forever” put themselves into weapons of their own enchanting, as an alternative to lichdom.

Sometimes grieving, sick, disfigured, disabled, fugitive, or just unhappy persons willingly cooperate with a wizard or other spellcaster (such as a priest of Gond) who can “put them into” a weapon; in other words, they DO “voluntarily meld” with a weapon.

However, being in a blade or other intelligent weapon drives most minds mad, over sufficient time (if bored, not if active).

Yes, most intelligent weapons can be bound against their will - - by the very few beings who know how and have sufficient power. A possessor fiend can in some cases enter an intelligent weapon, but usually can’t - - and upon entry, the sentiences may argue and even battle for control, but the resident entity has all the advantages in this struggle, and usually easily prevails, reducing the “second one in” to merely a mocking, powerless commentator.

Sometimes the wielder of the weapon is unaware of this struggle, but usually they can at least tell that something is wrong - - and if the weapon can speak, they almost always become aware of the struggle. A sentience in a weapon that’s having to fight one or more other internal sentiences for control usually lacks (or loses) power and concentration enough to “control” a wielder (any external being that touches the weapon). That doesn’t mean they won’t try to influence (by speech or actions) or affect the fates (by actions) of such wielders, telling the wielder what to do or uttering cryptic warnings or suddenly attacking others or springing from the wielder’s hand in attempts to affect how the wielder is regarded by other beings (“He tried to sword the Princess! KILL him!”).

Geniuses (beholders and the like, and the sort of archwizard of towering will who can readily become a lich, clinging to concentration and intent even through the bodily agony of killing themselves in particular, precise ways) can often manage to quell other wills inside a weapon AND dominate or control the weapon’s wielder, but such sentiences are rare - - and it’s even rarer that they wind up inside a weapon (when they do, it’s often the sort of sentience that can enter and leave the weapon freely, not one “bound” or trapped in the weapon, and so use the weapon as a means of hiding from peril or surviving for long periods until they can find another living body to possess, and thus outlive mortal causes or normal lifespans).

So saith Ed, who has always played with such weapons in his fiction and in Realmsplay. As I know, to my character’s cost (Ed can vividly describe what it feels to have a long, hard, COLD longsword slid fatally up inside your body - - so vividly that I was almost sick, the first time he did so during play). Shudder.

love to all,
THO

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July 23, 2007: Hi again, fellow scribes. This time Ed of the Greenwood responds to Jorkens, re. this query from mid-April: "Good morning Sweet Lady, I have another question for Ed. Looking through some old monsters I came over the Ormyrr again and I started to wonder; what role do these creatures play in the ruins of Myth Drannor and how did they arrive in the area? Are there any more bits of lore about this creature you would be willing to share with us?"

Ed replies:

I'm going to have to dance carefully around some NDAs here and therefore give a necessarily incomplete answer, but let me say this much: the Ormyrr were (or are, depending on how much Myth Drannor has been "tamed" and reoccupied in your campaign) predators among the ruins who survived the passing attacks of demons and devils through cooperation among themselves (ormyrr working together), thoroughly scouting the ruins and knowing where they can take refuge or defend themselves best, and in making use of various local wardings and magical effects among the ruins. I say "passing attacks" because there seems to be something about ormyrr that both demons and devils find... distasteful. Not worth fighting or slaying or bothering about, better avoided, and certainly not to be eaten.

The ormyrr came to Myth Drannor in the same way they have appeared elsewhere in Faerûn: through various portals, opportunistically, not as intended or anticipated migrants from... elsewhere (they don't create their own portals, their places of origin remain mysterious, and portal-creators active in the Realms didn't expect them to show up).

Which leaves them, yes, rather mysterious. :}

So saith Ed.

Ducking and dodging NDAs with grace and agility, all the way.

love to all,
THO

July 24, 2007: Hello again, all. Finally fought my way back into Candlekeep. Whew. This time I bring you the words of Ed of the Greenwood regarding this query from Kuje: "I was curious about if you could supply some differences between the pirates of the Nelanther Isles and the pirates in the Sea of Fallen Stars and Realmspace pirates. Specifically, I was wondering if you could details some superstitions of the three types, plus any pirate codes that they have? I could use some of Earth's pirate superstitions and codes but some of them make no sense for FR, so I was hoping for some FR answers."

Scribe Jamallo Kreen then queried what Kuje meant, and Kuje added: "I meant basically a pirate code of conduct. The book I was reading had a sample of a pirate code. I.E. no woman on board, less they were slaves or there to be.... raped. Or an another example, who got what plunder and how much, etc."

Ed replies:

It's almost impossible to make accurate general statements about any of those three groups of pirates; they're such large categories, including many sorts of races of creatures who took up or

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fell into piracy for so many different reasons, with such a variety of ships. So, let me try. :}

PIRATES OF THE FALLEN STARS gave us a look at the Sea of Fallen Stars pirates, who prey on passing shipping and participate in slaving. These freebooters have a few "friendly" ports (such as Westgate and Teziir at various periods of time) but by and large live as fugitives amongst the islands, fighting among each other only in passing (because they dare not take the time for really wholehearted war amongst themselves, with Sembian and Cormyrean and other naval vessels or hired "banes" (ships whose crews are being paid to hunt pirates) seeking to sink and slaughter them all. So these pirates have strict customs (not written rules or laws, but a code nonetheless, with breakers of that code being shunned by all and attacked by some) governing how they behave towards each other in friendly ports (no-weapons drunken brawls in taverns are acceptable but discouraged, but attacks on ship, cargoes, and armed and deliberate fighting are utter "no-nos"). There are no taboos on women on board in any capacity (and in fact pleasure-boats of whores exist in the Vilhon and in some harbors, as well as female pirates, and female "agents ashore" who keep "safe houses" for injured or sought-after pirates to hide in or hide "too hot" cargoes in, and to act as buying and selling agents and messengers in places where the pirates themselves would be captured or slain outright).

In the Nelanther and in Realmspace, things are far more varied and lawless: there's far more open water or space, and islands or floating-rock refuges to dwell on and hide among, a huge variety of sailors (from many countries, of many races, and for many reasons [for example, the Nelanther and Realmspace have some pirates that are various sorts of creatures that sail the seas to catch and eat sailors, and care nothing for the ships, which they let sail on, unplundered and uncrewed; that sort of pirate is unheard-of on the Sea of Fallen Stars]) indulging in piracy, and (with the exception of the local rules of a very few "safe haven" ports used as common meeting grounds for repairs, refitting, and the buying and selling of cargoes and hiring new crew) no police or code at all except "what sword and spell dictate." Again, there are no taboos against females.

All three pirate locales have superstitions involving "ghost ships" that give warning or presage doom when seen, and "dead ships" crewed by skeletons or undead that hunt down and punish those who have broken codes or individual pacts (if your captain promises Reljack Redbeard he'll not steal from him, and does, "that's a pact broken, and the gods will know," the gods being Umberlee, Mask, and others). The problem with trying to say anything useful to you about the pirate codes is that these superstitions are invoked, embroidered, or ignored by pirates for their own purposes, rather than applied with any consistency.

So saith Ed, who is trying not to tie the hands of DMs (and Realms writers and designers) TOO tightly here. Sail on, cutlass in teeth...

Oh, one thing: Ed neglected to mention the ships that are floating temples; there's one dedicated to Loviatar that plies the Lake of Dragons, Vilhon, and Dragon Reach on a dedicated circuit, "looping" at each port of call so faithful can come aboard at midnight, worship aboard (flogging and being flogged, in various holy rituals) for the next day as the ship sails out of the harbor, around in a great arc and back in again, and disembark on the same wharf again, the next midnight. Torm and Sharantyr posed as faithful and went aboard so Torm could plunder (he escaped by the skin of his teeth, not nearly as wealthy as he'd hoped to become) and Sharantyr could see if she liked pain as much as Torm wanted her to (no, but well enough that she forgave him for bringing her along).

Ah, those Knightly adventures of yore...

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love to all,
THO

July 25, 2007: Hi again, all. Back in November of last year, WalkerNinja posed a question that Ed delayed answering because the contents of the Realms hardcover "super-adventures" (such as CORMYR/The Tearing of the Weave and SHADOWDALE/The Scouring of the Land) weren't final and "set." Ed can still respond only in generalizations, rather than naming specific places and characters, but here we go anyway, with WalkerNinja's straightforward question: "Ed & THO, Are there any active Druidic Circles in the Moonsea region?"

Ed replies:

Yes, despite the strife that has raged in the area. There are two circles in the countryside of the Vast, one in the Border Forest, one that meets north of Deepingdale but has been much weakened by attacks from Sembia, Hillsfar, suspicious elves, and Zhentarim over the years, and one VERY secretive one that works in northern Sembia (among the upland hunting lodges and preserves of wealthy Sembians). The circles in Battledale and eastern Sembia, however, were both exterminated, and the circle that certain druids tried to form in Daggerdale was shattered by hostile agents (of Shade and the Zhentarim).

Unless, of course, you want things to be different in your Realms campaign.

So saith Ed.

Who apologizes for having to be so brief and general, but certain things still haven't "unfolded" yet, that he doesn't want to contradict.

love to all,
THO

July 26, 2007: And Ed replies lightning-swift to createvmind, re. this: "What is the necessity of Druidic circles if it causes druids to be targeted so, are they too stubborn in tradition/rituals to not find ways to succeed without being set upon by so many factions?"

Ed says:

Many druids don't operate in circles. Circles work best when druids have an ongoing need to consult with (share intelligence with), or get aid from, other druids. Except as "secret societies," they are less useful in densely populated areas. The Dragonreach lands have been a cauldron of competing interests (Dragon Cultists, Red Wizards, Zhents, "good" elves, "evil" elves and others desiring to control Myth Drannor, Hillsfar, Sembia, various Dales, the Harpers, Cormyr, expansionist Archendale, and so on and on), and the druids have all too often been caught in crossfires. However, circles can be VERY useful, and several very successful ones are operating (undercover) in the Sword Coast North right now.

So saith Ed.

Who can sing most of "I Am The Very Image of A Personage Druidical" (though it was Ian Hunter, who portrays Lanseril, who composed those G&S-accompanying lyrics, if I recall correctly).

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love to all,
THO

July 26, 2007: Indeed. Ed can confirm that the 40 YEARS OF GENCON book will indeed be on sale at the con - - and still doesn't know about HOBBY GAMES: THE 100 BEST. The latter book is, I understand, in the hands of the printer (i.e. it's editorially "done").

So we'll just have to see...

love to all,
THO

On July 26, 2007 THO said: And I would hope that many, many libraries do so. Although any "best of" is by nature subjective (in the same way that there are furious debates about who won, and who "should have won," the Oscars and many other awards), and the book has space limitations (only a hundred games, only a few pages on each, and the line has to be drawn somewhere; Ed tells me Jim Lowder decided that "active" board games such as shove ha'penny, caroms, and crokinole had to be left out), the book is a valuable snapshot of games for the uninitiated: a snapshot that says "here are one hundred darn good games, here's enough about each that you learn what it is and probably if it's for you or your family or gaming group," and a stellar lineup of gaming designers doing the writing (that's the still-secret part, though I suspect Jim would have put in a rule that no one could write about "their own" game).

In short, EVERY public library should buy it. I urge scribes to suggest it to their local library, because I would be delighted if Green Ronin made big bucks off this. All praise is due Mr. Lowder for thinking of it, pitching it, and doing all the editing work.

Hail, Jim!

love to all,
THO

July 27, 2007: And now, for everyone ...

Well met again, scribes. This time Ed makes reply to createvmind's query: "How are Half-dragon humanoids affected by the Rage if it affects them at all?"

One of my PC's is a half-dragon/ half-wood elf, Amethyst if I recall correctly and with 1373 looming I'm wondering how to drop hints without dropping hints. He doesn't read the novels but probably has the Dragons of Faerun sourcebook by now.

MY thoughts are in the early months of rage he will find himself easily distracted, difficultly to awaken at times suffering bouts of deep sleep, annoyed when made to repeat himself or answer constant questions.

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If attracted to someone their every action or inaction will change his mood instantly, probably not for the better.

During combat he will find it difficult to restrain himself from doing lethal damage especially to enemy that has hurt him in some form. Will sometimes use natural weapons in a situation that clearly calls for something else before restraining himself, such as against a creature that has resistance/immunity to slashing damage. Sense of humor will become more jaded.

As the Rage persist these "moods" will become more intense, his sleeping pattern will range from occasional deep sleep to very little sleep, or vice versa depending on your take on sleep.

I think him seeing extreme violence, blood and gore will cause him to grow highly agitated if not in combat, more bestial if in combat. And his perception while in combat will suffer as he will focus on slaying and not group tactics, even using his breath weapon with companions/noncombatants in area.

My main point is what will his dreams and daydreams/visions be of and being part elven will that help him in anyway during the various stages of the Rage?"

Kuje chimed in with this: "Richard Byers, before Dragons of Faerun came out, said in his thread so many years ago that the Rage would effect half-dragons but with lesser symptoms. Check his thread or my compiled logs. :)

Also, Dragons of Faerun, in the Dracorage Mythal, backs up what he says because it effects all dragon and dragonblooded."

Ed replies:

When I first conceived of the Rage of Dragons (preceding the launch of the published Realms) it was meant to affect all dragons and those with draconic blood to some extent, unless specifically magically protected (i.e. I knew there would be exceptions, but I hadn't worked out who, how, or why).

So the short answer is "yes," the PC WILL be affected by the Rage, and your description of his symptoms almost perfectly matches my take on it. I would say that his dreams will move quickly, usually involving violence or at least chases, change often, and be agitated, involving beings the PC hates or loves or fears or wants the respect of. They won't ALL be bad, but there will be a lot of blood (though the dooms will quickly be replaced by new dreams, not dwelt upon). As a result, he won't sleep well. A sleeping partner will find him restless (moving about often, and from time to time thrashing or sweating and murmuring), and if that partner is also a sexual partner, they may find his dreams lead him to initiative violent sex with them **WHILST STILL ASLEEP** (dreaming).

The elven side of the PC is what is keeping his dreams so (relatively!) innocuous, AND the PC able to maintain any personal control over himself at all. This control, by the way - - unless shattered by external events - - will continue throughout the Rage, so the PC can (with the symptoms you've described and proposed) continue to function in life.

So saith Ed, creator of the Rage and quite a few dragon types, too (fang, deep, electrum, and more). Who has, he tells me, finally recovered from participating in his library's midnight Harry Potter launch (a wild affair of some 300 guests, live owls, a Sorting Hat, readings of the last chapter of the Half-Blood Prince and just a teaser from the very beginning of the first chapter of Deathly Hallows, much food, an Order of the Phoenix meeting, 200 copies of the book being sold

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in ten minutes, and Ed garbed as Elminster whilst his fellow staffers were all costumed as various Hogwarts characters). They're STILL giving away candies and cookies...

love to all,
THO

P.S. Ed tells me he won six different bets as to the outcome of the saga (survival and revealed loyalties of various characters), with the result that no less than SIX publishing staffers from various companies now owe him dinners. Go ahead, publishing houses: feed the starving author!

P.P.S. To Vanidariaen, Ed says: You are very welcome. I enjoy answering Realmslore questions, and just wish I had a LOT more time in my life to do so. Though I suppose many folk feel the same pressure. Please, keep reading, and feel free to add queries into the ongoing ferrago!

July 28, 2007: Hello again, all.

Scribe ddporter recently asked: "Surely I am not the only Savoyard here. What are the chances of seeing these lyrics?" in response to my words: "So saith Ed. Who can sing most of "I Am The Very Image of A Personage Druidical" (though it was Ian Hunter, who portrays Lanseril, who composed those G&S-accompanying lyrics, if I recall correctly)."

Ed replies:

I will try to contact Ian for permission AND for a copy of the lyrics (which may take some time, as he's a very busy and roving fellow). My copy is literally buried in my upstairs study, and may well take years to find. As I recently discovered the hard way, whilst searching for vintage sketches for a forthcoming book, and finding all too few of them.

So saith Ed.

And I strongly suspect that book was THE ANNOTATED ELMINSTER, due out in November.

love to all,
THO

July 29, 2007: Hi again, all!

ddporter, although Ed understudied for the role of Major-General Stanley, he has only actually played onstage the following roles in that particular operetta: the Pirate King and the Sergeant of Police. As far as I can recall, he has also played the Mikado in (surprise!) the Mikado, and, in Pinafore, the Rt. Hon. Sir Joseph Porter, K.C.B. (First Lord of the Admiralty), Captain Corcoran (of the H.M.S. Pinafore), and (!) Little Buttercup. (In drag, obviously, beard and all; I remember the shrieks of laughter from the audience when he flirtatiously sat in the lap of one of the sailors and warbled provocatively, "Come! Of your Buttercup, buy!")

All of this fun befell before the surgeries to his throat and innards that left Ed's voice a mere echo of what it once was (and like almost all deep basses, his voice has been rising into "just baritone" range as he ages, and fading at the top end, too; what he once sang "straight" is now often done

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in falsetto). His parents and one of his sisters remain active singers, often doing some "cathedral" tours (singing in one of the pickup 'touring' choirs that fills in for cathedral choirs across England during the summer). As Ed once put it to me: "They have perfect pitch. I am just a good mimic. I sure miss the days when I could perfectly mimic Paul Robeson."

He could, too; I remember at a party once, someone was playing a scratchy Robeson record, and the record player (yes, children, that's what they were called back then) died right at "river, stay away from my door." Ed, who was standing talking in a corner with a drink in his hand, lifted his head and finished the song, causing an instant and awed hush. As one of the older folks in the room said, "It was as if Robeson was alive again and standing in the room with us." Ed went on into "That Lucky Old Sun" and then "Lazy Bones." Then everyone joined in (or tried to; he was of course singing at a pitch WAY too low for some of the ladies) on "Jacob's Ladder."

The man himself put in a full day at the library today and is now scrambling to write some promised short stories (a story a day), but he did have time to divulge this small bit of Realmslore:

The Steel Regent recently let slip (in a conversation with the sage Alaphondar that was overheard by several folk of Cormyr waiting to present matters to her, for judgement or aid) that she knows of no less than seven bastard children of her father who currently hold positions at Court. (Jobs, not royal ranks or titles.)

It is generally known that Auneth "Blackhair" Druin of the Royal Kitchens (a jovial, busty, curly-black-haired cook some three years younger than Alusair) is a daughter of Azoun IV, and that the shy and effeminate Tarleth Marlenspur, one of the Tailors of the Royal Wardrobe, is that same monarch's son - - but tongues are now wagging "swift and sharp" in debate and speculation over the identities of the other five known-to-the-Regent bastards. It is widely believed that Azoun fathered literally scores of officially unacknowledged offspring outside the bounds of his royal marriage, and that Dowager Queen Filfaeril knows the identities of the great majority of these children, and has befriended (and from time to time assisted or sponsored) many of them.

So saith Ed.

Who tells me this snippet "fell out of" his lore-notes for the current Knights of Myth Drannor trilogy. And that he might be able to find us something on a few of the ghosts who haunt the Palace, too.

love to all,
THO

July 30, 2007: Hi again, all. This time Ed replies to a recent query from Kajehase: "I saw something Katherine Kerr said about the differences between the human and elven physiologies on a mailing-list for fans of her Deverry books and thought it'd be interesting to hear how much of that holds true in the Realms, so:

quote (of KK):

The differences are based on their long lives. I was thinking, well, in folklore elves live for hundreds of years -- to say nothing of the immortal version as per Tolkien. Yet accidents happen to all of us, and to those who live out in the wilderness areas, they may happen even more frequently. Therefore elves must heal faster (this is brought out in DAGGERSPELL, present time section), fight infection better, and also bleed less from cuts than humans.

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I'm postulating that organs like the kidneys and liver, which strain out impurities, must work a thousand times better than ours, too, which would explain the resistance to drink and to poisons (as in Book 4, when the Hawks try to poison Rhodry). Other internal organs, such as the heart, must "self-repair" faster than ours. Those tall if slender frames may have more room inside for a larger heart and lungs.

The liver-kidney function is probably central, though.

Kit"

Ed replies:

Katherine was the third Contributing Editor of DRAGON, as I recall (Roger E. Moore and I were the first two, and she replaced Roger when he became a full-time TSR staffer), and although I tempted to "second" everything she says for Deverry for the Realms, I can't: the game rules say otherwise. Elves just don't "heal faster." However, I agree that their metabolisms must be far superior to those of humans, allowing them to, yes, be resistant to poisons, and to adapt to eating forest flora and fauna that have begun to rot (without sickness or harm), and most importantly: to keep body cells from deteriorating at the rate human cells do (hence: no cancers, fewer diseases, and those longer lifespans: all cells last longer, are cleansed better, and replacement spells are spawned on a better balance, so as to keep the elves functioning for centuries longer, barring violent injury, hostile magic, or death by misadventure). That would in turn suggest more robust organs (or the natural ability to regenerate organs internally, or both). It's quite possible that (given the game rules about regeneration) ALL creatures of the Realms have the ability to store genetic code for all specialized body cells (organs) throughout the body, not just within the organs. Magical healing and the reluctance of living things to cut themselves open just to experiment in hopes of finding answers to such questions have kept the Realms in general from knowing more.

So saith Ed.

Who has spent two days repairing and setting up no less than three iMacs to replace various older and finally dying Macs. As he told me: "It's getting so I can field-strip the things to replace dead CMOS batteries without thinking at all, so I can go right on writing with my other hand."

love to all,
THO

July 31, 2007: Hello again, fellow Realms fans.

GoCeraf, to the tales already noted here by other scribes, I would add Ed's current Knights of Myth Drannor trilogy: Swords of Eveningstar, the forthcoming Swords of Dragonfire, and the still-being-written The Sword Never Sleeps. They feature guest appearances by some powerful Realms characters, but star the Knights as novice adventurers, bumbling and learning as they go. I will forward your query to Ed for his response, of course, but there obviously IS room for "small personal stories" in the Realms.

As far as Realmslore for us all, this time Ed makes reply to The Sage, re. this query from back in May: "Ed, this is regarding the divinatory practice of palmistry. What more can you tell me [other than the few tidbits we've learned about in previous Realmslore] about its notable practioners in the Realms? In which cities and countries may it still enjoy widespread use? Are there places

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where it must, unfortunately, be practiced in secret? And, also, are there locations in the Realms where palmistry may have come into conflict, either directly or in secret, with already established churches and/or state-religions?"

Ed replies:

Palmistry is widespread but not highly popular across the 'civilized' surface Realms. It is frowned upon by some individuals who dismiss it as a charlatan's trick used to influence the gullible, and in some temples on the same grounds (and as "competition" to receiving proper divine guidance through prayer). In rare cases, this opposition has briefly gained official force as palmistry-dislikers achieve positions of rulership or bureaucratic administration, but there are no long-lasting or absolute prohibitions.

Palmistry is regarded as "part and parcel" of fortune telling, which in turn is generally regarded across the Realms as "a way of learning the will or inclination of the gods via untutored, 'attuned' beings, who have no stake in swaying clients as priests do, but who by the nature of their divinations are less precise than priests using the right spells can be."

So individual heads-of-temples clergy may ban palmistry and/or other means of fortune telling, or punish its users or practitioners (either openly and legally, or covertly and through threats and scare tactics), but most clergy view it as either a poor but possibly beneficial or comforting aid in learning divine guidance, or worthless silliness that either wastes time or allows people to be misled and is therefore sinful, or worthless silliness that's not worth getting upset about or reacting to.

Public for-hire fortune telling in general is more openly and daily practiced in Calimshan, the Tashalar, and the Vilhon than elsewhere; in more northerly climes it is more often done in private, or even as part of a secret or semi-secret gathering (either a closed-doors "brotherhood" that meets to arrange matters of law and "what shall be done" in rural communities, or as a ladies' cooking or sewing session, with gossip - - palmistry being done as part of this, and hidden when strangers, children, or men-folk intrude).

Please be aware that the "witches" of Rashemen and many small "secret societies" down the years have devised magical means of placing simple messages or recognition marks on the palms of willing subjects, so some of what is thought by bystanders to be palmistry is actually a secret form of communication or identification (and that some "fortune tellers" perform their divinations entirely as a "cover" for such activities).

So saith Ed.

Giving us all a "ho HO!" moment of revelation in that last paragraph, there. Great question, Sage.

love to all,
THO

August 1, 2007: Hi again, everyone. Ed's last Realmslore answer leads rather logically to his dealing with a query from Rolindin: "So does Corymr have traveling minstrels' shows, circus-type shows, or any other kind of musical traveling-type shows?"

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The second question would be: does Corymr have gypsies that travel around the country, maybe even between countries, keeping up their traveling routes every year?

I ask this because of the traveling entertainment troops in our own history, and because I made up such a traveling troop for my Realms that is called the Zeandril. Kind of based off the Barnum and Bailey early circus style.

With chance games, performers, singers, musicians, fortune telling, story telling, different kinds of monsters in cages, illusion shows, famous stories and tellings from the past with illusions, and clowns and the rest, but Realms style.

Does Corymr have such traveling entertainers, that may be gypsy-like in some ways?"

Ed replies:

The Realms has many, many traveling troupes of entertainers; most "mixed" caravans have at least one minstrel or juggler/peddler-of-toys/storyteller traveling with them, and such individuals - if they aren't "difficult loners" by character - almost always gravitate to traveling about in small groups for mutual protection and assistance. In cases where a charismatic (and/or well-paying) "leader" sort gathers some of these small groups together, successful troupes may coalesce. Most last only temporarily, as egos pull them apart and the "weak reeds" fall away (both those who don't like the traveling life or can't hack it any longer for reasons of age, illness, or failing skills, and those who never wanted to be part of a larger show, and joined up only because it offered a way to get to, and perform in, large [and possibly scary or too distant, to the individual] venues such as Waterdeep, who depart once they've either tasted Waterdeep and want to go home, or because they like Waterdeep and want to stay).

The larger troupes, unless they specialize (in acting, or comedy, or musicianship), are very much like the troupe you created in terms of "the mix" of what they do. However, although there ARE Faerûnian families who enjoy the lives of traveling performers for generations, there is not a Rom or Romany or "Gypsy"-style culture, with the racial, religious, and prejudice-on-the-part-of-others attitudes that involves.

So saith Ed, who can certainly a few do song-and-dance routines of his own when the need arises.

love to all,
THO

August 2, 2007: Hi again, all. This time Ed makes a lightning-swift reply to Uzzy, re. this still-piping-hot query: "Nice quick and easy question this time Ed. What's the name of Alusair's favourite horse? And, if it's not the same one, the name of the horse she would ride in battle? Thanks once again for the lore you share with us on this site."

Ed replies:

You're always welcome, Uzzy; I love doing it. And answering your questions for "right now," Realms-time (up to date, that is, answering for the Steel Regent and not the young teen Alusair seen in the Knights trilogy):

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Alusair's favourite mount is her hunter (jumper and cross-country "runner"), a large black stallion named Rorrel (named after the now-dead noble whose gift to her the stallion was; the princess is reputed to have enjoyed riding the noble as much as she likes riding his namesake.

Alusair's usual and preferred battle mount (heavy war horse) is a HUGE dapple gray gelding named Thundersword. Her "remount" is a large chestnut gelding named Dracorus.

As a royal princess, Alusair of course has ready access to literally hundreds of training riding horses, from delicate palfreys to war horses almost as large as Thundersword. More than a score of horses have died under her in various battles, and she won't willingly risk any of her favourites, except Thundersword, if she's going into a fray that she expects to be dangerous (where her horse will face arrows or hostile spells).

So saith Ed.

Who isn't just pulling names out of hat, here, folks, because we Knights once skulked through a royal stables, and Ed knew the names of every horse whose stall we so much as peered at. I wouldn't be surprised if he knew their pedigrees, for that matter.

And as for riding nobles: I've not knowingly done so, but I HAVE had sex on horseback. In a word: bruising. (My male partner endured much greater pain than I did, and will undoubtedly describe his memories of the occasion in harsher terms.)

Oh, and yes, barring some sort of disaster, Ed will be at GenCon. It's a little hard to hold Spin A Yarn With Ed Greenwood without him.

love to all,
THO

August 3, 2007: Hello again, fellow scribes. This time I bring you Ed's response to createvmind's query: "What magic works within Candlekeep if that's not NDA, If NPC has Rary's Telepathic Bond with someone and enters Candlekeep library can he speak via the magic?"

Teleportation, divination and such that can be done, if this has been mentioned before then ignore please."

Ed replies:

There are strong NDAs relating to this topic, though some hints can be gleaned by reading the Introduction to Candlekeep I wrote for Alaundo some years back. In general, however, all forms of translocation (teleportation), telepathic and mental communication and influence, and "spying," are either prohibited or "clouded" (made weak and unreliable, either not functioning or working for very short distances or durations, or reaching the wrong destinations or conclusions) due to "something about" Candlekeep. Certain high-ranking individuals at Candlekeep seem to be able to "reach out" of Candlekeep to practice such things on a limited basis, and (secret and hidden, one-way-outbound) gates (portals) are known to exist linking Candlekeep with (undisclosed) locations outside Candlekeep, but no one not of divine status seems to be able to "reach in" from outside Candlekeep. Again, only higher-ranking persons of Candlekeep seem to be able to accomplish such magics within Candlekeep (from place to place within the walls, not reaching outside).

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However, specifics (and exceptions) remain, regrettably, mysterious at this time. :}

So saith Ed.

Creator of Candlekeep (the fictional original, not this splendid site), of course. He regrets not being able to properly bring it to life in fiction, yet, and hopes to someday publish his early short story, "The Endless Chants of Alaundo."

love to all,
THO

August 4, 2007: Hello again, scribes of the Keep. Ed has sent me his Realmslore tidbit, so here it is (but first, he wants createvmind and CorranH to know they're very welcome for the lore replies, and to by all means keep Realms questions coming).

This time around, he tackles this question from Athenon: "Hi Ed and THO, I wanted to ask Ed if he has any insight into the hiccup in FR RPG products coming up. Also, any previews of what will be revealed at GenCon? He is going right? Any chance Ed will run a Forgotten Realms game there?"

Ed replies:

I will certainly be at GenCon, barring vehicular breakdowns or other misfortunes. Unfortunately, as of right now it doesn't look as if I'll have time to run any Realmsplay sessions there. Remember, folks, this is a working convention for me, with the need to squeeze in business meetings among the shopping and eating (usually with friends I see once a year, and absolutely refuse to forego my "fun time" with) and sleeping, to say nothing of the events I'm participating in. (As usual, I can't show up at the Wizards' freelancer meeting because it conflicts with something else I've agreed to attend.) However, I will go over my schedule again several times before I depart to attend the show, just in case.

As far as the "hiccup" in upcoming "FR RPG products," I am not now and never have been an employee of Wizards of the Coast, or of TSR. Product scheduling has often been as much a matter of surprise and mystery to me as it is to any other gamer walking into a store, seeing something new on display, and reacting with interest. Not always, but often. For obvious reasons, the timing of product releases is something any publisher regards as vital to their business, and therefore their bailiwick, and theirs to keep secret if they want to. In my "other life" at the public library and as a good customer and close friend of an independent bookstore owner who often gets shown catalogues, I usually see the mini-catalogs WotC sends out to the trade, and so have some advance warning of what will appear when. NDAs of course prevent my saying anything at all about forthcoming products I am involved in, except as Wizards allows - - and that holds true in this particular case, of course. So: sorry, but my lips must remain sealed at this time. (If you want to taste lips that are parted, willing, and eager, I recommend THO's. ;))

So saith Ed, handing yours truly a testimonial at the end there that I purringly agree with.

love to all,
THO

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August 5, 2007: Hi again, fellow scribes. This time I bring you Ed's response to this recent query from GoCeraf: "Mr. Greenwood, if you please, I've noticed, through my albeit limited experience with the Forgotten Realms novels and a response to a question you answered for me several months ago, that the entries into the FR mythos seem to be very much on the grand scale. Heroes and villains battle for the fate of cities, kingdoms, and populations. I don't mean, however, that these are flawed concepts, as we've seen countless times that they work quite well. Is there room, though, for more personal novels in the Forgotten Realms, that tell the stories of the few and separate? Much of the material for the campaign setting comes from those far-reaching entries, and more personal stories would have little-to-no effect on the larger scale Faerun. Does that mean that they're unwanted or unallowed?"

Much thanks,
GoCeraf"

Ed replies:

I don't think so. Just as several helpful scribes have pointed out already, "small-scale" or personal-focus stories make regular appearances in the "quartets" of novels (e.g. the Fighters series). Although I am asked to write books about such key Realms characters as Elminster (and tend to populate my pages with the likes of the Chosen, the royal family of Cormyr, and various Lords of Waterdeep), I try to keep my storytelling closely focused on characters, and feature "unknowns" (such as Shandril, or the fledgling adventurers who became the Knights of Myth Drannor) as my protagonists.

However, regardless of who's sitting in the editorial chairs at TSR or Wizards, down the passing years, any publisher is interested in selling the maximum number of books. One worthy way of doing that is to simultaneously offer for sale on the stores shelves a variety of different styles of fantasy story, from romances to kingdom-shattering war epics to the big setting-altering events that we refer to here at the Keep as RSEs, and from dungeon crawling to piracy to court intrigue. The full buffet, as it were. Something for everyone.

So at the same time as writers (newer writers doing standalone novels, in particular) are telling smaller-compass tales that entertain within the covers of a single book, other writers are spinning larger yarns that will run to three books in length or more - - and those larger tales usually have higher stakes; regardless of how much or how little they change the Realms in the end (the Threat From The Sea, for instance, had a relatively minor long-lasting effect for surface-dwelling mainlanders), they are the "grand scale" stories you mention.

Not everything will be to everyone's taste; that's a given (and a good thing: can you imagine a world where every restaurant had only one meal on the menu? Because that one thing was the only meal every last living person liked?).

The grand scale stories by their very nature upset more readers, and attract more discussion; they can certainly seem to be the perennial centers of attention.

Yet the smaller-scale stories are always there, in part because TSR and now Wizards have always been on the lookout for new writers, who tend to start with single-book projects to get comfortable telling book-length stories and settling into the Realms - - and in part because there is always a demand for stories that entertain satisfyingly on their own, rather than sprawling over many books to do so. I have written trilogies intended as trilogies, but I have also written many more series in which I have tried to tell satisfying stories "inside" each book, so a reader who never has access to prequels or sequels can still enjoy the lone book they do find.

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To turn to fantasy novels in general: there are many series I love, but on the other hand (despite the intense commercial pressure to write sequels to books that have sold well) many of the real classics of the field were intended as, or are, stand-alone books (or remained so for years, until authors or their estates finally gave in to demands for sequels). To note just a few examples: *The Face In The Frost* by John Bellairs; *Tigana* and *A Song For Arbonne* by Guy Gavriel Kay; *The Last Unicorn* by Peter S. Beagle; *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell* by Susanna Clarke; *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien (yes, always intended to be, and thought of as, a single work by its author, but split for length reasons by its original publisher); all of Merritt's fantasies; and most of Patricia McKillip's and Lynn Abbey's recent fantasies.

There's a huge additional bookshelf of standalone books that share a setting with other novels by the same writer, but essentially function as a standalone books (most of Norton's *Witch World* novels, Caroline Stevermer's fantasies; McKinley's *The Hero And The Crown* and *The Blue Sword*; Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, which [to the casual reader, not the author] is linked more by scholarship and material by Tolkien published after his death to *LOTR*, than it is by the published books, unless one reads them in succession and in the right chronological order). Over time, these can build into series, as evolving chronologies and reader demands cause "gaps" to be filled in with new books - - but the individual books for the most part have to "work" as stand-alone stories (one last example of this: Steven Brust's *Khaavren* romances).

So saith Ed.

Who can expound for hours on such matters (few people have fantasy collections as large as his, and his reading is much wider than his collection), and who prefers small-scale, personal-focus stories because - - with notable exceptions he's mentioned earlier, such as Tolkien, May, J.V. Jones and some of Guy Kay's books - - they usually work better as storytelling than the "cast of thousands crashes together" books.

(Yes, GoCeraf, I know you suggested removing this query from Ed's pile unless Ed was already working on a reply - - but as you can see, he was.)

love to all,
THO

August 6, 2007: Hi again, all. This time Ed turns to a still-warm query from *Baleful Avatar*: "Hello, Ed and lovely Lady THO,

I just happened across a copy of *SWORDS OF DRAGONFIRE* in a publishers' warehouse this morning (and am heading over to the relevant discussion thread to post my impressions, after shamefully neglecting all of my other work for 2 hours to devour it), but it prompted me to ask for an update to something that was asked of you (by Faraer? Or is my memory faulty?): what's your bedside reading, Ed, right now? Or in the last week or so? (What you're allowed to tell us without breaking any NDAs, at least.)
Thanks."

Ed replies:

Easily done, and a pleasure. Limiting myself to the past ten days or so, there are three books I can't name for NDA reasons, and a whole bunch of stuff I've been reading and re-reading for World Fantasy judging reasons (about which I'm not going to make any specific mentions or recommendations here, at this time, because to do so would be a trifle unethical before more

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about the finalists is published). And there are the "library duty" books that I MUST read, regardless of my own tastes; a recent and enjoyable one (that I would have read anyway) was the last Harry Potter book.

However, there are also books I am perfectly at liberty to mention, to whit:

A SWORD FROM RED ICE by J.V. Jones, third in a series, forthcoming (October) from Tor. One of the Tor editors sent me this to "blurb," and I absolutely loved it. Highly recommended, AFTER you've read the previous books (A CAVERN OF BLACK ICE, A FORTRESS OF GREY ICE) in this (Sword of Shadows) series (it's not a trilogy; this saga should continue in future books). Jones deftly and ably handles a huge cast of characters better than anyone writing fantasy today except Guy Gavriel Kay and Julian May.

THE WORLD WITHOUT US by Alan Weisman, a recently-released hardcover from Thomas Dunne Books (St. Martin's Press). A well-written non-fiction look at what the Earth would be like if humanity vanished (our cities and other engineering feats being "overgrown," as nature reclaims sway over the changes we wrought). Fascinating.

THE 100-MILE DIET (A Year of Local Eating) by Alisa Smith and J.B. MacKinnon, current hardcover from Random House Canada. I enjoyed this non-fiction book enough to re-read it less than a month after first reading it. It's a "how it felt to us" account of a couple (based in British Columbia, Canada) who tried to go for a year eating only food that had travelled less than a hundred miles from source to their plates. Interesting reading, about a lot more than just the food. I haven't tried any of the recipes that head the chapters yet, but hope to.

SUNDAY ROAST (The Complete Guide to Cooking & Carving) by Clarissa Dickson Wright (the surviving member of the Two Fat Ladies) and Johnny Scott. Brits may know this pair from three seasons of the TV series "Clarissa and the Countryman." Non-fiction, Kyle Cathie Ltd., a 2006 trade paperback reissue of a 2002 Headline original. One of those gorgeous droolworthy books of "food porn" photos and accompanying recipes and lore, all about the "big" weekly main meat dish of a British household. Don't even look at this book if you're hungry. (Unless a huge meal that includes several roasts is piping-hot-ready for you in the next room.)

MAD KESTREL by Misty Massey, forthcoming (2008) from Tor. A romantic light-fantasy (invented setting, touches of magic that anchor the story but don't dominate it) swashbuckling "first novel" about pirates, centered on a female protagonist (Kestrel). I was sent this to "blurb," and liked it. Not to everyone's taste; the action can be swift and furious, but this is far more mood, internal monologue, and personal confrontations than it is hundreds of sworded pirate bodies, flaming sinking ships, Captain Jack Sparrow types, and so on.

THE NEW WORLD by Michael A. Stackpole, 2007 trade Bantam Spectra paperback. Third in The Age of Discovery series (preceded by A SECRET ATLAS and CARTOMANCY). Mike should be well-known to all gamers, Star Wars fans, and comics fans. He once "almost" wrote a Realms novel, and I've never managed to find a bad Stackpole book yet; I pick up everything he writes and devour it; this series and his recent DragonCrown War Cycle of four books should be right up every gamer's alley, as enjoyable reads even if they don't spark campaign ideas.

THE HISTORY OF THE HOBBIT, Part Two: RETURN TO BAG-END by John D. Rateliff, HarperCollins 2007 hardcover. The sequel to Part One: MR. BAGGINS, by longtime Wizards and TSR staffer and reigning American Tolkien expert (accept no substitutes! Aside, Shippey, I say!) John Rateliff. I couldn't wait for the American edition of this second book (coming this fall), and ordered the UK one right away. This is exhaustive and important Tolkien scholarship, but will merely be interesting reading to those who want more straight-ahead Middle-Earth fiction (for

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that, see CHILDREN OF HURIN [sorry, can't do the accent mark over the "U" in this primitive e-mail]).

THE LAST STAND (A Journey Through the Ancient Cliff-Face Forest of the Niagara Escarpment) by Peter E. Kelly & Douglas W. Larson, Natural Heritage Books (The Dundurn Group) 2007 trade paperback. A gorgeous, loving photo-and-text tour of the truly ancient (oldest known one dates from 688 A.D.) stunted cedar trees growing out of the cliffs of the Escarpment that gives the "fox-head" of Southern Ontario its "ears." Of personal interest to anyone (like me) who has hiked the escarpment end-to-end and spent many happy weekends crawling down the Rattlesnake Point caves. A younger, slimmer, more agile me touched many of these trees, and they (and their cliffs and the talus and forest below) are what I think of when visualizing the headwaters of the Delimbiyr (nigh Hellgate Keep).

And that's about it; I had a huge stack of current magazines to read, and favourite short stories (Kipling as well as more recent) to re-read, and so didn't get through much more. Waiting for me tonight: a treat that unfortunately has NDA stamped all over it.

So saith Ed.

Who as you can see still tries to read for several hours every day, no matter what else is happening.

love to all,
THO

August 7, 2007: Hi again, everybody. This time Ed essays an answer of sorts to Auralis, specifically to this query: "Had a few questions in regards to the High Harpers, namely, who and what they might be. It seems, after looking through several sourcebooks that there are mentions again and again (specifically in the FRCS, though curiously no mention whatsoever in Code of the Harpers) regarding High Harpers, but absolutely no in depth information regarding them. Are the High Harpers simply the most senior Master Harpers as mentioned in Code of the Harpers (ie- Elminster, Storm, and the like), or are they some other, hidden-quite-well folks that the FRCS alludes to as being elected by secret ballot? If the latter, is there any information you could provide on them, who they might be (aside from the oh so brief mention of a High Harper Paladin of Milil in City of Splendors: Waterdeep), and if they receive any blessings from the harper deities beyond that of a Master Harper? Thanks!"

Ed replies:

No, I'm afraid I can't provide much, beyond pirouetting like a fashion model to show you the bright, elegant NDAs I'm wearing. Yet ere I race back into the wings, let me whisper just this much: no, they are not "simply the most senior Master Harpers," and therefore, yes they are "some other" folks, who - - yes again - - are indeed "hidden-quite-well" for the most part. As to their organization, strength (beyond saying that their numbers are small), and special powers, if any, not to mention special relationships with deities, if any: about those matters, I can say nothing at all. Yet.

So saith Ed.

Who probably added a silent "Bwoohahaha!" to that last word. Yes (he just e-pinched me), he did. Saucy fellow.

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And I LOVE rich sauces...

love to all,
THO

A postscript for The Sage and others interested or potentially interested in SWORDS OF DRAGONFIRE: Ed tells me that there is a "treat" coming up on the Wizards website related to the book. No, not the wallpaper that you can download right now, nice though it is, but something written by Ed.

Remember that "encounter" Ed had with the Seven Sisters?

No, it's not a sequel to that, it's - - no, Ed won't tell me. Yet. You'll just have to wait and see...

love to all,
THO

August 8, 2007: Hi again, all. Back in May, Kuje posed a two-pronged array of animal-related questions. Ed will leave the second and more heavy-duty set of queries for another time, but reply as much as he can to the first array of questions, which are these: "Whatever happened to the two hounds that Storm had in the early material? Where did she procure them? What were their names? Did they have any puppies? Etc. Details Ed, please! :)"

Ed replies:

Those weren't canines born-and-bred, but rather humans forcibly shapechanged into that form for a time by Mystra, as a penance (so the arrogant pride that had led them to transgress would be broken or tempered by having to serve others for a time, in hound shape). Their follies, real names, and stories are self-imposed-NDA for now (personal 'home Realms campaign' and possible future Realms fiction reasons), but Storm (who knew their true natures and all about their punishment; and yes, they were aware she knew) called them "Arauth" and "Beldobran" (after two early servitors of [the first] Mystra who gained great power in Her service, and ultimately sacrificed themselves to defend her and the Weave). So, no, they did not have any puppies. :}

So saith Ed.

Revealing the minimum he has to, for the reasons given above. WELL, now (as Torm would drawl), THAT'S interesting...

creativmind, Ed sure HOPES Wizards (and other vendors; there's a Borders book booth down the western end of the exhibit hall) will have copies of SWORDS OF DRAGONFIRE at the con, but he can't get confirmation on that, nor learn how many they'll have (they ran out the first afternoon one year, and only avoided running out the first day, another year, by rushing a second shipment to the con [both shipments sold out, but at least there were some copies still to be had on "the big day" (Saturday)]. He'll keep trying to get word on that, in the few days he has left before starting the drive down...

love to all,
THO

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August 9, 2007: Hi again, fellow scribes of these candle-filled halls. I bring you the words of Ed, this time to Kajehase, re. this: "Greetings Ed and the Hooded One. I was reading Ed's Elminster's Guide to the Realms article in Dragon #289 - "The Shunned Street" - and now I'm wondering how widespread knowledge of the Arcane mark ward spell presented therein is. Is it a Thayvian exclusive, or does wizards of other regions also know of it (or of identical spells researched independently)?"

Ed replies:

That particular spell is a surprisingly overlooked magic, given that it is quite widespread. "Out of fashion, and therefore out of mind" is perhaps the best way to describe it. Like spats. Many of us have seen them in movies, worn by W.C. Fields or any number of others, but very few of us own any, or customarily wear any, or even know where to readily get any.

So, no, the spell is not a Thayvian exclusive, and its fairly simple nature (utilizing spellcasting forms that can be described almost as "mainstream") lends it to readily being researched or experimentally derived independently. It just hasn't (yet, perhaps) "caught on" much. Unless you as a DM want it to, of course. :}

So saith Ed.

Creator of enough D&D spells to fill a book or two (oh, wait; they already have). But then, he never stops weaving new magic...

love to all,
THO

August 10, 2007: Hello again, all. Ed has chosen to respond this time around to poilbrun's post just two above this one, so I won't repeat it here. Ed says:

Please accept my good wishes! I have to admit that I just coined (invented) both of those names; they aren't translations or even derivations of anything except that they had to "look and sound" female (the "ra" ending, for example), and they had to "sound right" when applied to the two characters I invented them for. One can see the word "lass" in the middle of "Alassra," but I didn't deliberately build the name around that word (unlike, say Alustriel, which WAS deliberately built around the word "lust").

So the two names, so far as I know, don't "mean anything" in an old language or have any intended hidden meanings. I would feel honoured if you chose one of them for your daughter, but of course you should do what I did, when creating them: say them, read them, and use them over and over, consciously applying them to the human being you want to apply them to (along with any other naming choices you may have selected), and in the end pick the one that seems "right" to you.

It would be wrong of me to try to influence this decision in any way, beyond providing the bare answer to your question, so I'll end now. Happy choosing!

... And there you have it; Ed's answer. Smiling just as he is, I leave you now,

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love,
THO

August 11, 2007: Hello again, all. Once more I place before you the words of Ed of the Greenwood, creator of the Realms, this time in response to Bahgtru's question: "Last year you responded to a question of mine about Madeiron Sunderstone and indicated he is a character you would like to write about time permitting. Any chance he will find print in the near future? Thank you in advance!"

Ed replies:

Unfortunately, not that I know of, unless a scribe who reads this is crafty enough to suggest his inclusion in the next Spin A Yarn tale at GenCon. (Even then, your definition of "near future" may not fit how long it may take to get that story "up" on the Wizards website; I've recently learned that the 2006 yarn still hasn't appeared.) However, I'm still interested in Madeiron and consider him one of the many "neglected" characters of the Realms I'd like to see more of. One way or another, I would still like to get him into some of my Realms fiction...

So saith Ed, voicing his eternal lament of "Not enough time! Not enough wordcount! Not enough breadth in these products, to sneak in all I want to sneak in!"

I fear the reasons behind those complaints are not going to go away. Ever. Yet consider how much we've already got. The Realms IS the most detailed fantasy setting yet, and still unfolding before us, more than forty years after a young Eddie sat alone with it in his father's den...

love to all,
THO

On August 11, 2007 THO said: Jorkens, are you familiar with Ed's coverage of Turmish in his "ELMINSTER'S EVERWINKING EYE" column in the old POLYHEDRON Newszine? Ed covered the countryside, not the cities. I know there are indices ("indexes" to Americans) out on the Net that cover which POLY issues have what...

love,
THO

On August 11, 2007 The Sage said: Indeed. As I recall, the POLYHEDRON articles feature lore on Turmish that didn't make it into *Vilhon Reach* accessory. The coverage of Turmish in POLYHEDRON:- #96, 98, 101, 103-108.

Sage, thanks for providing the issue numbers. I wasn't an RPGA member, and have always had to peek at Ed's issues.

However, Ed wrote those articles well before Jim Butler wrote the VILHON REACH sourcebook, so they can't be "leftovers" from it. In those days, Ed was so busy (heh; big change from THESE days, hmm?) with other Realms writing projects that he used to drop everything for a week and write 20 or so Poly articles and fire them off to the editor, so there'd be a large stack of not-yet-published text that the editor could rely on (lots of POLY articles got "donated" at the last moment by overworking TSR staffers, or arrived long after being promised by RPGA gamers who were

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great at designing and playing, but not so great at sitting down and formally typing up their stuff). So some of Ed's stuff was written and submitted two to three years before it got published.

love,
THO

August 12, 2007: Hi again, scribes. This time Ed answers Rolindin's followup circus queries: "Then thank you for the answer Mr. Greenwood.

The next question about such entertainment traveling troupes is: where do you think they would have a permanent settlement?

I do remember that in Florida there is a retirement circus town, where all the performers go on the off-season and retire there, to raise their children to follow in their crafts.

To me, in the Realms I would think that a small town in the North, maybe by Longsaddle somewhere, is a good place to put such a town. Maybe by the captial city of Corymr, a small town for the performers also. Far enough away but not too far.

Where do you think such traveling troupe retirement and off-season towns would be at? If you don't mind me asking."

Ed replies:

Florida is one of those warm-winter sites where folks don't have to worry about freezing to death in winter without chopping lots of wood, or fighting off wolves, or having no green growing things to eat (herbs, vegetables, et al). The same concerns tend to hold true in the Realms: Longsaddle is "just inside" the cold, snow-swept, orc-raided, monster-roamed North. Waterdhavian patrols reach it in winter only when snows permit, and merchant caravans often don't reach it at all.

Similar considerations will prevent all but the wealthiest performers from wintering over in friendly-to-such-artistes Silvermoon or Everlund—and the high cost of daily living would make most of them shun Waterdeep, too (exceptions in all cases being those who can "stay on the cheap" with family, or work at a "winter job," usually craftwork of some kind).

Traveling troupes are far more likely to winter over in southern Tethyr, the Vilhon, and more southerly areas (near Innarlith, for example, or in the Border Kingdoms, or down in Luiren).

Cormyr is "law and order" safe, enough, yes, but still has a harsh winter climate—and most traveling performers will by nature mistrust the surveillance "everyone knows" the War Wizards perform on everyone and every place in the Forest Kingdom.

Remember, acrobatic entertainers need warm weather, cheap food and accomodation, and relative safety, so they can keep their muscles relaxed as they practice, readily recuperate from injuries suffered on the road, and live cheaply and easily. That usually means dwelling on farms, villages, and hamlets in lush, warm, lightly- (or fairly-) ruled areas.

So saith Ed.

Who does think all of these things through. At a great and ongoing cost to his sanity.

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love to all,
THO

August 13, 2007: Thank you, Alaundo. Methinks that scroll has been floating around for some time; it must refer to Ed's tour for ELMINSTER'S DAUGHTER (!). Nevertheless, I shall forward it to Ed for his reply...

Hello again, all.

Back in May, Zandilar posed a quartet of questions; Ed has dealt with the first, and now tackles the fourth, leaving the two "middle queries" for later occasions. This fourth question was: "Do War Wizards retire at all, or is their membership lifelong? Could a War Wizard request to be taken off active service, and perhaps play a teaching/support role?"

Ed replies:

Yes, War Wizards do retire - - but as both Laspeera and Vangerdahast have been heard to say on occasion, "War Wizards never REALLY retire." (Meaning: the rest of the War Wizards keep a close watch on them to make sure they don't go mad or turn traitor, or succumb to the temptation to use the secrets or magic they've learned to blackmail anyone or settle scores with other citizens in ways that upset the peace (they'll turn a blind eye to an aging War Wizard "paying back" a dishonest or cruel noble or swindling merchant, but step in if the War Wizard turns into a local "quiet tyrant" over a community or rural area).

Most War Wizards retire because they grow sick of all the deceit they uncover or are made aware of, or become too old or disease-twisted to deal with the demands of War Wizard missions; they don't want to feel "abandoned" and lonely, and welcome visits from colleagues who "keep them up to date" with (usually censored versions of) what's happening within the Wizards of War.

Many "retired" War Wizards become paid-by-the-Crown tutors of younger War Wizards and other Crown agents and bureaucrats, sharing their expertise about particular Cormyrean families and businesses as well as magical matters.

So yes, they can request such "retirement duties." Realmslore to date has recorded little of such folk by the very nature of the excitement we're usually chasing, in print, but that doesn't mean they don't exist. Becoming "house wizard" to a noble family whose members are all aging is another form of "less-than-energetic" service; see my current Knights of Myth Drannor trilogy for some examples of house wizards.

So saith Ed.

Creator of the War Wizards, Vangerdahast and Laspeera, Cormyr and the Realms and the little black cloth bookmark Vangey used to mark his place in the salacious "heaving-bosoms" chapbooks he secretly took to reading in recent years. Little knowing that Laspeera (under a pseudonym, of course) wrote some of them. (And yes, this little aside is canon; it comes to me directly from Ed.)

love to all,
THO

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August 14, 2007: Hello again, all. This time Ed makes a tiny start on a huge query recently posed by Skeptic: "I would really much like a short description of all the "empty" areas of realms. By "empty" I mean all the place light-green colored on the FR interactive atlas. Generally, all the place between forests, swamps, mountains, cities, etc. I don't want so much place-specific details, but a general picture.

When I DM, it's always those areas that I have the more trouble describing to the players : settled or not settled? If settled, only farms/herding lands or hamlet (like Rassalantar but not on map) ? What's the density of the settlements? etc.

Of course the main areas would be : the North, Cormyr, Western Heartlands, Amn, Tethyr, Sembia, the Dales, Moonsea north, etc.

It's something that I guess Ed could come with quickly (not meaning he will answer fast) but if it's too much of work for what can be done here, I'll understand.
Thanks."

Ed replies:

A great request, but a BIG one.

It's personally difficult for me because a lot of the "Realms in my head" no longer match the published Realms, thanks to the 3rd Edition maps of the Realms inexplicably altering overnight from the 2nd Edition maps, in those same "empty" areas you refer to (read SWORDS OF DRAGONFIRE carefully for the words of a wandering Harper, and what a senior War Wizard says about portals, for the glimmers of an in-game explanation of this change).

It's also large in scope because we're talking about "describe all of the empty countryside of a large and varied continent" here.

So in this answer, I'm going to cover just two small and easy parts of your request: Cormyr and (tomorrow) the Western Heartlands.

Cormyr:

In the Forest Kingdom, the "open empty areas" are generally lightly settled throughout the coastal south and around the Wvyernwater, but almost deserted (except for hermits, outlaws, and a few "loner" shepherds, prospectors, and hunters) in the West Reaches, the Stonelands, and much of the northeast (north of the Hullack Forest).

In general, the West Reaches and the Stonelands are mainly bare rock with shallow soil, where the rest of the realm has deeper, richer soil.

So this "rest of the Realm" can be described as gently rolling, and dominated by small farmsteads: low, modest stone or timber, sod-roof barns and homes surrounded by a mix of fallow fields/pastureland and sewn crops, fields walled by lines of heaped-up stumps-plus-stones (inevitably: the tangled canes of berry bushes and scrub trees grow up among them), and woodlots.

Where there are no farms, the countryside is wild grasslands overlaid by scrub woodlands (everything was logged over extensively in the past, and lone large trees have been harvested

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ever since), with marshes of standing deadfalls, stagnant water, and much wild "bush." Extensive Purple Dragon patrolling has led to cart tracks-paralleled-by-grassy-rides crisscrossing even deserted countryside (so the patrols can "get around" swiftly), with campsites (felled treetrunk seats around a firepit) on most heights of land (these can be used by any travellers). These tracks have no signage, but their moots with main roads usually have markers of heaped stone with graven and painted marks on them: a simple picture (so a Dragon commander can tell his men: "Turn off on the track at the sign of the sliced-in-half apple") plus a direction and distance to the next settlement ("Waymoot: half a day" and an arrow).

So in this countryside, windswept heights will almost always be grasslands (the Purple Dragons have cleared them of trees, to use as lookouts and so that invading forces can be seen crossing or occupying them (regardless of the relative paucity of invasions, down the years, the Dragons are sent out on "exercises" against each other, with another Dragon unit "playing the invader"), and the downslopes are usually thickets of bushes and saplings of the aspen (poplar), birch, and willow sort, with beeches, maples, oaks, walnuts, chestnuts, and duskwoods all growing more rarely amongst them (and many of these older trees have been scarred by lightning, had boughs lopped off them for firewood, or have been coppiced). There are some short cliffs (falls of perhaps twenty feet) and talus or scree (rocks fallen from weathering cliff-faces), but the land is relatively gentle.

So saith Ed, who will return with a description of the "open empty areas" of the Western Heartlands next time.

love to all,
THO

Hello again, fellow scribes. This time Ed returns with his promised second part of replying to Skeptic's request for descriptions of the "open empty areas" of the Realms, as follows:

Western Heartlands: This is a LOT of area, and so encompasses a wide variety of terrain, but the majority of the countryside is gently rolling hills (drumlins) covered by trees, with all of the downslopes and bottom lands being wild grasslands (like tallgrass prairie). There's lots of gravel and sandy soil (digging is easy), open water is relatively scarce but the land isn't dry (dig down far enough, typically four to seven feet, and you can find wet earth and, if you sink a helm or cup into the wet earth, it will soon fill with water enough to drink), and tiny trickling creeks and rills, that rise from the earth and then vanish down underground again (rather than forming larger rivers or lakes) are plentiful.

Birds, large fluttering insects, and other wildlife are also plentiful (hunters and snarers can readily feed themselves as they travel), and this is "big sky" country, with lots of sunlight, clouds moving swiftly overhead, and fast-moving, sweeping storms rather than long, soaking rains. Mornings and evenings tend to be misty, because nights are markedly colder than days.

Some parts of the Heartlands have small cliffs, crags, and "badlands" erosion-faces, and are windier and dryer than the rest of the countryside. These sometimes have small caves (usually beast lairs) where such are very rare in the rest of the Heartlands.

Most of this countryside is uninhabited by "civilized" races, visited only by travellers who camp and move on. Orc hordes and other large armies can move fairly freely in such terrain, and so have swept over it repeatedly in the passing centuries. Ranchers sometimes graze herds as they move through it (guarding the herds from wolves and other predators with mounted spear- and bowmen), but permanent habitations are usually waystop hamlets or fortified inns along the trade-roads. Elsewhere, long-deserted ruins (occasionally used as monster lairs or outlaw bases) are

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the only buildings likely to be found.

So saith Ed.

Your Realms geography professor (and history professor, and sociology prof, and...)

Ed is starting the drive down to GenCon, and so will fall e-silent until next Wednesday, so I, too, will take a vacation from Candlekeep and do some of my work tasks that are better performed whilst maintaining e-silence. However, don't stop posting those questions! I KNOW there will be a flood of them after certain soon-upcoming news breaks...

love to all,
THO

August 15, 2007: "Hey Ed, I've got another question for you [shudder], though it's not Realmslore-related.

I picked up my copy of *Dragons of Krynn* earlier this morning and was pleasantly surprised to see a brief contribution from your very own quill contained within this tome. Needless to say, I was definitely intrigued by this so, naturally, I was wondering whether you could tell me a little more about how this came about?"

Ed replies:

Surprise! I was able to get hold of Ed en route down to GenCon, re. The Sage's request, and here's his reply:

Sure. Margaret asked me. :}

Literally; Margaret Weis and I are friends, of course, and she e-mailed me to see if I was interested. I was delighted (Margaret is not only my friend, but a lovely person, a great lady, and a darned fine fiction writer and fantasy designer; if she calls, I come running), and wrote something that I BELIEVE (but am not sure) was tweaked by Sean Everette to make it more Krynn-ish. (I haven't yet seen the end result, but he did send me an e-mail asking if I minded his rewriting it, and I said fine.) Whatever form it's in, I hope it entertains; I look forward to getting myself a copy, at GenCon. Hope you enjoyed it.

So saith Ed.

He and I will DEFINITELY fall silent now, for a week, but don't stop the questions coming; I've sent Ed the latest batch, and they're great, scribes!

love to all,
THO

August 24, 2007: Hello, all!

Ed is finally back from GenCon, and responding to this lore question from Jamallo Kreen: "Well met! In Waterdeep, is there anything distinguishing or "special" about doors which let out into

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alleys? Do businesses place signage at the back door as well as the front? Are alley doors stronger or better defended than front doors? If a building has a basement, is it common practice for it to have an outside entrance to it (like the cellar doors so common in the midwest, as in *The Wizard of Oz*)?"

Ed replies:

Confining my reply to within the city of Waterdeep: alley doors are always stout and fitted with inner bars (heavy-duty metal hooks on door and frame that form a cradle that squared timbers can be dropped into, across door and frame, to hold the door firm, so some strong men with axes can't get through the door without taking some time and making a lot of noise). They very rarely display any sort of signage, but may bear little painted symbols so someone trusted can be told to go "six doors down, to the door that has the little purple helm painted high up on it" (high up, in this case, meaning out of normal reach).

Basements almost NEVER have outside entrances with "storm cellar" doors (over stairs) adjacent to the walls, in Waterdeep. The buildings of nobility and the wealthy may well have secret passages "arising" in other buildings (e.g. underground tunnel to stables, stairs come up there), and except in Dock Ward where flooding makes cellars of any sort rare, the "common" city buildings usually have cellar entrances either into sewers (VERY stout doors, or trapdoors), or "back stairs" that come up to street-level doors adjacent to the main entrances of the buildings they're attached to.

So saith Ed.

Whose comment about getting past anger, Kuje, was, he tells me, in the context of "I know some will be upset; 4th edition or any change can be upsetting, but anyone who'd like to talk it over with me, I'll try to take it past the anger and upset stage to try to reassure you that we plan to keep right on developing the Realms and answering Realmslore queries and making it ever-more-detailed and ever-better. I sure hope no one is trying to wreck the Realms, and certainly don't think that's the intent of anyone."

Of course, Ed would be just as happy if we had no game-rule stats in any Realms work, and just filled the pages with lore.

No, he didn't feel stalked by anyone (he DOES have two male and one female stalkers, and one of the male ones was at the con this year, but Ed is perfectly happy to hang out with them), and wishes he had more time for everyone. He was rushing, Sanishiver, to get back to his room and escort his wife to a private Wizards function, and he was rushing when you saw him, createvmind, to get to the Indiana Roof Ballroom for the VIG Dinner so as to be there in good time to get his guests in past the door-Nazis, and to meet with some gamers he'd promised to talk to.

And George: sorry I missed you, but my reach is long and my aim getting ever better. Ed tells me I'd really like you. (You're going to have to imagine that I'm murmuring that as I wink and slide my flank alongside yours, not trying to upset family men at all.)

Ed himself wishes that he'd had more time (and fewer obligations) Sunday night to have a last dinner with you and Brian, too. He did tell me that on one day at this GenCon he had two breakfasts, four lunches, two dinners, and then (as he puts it) "the best meal of the day," abed with his wife in their hotel room, late in the evening (and no, he's not handing out entendres there, he means it literally).

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Love to all,
THO

August 25, 2007: Hello again, all. This time I bring you Ed's responses to Skeptic's recent queries: "What is the ratio of the work done on the new FRCS will come from freelancers (like Ed himself, Eric Boyd, etc.) vs the WotC staff ?

An easier one, I would bet a lot that D&D 4E is more in line with what Ed would like in a RPG than D&D 3.x was, I'm winner or looser?

Any talks about resuming the "Border Kingdoms articles" on DnDInsider?"

Ed replies:

As to whether or not the FRCS is to be done wholly or partially in-house: I just don't know. Yet. A certain lovely novel editor wants THE SWORD NEVER SLEEPS in her hands before I even go asking, so I'm being VERY good. Right now, my best guess would have to be: largely in-house.

As for 4th Edition, I also have to say: I don't know yet, because I haven't seen the 4th Edition rules. I do know they aren't finished, and that everything has been done in-house thus far. The thrust and shape of the rules certainly SOUND like they're closer to what I love in roleplaying, yes.

I have already promised to get back to work on the Border Kingdoms ASAP (I am crushed under workload at the moment; by year-end I will have written, if I don't get run over by a dragon or blow too many deadlines, SIX novels, parts of yes, SIX game products, and over forty short stories or articles, all in 2007). Whether or not those articles will appear on the free part of the WotC site or within DDI or somewhere else, I don't know (and of course it's not up to me).

I re-sent the 2006 Spin A Yarn tale in before driving down to GenCon, and have not yet received the story elements list from the 2007 con session from the lovely Shelly. Scribes will by now have noticed that other intrepid writers are now penning "Realmslore" instalments. Folks, I just can't keep up (so little time, so many babies to father...)

So saith Ed.

Making the joke I was about to make at the end, there. So there you have it. Ed is chuckling his way through scenes in THE SWORD NEVER SLEEPS (the third Knights novel) as we speak; to this heavily-biased reader, at least, it looks like it will turn out to be a solid, readable (and re-readable), thoroughly entertaining trilogy. Go Ed! (But not too far. I still have need of you, and the whips are dry.)

love to all,
THO

August 26, 2007: Hello again, all. This time I bring you Ed's response to AlorinDawn, re. this: "ED & THO, Yet another non Realmsian query. Ed, have you been working on or heard of any plans to bring more Castlemourn material to us?"

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Ed replies:

Yes, I have heard of some plans. Yes, I've been working on them (back-burner, behind my other frantic, up-front workload). Nothing definite yet, and the opportunity I hoped to have at GenCon to sit down privately with Margaret Weis Productions staff to REALLY plot and plan didn't materialize; everyone was just too busy. However, I certainly hope to have that talk when I can. There are just these three novels to get out of the way first, or at least the most pressingly urgent "first two" of them. Honestly, I just can't keep up at the moment, but am doing my best. I could have skipped GenCon and bought myself another week of writing time, but that's a sacrifice I didn't want to make, for Realms fans as well as me. I thought it was far more important to "be there" to meet George Krashos and Brian James for the first time, as well as old friends, gamers, and designers I look forward to meeting every year, as well as to be on hand to talk to gamers (such as yourself) who make the trek to GenCon for the first time. It recharges my batteries, so to speak, by giving me direct contact with the people I'm doing all of this for. So I slide another week behind... and I'll get to Castlemourn when I can. Promise. Full disclosure: I work on and in lots of other fantasy settings, too. :}

So saith Ed.

Weary creator and co-creator of fantasy worlds (the Realms, Castlemourn, Falconfar, Embersea, Mornmist, et al). Who STILL hasn't unpacked from attending GenCon yet, aside from washing the dirty laundry.

love to all,
THO

August 27, 2007: Hi again, scribes. Ed responds to another AlorinDawn query this time, to wit: "Ed & THO, I've left you two be long enough >=).

My question this time is have you ever DMed a group of planes jumpers who ended up in a more modern era (Old West or current time) other than the time you mentioned having your players pop out near your home, in game?"

Ed replies:

Yes.

Here's a partial list: current time (more than once), Hundred Years War -era (England and France fighting in France), upland outlawry whilst Stephen and Matilda were fighting for the crown of England, and between the two World Wars in upper-class "country house" England (hunts and shooting parties). Great fun, if done sparingly. If you do this, take care to NOT have it be when campaign play is faltering or becoming humdrum, or it can tug play out of the Realms (or wherever your campaign is set) permanently, often leading to play fading away because the players are no longer immersed in a setting they've invested time and interest in.

So saith Ed.

Wise words, indeed; that very calamity in his last sentence befell two other campaigns I have dabbled in. When the magic is gone, switching costumes rarely rescues the situation all by itself.

Oh, and one last note, AlorinDawn, re. Goodman Games: Ed says:

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In the works? News to me! I guess the "works" haven't yet reached the 'somebody ask Ed Greenwood if he's interested' stage. :) Don't get me wrong, I'd love to write one. Chorus:When I have time!!!

So, beware booth spin! PDK, I have forwarded that thread (thus far) to Ed so he can see the scribes planning to assemble. Sounds like a "date" will have to be added to his con schedule next year!

love to all,
THO

August 29, 2007: Hello again, all. Ed is temporarily snowed under by visiting family and a flood of urgent "writing business" requests (Canadian listeners: Ed did an interview on the coast-to-coast radio program SOUNDS LIKE CANADA today), but he did manage to tackle this most recent Woolly Rupert request: "...And I'm back with more questions for my own queue. These are both about Waterdeep, the greatest city in all the Realms.

First, what's with the "Upper Downs", that walled-in but empty plot of land north of the Sea and North Wards? It looks like a great place for some development, but is for some reason left untouched by an otherwise crowded city... I'm quite curious about that.

Second, exactly why is it illegal to fly into the city without permission? Is that simply a security precaution? That seems unlikely someone wanting to do something bad would likely ignore that law, just as they would ignore other laws..."

Ed replies:

The Upper Downs are kept clear of permanent structures and ongoing habitation by Lords' decree. They are a field used by arriving caravans to disassemble in an orderly fashion, departing caravans to assemble ditto, for hiring affairs (by permit), the grazing of livestock by citizens and by resident livestock-sellers (by permit), for "assembly" of large items, experiments, et al (by permit), and for residents of the city to receive riding lessons (by permit). Informally, they are used for picnics, open-air strolling "business meetings," and caravans hiring guards from hopeful residents of the city.

In case of war or imminent attack, they are to be used for troop assembly and training, and then to shelter (encamped) folk from Goldenfields, Amphail, and other nearby communities.

As for the flyover bans, they are now for security reasons (preventing smuggling, hired "snatchings" of citizens, and guild strife, as well as hampering attacks on the city), but originated early in the city's history, when rival noble houses took to flying various aerial steeds over the walled compounds of rivals, and "accidentally" dropping unpleasant or deadly things down on the heads of said rivals. This quickly escalated into nightly "warfare from the skies" (arson, attackers dropped down on lines to butcher servants and mounts in stables, etc.) trouble that was quashed just as swiftly by this ban. Which various guilds and nobles have defied down the years, only to be heavily fined and/or suffer the imprisonments of members, for the same "stop it before it gets right out of hand" reason.

So saith Ed.

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Who I can attest is explaining reasons he provided to questioning players back in the very early 1980s. He does think all of these things through, believe me.

Love to all,
THO

August 30, 2007: Hello again, everybody. Ed is still struggling to cope with family and pressing deadlines, but has as usual found time to tackle a Realmslore question from the ever-growing mountain. Another recent one, this time, from scribe Malcolm: "I have a question, too, this one arising out of Ed's superb new novel, Swords of Dragonfire. In "right now" Cormyr, with the usual intrigues raging but the country not officially at war, are War Wizards often assigned to spy on a particular "troublesome" Cormyrean noble family as a continuing, long-term assignment? Or are nobles "hands off" unless Vangey or a royal family member raises the alarm, or a noble publicly does or says something treasonous?"

One note: I know Dragonfire takes place in the past. I do mean "right now" as in: where Realms time has advanced to as I post this, with Grand History not yet released.

Thanks in advance!"

Ed replies:

Yes, War Wizards spy on particular noble families as a matter of standing policy, in two ways:

1. The "house wizards" hired by, and on staff at, almost all noble households are either War Wizard plants or are regularly "mind-reamed" by War Wizards, who view their thoughts and memories, and spy on those households through them.
2. War Wizard teams are often assigned to snoop into the daily lives and doings of noble families on grounds of general suspicion. Vangerdahast suspected EVERYBODY of darned near everything, so every noble family got peered at at least once a year (and some of the more shady ones were never free of multiple-War-Wizard surveillance).

Since Vangey's replacement by Caladnei, three women (Laspeera, Filfaeril, and Alusair) have "taken over" directing this snooping program; Caladnei "sits in" on their deliberations but defers to them, because (as she freely admits) "I know not even where the closets are, let alone which ones bid fair to hold skeletons." However, she's learning fast, and won't hesitate to assemble a new team and order them to "incline thine eyes in the direction of" (get snooping into) a particular situation, family, cabal, or link.

DMs running Cormyr are safe in assuming that every noble family is watched, but boring, innocent, stay-at-home nobles are only lightly spied upon; a younger son or older aunt could sneak off for a tryst or drinking bout or a secret meeting that might lead to a conspiracy or a crime without necessarily being overhead or followed. Once the family was suspected of such behavior, surveillance would increase.

So saith Ed.

Who always warned us "If you see a War Wizard buffoon lurking and watching you, you were meant to see him. Someone else is doing the REAL watching."

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There's an old, old tale told amongst Cormyrean nobles, of two matriarchs who became heartily sick of War Wizard snooping, especially as they WERE up to something shady. They finally drifted off, by separate routes, to reach the same garderobe in unused guest apartments high in a wing of a mansion belonging to one of them, and sat down in adjacent screened stalls, to whisper to each other. First they both heartily (and colourfully) cursed the War Wizards, and then they went on to make some shady arrangements. When they were done, they strolled into the passage outside - - only to freeze in horrified guilt as Vangerdahast himself emerged from the garderobe, smilingly reminded them that it had other stalls, admiringly repeated some of the more choice curses they'd just bestowed on the heads of the War Wizards, and reminded them of the time of their just-arranged next illicit meeting.

Oh, he was as subtle as a boulder dropped on a bare foot.

love to all,
THO

September 2, 2007: Hi again, all. Ed still has family visiting and a wild workload related to his library day job and the flurry of personal queries he's fielding due to the 4th Edition announcement (even with NDAs preventing him from saying much of anything, he still has to politely respond to queries from the many, many friends), but he has managed to send me another brief Realmslore response. This one is to createvmind's mid-July query: "I wonder if this question has a simple answer, do the lower lvl illusion spells also change the shadow of the creature under an alternate guise?"

Ed replies:

I'm not the right source to properly answer rules queries, and don't know if any reply I do give will be rendered obsolete by 4th Edition. However, if I confine myself to answering what I as a DM have ruled, during play in my 'home' Realms campaign and various Realms sessions run at conventions: yes, the illusion spells do affect personally-cast shadows (though carried items that have their own magical auras may adversely affect this benefit). They do NOT affect flour, thin sheets of cloth dropped from above, or other means of physically outlining the actual shape of an illusion-disguised creature, from revealing "the truth."

However, scratch a different sage, and you might well get a different answer. As a DM, I tend to be lenient on characters; it's the roleplaying I'm interested in, not tricks and traps and physical combat.

So saith Ed.

One weary and overworked (as usual!) world creator, game designer, and author (he'll be writing six novels this year!). Who tells me his stint at judging this year's World Fantasy Awards has resulted in final choices (though of course what those choices are remains secret).

I mention these things as my own response to those who love to criticize Ed's novels: he can't be THAT lousy a writer, or he wouldn't get published so often, or chosen by the best fantasy professionals to judge this year's best fantasy books.

Ed's one of the world's nice guys, so he rarely defends himself - - so from time to time, I'll do that for him.

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love to all,
THO

September 3, 2007: Hello again, all. Ed emerges briefly from his lair (after a fryup of fresh-caught rainbow trout, I'm told), to answer another Realmslore query. This time it's from scribe Warrax, to whit: "Jehoshaphat... This thread is huge and it's only for this year? Blood and ashes, I should have joined Candlekeep AGES ago..."

I should open by thanking Ed for letting everyone into his playground world; I've spent many years now enjoying the fruits of his labor (and of the other contributors, of course) and wish to express my fervent gratitude for this wonderful world which I can call my sandbox. Thanks so much for all your hard work and detail-oriented approach!

If I may, I would like to ask a question about the Harpers that I hope isn't NDA'd out of the range of things you can answer:

With the emergence of the Tel'Teukiira in the Western portion of the Realms, just how active do the Harpers remain in that region? I'm about to run a campaign in that region (set in 1375 DR) and I'm trying to get a feel for the Harpers' level of involvement so I can decide on the full range of implications for the keystone element of the plot.

Thanks!"

Ed replies:

You're very welcome, and I hope you'll settle in here at the Keep and ask many a question; I regard it as a bit of the "real Realms" out on the Internet. Please be patient regarding my answers; I have towering dunes of not-yet-answered ones. and some folks (the long-suffering Kuje, for one) have been waiting since 2004 for replies (sometimes NDAs just stand in the way like castle walls).

However, happily, this question of yours isn't one of them. :}

The Harpers remain VERY active in the Western Heartlands of the Realms, though increasingly they are retreating from the "sword this major threat, overthrow that ruler" heavy lifting (which the Tel'Teukiira do so well), and are concentrating on the information gathering and spreading, rumor-spreading (to influence public attitudes down on the "commoner" level), spying, and "steer the other fellows' spies" work. This has always been the bulk of the Harper workload, in the same way that even in the fictional world of James Bond, the "Double-O" agents were few and far between, and there were far more patient local plodders, listeners, peerers, and whisperers. Or to use another recent fictional metaphor: the Tel'Teukiira do the Eddie Murphy character role in the Beverley Hills Cop movies, whereas most Harpers fulfill the daily functions of the plainclothes detectives on the Beverley Hills force.

In general, Harpers should watch and listen (largely unseen) to darn near everything suspicious that goes on in quieter, more rural areas, but operate far more lightly (and overloaded, so stuff slips past them) in such bustling trade hotbeds as Waterdeep, Athkatla, and Scornubel. How much they reveal themselves, draw swords, and burst into the midst of unfolding action depends on the situation; in general, they are NOT going to "blow their covers" for minor-scope stuff. A favourite Harper technique is to manipulate ("steer") handy bands of adventurers (*cough* the PCs *cough*) into doing the desired dirty work, without (as much as possible) those same

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Harpers revealing their presence or meddling to the PCs.

So saith Ed.

Creator, of course, of the Harpers. We once made him a "Head Harper" badge as a joke, and he proudly wore it for several play sessions, pinned to the brow of a succession of ridiculous hats.

love to all,
THO

September 4, 2007: Hello again, everyone. Warrax, this is your lucky day (or night). No, I don't mean I'm waiting for you wearing nothing but a smile and a black ribbon choker around my throat (though I have done such things, and am growing restless to do them again; I mean, it's been almost four nights, now), I mean that Ed has charged right back into the lists with more replies to your followup question: "I've another question, though I'm almost certain it's under the auspices of the ubiquitous and malevolent 'NDA:'

What happened to the Manshoon that purchased sanctuary with The Simbul?"

Ed replies:

You are indeed correct that NDAs hamper my replying about that particular Manshoon clone, and The Sage rightly pointed out that we know almost nothing of his fate. However, for the purposes of your PBeM campaign; please be aware that although future "official" Realmslore may well reveal something of the career of this particular Manshoon clone, there are many; rumors of how few survived what some have called "the Manshoon Wars" are greatly exaggerated. Why, I can think of almost a dozXXX ahem, I probably can't say that, so let us just say instead that I'd not be surprised if more Manshoons are in hiding. Remember, the arrogant, brash ones have the highest profiles, and the later, wiser ones have both learned to eschew the limelight AND been given (through ongoing refinements to Manshoon's stasis clone spell) greater resistance to the "pull" and need to destroy fellow clones; the more recent ones can largely ignore other clones, unless they get almost within touching distance, and have even taken to using magic to alter their apparent species and/or racial heritage and/or gender. Many of them have joined various guilds or power groups (having nothing at all to do with Zhentil Keep or the Zhentarim or Bane or Cyric or beholders) to further "bury themselves" from suspicious eyes.

All of which means, as Richard Lee Byers famously quipped a GenCon or two back: "In My Father's House, there are many Manshoons."

NONE of them can fool The Simbul as to their identity, schemings, and intentions; if she's sheltering one or even treating him as a friend or lover, it's with full knowledge of who and what he is, and she will have many safeguards in place (she can call on all of Mystra's servitors, remember, and the aid of two deities) that will prevent a Manshoon from successfully double-crossing her, regardless of the circumstances.

So saith Ed.

Creator of Manshoon, the Zhentarim, Zhentil Keep, The Simbul, Bane, and blah, blah, blah. Who has, in his younger days, worn fishnets to work at the library just for fun, to watch the reactions of co-workers and patrons.

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P.S. createvmind, your question re. wands has gone off to Ed, but I recall that various rules editions (and TSR and WotC "Sage Advice" senior designers) have at various times ruled that wands crumble into dust when exhausted of charges, or become "forever magic dead" pieces of wood, and so on. At a GenCon (19? 20?) I attended, one of the senior TSR designers insisted wands had to be recharged while they still had at least one charge left, or the result would be destruction of the wand and a dangerous "wand of wonder" effect and a waste of the charging magics, not a "refilled" wand. So the game rules have gone every which way on this.

love to all,
THO

September 5, 2007: Well met again, fellow scribes. By the warmly willing loins of Sharess, Warrax, Ed likes you! He has promptly plunged ahead to answer your THIRD lore-query in a row: "Has anyone asked about Azalar, Dove's son?"

Ed replies:

Florin had something to do with Azalar's coming into being, too. :}

Azalar was reared on Evermeet and (in his later youth) in the Elven Court woods, is a ranger with the same heroic tendencies as his father, and appears in the recent SHADOWDALE: The Scouring of the Land adventure (Eric Boyd and I put our heads together, and I said yes to his planned - - and superbly presented - - use of Azalar). That's what The Sage meant when he suggested you "take a look" at that adventure. If I can possibly arrange an opportunity. I will write and publish (on the Wizards website, perhaps) a short story of Azalar somewhere, somewhen.

Just not now. Not with three unfinished novels still on this year's platter.

So saith Ed.

Still riding hard to meet those deadlines, with the world-weary grace of the scarred and seasoned (with chocolate sauce, yummm) veteran.

love to all,
THO

September 6, 2007: Hello again, all. This time Ed tenders an answer (of sorts) to one of Jamallo Kreen's recent queries (regarding War Wizard prying into the minds of "house wizards" attached to Cormyrean noble houses who don't already happen to be undercover War Wizards): "Well met! Pray tell us, Ed, what spells do the War Wizards use to do this mind reaming? As a DM I want to know."

Ed replies:

Sorry; firm and strong NDAs apply to the specific nature of the spells. I can say that aside from Vangey and Laspeera, all War Wizards (even Caladnei) have to physically touch a wizard to do this "mind-reaming." For what it looks and feels like, when mind-reaming is done to a non-wizard, see the interrogation scene wherein Caladnei probes Narnra, in ELMINSTER'S DAUGHTER. (Weaker minds than those of the prober - - target minds that are without training in the Art or an

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aptitude for it, that is - - can often be mind-reamed at a distance.)

There are defter and swifter spells that work on minds trained to (and with the aptitude for) the Art than shown in that scene, and a mind can be overwhelmed and "forced" with comparative ease (and so, little damage due to mental fighting, because it lasts such a short time) by three or more as-powerful wizards' minds; War Wizards customarily perform such reamings with five or six, some of them passively observing in the mental link so as to pounce on suppressed or avoided memories.

I can also say that less than twenty senior War Wizards know how to cast and lead a mind-reaming, though many more have participated in reamings launched by others. Chosen of Mystra and many archwizards have developed more sophisticated (less brute-force, more precise, and sometimes even unnoticed by the recipient) equivalents to the mind-reaming magics Vangerdahast inherited from previous Royal Magicians of Cormyr (Baerauble, in his last years, experimented with the first clumsy beginnings of such spells).

It is a "low treason" (punishable by death, feebleminding, or permanent exile from the realm under the Brand of Azuth's Disfavour, which is a magical marking, ceremonially applied by clergy of Azuth, that forbids clergy of Azuth or Mystra from aiding the marked miscreant, and forbids any user of the Weave from training the marked miscreant) crime to mind-ream anyone in Cormyr without the express consent of the Royal Magician or the Court Wizard (one and the same person during Vangerdahast's time, of course) or Sage Royal or an Obarskyr (or, by the Decree of Azoun's Ascension, prepared by Vangey and enacted into law as the first ruling deed of Azoun IV, Laspeera or any alarphon).

At least one past monarch of Cormyr (SaleMBER) had a wizard of Selgaunt he (correctly) suspected of magically peering into his mind captured in Sembia. The wizard was then blinded, his tongue cut out and all his fingers severed, and he was returned to his abode for his servants (who hated and feared him, and took their revenges on the unfortunate without going to the city authorities) to find.

So saith Ed.

Who has revealed a wealth of lore about Cormyr here at the Keep, yet (of course) only scratched the surface. He will return with another lore reply as usual on the morrow.

love to all,
THO

September 7, 2007: Hi again, fellow scribes. I bring you the latest lore-reply from Ed of the Greenwood, the time to a query that Blueblade posted on behalf of another Realms fan: "If someone ends up "on the run" from the law in Amn, and flees to Waterdeep, or Cormyr, or Sembia, do any of those places have "agreements" with Amn that mean the running person is automatically "in trouble with the law" and subject to immediate arrest from local lawkeepers, the moment they get news from Amn (and how soon and how ungarbled and/or detailed would that "news" be?)?"

I talked to this guy" [the "another Realms fan"] "for a little while, and we're both well aware that bounty hunters or others from Amn could of course follow the running person and try to take revenge or capture him - - but if the running person hasn't offended against rulers back in Amn, would "the law" in any of those three places give an official hoot about the runner's alleged crimes

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committed in Amn?

Thanks, Blueblade"

Ed replies:

None of those places have agreements that deem the fleeing person "automatically" afoul of lawkeepers in the place fled to, but all of them by custom have requested the arrest of runaways who have murdered or tried to murder heads of state or (truly) high-ranking courtiers - - and those arrests (and returns of the arrested to the place fled from) have been made where possible.

However, if the runaway merely stole a crown or plundered a royal treasury, or is alleged to have beaten (but not deliberately set out to murder) a ruler, or eloped with an heir or had an illicit love affair with an heir (as opposed to kidnapping or raping an heir), or there is any doubt about the story of the offense, or the ruler "wounded" in some way by the runaway is of a place not part of the same political alliance or on friendly terms with the place fled to, such a request will be ignored.

Bounty hunters acting openly in defiance of local laws would NOT be ignored, which is why most such "snatchers" do just that: covertly kidnap a quarry and spirit them back out of the place they're captured in, to face justice in the place they fled from.

So, no, the intrepid adventurer who robs one of the rulers of Amn (perhaps punching a few guards getting away, or stealing a kiss or two from the ruler's loved one) and races to Waterdeep would NOT be arrested by the Lords of Waterdeep, but probably would be chased by divers bounty hunters, or even assailed by Waterdhavian bounty hunters if he bragged too loudly or news about him travelled swiftly and loudly enough.

So saith Ed.

Who has dealt with such matters a time or two in our 'home' Realms campaign. The time Torm seduced a baroness of Tethyr, for example.

love to all,
THO

September 9, 2007: Hello again, all. This time Ed responds to Skeptic, re. this: "A first question to Ed about some of his past novels (others will come). I recently noticed that in Elminster in Myth Drannor elven sub-races are not mentioned at all. Why?"

Ed replies:

The various elven sub-races aren't really mentioned because editors got to such mentions and almost entirely removed them (although if you set my novel down beside Steven Schend's superb CORMANTHYR, you can rapidly confirm the sub-races that various "probable" [from my descriptions in the narrative] moon or gold elven families truly are). I was well over my wordcount when I turned in that book, so I really can't kick at any editorial prunings.

So saith Ed.

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Creator of Myth Drannor and so on. Who says a little more about such matters in the annotations in THE ANNOTATED ELMINSTER (wherein, so far as Ed knows, the text of ELMINSTER IN MYTH DRANNOR will appear unaltered from its published version).

love to all,
THO

On September 9, 2007 THO said: Ed has copies of the original versions of MOST of his books. The one exception is SPELLFIRE, written in those BC (Before Computer) days. Ed had so little turnaround time for his final draft that he had to take his almost-500-page photocopy "master copy" of the first draft, and generate a second draft by cutting and pasting retained paragraphs between newly-typed ones - - which is why the twice-as-long-as-printed original can't be pieced together again.

And Red Walker, if you ever saw Ed's bookshelves, you'd not hint at being allowed to help organize them. Strong, intrepid adventurers have descended into Ed's writing cellar in search of classic fantasy tomes... and never been seen again.

Ed usually sits naked in the dark, the glow of the computer screen the only eerie light source, as he types at lightning speed and the books on the tiers upon tiers of shelves behind him LEAN forward to try to read over his shoulder...

Think I'm just kidding?

Heh. Heh. Steven Schend, at least, knows better.

love to all,
THO

On September 9, 2007 THO said: Ed tells me the Knights JUST get to Shadowdale when the third book ends (unless things change in the editing). Being the Knights, they get into a huge heap of trouble on the way to Shadowdale, just as in SWORDS OF DRAGONFIRE.

Me, I don't really care. I'm having such a blast just watching Ed unfold "our" characters, and slipping in the Realmslore, and bringing it all to life.
Ed's becoming a darned good writer.

And I can say that as a sometime fiction editor and reader of hundreds of sf and fantasy novels, annually. Ed's never told groundbreaking fiction, or written a standout classic, but he's not trying to. He's either trying to bring the Realms to life, or just spinning a good entertaining yarn, or both (always with humour and satire and multi-layered characterization). I'm always amazed by how many Net posters miss all that, and rush to "review" Ed's books by saying they Suck in some unspecified way, or are wish-fulfillment fantasies (Huh? The guy created the entire Realms, so writing about particular characters that TSR or WotC editors ask him to write about can't be any sort of wish-fulfillment; or do you think, as Realms creator, he has God fantasies? And can you proffer any evidence for that view, really?)

I can't wait for the third Knights book. Or to see what Ed tackles next. (Remember, everyone: Realms writers DON'T get to just write about what they "feel like" writing about; these are all work-for-hire books, and their topics, time and place of setting, and characters involved must all

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be approved by the company editors. That's why Ed's never had the chance to write that Mirt novel. Or the Alustriel novel. Or...)

love to all,
THO

September 10, 2007: Hi, everybody. This time Ed responds to Kentinal's query: "How does Ed feel about a Living RF, that most likely will have many players used to Living GH or other Living settings?"

and couldn't resist also addressing Woolly Rupert's followup: "Living RF? Rinonalyrna Fathomlin? I know what you mean, but that's one of those typos that's too fun to ignore!"

Ed would like it known that he'd far rather meet a living Rinonalyrna Fathomlin than a dead one, because he'd like to chat (over dinner, perhaps, and NO, fellow scribes, don't go reading into that what I think you will! Ed still vaguely remembers how to be a perfect gentleman), but handed me this more serious reply:

The Realms hosted the Living City campaign for years, and although I'm no fan of metaplots developed in secrecy (without consultation with me or other "lorekeepers of the Realms") or that reference real-modern-world people or business processes too closely, I quite enjoyed doing the CITY OF RAVENS BLUFF sourcebook that finally tied it all together.

So as long as we're all on the same page regarding the "reach" of a Living RF campaign, I think it'll be great, pouring a lot of life, verve, and adventuring energy into the Realms. I prefer the "superior roleplaying" over "getting points by doing this or that specific thing" tournament approach, and was vastly impressed by what I saw of Ian Richards, Ratty, Smiffy, and all the other dedicated, enthusiastic UK RPGA folks running the RPGA events at GenCon UK some years back; with Ian running the entire RPGA as he does now, a Living RF can only be a Very Good Thing.

Which I will await with interest (I'm still a Charter Life Member of the RPGA, and last time I checked was a 12th level judge and 6th level player, though that was over a decade, not to mention several computer breakdowns and points systems, ago).

Come to think of it, I'm still officially a Regional Director of the RPGA, empowered to write "certs" (though I understand certs no longer exist, and my Regional Directorship probably doesn't either - yet, ahem, please note no one ever bothered to actually TELL me so).

So saith Ed.

A public service announcement for scribes in the southern Ontario area (such as Warrax). Ed will travel to Australia to attend Reefcon, Spring Revel Down Under, and the Cairns Junior Writers' Festival (all in Cairns, Queensland) in early October, but "something secret" (I'm thinking an FR summit) means he will unfortunately miss Phantasm in Peterborough this year.

He will, however, for anyone wanting to travel to Port Hope, Ontario, be giving a reading at some point after 7 pm on Thursday, September 27th at the Port Hope Public Library (the main Mary J. Benson Branch, at 31 Queen Street, on the banks of the Ganaraska River just above where it empties into Lake Ontario; this is the library where Ed works part-time). It's actually the Annual General Meeting of the Friends of the Port Hope Public Library (one of those volunteer

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organizations that fundraise for libraries, and are typically dominated by seniors); Ed is evidently the entertainment.

What he'll read from, he doesn't yet know (remember, he has three new novels out: DARK WARRIOR RISING from Tor; DARK LORD from Solaris; and SWORDS OF DRAGONFIRE from Wizards, but SWORDS is the book whose cover appears on the meeting notice, so Ed's leaning towards that. This is your chance to hear Ed (a superb reader) perform, and ask him about Realmslore, or getting published, or (ahem) signing the body part of your choice, WITHOUT the crowds of GenCon. Just a suggestion.

(And being as it's a library, they might even serve tea, coffee, and cookies. Or even gooey cake.)

love to all,
THO

On September 10, 2007 THO said: Understood, Zandilar. Back in 1994 Ed did a con at a school just outside Canberra, then Wes Nicholson drove him and spouse and two other gamers down to Melbourne (which he loved, though it was COLD) for a con - - and then drove them all the way back up to Brisbane for another con! (TV and radio appearances, mainly using the ABC main studios in Sydney, were interspersed.)

Ed as a Canadian is used to driving long distances, but even he said the drive down to Melbourne and back "made his sitter tired."

Ed will only appear briefly at ReefCon (something about a roleplayed wedding dinner), and the Writers' Festival is open to high school students only, I think (there's a PDF brochure on the Trinity Bate State High School site), but Spring Revel Down Under is apparently the big annual RPGA convention (which moves around the country, to a different site every year). It's at the Showgrounds in Cairns, not the dockside Convention Centre.

And yes, details of exactly what Ed will "do" at the cons are still being finalized, but he is always happy to meet fellow gamers, chat, talk about the Realms, sign things, give advice to writers, and so on. "By the fans, for the fans, and I'm a fan" as Ed said of his con philosophy, in his GoH speech back at a GenCon somewhere in the 20s in numbering (I forget which one; Ed's been a GenCon GoH 8 or 9 times, and in memory they all tend to mingle together).

love to all,
THO

On September 10, 2007 THO said: Certainly. Port Hope is east of Bowmanville (itself east of Oshawa), on the 401. The signs say Port Hope has 3 exits, though the first one is WAY out in the country. If you're travelling eastbound from Toronto, watch for a service centre on your side of the highway. Then take the third exit after that (Hwy 28/Port Hope/Bewdley it will say, or Hwy 28/Port Hope/Peterborough). It's the exit AFTER Hwy 2 Welcome/Port Hope.

Go south (off-ramp curves to an intersection, turn right and then left at the next light, which is the bridge that carries Hwy 28 back over the 401). So you're turning AWAY from the 401, south. Follow that road (Mill Street/Hwy 28) south down into town, bear left at the fork, go right down to a light underneath a railway viaduct. Turn right at that light, cross the river, turn right immediately on

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the west bank, heading back north on Queen Street, the library is the first building on the right (between Queen Street and the Ganaraska River, at 31 Queen St., has its own parking lot beside/south of the library building.) There's also on-street metered parking, and an overflow lot just west of the library, across a park (it has a bandshell in it).

Hmmm, does any of this make sense?

love,
THO

Warrax, you're very welcome. Just snuggle up, no need for thanks...

The time needed to reach Port Hope depends, of course, on traffic. From 400 and 401, you've got to cross most of Toronto, and hit the eastbound traffic, which is "steady heavy" on Thursdays (folks outbound to cottages in the Kawarthas, truckers and shoppers from Montreal returning home from Toronto) until the rush-hour commuters heading home make it REALLY heavy (starting around 3:30pm). They thin out a bit at Oshawa, and more at the 35/115 interchange.

I would say 2 hours. The meeting doesn't start until 7 pm, and I don't think Ed will be the first "attraction," so to speak. However, if you left things until 5 pm to start driving, you'd have a "hairy slow" height-of-rush-hour drive. So, 4:30?

Ed commuted from Don Mills home well past Port Hope for 14 years (yes, and wrote all the published Realms stuff while doing so!), and usually made it home in 1.5 hours unless accidents or construction made it worse. His slowest commute took 8 hours (driving at a crawl on black ice on a closed-down 401 all the way, to get to his wife in hospital), and his fastest (to get a visiting diplomat TO hospital, with police escort) was 50 minutes (apparently Dodge minivans can really move, when urged to do so).

love,
THO

September 12, 2007: Well met again, fellow scribes. I bring you this time Ed of the Greenwood's response to a recent and truly juicy question from Blueblade: "Hi, Ed! I was in BakkaPhoenix a few days back, asking for release dates of your next few books, and ran into a *very* beautiful young lady who says you autographed her, uh, right-hand female chest area at last year's GenCon (I know, that may not narrow things down enough for you to remember her, but she also said she wore a costume that "had blue feathers and blue boots and not much else," if that helps).

Anyway, she wanted to pass on her thanks for your advice (apparently it worked and she scored an acceptance from the publisher she submitted it to), and a Realms lore question: did Azoun and Filfaeril have any other children (aside from Foril and the two princesses we know all about)? Stillbirths, babes spirited away, that sort of thing. I gather she's looking for a campaign hook: among the many bastard offspring of Azoun IV, a REAL heir. Neat idea, but probably impossible (given Vangerdahast's nosiness, for one thing), but I promised her I'd pass it along.

Oh, and she said if you're ever in Toronto, drop by BakkaPhoenix. Her apartment isn't far away and she can offer "great tea and ice cream" (I'm merely quoting, straight-faced, here; anything beyond tea and ice cream is er, heavily implied). Ed, you're a lucky man, if half the ladies who

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inhabit your lap at GenCons are like this one. Blueblade”

Ahem. I will merely mention to all scribes that BakkaPhoenix, on the south side of Queen Street near Bathurst, is Toronto's [and, I believe, now North America's] oldest continuously-running sf and fantasy bookstore; in the 30th Anniversary BAKKA ANTHOLOGY published a few years back, in a signed-by-all-the-authors trade paperback edition, Ed wrote a story as “Guest of Honour” based on his few days of volunteering, years ago, to run the store, amid current and former store staffers turned sf/fantasy authors Robert Sawyer, Tanya Huff, Fiona Patton, Michele Sagara West, Tara Tallan, Cory Doctorow, Nalo Hopkinson, and Chris Szego.

Without further comment, I present Ed's reply:

I am indeed a lucky man, and do remember the lady in question. She fit my lap quite nicely. :}

I will preserve her anonymity here and now in case she prefers to use a pseudonym when her book does appear (she did mention she was thinking of doing so, and happens to be one of those human beings blessed - - or cursed - - with truly stunning good looks, so she might well need her privacy; guys as unhandsome as me attract relatively fewer stalkers).

As for the tea and ice cream, I'd love both, but as a married man I'd settle just for them. As a male, my body might, ahem, involuntarily demonstrate desires to the contrary, but I found her delightful as a person, not just as eye candy, and would prefer to add her to the ranks of my friends (and hopefully, fellow veteran writers). Gods, I sound old, don't it? :}

Wherefore let me sweep away all thoughts of blue feathers (and what sweeping them away would reveal, for that matter) and apply myself to her Realmslore question:

No, Azoun and Filfaeril did not have any children aside from now-dead Foril and Tanalasta, and the still-living Alusair. Nor did Azoun have any secret marriages before he wed his beloved Fee.

So there are indeed lots of bastard offspring (as I've mentioned in a Wizards website Realmslore column, among other places) of Azoun IV, but no other legitimate heirs. No clones, stillbirths, or babes spirited away.

And yes, Vangerdahast has deftly mind-reamed Filfaeril to make sure of this. She didn't catch him at it, at the time (he conducted scores of short sessions while she slept, some years back), but figured out later what he must have done, and (backed up by Elminster) in a memorable private confrontation, cornered Vangerdahast in the royal vaults, dropped the robe she was wearing to the floor to stand bared before the Royal Magician, and challenged him to rape her body as he'd already raped her mind. Angry and ashamed, but unable to bluster or deny in front of Elminster, Vangey apologized, explained he had been serving the realm as he saw best, and promised never to so spy on the minds of Azoun, Filfaeril herself (again), Tanalasta, or Alusair without the express, obtained beforehand permission of Azoun or Filfaeril.

It was, of course, a promise he broke. Several times.

So saith Ed.

Who has taken pains, over the years, NOT to portray Vangerdahast as an evil man, but rather a man who will do ANYTHING to preserve and strengthen the realm of Cormyr (and remake that realm into what he thinks it should be). Vangey, like Filfaeril, is one of Ed's “fascinating but underappreciated” Realms characters.

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love to all,
THO

September 12, 2007: From what Ed said, Erik, I think so (he appreciated not only what you did, BTW, but the way you handled it).

Kajehase, re. Vangerdahast: that's exactly what Ed has been trying to explore with Vangey. How power corrupts, and how much evil someone can do while honestly TRYING to do good... and how what "evil" is depends on the differing viewpoints of those affected by/witnessing the deeds of the Royal Magician.

RodOdom, Ed can say very little about 4e Realms right now, for two reasons: NDAs and because: "Regarding many matters, I just don't KNOW the answers, yet. Change is always unsettling, so I quite understand why many scribes are upset, and many of the concerns raised by scribes are valid ones, and the 'worst case horror' scenarios raised by some would indeed be disasters, IF they happened. However, the best advice I can give right now is: wait and see. I as well as many other longtime Realms fans and designers are still aboard, we still love the Realms, everyone at Wizards wants the Realms to continue to succeed as setting, and we're all working hard on that. For some gamers, continuing their campaign at its current 'date' is the logical thing to do; regarding how best to handle your current characters, the best thing to do is wait and see the specific rules re. conversion or rebuild. Hang in there, everybody! The sky is not falling!"

So saith Ed.

Thus far.

love to all,
THO

September 13, 2007: Hello again, fellow scribes. Despite the current consternation over 4e Realms, Ed keeps working away on "to be printed" Realmslore (nice to see last year's Spin A Yarn starting to appear on the Wizards website; there's still apparently some delay on posting the "little treat" Ed wrote as a SWORDS OF DRAGONFIRE promo), and on your questions posed here at the Keep.

Today's query is this, from Verghityax: "Dear Ed and Lady Hooded One, Long, long time ago (a year and a half, I suppose) I asked about certain locations in Elturel and Iriaebor. Back then Ed said that those places are under NDA because of uncertain legal status concerning some licenses TSR sold to an outside company. I would like to know if there was any progress in this matter? I realize that Ed is extremely busy nowadays so I apologise for any inconvenience."

Ed replies:

No apologies necessary, Verghityax! By all means prod me, if time passes and passes and you hear nothing. However, in this case, I don't have an update for you. I don't THINK those licenses are still "active," but I've never been either a TSR or a WotC employee, never saw the wording of the license contracts, and don't know if they had a set expiry date. I have queried both the Wizards legal eagles at Renton and the Hasbro team at Pawtucket, and the former tell me they're "still working on it" (which I SUSPECT but am not sure is code for: "Huh? There is? Can't find

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anything, but better look harder”) while the latter say they “know nothing about it,” and suggest I talk to the Renton people. Rest assured that the moment I know the status of things, I will let you know, and if those locales aren’t hampered by any new projects, post the lore you requested here. (Nothing has changed; that “if” has always been there.)

And yes (sigh) I am busier than busy, right now. I envy those book-a-year-if-I-feel-like-it authors, but I suppose some of them might envy me, too. The grass is always greener over the manure pile, and so on...

So saith Ed.

Who would know.

love to all,
THO

September 14, 2007: Hello again, fellow scribes. The march of Realmslore replies from Ed’s pen continues with a response to Jamallo Kreen’s question: “Well met! The question about Finder Wyvernspur sparks another: Is Finder averse to other deities sponsoring or encouraging artists, or does he try to maintain fine art as his own personal bailiwick?”

Ed replies:

So far as is known, Finder says and does nothing regarding the support and encouragement (or lack of same) for the arts on the part of other deities. He encourages his devout worshippers to “follow his way” by dedicating their worship and their sponsorship of mortal artists and art to him rather than other deities, but seems to ignore other deities rather than commenting on their deeds and sayings. (Directly commenting, that is; occasionally he makes his clear his favor or disapproval of specific actions of WORSHIPPERS of other deities.)

So saith Ed.

Who always defers to Jeff Grubb, Finder’s creator, in these matters. He does recall that Jeff wanted Finder and his faith to be “the mysterious path of a reluctant deity, a loner who walks his own way,” so that’s the flavor he tries to maintain.

love to all,
THO

September 15, 2007: Hello, all. This time Ed tackles a heavy-duty Realmslore question from Sanishiver: “Hello THO/Ed, Awhile back you helped me with a very useful response on what would happen if a bubble of heavy magic were to burst forth in Cormyr.

I’d like to supplement that question/answer with a follow up, also for the aid of my Realms Campaign.

Suppose there exists a modified ‘layer’ of magic all through Cormyr that is somewhat like a mythal, but vastly larger in size and much, much more subtle in effect (or better described as the Weave all throughout Cormyr, but modified long ago by Giants and/or Dragons in certain ways),

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where this layer of magic allowed an ancient being like The Devil Dragon to snatch any War Wizard into her maw that used a Teleport spell in the opening stages of the War, and to this day prevents dragons within its confines from succumbing to Rage whenever the King Killer star shines in the night sky.

Now suppose rumor surfaces amongst dragons and their ilk of the impending approach of the King Killer star in current-day Faerûn, with a second rumor that the old Realm of Thauglamorious will protect any dragon in its confines from the star's effects, thanks in part to a freak occurrence of heavy magic bursting forth in Cormyr, that has rejuvenated the last great quasi-mythal (for lack of a better term) known to Dragon Kin in the Realms.

Now suppose some of these dragons decide to up and relocate themselves (many with their hoards!) to Cormyr to ride out the Rage, and/or seek out Thaug's lair in the hope they'll gain control of the quasi-mythal.

...with all this supposed, and keeping in mind Cormyr is still dealing with the after-effects of the Heavy Magic discharge, I have three general questions:

- 1) How might Cormyr respond if 10-20 such dragons relocated to Cormyr from all over the Realms over a short time –say 1 to 2 months?
- 2) How might you (if you were the DM) drive your Epic Level players batty....er, rather, 'make things interesting' for them (with one of them a fledgling Baron of the Stonelands) if Cormyr gave *the players* the job of sorting out lair locations and imposing Cormyrean law (such as it is) upon any dragons found in the Realm?
- 3) Are their Draconic rules of behaviour ala the Feint of Honor Illiphar and Thauglamorious abided by that might govern the ways in which these 10 - 20 Dragons seek to influence Cormyr and its environs as they compete with each other for lair locations and in their efforts to unearth lore about the Quasi-Mythal?

As always, thank you in advance for your help and advice, for dropping hints here at the 'Keep that turned me on to this campaign idea, and for sharing so much more of the Realms with us.

J. Grenemyer"

Whew! Ed replies:

Accepting your suppositions, I respond thus:

1. If your campaign is set pre-ELMINSTER'S DAUGHTER, or has taken a different route through imagined Realms history [[THO interjection: All scribes please note: see how easy it is to veer aside from what you might not want, of the upcoming 4e Realms?]], Vangerdahast will view these "invasions" as dragons breaking the founding treaties of Cormyr, and will fear for the safety of the human kingdom, and become very, very upset indeed.

He will assign some of the War Wizards to using magic to (try to) "stay unseen" by these "invading" dragons, and spy on them; some senior War Wizards (Laspeera) to "calling in favours" by contacting Elminster, Dove, and other Chosen to aid him in "defending" Cormyr; they will agree to turning aside (and slaying if need be) dragons who attack castles and major cities, but will not agree to aid him in hunting down and slaying dragons just to get them out of Cormyr; and the other War Wizards he will train and deploy in or near strategic points (all major cities, High Horn, Thunder Pass, Jester's Green) in organized "dragonfighting" units (equipped with spells

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and magic items intended to be able to blast any dragon out of the sky, and provide shielding for self and civilians and ground targets against dragonbreath attacks).

If your campaign is post-ELMINSTER'S DAUGHTER, Vangey and his "dragon flight" will be part of the realm's defense, Caladnei will do the freaking out instead (and will contact him and Harpers and Chosen, and end up doing much the same things with the War Wizards as above).

In either case, the defenders of Cormyr will not want to precipitate a battle that could destroy Cormyr. If the dragons don't try to land in, lair in, and largely destroy major cities, the Cormyreans will avoid attacking them (if the dragons kept on arriving, month after month, in ever-increasing numbers, a panicked populace would try to flee en masse, and the defenders would then decide to attack dragons when they could surprise lone or small groups of dragons, and think they can manage to destroy them before lots of other dragons are attracted to the fray. If they can see a way to make dragon start to fight dragon, so they can "attack from the rear" in the chaos and finish off wounded wyrms, they will do so). Rather, the Cormyreans will muster an ever-beefier defense, and do nothing else but wait and watch (moving important citizens, mothers and children to deep shelters away from dragonbreath attacks, and abandoning towers that can be shattered easily by dragon wings and talons, plus the surrounding buildings that toppling towers would flatten). Cormyrean envoys in Sembia, Westgate, and elsewhere will hire adventurers to make exploratory "find dragon lairs, destroy them and their treasure is yours, we can use magic to help you escape if things go bad, and you signal us thus" expeditions.

2. The defenders of Cormyr would be perfectly happy if the arriving dragons laired in the Hullack Forest, the West Reaches, and especially the Stonelands. Epic-level adventurers (and of COURSE any existing Baron of the Stonelands) would be expected to make it clear to dragons that attacks on the citizenry, livestock, and food crops of Cormyr will be viewed as acts of war and that "Cormyr has the means to slay any aggressor, even the mightest, eldest wyrm" (but that Zhent caravans are fair game, and - - if the city of Shade exists in your campaign - - they, too, are fair game).

Epic-level adventurers would be expected to kill dragons who defied such words, or attacked them or Cormyr, and would be promised rewards (noble status to anyone who delivers the deathstroke to a dragon, knighthoods to anyone who participates directly in the slaying of a dragon, plus gold-coin-cash rewards [and yes, thanks to the Crystal Grot and Vangey's canny "buying" of much foreign gold coinage, Cormyr has built up treasury enough over the years to do this]).

3. Yes. If you own the old COUNCIL OF WYRMS boxed set, consider that all of the "honor to avoid or control combat" customs therein hold sway. Apply any wrinkles you want to from either the original or the 3e DRACONOMICON tomes, and then consider that individual dragons, if brought to desperate near-death straits, may well "break the rules" and try all manner of tricks, savage attacks, etc. (if they value ascending to control this mythal as "worth it," balanced against being thrust out into the Rage or being shunned by all dragons who hear of their behaviour). The governing principle here has to be: with so many dragons crowding into a small area in a short time, they are going to have to be "excessively polite" to each other, akin to the old joke about the armed Americans crowding into the phone booth - - or there's going to be mayhem and bloodshed, right away!

This sounds VERY interesting. Regardless of what you decide to do in the campaign and how it unfolds, please let me know what happens!

So saith Ed.

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Who will always have a soft spot for Cormyr. (Sorta shows, don't it?)

Two more swift notes: to Warrax and Purple Dragon Knight, the Port Hope "overflow lot" I mentioned behind (west of) the park with the bandshell is free (no meters), and the meters elsewhere in town stop being enforced at 6pm. Port Hope is a lovely old town, and has some good restaurants (from the superb but pricey Palm/Dr. Corbett's Inn) to Zest and the save-your-nickels muffin-and-coffee place, the Dreamers' Cafe, plus most of the usual chains (such as a Tim Horton's, east on Hwy 2/Peter Street from that intersection at the railway viaduct).

From Scarborough, Port Hope is about 1.5 hours drive on a busy but steady flow 401; if there are accidents or the traffic is REALLY heavy, add time to that. The Hwy 2/Welcome/Port Hope exit is Exit 461, and the next one, that I recommended (Hwy 28/Port Hope/Bewdley or Peterborough) is Exit 464 (the numbers of course correspond to the kilometer-posts along the 401).

Mkhaiwati, Ed says you're very welcome, he'll get to your natural disaster lore request when he can, and it was his son-in-law, daughter, and granddaughter who caught the trout. They were VERY fresh when beheaded and gutted, then fried in an iron skillet with a little olive oil, lemon pepper, and a pinch of salt. Done so nicely, Ed said, that he could pull off the tails, then lift the flesh of one side off the bones, take hold of all of the bones as one piece and pull them out intact, and eat what was left. Yumm. Fresh-caught fish taste UTTERLY different from (and are superior to) not-fresh or (gackkk!) frozen fish.

love to all,
THO

September 15, 2007: Hello, all! Hearken! Blueblade's recent post has elicited some very important words from Ed, so I'll sign off now and let the Creator of the Realms speak:

Not, it was not my idea.

However, before every scribe or Realms fan everywhere grabs that comment and shouts, "See! They're ruining the Realms and Ed Greenwood hates what they're doing!" I would ask everyone to remember that I walked this particular plank back in 1986, when I sold rights to the Realms to TSR, ceding artistic control of the setting.

From that day to this, except when I "get in first" to paint the picture of a person, place, or country in the Realms, I have been watching other people do things I might not have ever thought of, or agreed with, to the Realms, and exploring the consequences.

It's what we all ("we" being everyone who works on the Realms, from artists who do line drawings for product interiors to Bob and Elaine as novelists to Eric and George as "lore lords") DO: poke the Realms in various ways and see what happens. That's what makes the world seem alive, the constant change.

Most humans hate most change. All of us can recall things (the house or neighbourhood or town where we grew up, perhaps) that have changed so much they're "gone" for us; our remembered thing has been changed too much for us to accept it as the original. This could, yes, happen with the Realms, just as with every other thing. As I said before, we can't tell yet (yes, that includes me, because I haven't seen enough of the so-called "new Realms" yet). Yet riding this magnificent horse that gallops in different and often-surprising directions is what I do, and have done for four decades now, two of them in print with TSR and now Wizards.

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I'm sticking with the horse for now, because I know it and love it and we've ridden far together. Bailing right now, at full gallop, would be painful, and I'd be left behind and never get to see what neat new places it will reach.

With that said, let me say how moved I am by the anger and upset various scribes have shown here in their postings. You care about the Realms so much. Thank you for that.

I understand your hurt. I have felt it too, over and over, down the last twenty years, and believe me I feel it now, as characters get whacked and I face the prospect, that I've been fending off with potions of longevity for as long as I could, of others dying of old age before I ever get to really tell their stories.

I see the risk Wizards is taking, and sure hope it pays off. Whatever happens, I intend to go on sharing the Realms with gamers and readers for as long as I last. I am hard at work on future Realms goodies now, and am acutely aware of the Border Kingdoms and the unpublished city of Teziir and other things too long neglected.

If you need to vent, if you want to talk, I'm here (well, not HERE, but reachable via the Lovely Lady Hooded). I've been talking with many of you already about what to do in your own campaigns, and would like to remind everyone that playing up to the Year of Blue Fire can take you ten REAL years (or even longer); my home Realms campaign is proof positive of that. So you can have the luxury of not changing anything right now, and watching the 4e Realms unfold in print, before amking any decision. Lore replies here and elsewhere can still provide guidance in the "Lost Years."

Please remember that although Wizards of the Coast is a business, it is a company staffed by GAMERS. And fiction writers. They care deeply about the products they publish, and would work elsewhere (because there are many, many fields where creative people can get better paid than in gaming) if they didn't. So, please, ease off on the Evil Empire talk and wait and see what they DO first.

I'll still be here (I hope; certain editors have promised to murder me messily if I blow certain deadlines :}). I still care about the Realms; no matter what happens to it, I brought it into the world and want to be there and see what it does. I hope all of you will, too.

To borrow the words of The Hooded One:

Love to all,
Ed

P.S. Beezer, no, sorry, there isn't a Bob short story in GRAND HISTORY. And I disagree with your reviews, but thanks for them anyway. :}

September 16, 2007: Sage and Arkhaedun, indulge us for a moment, please. Ed will return to lore replies forthwith, but folks are upset and he wants to address that. So...

Hi again, everyone. Ed is remaining true to his promise to "be here" for scribes, but warns that he just can't answer as freely as he might, not just because of NDAs and not wanting to damage the process of unfolding the Realms, but because so much just isn't known yet (by him, and presumably by most others) about specifics of the 4e Realms.

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However, without further jabber from me, heeeeere's Ed:

Hello, all. I continue to receive e-mails, phone calls, snail mail letters, and in-person queries, beefs, and pleas for reassurance from longtime Realms fans - - and continue to be humbled by the depth of your feeling for the Realms. Thank you, everyone.

Though I am frantically busy trying to get things done before flying off to Australia (during which trip I will almost certainly fall e-silent, BTW) I will try to respond to scribes who have posted in this thread, as I come to your posts in the e-mails THO forwards me.

Red Walker, you're welcome, thanks for the love, and you are very, very right to say: "Fear of change is natural, and greater fear of Big changes is too!"

The reactions of Realms fans were expected for this very reason. Of COURSE everyone will be upset, or at least anxious, in some way, whether eager for change or hating its possible/probable consequences. Wooly Rupert and others are correct to say we haven't seen enough yet to really judge the so-called "new" Realms, and I agree.

None of which doesn't make opinions on it, based on the little we have seen, perfectly valid. Zandilar isn't the only one to decide that the changes she's heard about thus far seem "so... well... dumb, to put it bluntly."

Please, please, all of you: respect each other's opinions. Disagree with them as heatedly as you want, but please bend over backwards not to disrespect each other for holding them. As it happens, the way the "peekaboo" revelations have thus far appeared (I'm guessing so as to foment maximum "buzz" and therefore unpaid publicity), I agree with Zandilar. Those don't sound like MY gods. :}

However, Chosen of Moradin quite rightly points out that "a timeline is not an explanation of what happens. It's only a summary. And a summary cannot explain clearly anything. The summary of the Fall of Myth Drannor don't explain the Fall of Myth Drannor. So, to see exactly what happened, we will have to wait until the next FRCS."

Correct. As I've always said, mortals in the Realms can never know the "truth" about divine deeds and intentions, only what's reported to them. By deities, priests, soothsayers, "possessed" madwits, and in dream-visions - - and ALL of those sources can be mistaken or misinterpreted, or can lie and distort or slant to further their own agendas. Yes, even the gods themselves. So what appears in THE GRAND HISTORY OF THE REALMS is what "the loudest reports say" happened, not what every being in the Realms personally saw and therefore "knows" (and agrees) happened.

It should be obvious to everyone by now that there are major changes in magic and the deities underway, and that the Spellplague is part of that. We now know that it begins in the Year of Blue Fire, in a dramatic way, and that part of Bob's newest novel takes place a hundred years in the future (at a time when almost all human characters alive in the Realms of "today," if they haven't found some magical means of prolonging their lifespans - - in a "magic unstable and unreliable" situation - - will have perished of old age).

Which brings us to eiglos, who posts: "My only current played character in the Realms is a Priestess of Lurue. Her future must be uncertain, unless Lurue returns to her original role in the Realms."

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Passing over the obvious points that everyone's future is always uncertain, and that the particular priestess will almost certainly have died of old age by the time of THE ORC KING anyway, we know that gods can and have been subsumed by other gods, and that "dead" or fallen gods are still worshipped fervently, just as before, because other deities adopt their followers, still grant spells, and so on - - so mortals may or may not know the true fate of the deity they worship. This MIGHT be one future for this specific priestess. Lurue (or any other deity, for that matter) could of course survive "unchanged," or change in divine power but keep the same looks, portfolios, aims, and credos. Deities tend to shift subtly all the time in these things, however. And IF we are talking a century of time, that's a lot of roleplaying (in terms of real-world duration). So for now, eiglos, roleplaying "life" for your priestess can be very much "business as usual."

I personally would welcome the separation of, say, The Living Realms and the "history" RPGA play therein develops, from my own home campaign. If characters played in an RPGA adventure slay a wizard and blow up his tower, and I'm using both wizard and tower extensively in my home campaign, the potential conflict vanishes; the destruction won't occur until the future (if mage and/or structure "go down" in my campaign, there's plenty of in-Realms time for the one to be brought back to life somehow and the other rebuilt, to "explain away" the conflict).

A gamer can play in their own current campaign just as before, peek at eventual 4e Realms releases in hobby shops, at conventions, and via online discussion, and either decide never to go to 4e, or (if the new material at some point seems really exciting) "jump" the characters from one Realmsdate to the other by some magical means (even if it's "caught in a portal for a century," and I set just such weirdness up with some comments in SWORDS OF DRAGONFIRE that also "start to" explain the 2e to 3e "map changes" in the Realms without being too explicit, for those who didn't make the change). Or, if a DM and player group collectively decide to move to the "new" Realms, they can even try to arrange cached treasure and PC breeding so as to "set up" descendants of their favourite characters as adventurers in the future Realms.

So, eiglos, your priestess can have a long and rewarding life and career, regardless.

However, this leads to another important point Zandilar raised: "If I run my campaign prior to the Year of Blue Fire, then I don't need the 4e products. Since I don't need them, I don't buy them. Since I don't buy them, WotC doesn't get my money. WotC doesn't get my money, and it is starting to look like a lot of the "old guard" are going down this path... So WotC starts to loose money, and eventually the line will get cut."

This is indeed the Big Risk in all of this, the "roll of the dice" that I wish someone had never decided to make (because I personally value the ongoing development of a shared and unbroken imaginary Grand History of a fictional fantasy setting as something magnificent in itself, an achievement we should all continue to contribute to).

Yet it's happening regardless of my personal wants, and I choose to be onboard trying to paddle and steer, rather than left behind swimming in the water, calling out that perhaps we should have set a different course.

Zandilar is perfectly correct to post: "I've never ever had problems with a business wanting to make a profit. That is, after all, the purpose of a business. But what they're doing here is taking a HUGE risk with a known quantity. They're risking the entire Realms product line with this move, and they seem to have gone to great lengths to rub us old guard up the wrong way with the changes they're making. (Just my perception, I'm sure they haven't deliberately set out to slight us.)"

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I don't think anyone at Wizards set out to deliberately upset or slight anyone. I do think it has been decided to make these changes swiftly, and that very "brutal rapidity" is increasing some of the upset along with the "buzz."

However, there's no reason at all to move your own campaign if you don't want to. IF there's a hundred-year jump, that's a LOT of time to roleplay through; most FR campaigns I hear about don't cover more than ten to twelve years in the Realms unless they incorporate "down time" jumps of their own, before they "run down" and the folks involved start anew.

Yes, the Spellplague is going to shift the flavour of the Realms (if wizards are dying or their magic is going wild or failing, and priests are all upset, too, it follows that the "tone" of daily life and therefore of roleplaying will change a bit), but the Realms is a big place, and there's no reason yet to suspect that "all civilization will fall." Waterdeep, Silverymoon, Cormyr - - I don't think a century will sweep any of them away. CHANGE them, yes, but they're all changing constantly, anyway; we just usually live with the changes as they're happening rather than seeing a "big jump-cut." Nor is there any reason, based on what we've seen thus far, to believe that the Spellplague is a single big event, over in a short time; the very name implies something of longer duration, with almost certainly (if real-world "plagues" are anything to go by) varying results from place to place and person to person (this city or region largely unaffected, that wizard untouched, this one over here driven mad; that allows DMs plenty of "elbow room" to preserve the "heart locations" of a beloved campaign, and favourite PCs and NPCs, too; it's "the rest of the Realms" where the BIG changes occur... something that a lot of DMs have already been doing for two decades, as they steer their own campaigns around events in the published Realms).

None of which means my arguments should be seen as quelling, denying, or belittling the personal anger and upset longtime Realms fans are feeling over this. Believe me, I know how you feel. :}

Neriandal Freit, your queries don't come off as offensive, at all (and I'm glad you loved that little scene in EL'S DAUGHTER; one of my favourite moments, out of everything I've written). I hear you and I sympathize, deeply. (And yes, I'll check out "Redeemers of Dawn," and let you know; somebody please give THO a heads up when the new Compendium is released, okay?)

My answer begins: Although I know the Realms is intended as "a place to play," and therefore should be something of a haven from the unpleasantnesses of real life, so we can hold on to elements in it we love and hold most precious, even in the Realms everything changes. I hate changing anything in the published Realms before I finish the (admittedly endless) task of detailing every corner of it (we still aren't really off the first continent, are we?), but the alternative is static boredom... dust settling on statues in silence.

Everything changes; eventually, everyone (even deities, as they are conceived of in the Realms, with power tied to worshippers) dies. So with that said, my "answer direct" to you becomes another question: In real life, and in the Realms, do you NOT fall in love with someone, or befriend them, or work with them on something that interests you both and that you can both be proud of, because someday both of you will die?

I don't think so. Despite yourself, even if you know we're all rushing to oblivion, you do it anyway. In the end, that's what "living" is all about.

We know we're all doomed (as the song goes: "We're here for a good time/Not a long time"), but we go ahead and love, laugh, climb mountains, read books, and fall in love with the Realms anyway. At least I did. :}

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If it helps you decide, I intend to go on exploring the Realms, bringing us all more detail. Some of it in the "now" Realms, and some of it in the "new" Realms.

I strongly suspect the published Realms will shortly become "new Realms only" in terms of the time-setting of products - - and that many fans may step back from that new Realms. That's an individual choice I certainly don't want to try to (further than by setting forth my views here) influence for everyone. It's going to have to be your call.

I hope you'll join with Xysma and others in "clinging to the merest sliver of hope that Ed, Eric, and the rest can salvage what at first glance is going to be a nightmare for those of us who love the Realms so dearly," and therefore at least give the new Realms a look.

I'm going to go right on exploring the Realms, and if that means finding some way to paint in bits of the "Lost Years" in the time-jump, I'll try to find some way to do that. We MIGHT end up with a Realms of the novels that's far "ahead in time" of where you or other gamers might be roleplaying, and therefore not conflicting much with your unfolding play. Lovely smell over here, steak sizzling over there, so to speak.

I KNOW it hurts when you've come to love and cherish a fictional place and characters, that you can enjoy in your imagination, and someone goes and stomps on what you hold precious. Yet what lies your imagination can be only be hurt if you let it be.

In the Realms, this has all happened before; the Mystra you loved that scene about is Mystra Number 2 (Number 3 if you count Mysteryl). The Realms you love grew out of previous planet-shaking debacles. and you may come to like the post-Spellplague Realms.

Or not. I understand and respect both your love for the Realms, and that you feel the way you do right now.

Kuje expressed his dismay early on in this, and many other scribes have cried out between him and you; I understand and sympathize with all of your misgivings and raw emotions. I went through the same thing at a secret summit meeting at GenCon some years ago; believe me, heavy-hitter novelists and game designers who love the Realms have argued about this "change" over and over heatedly.

There's always a strong streak in gamers and game designers of what I said onstage at the Killer Breakfast this year, when Tracy asked me what my character was going to do, and I replied: "Being a game designer, I go for the bright shiny object." We always feel the lure of what's exciting and new.

Yet I deliberately left the ever-busier city where I grew up ("home") to go and live in the country, to try to cling to some of the good things of the past that were slipping away in the big city. So I'm going through this struggle, too. Lose Slyné? Hell, lose ALL the human NPCs I spent forty years bringing to life? This had BETTER be good!

Wizards of the Coast obviously believes it will be. I'm going to do my best to help them make it so. I hope Candlekeep continues to be the friendly forum of fellow Realms-lovers that it has always been, as we all go through this together. If you don't want to move to the "new" Realms, that doesn't mean there's anything wrong with either you or the "old" Realms. Goodness knows Candlekeep, and the hearts of its scribes, are both big enough to accommodate both. If we want them to be.

(Strikes dramatic pose, raises sword to gleam in the sunset, and hopes breeches won't fall down.)

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Enough for now. The Realms lives! I have spoken! Ale and light wines half price, served by a smiling Storm Silverhand fetchingly clad in thigh-high boots and naught else! Ahem...

So saith Ed.

Oh, and about those straps to keep you on the horse, Xysma? I'll be right over! Be warned (as if you needed any warning, purrrr) that I've never learned just to keep my hands on the buckles.

Hereafter, back to the lore. Ed hasn't seen a copy of GRAND HISTORY yet, BTW, so can't comment on specific wordings therein.

love to all,
THO

On September 17, 2007 THO said: And you'll see Hesperdan at work again (though perhaps not actually onstage) in THE SWORD NEVER SLEEPS, the third Knights novel. Ed also tells me that Vangey and Alusair have more than one "confrontation," we get glimpses of Lady Targrael and our old friends the Spurbrights, and... and there's this sword, that doesn't sleep, see?

Ed will return with more Realmslore on the morrow, I hope. He was wrting something in a hurry for someone to use re. the Emmys, I understand.

love to all,
THO

September 17, 2007: Hi, all. Ed of the Greenwood returns with a Realmslore reply, this time to Foxhelm's query: "Here's an interesting question: Can the shockwave from a smokepowder explosion put out a fire? I know in the real world that a low explosive like Blackpowder can't do it, but a higher explosive can.

Or could a wizard use a sonic burst to put out a fire? Cause I know that a low frequency sonic pressure wave can put out fire from the real world.

(Information gained from a Mythbuster Episode)"

Ed responds:

Yes to both (smokepowder and sonic burst). However, conditions have to be "just right," so it happens very rarely.

Most smokepowder explosions are too small, and the fire isn't the right distance from the blast, or there are obstacles or uneven ground between that means the fire might be scattered (sometimes flaming embers are hurled quite a distance, to start other fires), lessened, or temporarily disrupted, rather than extinguished.

Sonic bursts manage it more often, because wizards who practice casting them get to know just where and how to unleash those magics to quell a fire. A mage who's never done it before under the specific conditions, or not recently, however, is still unlikely to get the fire completely out.

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Moreover, neither extinguishment method is effective against huge fires (entire city block aflame, or a big siege tower) or "creeping" fires (smouldering hay, a seam of clay, or leafy forest dirt burning underground and flaring up from time to time aboveground).

So it CAN be done, but...

So saith Ed, Mythbuster watcher.

He met them two GenCons back, and has always been struck by how much one of them resembles Zeb Cook (as Zeb looked in the days of TSR).

love to all,
THO

September 18, 2007: Hi again, all. Another swift, short reply by Ed to a recent and straightforward Realmslore question by Blueblade (shades of the "quickies" from the end of 2006): "The terrain and "cover" around Everlund: how wild is it? How easy is it for, say, a "good at what they do" orc raiding party to sneak up to the edges of Everlund by night without being seen by average joes (I'm not talking "can scan with magic" types, here), smelled by stabled horses or livestock hobbled outdoors in paddocks, etc.? Thanks"

Ed replies:

Everlund has both a traditional cobbled-streets, built-up central area, and extensive "verges" (suburbs, if you like, though I hate that word when applied to any non-real-world setting) that consist of wooded rolling hills where many mansions, keeps, and more modest cottages stand (some of them hidden in trees, some of them tucked between hills in their own little "dells," and a few of them crowning hilltops. The hills are small, with few rocky outcrops and a lot of topsoil, meadows are found wherever the trees have been cut back, and the area is very well watered (lots of ponds and springs).

In short, there's a LOT of cover, and a skilled raiding party can sneak up on or even "between and past" these edges-of-Everlund dwellings with comparative ease. Yes, some magic is used for spying and warning systems, when trouble is expected, but not everyone has access to magic, or would spend it on such a "small precious candle in the great darkness" use.

So saith Ed.

Creator of Everlund, of course.

September 19, 2007: Hello again, fellow scribes. This time Ed makes reply to words scribe Victor_ograygor asked me to forward to him: "Ed I hope that we one day are going to here your personally wives on the changes on Forgotten Realms, and not only that we have to take it easy and see what happens. Sorry if I offend you with my Pirate ship terrorises but these changes are absolutely ridicules. I have been a gamer since some of the first FR material came out and our group now (oldies) still gather and play FR, and we all agree that these changes a really not you at all. I really feel that a line should be drawn here, from both gamers and designers.

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I am sorry to say that I (we) are not going to buy these 4 ed changes and I hope and think that many other gamers are going to follow these foot steps.

Ps: A man working on a pirate ship is either a slave ore a pirate

And a slave usually doesn't have anything to say..."

Ed replies:

Hi, Victor. I quite understand how you (and your group) feel, and I'm not going to say that you're wrong or try to convince you otherwise. You should do what works for you as a gamer, just all the rest of us should. Many of the original Realms players had a "WTF?" reaction, initially, too, but being gamers, they will peek at 4e before deciding: gamers always have to look at the new stuff to see what it's really like.

I'm a gamer, so: So do I.

I asked everyone to wait and see because that's all any of us (yes, including me!) can do, thus far. We haven't seen enough to know how "good" or "bad" things are going to be. I am hearing a lot of negative opinion, but haven't seen much of what those opinions are based on. Yes, "one day" I will have my say on the changes, when the time is right. It's not right yet, because I haven't seen the changes (nor do I think any one product will reveal them all, at once).

I will stick with the Realms because I love it and created it and have spent forty years working on it and intend that it shall be the best it can be, for everyone (old fans, new fans, fiction-only readers, Wizards; EVERYONE). I will keep on trying to do that. I know many of the staff members of Wizards of the Coast personally, and they don't strike me as evil, or non-gamers, or people who are either stupid or bad-natured. I'm waiting to see what they do to the Realms (because that's all I CAN do: wait).

But as for your pirate ship comment: I'm not working on the pirate ship.

Right now, I'm forty years back from current ("old," if you prefer) Realmstime, finishing the third Knights of Myth Drannor novel.

In other words, I'm what I've always been: a hard-working slave on a grand old ship that I built and a lot of other people have improved, that's been sailing along these forty years, and certainly hasn't gone "pirate" yet.

You seem to think I am on the staff of Wizards of the Coast (which I have NEVER been, nor yet its predecessor, TSR). I am a gamer, a freelancer who doesn't even live in the same country as the publisher of the game. If I'm working on that pirate ship, then every gamer who proposed, wrote, and managed to get published an article for DRAGON or DUNGEON is, too. As an analogy, your pirate ship scenario just doesn't hold, and because it describes the situation so inaccurately, is, yes, offensive (just as many of your countrymen probably don't like being confused with the native inhabitants of Germany, Sweden, Finland, and Norway by someone who says "those people who live in that part of the world, they're all the same," right?). The company OWNS the game; what they do with it just can't accurately be described as "piracy."

However, that's your opinion and you're perfectly entitled to it. Though when THO and I both tell you you're wrong, in something pertaining to the Realms, I would listen if I were you; arguing with us is, to borrow your word, "ridiculous."

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Yet I say again: wait and see. By "see," I mean have a look at that new FRCS when it comes out (no, I don't mean buy it, necessarily; plenty of folks will be discussing it and stores will have it for you to eyeball and no doubt Wizards will have previews on their website). If you hate it, then you probably will have to step back from buying new FR products. Which of course DOESN'T mean saying farewell to the Realms; it just makes it yours, to run as you will (and I'm sure many other scribes will be improvising their own futures for the Realms, just as you are, if ideas ever fail your group).

When that new FRCS comes out, ask me again about the "new" Realms, okay? I'll be perfectly happy to chat with you again, now or then. Anyone who's played in the Realms since the Old Gray Box is great in my books!

Ed

So saith Ed.

Creator of the Realms, and its most faithful booster and detailer, down all the years.

love to all,
THO

September 22, 2007: Hello, all. Skeptic, I relayed today's posts to Ed, and he sent back this:

Skeptic, you're very welcome.

As all Realms fans might expect, I will move heaven and earth if I have to, to get to work on the the "new" Realms.

I have always "half-planned" for the future of the Realms, continuously. By half-planned, I mean: establish trends (this is happening in Thay, that's befalling in Sembia) to set things in motion, see what actually happens (in play in my own campaign, on one level, and what various novelists, short story writers, and game designers publish in Wizards products on another level), and think about consequences, reactions to events, and how the ongoing trends will be changed or deflected.

This process has been part of how I shaped and "ran" the Realms from the beginning (yes, when it was just my own private fiction setting, and later when it was a D&D play setting, too; and yet again when it became a published setting). This is how the life blood of the Realms has always flowed.

Some years ago, in a secret "Realms summit" that I attended at a GenCon, some larger changes were discussed, argued over, and hammered out. Yes, I was a part of that; I have been NDA'd on this until now, and wasn't privy to some of the specific fragments thus far revealed (e.g. in THE ORC KING Prologue) until very recently. THAT'S why I kept pleading to scribes to "wait and see." (I agree it's certainly early enough to get excited, upset, or eager, but we can't see enough yet to really judge anything. Some scribes posting here and elsewhere have obviously seen more "teasers," hints, or leaks about the 4e game rules than I have.) When I said "This had BETTER be good!" I was repeating (more or less) one of the points I made at that summit: we risk much, and must Do It Right.

We are now beginning to see some of those larger changes, and as Rich Baker revealed on his blog and I let on in this thread, I will be on board the Good Ship Realms as we sail into the

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Spellplague.

I'm still urging everyone to wait and see. It's still the Realms you were playing in a month ago, before all of this news broke (look back and you may see THO hinting, just a bit, that SOMETHING was coming). I'm VERY proud of THE GRAND HISTORY OF THE REALMS (yes, I found and bought a copy), and the contributors all post here from time to time and are part of the Candlekeep community. We brought it to you with love, and I think that shows.

I think everyone who plays in the Realms, or works on the Realms, falls in love with it, at least a little. That's why so many of you have posted so emotionally; because you CARE.

Well, I care about the Realms, too. So, I know beyond any doubt, do the folks at Wizards I have worked with, on the Realms, and those I am working with now on the Realms. NDAs prevent me from giving any details about forthcoming products, but I will be a part of it all, and I firmly expect (as a gamer and customer; and, yes, I BUY a lot of stuff, just like anyone else does) to be pleased with Realms products in the future.

I'm going to try to keep on answering lore queries in this next week, but I am TEARINGLY busy right now (and looking forward to meeting some of the Australian-resident Candlekeep scribes in person, soon), so if I fall silent, please understand why.

In other news, a fan dropped by the library on my last work shift to show me a "Realms dress" she'd just sewn. It was stunning, but I doubt Wizards has any idle personnel to branch out into a gamer fashion line. Sigh; choice, choices.

Hang in there, folks! I have trusty sword in one hand and wild-as-ever spell in the other, and haven't lost my taste for riding into battle...

So saith Ed.

That's my DM/old friend/hero figure.

love to all,
THO

September 20, 2007: Hello, all. I sent Ed the latest batch of scribes' posts, including this one from WalkerNinja: "Ed, As you probably know, Robert Jordan (the nom de plume of James Rigney) died yesterday. In my mind the two of you have been locked in mortal combat for the status of My Favorite Author for over a decade. I was wondering if you knew him, what you thought of him, and of his contributions to the fantasy genre.

Additionally, would you consider completing the 12th and final book of the Wheel of Time Series as he died in the middle of writing it? I know that his entire fanbase, grieved as we are for his death are in utter hysterics over not getting to see the end of his wonderful saga."

Ed replied almost INSTANTLY, and apologized that 'real life' is making his replies a little spotty now and for the next few days (time for his stress echo with his cardiologist 120 miles away, library board meetings, etc.).

Here's what Ed had to say:

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I met "Robert Jordan" once, briefly, and we had a very nice chat. He struck me as a well-read, intelligent, sensitive man. I liked him, and regret his passing. It wasn't as much of a blow as, say, the loss of Roger Zelazny, because I knew just how grave his situation was for longer.

He was a giant in modern fantasy publishing. Some readers (including me) LOVED "The Eye of the World" but thought the series grew too long and confused in its pacing in some of the later books. However, I kept reading, just as most of them did. :}

As a library worker, I noticed that like Eddings, Rowling, and Tolkien, his books appealed to people who "don't like and read that fantasy stuff" as well as to fantasy readers. He transcended the genre.

As a result, he was THE heavy hitter (in terms of sales) at one of my publishers, Tor (Terry Goodkind being the runner-up).

He had been ill for some time, and a number of Tor writers (very privately) discussed whether it would be possible or appropriate for us to "gang write" the last book and finish it if he didn't live to do so. The consensus was, we should not if the man himself didn't want us to (as he once stated), but that we would jump at the chance to do it, for free, if his wife (and series editor) Harriet ever asked us to (as Mr. Rigney later said Harriet should finish it if she wanted to). PLEASE understand that, even typing this, I feel incredibly presumptuous; we were reacting as heart-torn fans, desperately wanting the tale to stand complete.

The Wheel of Time should be finished (IF possible to a worthy standard); "unfinished tales" disappoint, weaken, and sadden us all. Even if the decision is made NOT to finish the last book, I want to see published the fragment that does exist, plus the notes (SUNSET AT BLANDINGS style).

Obviously, Harriet (with or without any assistance she feels she needs or doesn't need) is THE person to finish A MEMORY OF LIGHT. We know that anything from two-thirds to "90 percent" of the book is done (much of it dictated onto tape), and that when very ill, the man outlined the entire story to family members. So it appears that the tale CAN be finished. I feel strongly that it should be.

I also feel strongly that I'm not worthy to even attempt the task. I would be VERY willing to help, if the man's family asked me, but I don't want them to ask me. They can find writers far, far better suited to the task. If Mr. Tom Doherty, who publishes books by me and by Mr. Jordan, asked me to, I would help in any way I could, but would want to know that Harriet, at the very least, wouldn't object to my involvement. Being immersed in the Realms prevents me from being as deeply immersed in ANY other fantasy setting as I should be, to attempt anything approaching what you suggest.

However, I don't think any of us need to worry. I spoke with Mr. Doherty at GenCon, and he then expected that the book "will get done." I expect that it will, too, without any involvement on my part. I trust Tom Doherty absolutely. I respect and trust Mr. Rigney's family, and believe his wife is the best person on the planet to finish the Wheel of Time saga.

I am confidently awaiting the day when I can buy a big, fat tome entitled A MEMORY OF LIGHT. That tale will be ended forever, I'm afraid, but at least it will be complete.

Ed

So saith Ed.

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Not much I can or should add to that.

love to all,
THO

Warrax, Ed and I have discussed the Wheel of Time several times in the past, and I believe Ed expressed himself poorly in the passage you quoted. I know from our discussions (and it's clear from the rest of his words, too) that he didn't think the SERIES was too long, but rather that several of the later books were in themselves (within their own covers) too long and confused in pacing: in other words, that within a given book Jordan was juggling too many characters, following too many subplots, and the result was confusing for many readers and less effective than a more straightforward yarn would have been (something Ed has a tendency to do, too, and therefore "looks for" and studies, in the writing of others).

There's no question that "doorstop"-thick fantasy novels in a single sequence have more publishing-industry impact than shorter books that simply share the same world setting (like most of the Realms fiction canon). I'm not saying that the collective sales of the one way are superior to the other, or that either way is preferable or "better." Every publisher (and to the extent that the publisher allows them, every writer) has to follow the way they believe best; some even try different ways and tinker for a bit.

Just trying to clarify; here, I think Ed "misspoke" himself enough to be misunderstood.

love,
THO

September 21, 2007: Hi, Warrax (and everyone: important stuff for all scribes' eyes at the end of this post). I sent your post to Ed, and here's his reply:

Well, "better off" of course "depends" (on whose viewpoint we're speaking of). Every writer who has the freedom to do so should tell a story the way that works best for them, to yield the "best" story; perhaps if the Wheel of Time books had been written as shorter, focus-on-fewer-plots-and-characters books, they wouldn't have "worked" at all for any of us (the writer, readers, and therefore sales/the publisher).

However, yes, if we go by my personal preferences, I'd prefer books that are more satisfying in themselves (come to resolutions or "halfway" resolutions that satisfy the reader, within one set of book covers).

Terry Pratchett's Discworld books are examples of this: each tells a stand-alone story, but they revisit favourite characters, and each one advances the "history" of a rich shared fantasy setting.

However, such books don't HAVE to be short. Julian May's Pliocene Exile books are examples of long books that have huge casts of characters, adroitly handled. Or the as-yet-unfinished Sword of Shadows series by J.V. Jones (A CAVERN OF BLACK ICE and its sequels).

As with almost anything in fiction, Your Mileage May Vary.

So saith Ed.

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Who has read literally tens of thousands of novels, of all sorts. And written lots of them, too (the latest two: SWORDS OF DRAGONFIRE from Wizards of the Coast, and DARK WARRIOR RISING from Tor Books; next up are DARK LORD from Solaris/Black Library [distributed in North America by Simon & Schuster] and THE ANNOTATED ELMINSTER from Wizards of the Coast).

By the way, Ed has been talking extensively with folks at Wizards (remember, he WAS part of the "Secret Summit" some years back at GenCon, at which "something" was planned for the Realms that now seems to be happening, and that involves the Spellplague, so this "big change" is something he knew was coming [as was made clear to those who attended the "Secrets of the Forgotten Realms" seminar at GenCon]), and has just told me:

Yes, I WILL be involved with the next series of Realms products, just as I was with this plan for the future of the Realms. You can tell interested people (such as the scribes at Candlekeep) this; I've been told from the top that it's okay if it becomes public knowledge. I still have no details to yield up, because I don't know any - - and that's the state of affairs right now not because of any sinister coverup, but simply because so much hasn't been decided yet (I suspect matters have been delayed by the evolving 4e game rules, which of course must come first).

So smile, sword high, and onward! After every fire, there's always another frying pan, and so on. That succession of burns and scalds is called "life."

(There. More hilltop philosophy. Must run from this keyboard now; the Fed Ex guy is at the door with a box of books, and Jen's calling me for dinner from the other direction. Wheeeee.)

So saith Ed (again).

Interesting times, to be sure. Hang in there, scribes!

love to all,
THO

September 24, 2007: Hello again, all. This time Ed pounces on a recent question from createvmind: "Hello All,

Ed I assume the various creatures in Faerûn have unique smells, just as one here can clearly smell the difference between a dog and a fish, so with this train of thought I wonder if shapechangers like the Maluagrym, Rakshaha, Dragons and Doppelgangers and such have a unique smell that would possibly alert a being familiar with them to discern their true nature?"

Ed replies:

NICE question. Dragons have various "metallic tang" smells when in their own form, but don't have a strong "smell" at all when in human form (or Mirt and Durnan would have sussed out the "lady" in my REALMS OF THE DRAGONS story - - and NO gold dragons would be able to "hide" for long among humans, in Waterdeep or elsewhere). Malaugrym are humans with a shapechanging ability (they are "the Blood of Malaug," and he was a human mage) and smell like humans. Doppelgangers don't have a smell at all, EXCEPT when scorched or burned (whereupon they have a horrid "cooked slime" smell rather than the bacon-like smell of human flesh). Rakshasa have a tiger-like smell that they bathe daily to "keep down" (they only get really "whiff" if they've sweated for two days or more, and eaten raw meat, but know this well, and work to quell it). None of these creatures (except the Rakshasa, in conditions I've just noted) has a

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strong enough smell for dogs or other scent-trackers to reliably identify or follow. A “sniffer” might notice that a human (actually a doppelganger) doesn’t seem to have any scent AT ALL, but it’s rare that they get the chance, because the Realms, from the wilderland outdoors to crowded cities and muddy tavern years along high roads, abounds in smells.

So saith Ed, Old Bloodhound of the Realms.

Love to all,
THO

September 25, 2007: Hello again, all! This time Ed responds to Warrax’s query: “Ed, I have a question for you that’s completely unrelated to the Forgotten Realms, if that’s OK?”

When you were writing 'The Kingless Land,' did you spend much time developing Aglirta first or did you get a basic gist of everything and develop the setting as you progressed through the plot?

Incidentally, while the story (and the series) is great itself, I think the opening sequence of that book may be my favorite opening to any fantasy book.

OK, we need coin so that we can get in out of the cold and get some food in us before everyone tries to kill us for being outlaws, what do we do?

I know, I know! We steal a dress!

Great stuff, really. :D”

Ed replies:

Oh, I’d not say it’s completely unrelated, because it’s still worldbuilding.

As it happens, I came up with the setting first, because the idea of the verdant river valley hemmed in by dangerous/inhospitable hills and crags, that in turn constricts all the humans together in a series of warring baronies, is what intrigued me. It’s a GREAT roleplaying campaign setting, if properly handled (fallen/missing king, ambitious barons fighting little wars with each other constantly, everyone else just trying to survive, wealthy “common ground” independent port city at the river mouth, etc.). To that I bolted on the haunted/everchanging cursed palace (the ultimate dungeon; I even gave it its own book, THE SILENT HOUSE, as a capstone to the series), and then let my characters (editorial commandment: one will correspond to each of the four D&D “root” character class types) loose in it.

I wanted to explore HOW (and why) such a band of adventurers would ever get together, so the dress was my way of roping the beautiful lady who happens to be a mage into the group (I knew I wanted to start with two “war buddies”). And, yes, I chose a dress to poke fun at the “gee, look at this convenient treasure just heaped up here in this room Conan staggers into; that NEVER happens, no?” fantasy trope.

So saith Ed.

Who creates worlds for a living, and right now is hard at work on new Realms goodies for us all.

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love to all,
THO

September 28, 2007: Hello again, all. This time Ed of the Greenwood responds to Jamallo Kreen re. this query: "Well met! Ed has made it clear that divine magic on Toril comes solely from the gods, so I wonder how Ed would suggest dealing with Heroes of Horror classes like the Archivist and Death Delver (?) who can cast divine spells using "prayerbooks" in the first case and some mysterious and unknown source in the second? Is it possible on Toril to cast "divine" spells by channeling the unthinking forces of positive and negative energy, or must some deity focus that power into clerical magic?"

Ed replies:

Some deity must always focus energy into clerical magic, but NOT necessarily consciously and deliberately in response to each prayer for a spell. In other words, the mind of a deity does NOT have a little internal chamber where a sensor is bellowing: "Incoming request for a flame strike! Fill soonest!" Prayers are a constant din that deities only "listen to" directly when they desire to; divine-spell-requests are like a constant background hum/tug that is answered nigh-automatically by most deities, most of the time (and darned near ALL of the time for what most editions of the game rules refer to as magics of 2nd level and less [yes, including "zero" or "orisons"]).

Here's the wrinkle: just as the Weave is the way arcane spellcasters harness the raw life energies of the world, and most mortals (and many gods) have only a basic understanding of it (just as in the real world many people drive cars who have only a basic understanding of how they work, and couldn't fix most technical problems with their own car if their life depended on it), almost all mortals of Faerûn don't KNOW how the prayers for spells are answered, or even who answers them. It may be servitors of the god they're praying to, or another god entirely. Some gods, as we know, masquerade as others or work through others or aid others, from time to time. Divine assistance is always needed to "receive" divine spells, but that does not mean that "your god" pays direct attention to "your request" for that spell, or to your use (casting) of it.

Sometimes, however, they DO pay attention, and that's usually a bad thing for the mortals involved. :}

So saith Ed.

Creator of the Realms and most of its gods.

A postscript to PDK and to Warrax: Ed quite understands, and says that's just fine; there will indeed be other occasions, and he'll be happy to sign stuff and hang out for as long as he can at any given meeting.

love to all,
THO

September 29, 2007: Hello again, all! Well met, and hearken ye to Ed of the Greenwood's latest serving of Realmslore, in response to Penknight's query: "I would like to ask a few paladin questions, if I may. When a paladin passes on, what happens to his belongings exactly? Do they

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get interred with him, (armor, shield, holy avenger, etc.), or do they go to his surviving family? If one of the paladin's children became a paladin, would they receive their father's holy weapon? What if that person already had a holy weapon? Would it go then to the church? How exactly are these decisions reached, also?"

Ed replies:

This is one of those "it depends" answers. In this case, it depends on the faith the paladin belongs to, the manner of his death, and so on.

In general: specifically "holy" weapons tend to be recovered by the church (who may well compensate kin and even creditors of the paladin, and will definitely take care of the burial or compensate others who took care of the remains [any may well also recover those remains for reinterment "in the bosom of the church," i.e. in holy ground or a temple crypt under control of the faith). Relics of the faith worn or used by the fallen paladin, ditto. A token is always passed on to the family, if possible (usually, it's a dagger and/or helm, if these are not specifically holy or magical).

Every faith has developed its own policies, down the years; the churches of Helm, Tyr, and Torm value passing on material to younger kin (and seeking to recruit said kin to "full dedication to" the faith at the right time), whereas Tempus and the other warlike faiths (aside from these three aforementioned) tend to recover such material for the church.

Here, I would roleplay it however you'd like it to work in your campaign, because local temples have often "done their own thing" over the years, citing "inspiration from the god" that came to their senior clergy in dreams, altar prayer-visions, and the like.

So saith Ed, reiterating the "wiggle room" he has used in the "home" Realms campaign.

love to all,
THO

September 29, 2007: Hello again, all. This time Ed tackles yet another query from Jamallo Kreen (don't worry, scribes, he will get to you all; JK just seems to have the knack of asking about specific topics that are in Ed's forebrain for other reasons, such as internal WotC queries or discussions, or Ed's own design work for our campaign or other purposes), to wit: "My apologies, Lady Hooded One, but I just can't find my query to Ed regarding certain Chronomantic spells, so I repost it now, amended and corrected: I know Ed doesn't approve of the Chronomancer class, but are spells such as Scry the Ages and Temporal Eye (from the Chronomancer book itself), which allow a scryer to check out other times, usable in the Realms?"

Ed replies:

Certainly, but there's increasing evidence that MOST of the time they "go awry," and show a caster of those spells "things as they might have been" (or perhaps, things as they befell in alternate versions of the Realms, that are ERHAPS [sages debate this furiously, with no sign of agreement on any horizon] parallel realities) rather than "things as they truly were."

In other words, those spells, tricky though their successful casting can sometimes be, usually function, in a magical sense, but may impart false lore. This may be deception on the part of a deity or servitor, manipulating the Weave (obviously with Mystra's agreement or at least tacit

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acceptance), or it may be the result of a great elder Imaskari, Netherese, or other (Halruaan?) spell that met with the approval of Mystra, and so still "lives" in the Weave, to block accurate scrying either of ALL elder times, or (more likely) many specific events, beings, and places in the past.

So all such "scrying the past" spells are at best, of limited usefulness. They can impart fairly accurate general impressions of climate, topography, architecture, fashion, and presences of common fauna and flora - - but as to watching specific confrontations, encounters, and deeds, not so much. Be warned; some tibble-dabblers have learned this Too Late.

So saith Ed, whose warnings are never to be taken lightly.

love to all,
THO

September 30, 2007: Hello again, fellow scribes of the Realms. Ed is about to depart on his jaunt to Australia, to appear at Reefcon, Spring Revel Down Under, and the Cairns Junior Writers' Festival (all in Cairns, Queensland, Australia), and will probably fall e-silent for a dozen days or so (though he might find a way to get onto the Net). I will, as usual, also fall silent, having shifted one of my too-long-neglected surveillance tasks (that will also take ME away from easy Net access) to coincide with Ed's trip.

However, PLEASE keep posting Realmslore queries - - and other questions for Ed, too, from comments about the future of the Realms to Castlemourn matters to queries you'd like Ed to directly respond to about his other fiction and game projects, and.... life, the universe, and everything. Ed wants to hear from you, in part because he loves to "talk Realms" and hang out with others who love the Realms, in part because these are interesting times for our beloved shared setting, and in part because your various voices give him both feedback and "balance" from retreating entirely into a hearing-only-yourself-speak creative hermitage.

Not that Ed is neglecting answers tonight. Accordingly, I present Ed's reply to several scribes' queries.

First up, The Red Walker posted this: "Just a small question of little import, but as my sleep has dwindled as the birth of our 2nd child (1st son) draws near (Fri 5:30am est) I am getting less and less sleep.

I was just curious as to how much sleep Ed usually gets between all that he has going on?"

Ed replies:

First, having heard from THO that your son has arrived: congratulations! (I trust the two of you proud and happy parents know what causes these little bundles to keep coming, by now. :}) Remember to stop at what you can afford. (Which to me, right now, seems to be about HALF a granddaughter. :}).

As for the sleep I get:

Very little. Usual time to ascend to the bedchamber: 1:30 am or so. My wife and I are usually awake (reading and attending to, ahem, other matters) for another hour after that. If we can, we

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reward ourselves by sleeping in until at least 7:30. My wife wants the world to know that I have an annoying habit of spouting my best jokes and silly lines after lights-out, in those precious few hours left for slumber, and she wishes I wouldn't.

I want all scribes to know that this state of affairs is NOT healthy. Don't run yourself short on sleep. Yes, you WILL get used to "getting by" on less, but it affects your mood, alertness, effectiveness at all working tasks, and long-term health. Have a glance at SLEEP THIEVES by Coren, available at most libraries, for more about this. I do NOT advocate skimping on whatever sleep your body needs (everyone is different). Really.

You CAN learn to multitask quickly and efficiently, but high-stress adrenalin-pumping makes humans sick over prolonged periods; adrenalin is a helpful POISON to us, if not just used for those brief "fight or flight" situations. So, please, Red Walker, do whatever you have to do for your family to get all the sleep everyone needs. Babies have a habit of working against you in this. :}

So saith Ed.

Who then turns to another query, this one from Markustay: "With all the stuff Ed has going on, including his new commitments to the 4e FRCS, does he plan on continuing work on Castlemourn?"

I want to pick-up the setting, but not if its going to be a dead-end.

Thanks in Advance - Mark"

Ed replies:

I certainly plan to continue work on Castlemourn, and have a very enthusiastic and capable editor and designer (Brian Gute) and sometime collaborators (Jennifer Brozek and Jim Ward, the famous longtime TSR designer) who feel the same way. I didn't get the chance at GenCon to have the conflag I wanted to with the Margaret Weis Productions folks about how we'll do that (both I and they are overwhelmed with other creative projects at the moment), but boy, do I want to do more Castlemourn! (And my other "world," Embersea, too!)

However, the big hardcover setting book, even without the timeline that is still supposed to go up on the MWP website (itself stalled because they're just so darned busy) and the slew of later planned releases, is itself rich enough, when combined with d20 adventures from anywhere you'd like, or even FR or other D&D adventures, to be used as a campaign setting for, say, twenty years of play. Have a peek at it; like all books, there wasn't enough space to put in all I wanted to, and if it hadn't been a d20 book we could have pruned out new prestige classes, spells, and magic items and given you even more "setting and story lore." Yet I still think the result is worth the coin, to a DM wanting a setting (a new continent in the Realms or a new corner of any other medieval-era fantasy world that has salt seas and mountains), even if we never publish another word of Castlemourn material.

And there is the Game Trade serial story (I believe links to the e-version are posted in another thread here at Candlekeep), the tale in the Players Guide, and if I ever get the time to write it ANOTHER serial upcoming for Game Trade, to add yet more colour to Castlemourn.

Try it; if it seems to you to be priced too high, and you'd rather not order it sight unseen, try to get to a convention or large game store to glance at it for free, and decide for yourself. I designed it to last for years of play, and to be a "base to bolt other stuff onto" (Ptolus? Pathfinder stuff? Why not?), but it may not be your cup of tea.

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So saith Ed.

Who now turns to a THIRD query, this one from Kajehase: "Hi again Ed and the Hooded One. Here's something that's been sort of bugging me since I read the loooong debate Ed and a poster had about the War Wizards of Cormyr not being organised like the US army (in purpose and style of operation they've always reminded me more of STASI, but nevermind).

Exactly how much of the Obarskys' current troubles with the Cormyrean nobles stem from resentment (on the nobles' part) over the way that Vangerdahast and the War Wizards would stick (is sticking) their noses into everything?

Oh, and though Vangey's one of my favourite characters, I must say that the thing I'm looking forward most to in Swords of Dragonfire is seeing the adolescent Princess Alusair."

Ed replies:

Yes, I had fun (albeit too briefly; there just isn't room to explore all the characters and subplots I'd like to, in any novel) with Alusair in DRAGONFIRE, and will have some more in THE SWORD NEVER SLEEPS, last of the Knights trilogy, due out in August 2008.

You'll see a lot more of Vangerdahast, too, of course, exploring his "ends justify the means" approach and deepening his character further. And, yes, STASI isn't that far off, though many of the junior War Wizards really do believe they are protecting and improving Cormyr with every thing they do.

Some of the traditional troubles the Obarskys have with the nobles is the "Hey, what make YOU better than ME? My family's bloodlines are just as deep as yours, here in this land where we both began as settlers and farmers! So don't give yourself airs!" factor, some of it is the Magna Carta factor (nobles fighting with ruler over specific powers, each side thinking they're "right" and the realm will work better if they "win" over the other, with the Obarskys following the view that they do what they must to keep the realm together and getting ever-stronger, and the nobles thinking that every encroachment on their power or punishment of a noble is a vile misuse of royal authority), and some of it - - the major daily and ongoing irritant, in fact - - is whoever the "ahast" wizard is, at the time, and the War Wizards he or she is heading. They are seen by the nobles as the only reason slaughtering the Obarskys just isn't worth it (won't work in delivering the realm to them, and won't right any wrongs), the only way the Obarskys get away with what they do without both commoners and nobles rising against them and sweeping them out of existence, a plague on all honest Cormyreans, who must suffer their spyings and mind-controllings and meddlings and so can't enjoy their own country in any freedom - - and some nobles cleave to the view that the Obarskys are helpless, trapped figureheads and puppets of the sinister War Wizards.

So, yes, the War Wizards (every noble family's House Wizard is one, or is mind-reamed regularly by them, remember) are the prod that increases noble resentments on a daily and ongoing basis. Like any "secret police," they are feared and resented out of all proportion to their true numbers and effectiveness - - and because of their magic, they are FAR more effective, efficient, and precise in their actions than any such real-world force could ever be.

So saith Ed.

Leaving you all a brimming goblet of Realmslore as he falls silent for a short time (his next trip after Oz, he tells me, is to Pentacon in Fort Wayne, Indiana on the first weekend in November).

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Keep those postings coming! (Ed tells me a LOT of the queries still on his platter are NDA'd right now, especially in light of not-yet-published Realms fiction, and the upcoming new FR "baseline" game product[s], so there's room for plenty of questions Ed CAN answer.)

In the meantime, I don my cloak and dark glances and slide into the night, leaving the softest of ghostly kisses behind and my love to you all,
THO

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