

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons[®] 2nd Edition



The Seven Sisters

by Ed Greenwood

You ask why we honor these sisters?
My lord, do you not know?

These sisters are seven magnificent women who *matter*.
The Realms are richer and brighter for the work they
do. These lands are better places for us all because they
have walked the ways of the Realms and striven in them.

And who of all of us proud kings of Faerûn can make
that claim, and speak truth?

—Azoun, King of Cormyr to Padangan, King of Innarlith

Step right up, gentles! Sorceresses you expected, and
sorceresses you shall see! Look within, for we have
heroines here!

—Handobar Hillybuck of Phlan,
introducing Handobar's Travelling Marvels;
somewhere in Sembia, probably last year



To Steve Schend, for the seventh twist.

To Helen Peters and to Jennifer Brockett, because the spirit of the Seven endures.

And to all the sorceresses who have been the inspiration for the Seven.
Alive and dead, on this continent or that, ever bright in memory.
I salute you.

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Introduction



The book you hold in your hands is Realmslore many sages and archmages of Faerûn would die to possess. Some of them fear the Seven Sisters, some worship the Seven—and all of them hold the Seven in awe. This book may begin to explain why.

This volume details seven powerful and influential female nonplayer characters whose careers thus far have spanned more than the life spans of most beings of Toril. It can be used as a tome of new magic or a collection of super-powerful opponents to hurl at player characters, yes—but it is meant to be more than that.

The Seven Sisters is a guide to what goals and aims high-level, long-lived characters in any fantasy campaign setting might pursue. If you are a mighty wizard who has taken all your revenges, fulfilled all your easy dreams and taken steps toward living forever (or at least a long, long time), and you get up on the morning after managing all that, what do you set out to do?

Design, practice, and perfect ultra-powerful spells and then hurl them around for a bit, just to see towers topple and mountains move at your bidding. Yes, but what else? Making gravel soon gets to be a trifle stale.

Create something of lasting importance, like a great ballad, truly comfortable chair design, or classic recipe? Test-of-time judgments take a while to reveal themselves, and straight-ahead bids for classic status are notoriously unreliable.

Well, why not carve out an empire? Control the lives of thousands, build monuments, order folk about like slaves—but why bother?

Hmmm, why get up that morning at all?

The answers powerful beings find to such questions are as many and varied as the folk looking for them. On rare occasions, those answers can shape the destiny of a world. Ah, there we are—how about reshaping the world? Or several worlds? Wouldn't *that* be something? Yes? Read on.

How to Use This Book

The Seven Sisters can be used at different levels and for different purposes. Adventure hooks and cam-

paigned color ideas litter the pages all the way through. Even that long stretch of spells (the “Spells of the Seven” chapter) can provide ideas. Who is to say that monsters and evil NPCs have not learned those magics over the years, or left them as *spell trigger* traps to be unleashed on the unwary or the unwelcome?

The history chapter (“The Story of the Seven”) raises speculative questions about the fates of both folk the Seven had contact with and all the magic the Seven have accumulated along their life journeys. The chapter on the Chosen (“The Powers of the Chosen”) sets forth ideas usable in all campaign settings for Dungeon Masters creating characters who are not quite deities, but are very powerful and very special—the earthshaking heroes who might, just might, become gods in the eyes of folk born after them.

The entries on each Sister detail powerful characters that can easily be renamed and fiddled with for use in other campaigns, and that provide—most importantly—character motivations and aims for such NPCs of might. Then comes all the magic we could learn details of and cram into this book (the “Spells of the Seven” and “Magical Items of the Seven” chapters). Suggestions for using the Sisters in a campaign bring this look at the Seven to a close.

The Rune of the Seven

Even folk in Toril who have never heard of the Seven or realized they are real, living beings know this simple old rhyme:

Seven bright stars in the sky I see.
Seven for those who watch over me.
Seven be the smiles down they send.
Seven be the troubles swift they mend.

Warriors hum the rhyme's descending tune when they go into battle. Scribes and kings alike murmur it as they stare at treaties or important decisions. Even those who do not know the origin or meaning of the words weave more than they know when they recite them.

Who are the Seven Sisters?



Who are the Seven, indeed? Well, there are the Seven Lost Rings of Mhzentul, and old foresters of Cormyr tell tales of the Seven Swan-mays of the Wood who grant good fortune to those who revere living things in the King's Forest and bring ill luck to poachers and those who set careless fires. In Westgate, they speak of the Seven Spells that an early mage of the city used in a preset sequence (so that casting one set off the next) to destroy the dragon who ruled the city and win himself the throne as its first human king. In Chessenta, they celebrate the Night of the Seven Moons, when . . . But, enough. When Harpers, bards, mages, loremasters, and sages of the Realms gather together over dusty tomes or crackling fires to speak softly of the Seven, they mean the Seven Silverhaired Sisters and nothing else.

All folk of Toril and probably several other planes and worlds have heard of the fiery-tempered Witch-Queen of Aglarond, the **Simbul**, whose personal might-in-magic has kept an entire realm of wizards—dread Thay cats—afraid for decades. No one knows her true name, but everyone has heard that she and the infamous Old Mage of Shadowdale, Elminster, have become intimate.

Everyone north of Calimshan and west of Tel-flamm has heard of **Storm Silverhand**, the Bard of Shadowdale. Minstrels sing of her beauty wherever they go, and weave ballads about the many kings and important men who have pined for her, down through the years.

All Harpers and everyone else north of Tethyr and west of Ravens Bluff have heard of **High Lady Alustriel**. She brought grace, beauty, civilization, and prosperity to human holdings in the North, and has held onto those things in the face of successive orc hordes, year after year, building her city to rival lost and legendary Myth Drannor.

As many folk in the same area have heard tales of the lovely **Laeral**, who once led the famous adventuring band known as the Nine,

until the fell *Crown of Horns* robbed her of her sanity and turned her to evil—whereupon she was rescued by Khelben “Blackstaff” Arunsun, the Lord Mage of Waterdeep. She became his consort and the tutor of many prominent wizards of the Sword Coast who served as apprentices in Blackstaff Tower before going on to greater achievements. Some say the Lady Mage of Waterdeep still dabbles in evil doings and that she is descended from the notorious Laeral the Witch of the long-ago North—and others whisper Laeral is that same Laeral of yore.

Folk throughout the Dragonreach have heard of the Witch of Shadowdale and her heroic death defending her beloved dale against the **Flycatcher** Dragons that devastated so much in the region. **Syluné** was widely known—if not trusted by many decent folk—as a wise crafter of potions, herbal mixtures, and philters. Word is spreading that she lives on beyond death, still haunting Shadowdale!

Minstrels sing about, and mercenaries shake their heads over, the luck and riches of the famous Knights of Myth Drannor. The most renowned of that band, the kingly Florin Falconhand, married an adventuress already famous to Harpers: the quiet but powerful sword-maiden **Dove**. She bore him a child few folk in the Realms have ever seen—because, it is said, she is raising him among the elves in Evermeet, where even the wealthiest merchants, most powerful mages, and mightiest kings are not allowed to go!

The Simbul, Storm, Alustriel, Laeral, Syluné, Dove—that makes six. Who is the seventh?

Mystra herself, some say. A twisted monster or madwoman whom the others had to slay centuries ago, others insist. A tanar'ri or beholder who only takes human shape to taunt her victims, still others whisper. The most expensive sages and the highest councils of the Harpers agree that the seventh is a dark lady more active in the Realms Below than on the surface world. To learn the truth about her—and them all—read on.



The Story of the Seven



our eyes are reading lore known to very few folk in the Realms. The wild stories, malicious rumors, eerie superstitions, and simple misunderstandings about the Seven can easily fill an entire shelf of colorful tomes—and at Candlekeep, they do just that. This record, however, is the truth, briefly but honestly told. Here is the story of the women Faerûn knows today as the Seven Sisters.

The Beginning

This is the part of the tale that sages still argue heatedly about, because mortal beings in Toril do not know—and probably will never know—the “why.” Some say it was a command of the Overgod Ao that led Mystra to act as she did. Others claim it was her own wisdom, foresight, and self-sacrifice. Still others offer the good advice that divine affairs are beyond the understanding of mortals, and are best left that way; speculation is futile and even dangerous, as it has so often led to wars and general unpleasantness.

For the record, let it stand that some learned folk in the Realms cling to the theory that Mystra’s power must be rooted (or “sourced” as they put it) in mortals. Others believe that she was ordered to lessen her own power by a greater authority. To minimize the destruction this divestment would visit on the Realms, they say, she decided to apportion it out to mortals rather than letting it be dissipated and gone forever (weakening magic throughout Toril) or letting it be given to other divine beings who, emboldened, might misuse it. A third theory holds that Mystra’s move to vest some of her divine power in mortals was a matter of clever tactics on her part. Supposedly, she foresaw the Time of Troubles and with it her own passing. She chose to decrease her personal power to make things as easy as possible for her (presumably mortal) successor and to avoid disaster should another entity win control over her in

the chaotic period of wildly fluctuating divine power struggles that was the Time of Troubles.

Whatever the reason, it is clear that Mystra told Azuth at about the time of the Year of the Rising Flame (0 DR) that some of her divine power must be given into the hands of mortals. It would slumber within them, so that Mystra could call on it only with their permission. It would serve to help them heal quickly and would stretch their years into virtual immortality, but otherwise it would avail them little. The Chosen might gain some special powers, but these would still be far less than those of a deity (see the following chapter, “Powers of the Chosen,” for the actual benefits of possessing some of Mystra’s power).

The Goddess of All Magic accordingly appeared to a few mortals she considered suitable, first in dream visions and then directly, and ultimately invested part of her divine power in them. The young Elminster was one of the first. (This tale is told in the novel *Elminster: The Making of a Mage*.) This power was known as the *silver fire* because of how it looks and feels when unleashed.

It soon became clear to Mystra that most mortals were not tough enough to carry divine power. They either soon withered and died, burnt out by the load they carried, like the elf-queen Alovean of Ardeep—or they thrived but were twisted and corrupted by their power, like the mage Sammaster, who began to think of himself as a god and set about building himself a cult of worshippers. (These worshippers survive today as the Cult of the Dragon.)

Mystra decided that Faerûn was furnishing the hardy and noble, such as Khelben, and wily but loyal rogues, such as Elminster, too rarely to suit her purpose. She set about breeding individuals to serve as her Chosen, rather than trying to induce mature and powerful mortals into her service. In this way she hoped to avoid the problems she encountered with those she selected at maturity, who had long-held dreams, feuds, and grudges of their own that tended to draw them away from what she wanted them to do and be.