



# Cormanthyr: Empire of Elves

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Sample file

# CAMPAIGN INTRODUCTION



The Advanced Dungeons and Dragons® Game has presented its fans with two decades of adventure and excitement galore. All of its worlds are ripe with history and legend, of which the player characters found many lost tomes, ancient artifacts, and oft-told epics. Now, with the Forgotten Realms® Arcane Age® Line, you and your players can participate in the legends as they happen! Step into the past and experience the sights, sounds, and wonders of fabled Myth Drannor at its height. Walk the wooded glades of Cormanthyr, the last major elven empire on Faerûn, and discover secrets lost to the realms of the present day (1370 DR). Unless noted otherwise, this product presents the Forgotten Realms as it stood 720 years ago in the Year of the Falling Tower (650 DR).

Astute players and Dungeon Masters know what is to come (the inevitable Fall of Myth Drannor), but don't let the end ruin the grand vistas of the "current day." In many ways, an ARCADE AGE campaign can have more emotional resonance for players and DMs, both in this past era and in the present. Introduce them to great heroes who only exist in myths, allow them to learn the secrets forgotten in the future, and bring the past to life as an active and vital setting. Show the players and their characters that the past is not just some crumbling ruins, dusty artifacts, or names in a book—the past was, as any time, a time of life, laughter, and love, a simple thing that so many forget as they rummage through a long-hidden tomb. Since they know the final fate of these people, the players will gain a greater sense of the tragedies that brought this empire low long before they were born. As well, it may teach those less-scrupulous characters to think before robbing a tomb or desecrating ruins—especially if they get the chance to know the kindly, self-sacrificing person buried therein.

This chapter's purpose is to bring players and DMs up to speed on a number of major rules adjustments for this campaign. Though it's a foregone conclusion that the DM and players will enter the ARCADE AGE campaigns, they must decide whether their characters are natives of that time or time-travelers. A discussion of time travel reveals the hows and whys of reaching this 700-years-past realm from the modern Realms, and



provides three options of travel, each with their benefits and drawbacks and warnings to those who wander out of their own eras. Next, it details the races and classes available in this era for the player characters; during the ARCADE AGE, elves were more powerful and thus, there are a number of major variations for the elves to show the path of history and how it has changed them.

DMs should bear in mind that lengthy discussions on the history and development of human spellcasting are not herein. For the details and the

full story of Netheril, see TSR #1147 FORGOTTEN REALMS® ARCADE AGE® *Netheril: Empire of Magic* boxed set.

## Time Traveling Campaigns

For decades, the player characters have heard the legends of Myth Drannor, tales of the splendorous realm where the elves and all the races gathered in harmony and peace. In the Year of the Tankard (1370 DR), Myth Drannor is a tumbled ruin riddled with creatures fell and foul. Whatever the reasons, your characters intend to part the mists of time and experience Myth Drannor and its empire of Cormanthyr in its glory days. Know that it is far simpler to make the decision than it is to execute in action. . . .



Time travel has been possible both in the past and present Realms, but it is never easy, never without sacrifice, and never without consequence. Before the fall of Netheril in the Year of Sundered Webs (-339 DR), the goddess Mystryl strictly limited time travel to the past, since she was the goddess and guardian both of magic and time. Any methods used to broach the time stream before -339 Dalereckoning, whether they are the methods below or planar travel or spells from the *Chronomancer* supplement or even *wishes* or errands of the gods, automatically revert to the effects and limitations of Mystryl's own *time conduit*. The travelers suffer all the drawbacks of their chosen mode of travel in addition to those of the *time conduit*, and neither of these effects can be avoided. Mystryl notices all time anomalies such as time travelers, no matter their attempted method of entry, and she either allows time travel to happen on her terms or not at all. Characters attempting to time travel in other planes and then enter the Prime Material at Toril will find they cannot pierce the dimensional barriers or crystal sphere leading to Abeir-Toril due to Mystryl's opposition to their alien existence in this time and place.

## Time Conduits

Mystryl created the *time conduit* spell to allow travel through time strictly on her terms. Wizards who sought to bypass her rules of time travel through new spells ultimately failed. No matter their methods, they found that Mystryl's *time conduit* spell was the only way to time travel. The official ARCANES AGE timelines of the Realms are detailed in this product and in the *Netheril: Empire of Magic* boxed set. Details on the Fall of Netheril are found in the *How the Mighty are Fallen* campaign expansion adventure, while the times that bring Cormanthyr low are in the upcoming *Fall of Myth Drannor* campaign accessory (June, 1998). Mystryl's time-travel magic is tied to annual cycles; spellcasters and their companions who traveled back through time always arrive on the first day of a new year, and the magic recalls them to their original time at the end of the last day of that year. No magic within the past or present timeline, not even *antimagic shells* or *prismatic spheres*, can prevent the recall of a time-traveler back to his original time. There are a wide range of side effects to travel by *time conduits* that were far more surprising and disturbing to time-travelers; these are noted below within the spell itself.

### Ninth-Level Spell: Time Conduit (Alteration, Chronomancy)

**Range:** 30 feet

**Components:** V, S, M

**Duration:** Special

**Casting Time:** 1 turn

**Area of Effect:** Special

**Saving Throw:** None

Upon casting this spell, a shimmering, golden portal appears somewhere within 30 feet of the caster (though the caster has no control over where the portal appears). This golden disk appears upon the fourth round of casting, and it grows, expanding as if it were an opening eye until it reaches its

maximum diameter. At the completion of the casting, the 10-foot circular opening goes translucent as the golden light of its edges dissipates back inside its radius, making the portal suddenly seem to lead into a long tunnel filled with electric silver-and-blue flashes of light. Creatures that gaze into the opening for more than one round see quick glimpses of their pasts cascading along the walls of the tunnel, but no memories or revisited scenes cause any damage. The portal remains for one round per level of the wizard or until the wizard enters the *conduit*, whichever occurs first.

During the casting, the wizard names the age and year that the *time conduit* is to transport those who enter it. For example, a wizard who wanted to visit Netheril around the time of the birth of Karsus would state: "The conduit shall exit during the Shadowed Age of Netheril in the year 3163 in Netheril Years." Bear in mind that the phrasing or the choice of calendar is less important than the wizard's focus on and knowledge of the time he wishes to visit and his calculating of the years between his time and the one he wishes to visit. The same time could be reached with these phrases:

- "The conduit shall exit during the Fifth Rysar of Cormanthor in the 14th winter of the Coronal Tannivh" (travel to old elven realms);
- "The conduit shall exit during the Fourth Age of Calimshan in the 72nd year of the rule of the Pasha Vydraq" (travel to ancient Calimshan); or
- "The conduit shall exit during the 696th year before the advent of Dalereckoning" (travel back 2,000 years without focus on geographic destination).

Creatures entering the *time conduit* are immediately stripped of all magical items and memorized spells and psionics, though the psionics return at the standard rate of restoration. Spell books and scrolls remain intact in function, though they are slightly altered (see below). Items that do not yet exist among the culture specified within the casting or among the race to which the caster belongs (if a culture was not chosen by the caster by the use of its calendar) also disappear; for example, plate armor disappears from all folk but dwarves and elves, while arquebuses vanish from all folks' grasp. (Refer to the Equipment section at the end of this chapter for more details on technology shifts across time.) All appropriated items are shunted into subdimensional pockets within the *time conduit* itself, and all of these are returned to the proper time travelers upon the voyage home. This return trip likewise strips travelers of items they collect during their stay in the past and stores them within the *time conduit*; where these items go after the conclusion of the spell is unknown, though many wizards believe any time-lost items simply drift into the Ethereal Plane.

Spells that do not exist for the caster's race in the now-current year appear as blank pages in a caster's spell book. Scrolls for spells or effects that do not yet exist are also blank. These blank pages are restored to normal upon reaching the caster's own time or a point in time where the spells exist for the caster's race (by being created during the year they currently inhabit).

There is never a way to determine the precise physical destination when using a *time conduit* spell. The only thing for certain is that the time travelers appear somewhere in the lands of the culture they seek. Travelers seeking Netheril might arrive in the Netherese city of Thiefsward, while those seeking contemporary Cormanthyr could exit on the shores of Lake Sember in the same year. Depending on the concentration and focus of the caster, a *time conduit* generally lands its travelers within 100 miles of areas claimed by the chosen culture. If no culture is specifically sought, the PCs could exit the *time conduit* at the chosen time, but they could arrive anywhere within 500 miles of their physical location where the *time conduit* is cast.

Time travelers always arrive during the early hours of the first day of the new year, and they always return to their own original times during the final night of the year. The arrival and return magic of the *conduit* focus on these days as they correspond to when mystical energies and the potent magics tied to time are at their greatest on Toril. Nothing can prevent a time traveler from being drawn back into the *time conduit* at the close of the year, not even spells that negate magic or shield against its effects. Creatures return to their own time 30 days after they entered the *time conduit* originally, though they have physically aged one year due to their time trip.

Time travelers also cannot physically exist in two places at once within the same timeline. Therefore, once a creature has traveled back to a particular year (no matter where on Toril he was geographically), he can never visit that particular year again. Any attempt to do so fails utterly, and the caster (or a traveler who has visited the *conduit's* exiting point in time) is hurled 1d100 years and 10d100 miles to a random time and place in Toril's past.

The material components for this spell are three scales from three different aligned ancient dragons (one from each), the dust from a slain time elemental, soil or stones from the land that is the *time conduit's* destination, and knowledge of the age and time to be visited. The physical components are consumed during the casting, though the knowledge of the realm remains.

DM's Note: This spell is an extraordinarily rare and difficult spell to obtain, let alone master. Lifelong campaigns could be run by mages seeking such a spell, whether by acquisition from another wizard or researching the magic themselves. While it is certainly possible that the spell could be placed on a scroll in a long-lost tomb, it is more likely that the few upon the Realms who know the time conduit spell must be approached and wooed by the seeking wizard. Major campaign NPCs such as the lich Larloch, the wizards among Mystra's Chosen, the Magister or agents of Azuth, and others might trade the knowledge of this spell for such costs as "a favor in the future," "a small errand," or the payment of a valuable possession of the character (from another equally rare spell of equivalent rank to items or worldly possessions such as real estate). Many of the folk who might have access to this spell are also quite particular over whom would learn it, and many who finally discover the NPC with the knowledge they covet also find she has no desire to grant it to the PC. This sit-

uation can only be handled through roleplaying, though be warned: Once the Simbul makes her mind up, you'll have better luck finding a tanar'ri priest of Tyr than changing her mind. . . .

## Time Gates

There are *time gates* on Faerûn, but their locations remain a mystery. Ancient texts of Mysteryl's faith talk of three *gates* that were created either through accidents or great fortune. Unknown to any other races on Toril, there is one other *time gate*, and that is known only to the High Mages of the elves. The *time gates* are older constructs than anything else in the Realms, either ARCANES AGE or modern time periods. They predate the first dwarven realm on Faerûn, and even the elves seem in awe of their age and power.

While the *time gates* do not require the material components of the previous spell, their effects are identical to the *time conduits*. Bear in mind that if a seeker walks through a *time gate* without something to act as a place anchor (i.e., a stone from a certain place, an item from a past land, etc.), the *gate* will (just like the spell) deposit the traveler in a random location on Toril in the past.

Discovering the location of any of the *time gates* is definitely a quest of epic proportions, with many adventures along the way. Many adventurers have looked hard and long for centuries, to no avail. Since none ever had ever found anything (or at least had later developed the sense to keep quiet about it), most adventurers gave up hunting for the fabled *gates* while Myth Drannor was still aborning. The last recorded expedition to seek a *time gate* seems to have been in the Year of Withered Flowers (404 DR).

The first of Mysteryl's legends that reveals a hint to a *time gate's* location states that it ". . . lies hidden upon the back of the mountains, where the ice and rocks touch the summer sky of Amaunator's belt." This is actually a reference to an ancient constellation of Amaunator that appeared in the summer months over the Spine of the World. Adventurers could spend many months in the frozen wastelands of the Spine searching for the deep cave that holds the *gate* with no luck. For those few who do actually find the cave, they also discover that the *time gate* has a guardian, an ancient white dragon. She is vain, greedy, and far less crafty than she believes herself to be. She is smart enough to lay her bulk in front of the *gate*, and none get past her to use the *gate* unless they provide a service for her or pay her dearly in gems and magic.

The second *time gate* is ". . . north of Novularond, shining bright upon Miskens Peak at Highsummer." While the Novularond range has been searched repeatedly, adventurers have failed to discover the *gate* simply because the Great Glacier sheared off Miskens Peak in centuries ago. The portal still exists, however, though it's much more difficult to locate now, buried as it is deep within the glacial ice and moving slowly along with the glacier.

The third gateway known to humans of Mysteryl's faith (or later scholars of the same) exists at ". . . Andrio's Peak near the Garden of Eldath." A scribe actually misspelled the origi-

nal place name of the peak, which was Andrus. The garden is an obscure hint to the city of Cedarsproke in the Guthmere Forest of the Vilhon Reach. The *time gate* has survived the centuries inside Mount Andrus despite several volcanic eruptions, shielded from the monstrous heat by first Mysteryl's and now Mystra's magic.

The final and most mysterious *time gate* lies in Synnoria, the elven realm hidden high above Myrloch Vale in the Moonshaes. No legends speak of it, nor do any songs, for it is a *gate* that no more than ten Synnorian elves have even spoken of since they founded their grand city of Chrysalis millennia ago. They know what it is and what it can do, and they simply keep a sharp eye out for any who would abuse its powers. Whether the elves have used it for themselves, they do not say. The *time gate* is simply the open arch at the end of a clouded, misty cave behind the eastern falls that feed Mirror Lake.

## Risks of Time Travel

As stated earlier, no magics within any timeline can prevent the return of a time-traveler to her original time after one year. However, there is one, albeit dangerous, exception to this one-year time limit in the past: the alteration of a timeline.

If anyone purposefully or accidentally alters a pivotal event in a timeline, many sages believe that the magic that placed them out of their own time will prevent that change from occurring and most likely cancel the trip through time. Of course, so few folk travel in time (aside from the mundane method of one day at a time), that sages cannot gain absolute answers. Before the time-travel campaign even begins, the DM needs to make a decision on the effects of changing time. For the sake of smooth game play, there are only two options: The creation of a new timeline or the retroactive end of time-travels for the player characters.

## Creating New Timelines

Should anything occur within a campaign that alters the extant FORGOTTEN REALMS timeline, the time-travel magic's at play on the characters' end. However, the time-traveling characters are not pulled forward in time to where and when they came from — *They remain in this past . . . for the rest of their lifetimes*. By altering events in the past, the characters have created an alternate timeline that differs from their home timeline, and this forces them to remain in that altered time forever, no matter their wishes. From this time forward, the PCs have effectively created an additional FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign setting. The entire "past" that the PCs might remember begins to be rewritten, and this is entirely open for the DM to redesign.

Now, the form or details in some events will not alter time, but the end results must remain constant. Helping a farmer plow a field in the past or saving a child from a mad dog may cause nary a ripple in the timeline. However, major events must remain constant, or else major time shifts occur. Adventurers could travel back and attempt to save a king's life from an assassination in the past; the PCs might stop the as-