

FORGOTTEN REALMS®

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W

ithin these covers is your guide to the land of Faerûn. Read carefully, and ye will uncover more of its glories, byways, and dangers than ye might learn in a year of perilous travels. More adventurers should be so well informed when they venture into realms wild and strange. If they were, more might live to tell their own tales.

I am Elminster of Shadowdale, called by some the Old Sage, and called far worse things by others. I've walked these realms for over a thousand years. Yet, I am far from the oldest, wisest, or mightiest being to walk the ground of Faerûn with my well-worn boots—and that is truth. But if ye learn the long history of my deeds, ye'll know precisely what I stand for and what I am. And that's a rare and precious thing, knowing yourself. Do ye know exactly what ye stand for?

Think on that while I let my tongue loose for a bit and roll the splendid sights of these lands over ye like the great green waves that crash on the rocks below where Mount Waterdeep rises up out of the cold and mighty Sea of Swords. Let me speak of the wanderers bards sing of under the starry night sky all over these fair lands. Let me tell ye of soft blue moonlight and spell stars in the hair of elven women, their bare shoulders all silver, dancing under the trees of the High Forest—just as the ghosts of their fair vanished kin still dance under the moon in ruined, fiend-roamed Myth Drannor.

Let me speak of brawling, bustling Waterdeep, the beautiful towers of Silverymoon, and of a hundred other proud cities with their lantern-lit, rumbling carts and shadowed alleys and dripping sewers, their intrigues and strivings and riches. Let me whisper of the realms below, the Underdark, a world of sunless caverns where cruel elves with obsidian skin, purple-hued mind flayers, and things far worse battle in the depths beneath your feet, and gems are born in the hottest deeps where rock flows like water.

Heed my tales of old magic in forgotten tombs or marked by standing stones and portals that with a single stride span half of Faerûn. Beware cold claws that reach from the shadows and proudly sneering courtiers in gleaming finery whose honeyed tongues and sly plots are colder and more perilous still than steely talons. Hear tell of wild places where dragons battle each other in the sky and ruins only adventurers—like ye—have seen that are haunted by fearsome beholders, shape-changing horrors, and oozing things made of eyes and tentacles that lurk . . . and hunger.

Hold, and listen well! If ye heed not a word of mine in all your days, remember this: Faerûn needs its heroes.

I'm one such to some, though I am old and battered and have left a heap of bloody, bitter mistakes behind me high enough to bury empires. Your sword must flash beside my faltering spells, for Faerûn faces new, rising dooms that I cannot face alone. Our homelands stand in worse peril now than ever before. Old evils stir, or return unlooked-for, looming like storm clouds over the darkened hills. Strife and change tear asunder nations and cities. Who can see who shall rise over all? Even the monks of far Candlekeep, who guard well the words of the prophet Alaundo who is never wrong, cannot know.

It might just be ye, if your swords and spells are ready and your heart bold. Faerûn needs ye, lest we fall unguarded to the dangers all around.

Adventurer, I am Elminster, and I say to ye that these forgotten realms are yours to discover, reforge, and defend, yours to make anew in winning your own crown. Go forth and take up arms against the perils that beset us!

—Elminster of Shadowdale
Mirtul, Year of Wild Magic



Welcome to the world of Faerûn, a place of great heroes and stark evil, encompassing lands of magic, mystery, and high peril.

Bold knights dare the crypts of dead monarchs, seeking glory and treasure. Insolent rogues prowl the dank alleyways of ancient cities, plotting their next exploit. Devout clerics wield mace and spell, questing against the terrifying powers that threaten the land. Cunning wizards plunder the ruins of fallen empires, delving fearlessly into secrets too dark for the light of day. Dragons, giants, black-hearted villains, demons, savage hordes, and unimaginable abominations lurk in horrible dungeons, endless caverns, ruined cities, and the vast wild places of the world, thirsting for the blood of heroes.

This is the land of Faerûn, a continent of heart-stopping beauty and ages-old evil. It is your land to shape, to guide, to defend, to conquer, or to rule. It is a land trod by noble heroes and unredeemable villains, a great and terrible company to which you and your fellows now belong.

Welcome to the FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign setting.

The Land of Faerûn

From the bitter, windswept steppes of the Endless Waste to the storm-lashed cliffs of the Sword Coast stretches a wide, wild land of shining kingdoms and primal wilderness. Faerûn is only one continent of the world known as Toril. Other lands lie in distant corners of the world, but Faerûn is the center of it all, the crossroads and crux upon which all else turns. Dozens of nations, hundreds of city-states, and countless tribes, villages, and settlements dot its expanse.

The continent of Faerûn measures more than thirty-five hundred miles from east to west and twenty-five hundred from north to south. It includes sun-blasted deserts, vast forest deeps, forbidding mountains, and gleaming inland seas. Across this vast expanse travel minstrels and peddlers, caravan merchants and guards, soldiers, sailors, and steel-hearted adventurers carrying tales of strange, glorious, faraway places. Good maps and clear trails can take even an inexperienced youth with dreams of glory far across Faerûn. Thousands of restless young would-be heroes from backcountry farmsteads and sleepy villages arrive in Waterdeep and the other great cities every year in search of wealth and renown.

Known roads may be well traveled, but they are not necessarily safe. Fell magic, deadly monsters, and cruel local rulers are all perils that you face when you fare abroad in Faerûn. Away from the main roads and the great cities, the countryside is far wilder than the city folk remember. Even farms and freeholds within a day's walk of Waterdeep itself may fall prey to monsters, and no place in Faerûn is safe from the sudden wrath of a dragon.

The people

Faerûn is home to hundreds of intelligent creatures, ranging from the teeming kingdoms of humankind to the secret fastnesses of terrible creatures whose entire species numbers a score or less. Like humans, these peoples run the gamut from grotesque to beautiful, from murderous to beatific.

The great story of Faerûn is, in many ways, that of the rise of humankind and the fading of the ancient empires of those who came before. Over thousands of years, humans have brought an end to the old ways. Elven cities lie in ruins, abandoned to human encroachment. Hills and dells once the homes and hunting grounds of goblins and giants are now dotted with human fields and pastures.

Human pride and folly have brought untold disaster down on Faerûn more than once, and the ever-growing lands of humans encroach on the territories of older races both benign and fierce. The fundamental questions are clear: Can the old races survive the dom-

inance of humankind? Or will humans overreach themselves, as they have done so many times before, and bring down upon all a dark age of unimaginable horror?

The civilized folk

Of the many races of Toril, a dozen or so account for nine-tenths of all folk who live in the world today. Humans are the most numerous. They are a race of kingdom-builders, merchants, wizards, and clerics whose crowded cities lie scattered across the fair face of the continent. Young and vigorous in comparison to the other races, humans hold the future of Faerûn in their hands—for good or for ill.

While humans were still eking out a subsistence in scattered, disorganized bands, two older races—dwarves and elves—raised mighty realms in the mountains and forests. The zenith of both races is now past, but Faerûn is filled with wonders of stone, wood, and magic they wrought at the heights of their power. Grim dwarven citadels filled with the clamor of industry and breathtaking elven cities as graceful as spun glass still stand, even as year by year human dominion grows.

Though they never commanded the power of the dwarves or the elves, halflings and gnomes have adapted better to the rise of humankind. Halflings have prospered, taking advantage of the situations created by the cultural conflicts between the humans and the elder races. Although halflings hold lands exclusively for their people in only a handful of places, their settlements can be found throughout most human lands. Gnomes prefer more reclusive dwellings and do not raise mighty cities, but, like the halflings, their homes and settlements are scattered through a dozen human lands.

Other races are sometimes considered civilized folk, too, despite their smaller numbers. Centaurs and fey roam the great northern forests, good of heart but growing ever more wary of human incursions. Merfolk rule vast underwater domains in the warm seas of the south. Proud wemics roam the endless plains of the Shaar. But their numbers are few compared to even a small human land.

savage peoples and monsters

Against the young human lands and the ancient refuges of the older races stand ranged a great number of enemies. Foremost among these are the savage peoples—goblins, orcs, ogres, and all their kin. Breeding fierce warriors in dark mountain fortresses and noisome cavern dens, they regularly burst forth from their strongholds to pillage and slaughter villages and towns unfortunate enough to lie in their path.

Faerûn is home to creatures far more malevolent, cruel, and calculating than orc chiefs and rampaging ogres. The deeps of the Underdark house sinister and powerful beings such as the drow, the beholders, and the mind flayers. These terrible creatures dream of enslaving the surface lands and feasting on human cattle while they rule as the overlords of all Toril.

Neither the uncounted hordes of goblinkind nor the dark powers that lie beneath the surface world are the most dangerous threat to human cities and realms, however. That honor must be reserved for the most terrible and awesome creatures of Faerûn—the dragons. No one knows just how many dragons soar through the icy spires of the Spine of the World or slither through the depths of the Forest of Wyrms, but even a single dragon can spell doom for a city. From time to time, great numbers of dragons take flight at once and wing across the face of Faerûn in a terrifying rage, burning and devouring at will.

Heroes—and villains

Faerûn is a land of heroes both light and dark, and you must choose where you will stand in the struggle to come. Regardless of race or station, the most notable creatures to roam Faerûn are its heroes

and their enemies. In the courts of kings, the dens of thieves, and the citadels of dark powers, companies of questers, treasure seekers, monster slayers, and freebooters struggle to preserve the things they hold dear and to vanquish the enemies who would destroy them.

The most dangerous creature on Faerûn is, as you might expect, a person with the ruthlessness to do whatever is necessary to achieve her goal. Even a dim-witted ogre can guess what a red dragon might want when it appears on the horizon, but fathoming the purposes and designs of a scheming wizard or unscrupulous merchant lord is far more difficult.

A world of magic

Toril is steeped in magic. It permeates the entire world. Fallen empires thousands of years old left *portals* and wrecked towers scattered across the landscape that are still filled with potent enchantments. Haughty wizards whose spells can lay low entire armies plot against each other as they pursue their studies into ever more powerful—and more dangerous—fields of arcane lore. Deities channel divine energy through their mortal agents to advance the causes that interest them. Adventurers of all types, evil and good, wield mighty spells seemingly at will.

Most Faerûnians never learn to speak a spell, but magic touches their lives in ways they do not always see. Skilled wizards and sorcerers serve the monarchs of the land, plying their spells to defend their realms against attack and to watch their enemies' movements. Clerics intercede with the deities to invoke their blessings as real and tangible benefits to the endeavors of the community. Monstrous aberrations of twisted magic and warped energy are often the deadliest creatures to prey on Faerûn's common folk, and adventurers armed with enchanted steel are the land's first line of defense against such perils.

Ancient wonders

The history of Faerûn is dominated by the cyclic rise and catastrophic destruction of empires founded on knowledge of the intricacies of magic. The Imaskari wrought magical *portals* to bridge the gap between worlds, only to be destroyed by the god-kings of the slave races they imported to Faerûn. Their lost realm now lies beneath the dust desert of Raurin. The mighty Empire of Netheril dominated the center of the continent, its skies graced by floating cities and its wizards commanding unimagined might. They reached too far and were destroyed in a magical catastrophe of world-shaking proportions, forever changing the workings of magic itself. Realms such as Narfell and Raumathar, Athalantar and Cormanthyr, Illefarn and Hlondath have left their ruins throughout the world.

Magic both old and strong still slumbers in the wreckage of these ancient realms. Every year some new marvel is rediscovered in an old ruin: a spell never before seen or a wondrous item of great power and high purpose. More often, though, blights and perils long forgotten or magical abominations that should never see the light of day emerge to trouble the world anew, unearthed by those ignorant or unscrupulous enough to seek them out.

Mages, priests, and minstrels

Crumbling towers and buried vaults of elder lands hold power and peril beyond compare, but it is the living wielders of magic who shape Faerûn's future. Every land in Faerûn is home to the lonely towers of reclusive wizards and the fortresslike temples of clerical orders.

Practitioners of the Art, the wreaking of arcane magic, include the most powerful mortals to walk the face of Toril. Mysterious enchanters, proud diviners, and depraved necromancers roam Faerûn, engaged in their own secretive business. Some seek deeper knowledge

and greater power, others toil in the service of dark masters, and others still strive to right wrongs wherever they find them. Any person with the wits of a fence post treads cautiously in the presence of sorcerers or wizards, for who can guess at their purposes and designs?

Invokers of divine magic, also known as the Power, include the clerics of Faerûn's multitudinous goddesses and gods. Devoted to the service of their patron deities, they run the gamut from priests of Tempus who march with armies to scholarly clerics who carefully protect knowledge in the hoary halls of the Inner Chamber of Deneir and the Seat of Lore of Oghma in Berdusk. The deities of Faerûn watch over every corner of the world and aspect of life, and only a fool would ignore their mortal agents.

Wizards and clerics are not the only wielders of magic in the world. Druids and rangers serve nature deities and guard the deep forests. Bards wander the land, carrying news and gossip with their magical songs. Faerûn is a land rich with wielders of magic, and their works and deeds topple thrones and shake empires.

The forgotten realms campaign

This book describes in brief a wide and wonderful world. Most readers will use its wonders and survive its perils for themselves through the medium of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game. The information in this work provides you, the Dungeon Master, with a sketch, a snapshot, of a complete, living, breathing fantasy world in which to set your D&D® game. It's a setting for your adventures, a background for your characters and plots, a set of suggestions for how you could play a continuing game, and a source of ideas for how to develop a world of your own.

what you need to play

You'll need a copy of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS *Player's Handbook*, *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*, and *Monster Manual* to best use the material in this book. The *Monster Compendium: Monsters of Faerûn* sourcebook is also extremely useful, providing game descriptions of many creatures mentioned in this book.

If you've never played D&D before, this book may not be for you quite yet. If you've never played a roleplaying game before, start with the *D&D Adventure Game* before tackling the *FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting*. If you're already familiar with roleplaying games, you may want to start with the *D&D Player's Handbook* and play for a while to familiarize yourself with the game system.

where do i start?

Players beginning a FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign should start by creating a FORGOTTEN REALMS character. Talk with your DM about the character options he intends to make available in his FORGOTTEN REALMS game. After that, Chapter 1: Characters is the first place to go. Chapter 2: Magic is also useful if you create a spellcasting character, and Chapter 5: Deities is important if you are going to play a cleric, druid, paladin, or ranger character.

If you're a Dungeon Master starting a FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign, you should read most of this book eventually. It's filled with ideas for plots and villains, rules options to give your game a distinctive Faerûnian flavor, and tools to help you to run a comprehensive and cohesive FORGOTTEN REALMS game. For the DM, Chapter 8: Running the Realms is the best place to start.

ELMINSTER

Male human (Chosen of Mystra) Ftr1/Rog2/Clr3/Wiz20/Acm5/Epic4: CR 39; Medium-size humanoid; HD 1d10+7 plus 2d6+14 plus 3d8+21 plus 14d4+98; hp 219; Init +10; Spd 30 ft.; AC 29 (touch 17, flat-footed 25); Atk +17/+12/+7 melee (1d8+6/19-20, +5 *thundering longsword*) or +15/+10/+5 ranged touch (by spell); SA Sneak attack +1d6, turn undead 6/day; SQ Archmage high arcana, Chosen immunities, Chosen spell-like abilities, detect magic, enhanced Constitution, enhanced Intelligence, epic-level benefits, evasion, silver fire; SR 21; AL CG; SV Fort +17, Ref +13, Will +17; Str 13, Dex 18, Con 24, Int 24, Wis 18, Cha 17. Height 6 ft. 2 in.

Skills and Feats: Alchemy +27, Balance +6, Climb +5, Concentration +34, Decipher Script +9, Diplomacy +6, Handle Animal +7, Heal +8, Hide +8, Intimidate +11, Intuit Direction +6, Jump +5, Knowledge (arcana) +27, Knowledge (geography) +22, Knowledge (history) +17, Knowledge (Dalelands local) +17, Knowledge (nature) +17, Knowledge (nobility) +17, Knowledge (the planes) +22, Knowledge (religion) +12, Listen +13, Move Silently +8, Open Lock +6, Perform (dance) +6, Ride +8, Scry +27, Search +9, Sense Motive +11, Spellcraft +29, Spot +14, Swim +5, Tumble +5; Blooded, Craft Staff, Craft Wondrous Item, Expertise, Forge Ring, Heighten Spell, Improved Initiative, Luck of Heroes, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Spellcraft), Spell Focus (Enchantment), Spell Focus (Evocation), Spell Penetration, Twin Spell.

Special Qualities: Archmage High Arcana: Arcane reach, mastery of counterspelling, mastery of elements, spell power +4 (total). Chosen Immunities: Elminster is completely unaffected by attacks that duplicate these effects: *detect thoughts, disintegrate, Evard's black tentacles, feeblemind, finger of death, fireball, magic missile, sunburst, temporal stasis*. Chosen Spell-like Abilities (all 1/day): *dispel magic, lesser ironward, see invisibility, shapechange, Simbul's synostodweomer* (converts prepared spells into 2 points of healing per spell level), *spider climb, teleport without error, thunderlance, true seeing*. Detect Magic (Su): Line of sight. Enhanced Constitution: The Chosen of Mystra template adds +10 to Elminster's Constitution. Enhanced Intelligence: Elminster used *wish* spells to increase his Intelligence. His Intelligence score has a +4 inherent bonus included in its value. Epic-Level Benefits: Bonus spell level ×4 (included in the listing below), six effective levels of wizard and five of archmage (included in above total). Silver Fire (Su): See Chapter 2 for details.

Cleric Spells per Day: 4/4/3. Base DC = 14 + spell level, 16 + spell level for evocation and enchantment spells. Domains: Magic (use spell trigger or spell completion devices as a 26th-level wizard), Spell (+2 bonus on Concentration and Spellcraft checks). Caster level 3rd.

Wizard Spells per Day: 4/6/6/6/5/4/5/3/3/3/1/1/1. Base DC = 21 + spell level, 23 + spell level for evocation and enchantment spells. Caster level 25th.

Signature Possessions: Ring of protection +3, amulet of natural

armor +5, bracers of armor +7, ring of regeneration, mantle of spell resistance, +5 thundering longsword, Elminster's ever-smoking pipe. As a very powerful wizard, Elminster has access to incredible resources and can acquire or make almost any nonartifact item he might need, given time.

Like his onetime apprentice Vangerdahast, this ancient wizard is finally starting to seem truly old, prone to long reveries in which he sees again people and places now long vanished. The strongest of Mystra's Chosen rarely moves directly against his foes, preferring to work through younger and more vigorous heroes.

The Sage of Shadowdale for years confounded the Zhentarim, the Red Wizards of Thay, and a hundred rival mages while at the same time training and rearing a long succession of apprentices who all became superb spellcasters in their own right. Before that he foiled renegade Chosen, helped found the Harpers, and raised several of the Seven Sisters. During the Time of Troubles, he saved Toril by holding Mystra's power inside himself, surviving by his wits and the aid of the ranger Sharantyr rather than by his magic. He's also a passable fighter and thief and a superb dancer.

Elminster is a consummate actor and delights in acts of whimsy, helping the needy and lovelorn, and dispensing poetic justice to those who deserve it. He has a heart of gold, a deep need to bring tyrannical, pompous, and cruel persons low, and a crotchety, "Don't push me" manner. After knowing the love of the goddess Mystra, nothing awes him or leaves him much afraid.

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION TERMS

The nonplayer character descriptions in this book, whether presented in a section of their own or in a brief parenthetical mention in the text, use a lot of abbreviations. See Chapter 8: Running the Realms for information about characters of higher than 20th level.

Character Abbreviations: Standard

Classes: Bbn, barbarian; Brd, bard; Clr, cleric; Drd, druid; Ftr, fighter; Mnk, monk; Pal, paladin; Rgr, ranger; Rog, rogue; Sor, sorcerer; Wiz, wizard. **Specialist Wizards:** Abj, abjurer; Cjr, conjurer; Div, diviner; Enc, enchanter; Evo, evoker; Ill, illusionist; Nec, necromancer; Tra, transmuter. **DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide Prestige Classes:** Arc, arcane archer; Asn, assassin; Blk, blackguard; Def, dwarven defender; Lor, loremaster; Shd, shadowdancer. **FORGOTTEN REALMS Prestige Classes:** Acm, archmage; Chm, divine champion; Dev, arcane devotee; Dis, divine disciple; Gld, guild thief; Hrp, Harper scout; Hie, hierophant; Hth, hathran; Prp, Purple Dragon knight; Red, Red Wizard; Rnc, runecaster; Sha, shadow adept; Skr, divine seeker. **DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide NPC Classes:** Adp, adept; Ari, aristocrat; Com, commoner; Exp, expert; War, warrior.

Other Abbreviations: LG, lawful good; NG, neutral good; CG, chaotic good; LN, lawful neutral; N, neutral; CN, chaotic neutral; LE, lawful evil; NE, neutral evil; CE, chaotic evil; Str, Strength; Dex, Dexterity; Con, Constitution; Int, Intelligence; Wis, Wisdom; Cha, Charisma; HD, Hit Dice; hp, hit points; Init, initiative bonus; Atk, attacks; Spd, speed; AC, Armor Class; SA, special attacks; SQ, special qualities; AL, alignment; SV, saving throw bonuses; Fort, Fortitude; Ref, Reflex; Will, Will.

Illustration by Sam Wood



Elminster



CHARACTERS

additional features to Step 2: Choose Class and Race (choose a region here as well), Step 7: Select a Feat, and Step 8: Review Description we describe in this chapter.

character races

Faerûn is home to hundreds of intelligent races and gives rise to dozens and dozens of potentially heroic paths. In a FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign, a number of new character races are available for players. The standard races described in the *Player's Handbook* are present in Faerûn, although they're often known by names specific to Toril, the planet the continent of Faerûn is located on. For example, the standard dwarf is known as the shield dwarf, although gold dwarves and gray dwarves are commonplace adventurers. Moon elves, rock gnomes, and lightfoot halflings correspond to the *Player's Handbook* elf, gnome, and halfling, respectively. Humans and half-orcs don't have any specific subraces in Faerûn, but your choice of home region (see below) adds a new level of detail to these characters, too.

character classes

Some of the classes described in the *Player's Handbook* have significant new opportunities in the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting. For example, every cleric chooses a patron deity from the expansive Faerûnian pantheon. Many of these deities have access to new domains not described in the *Player's Handbook*. In addition to the prestige classes described in the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*, your character can now aspire to join one of a number of new prestige classes specific to Faerûn. While beginning characters won't qualify for the archmage class, the Faerûnian prestige classes are something a character may choose to strive toward right from 1st level.

character region

The *Player's Handbook* only requires you to choose a race and a class, but the FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign setting also gives you the ability to further define your character by choosing a region in which your character grew up (or at least gained most of her early experience). Your native region helps define your character as part of the world of Toril and gives you additional choices for which feats and equipment you can have.

Each race and class description lists a number of suggested regions in which that type of character is particularly common or encouraged by the principal culture. If you choose a region where your character's class is favored, your character gains access to special regional

Guarded wizards of Thay, distrusted by the common folk of the Dalelands, seek deeper knowledge in the elven ruins of Cormanthor. Determined clerics of Tyr wander the cold lands of the Wyrmsea, battling against the sinister influence of the Zhentari. Stout-hearted shield dwarves seek to free the plundered citadels of their ancestors from the feral orcs and ogres that occupy them. Almost any kind of fantasy hero or villain may find a home in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign setting. Faerûn is an old continent with hundreds of disparate cultures.

In this world, your fighter is not defined simply by his Strength score of 16 and his mastery of the bastard sword. He is defined by his homeland, his training, and his background. Just as the Dungeon Master (DM) carefully crafts adventures to highlight the magic and perils of the far-scattered lands of Faerûn, each player contributes to the campaign a character whose personality, motivations, and attitudes reflect the heroes—or the villains—of a land shrouded in mystery, myth, and legend.

creating a forgotten realms character

Any character created using the rules in the *Player's Handbook* works as a FORGOTTEN REALMS character, but this chapter explains how to create a character tailored for Faerûn and grounded in all the rich detail of the setting. To create a 1st-level character, turn to the beginning of the *Player's Handbook* and use the steps outlined in the Character Creation Basics section. Follow the *Player's Handbook* steps in character creation but add in the

feats and bonus starting equipment. See Table 1-4: Character Regions for a list of the possible regions and the specific benefits, and consult the Regional Feat Regions map to help in selecting a region.

Region-specific skills

A character's region may also affect his or her list of skills. As a general rule, characters with the Knowledge skill often focus on the region in which they grew up, although characters may focus on regions in which they have lived as adults or which they have studied in books.

Regional Focus: A character may choose to add a regional focus to the geography, history, nature, nobility and royalty, or religion areas of the Knowledge skill. The regional focus provides a +2 bonus on Knowledge checks that pertain to the region in question. For example, a character may choose Knowledge (Sembian history) instead of Knowledge (history) in order to be particularly adept at Knowledge (history) checks pertaining to Sembia.

Local Knowledge: The Knowledge (local) skill per se does not

exist in a Forgotten Realms campaign. Instead, a character who chooses Knowledge (local) must specify the region his knowledge applies to. For example, someone familiar with the legends and personalities of Sembia would take the Knowledge (Sembia local) skill.

New feats

This chapter introduces a number of new feats appropriate to various lands and cultures of Faerûn. A shield dwarven cleric might learn to fix her spells to objects through the Inscribe Rune feat, while a Mulhorandi mage could delve into the dangerous lore of the Shadow Weave and learn to tap sources of magical energy that most wizards dare not touch. Of course, all the feats described in the *Player's Handbook* are still available to Faerûnian characters.

Races of Faerûn

Faerûn is inhabited by hundreds of different races. Some races are native and have lived here for uncounted thousands of years. Others arrived over centuries of migration and conquest from other planes and worlds. The races most commonly found as player characters—humans, dwarves, elves, half-elves, half-orcs, halflings, and gnomes—are descended from both Faerûnian natives and immigrants from other worlds. Because of their complex ancestry, members of most of these races and subraces display a wide range of skin and hair colors.

As a further consequence of their mixed heritage, humans, dwarves, elves, and the other major races of Faerûn have much in common with their kin on other worlds. Rather than repeating facts that have been established in the *Player's Handbook*, this section focuses on the ways in which the races and subraces of Faerûn differ from the standard races described in the *Player's Handbook*.

Languages: Automatic and bonus languages for all races appear in the race descriptions, since Faerûn is home to a number of unique tongues. In the case of races for which "home region" appears in the race description—for example, humans or planetouched—the language selection is determined by the character's home region. See Table 1-4: Character Regions for details.

A character's choice of race and region determines her automatic and bonus languages. Table 1-4: Character Regions supersedes the automatic and bonus language information in the *Player's Handbook*. However, the following languages are always available as bonus languages to characters, regardless of race or region: Abyssal (clerics), Aquan (water genasi), Auran (air genasi), Celestial (clerics), Common, Draconic (wizards), Dwarven, Elven, Gnome, Goblin, Giant, Gnomish, Halfing, Ignan (fire genasi), Infernal (clerics), Orc, Sylvan (druids), Terran (earth genasi), and Undercommon. Druids also know Druidic in addition to their other languages.

Regions: Each race description gives the primary regions or strongholds of the race. Characters can choose one of these regions for their home region, they can default to the general racial entry for their region, or they can choose to be from elsewhere in Faerûn. The information given in this section helps you construct a character, but does not directly affect your character's starting feats or equipment. The regions/cultural descriptions that key into the regional feats and equipment on Table 1-4: Character Regions are those listed in the Classes section.

converting core D&D characters to forgotten realms characters

If you created a character with the *Player's Handbook* and would like to bring that character into the FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign setting, the biggest point of conversion lies in the differences between the pantheons. Table 1-1: Deity Conversion shows which FORGOTTEN REALMS deities correspond to the *Player's Handbook* deities.

TABLE 1-1: DEITY CONVERSION

<i>Player's Handbook</i> Deity	FORGOTTEN REALMS Deity
Boccob	Azuth, Mystra, Savras, Velsharoon
Cerollon Larethian	No change
Ehlonna	Mielikki
Erythnul	Cyric, Garagos, Malar
Fharlanghn	Selûne, Shaundakul
Garl Glittergold	No change
Groomsh	No change
Heironeous	Torm, Tyr
Hextor	Bane, Loviatar
Kord	Lathander, Tempus, Uthgar
Moradin	No change
Nerull	Cyric, Malar, Talona
Obad-Hai	Silvanus
Olidammara	Oghma, Sune, Tymora
Pelor	Ilmater, Lathander, Torm
St. Cuthbert	Helm, Hoar, Tyr
Vecna	Shar, Velsharoon
Wee Jas	Azuth, Kelemvor
Yondalla	No change

Also, the subraces of Faerûn vary from those presented in the *Player's Handbook* and the *Monster Manual*. For simplicity, choose the FORGOTTEN REALMS subrace that matches the racial ability score modifiers for your character. Standard elves become moon elves, standard dwarves become shield dwarves, standard gnomes become rock gnomes, and standard halflings become lightfoot halflings.

HUMANS

Compared to most of the nonhuman races, who tend to get along with others of their own race reasonably well, the humans of Faerûn are divided into innumerable competing nations, states, sects, religions, bandit kingdoms, and tribes. Humans argue about anything, fight about most things they argue about, and hold dear among their many deities quite a few who actively encourage that type of behavior.

The longer-lived races of elves and dwarves tend to have respect for individual humans who deserve it without necessarily respecting the entire race. The elves have difficulty forgetting that the first human empires of Netheril, Raumathar, Narfell, and other ancient lands were built upon magical secrets borrowed or looted from the elves. The fact that those early human empires invariably corrupted themselves with evil magic does not reassure the elves. The dwarves, particularly the shield dwarves of northern Faerûn, respect humans as fierce warriors, but fear that there would be little room for their race in a world dominated by humankind.

Humans don't see it that way, of course. Their greatest heroes outshine the deities themselves, or become deities in their own right. Unfortunately, the same could be said of humanity's greatest villains, and that is the challenge facing any human adventurer. Power comes at a cost.

Regions: Humans can be found in almost every corner of Faerûn. Decide what character class you wish to play and pick a region listed in the class description, consult Table 1-4: Character Regions or browse through Chapter 4: Geography for a region that seems appropriate to your character.

Racial Abilities: Human characters, regardless of region, have all the human racial traits given in Chapter 2 of the *Player's Handbook* except as follows:

- Automatic Languages: Common, home region. Bonus Languages: Any (other than secret languages, such as Druidic).

DWARVES

Dwarves ruled vast kingdoms beneath hill and mountain long before humans wandered into Faerûn. Many sages suspect that the first dwarves came to Faerûn millennia ago in a great migration from another plane. However, it occurred so long ago that evidence of it is almost nonexistent, and meanwhile the dwarves are now as nar-

ral a part of Faerûn as the mountains themselves. The two main dwarven subraces are the shield dwarves of northern Faerûn and the gold dwarves of the far south. The gray dwarves, or duergar, are an Underdark race less common than their surface kindred. The gray dwarves are generally evil, although a few exiles defy this rule.

Male dwarves of any type take pride in their beards, the most remarkable of any race. Some female dwarves of Faerûn can grow beards, too, often passing as males among the nondwarves of the surface lands. Dwarven women may choose to shave their beards to match human-style expectations of beauty, while others glory in luxurious plaited beards that match their hair or wear sharply cut goatees.

For many generations the dwarven race declined in numbers from endless wars with orcs and their kin. However, in the Year of Thunder (1306 DR), the great god Moradin bestowed a new blessing upon his people. The dwarves tell different stories about the source of this blessing, which they refer to as the Forge or the Thunder Blessing. Some say that it was the result of a mighty quest by a dwarven heroine. Others say that Moradin had planned to reforge his peoples' souls all along. Whatever the source of the blessing, the birthrate among dwarves has soared until it is now fully half as high as that of a young and vigorous human land.

The new dwarven generation is commonly referred to as the thunder children. Nearly a fifth of dwarven births after the Thunder Blessing have resulted in identical or fraternal twins. The thunder children share little of the fear and distrust of arcane magic possessed by their ancestors. Most dwarves still feel more comfortable wielding an axe instead of a wand, but many thunder children, particularly the twins, study wizardry or the sorcerer's arts.

In the past few years, these thunder children have come of age, and dwarves are once again a common sight in Faerûn. Many young stout folk leave their homes in groups of a hundred or more to found new clans in hills unclaimed by other dwarves. Others have chosen to wander the world, seeking glory and wealth.

Folk of Faerûn

Ah, humans, now. There're a lot of us, to be sure, flung far across all these lands, and more besides, across the sundering seas. We battle like orcs and dream like elves and work harder than all but the dwarves at their forges—and we cover Faerûn.

There was a time when any fool could have told you where the folk of this land or that came from, but now we sail or ride so far and often that we're all from everywhere. Even the most isolated villages hold folk who hail from they know not where.

Yet you can still tell something of where someone hails from by their hair and build and skin and manner, though any traveler knows not to assume too much from a quick glance. Remember that, and hearken:

If you look upon tall build, pale skin, hair of flame or straw, and eyes of hazel or blue, slow to speak, apt to frown at cities and go wide-eyed in wonder at finery or magic, then you look upon a Northerner of the Sword Coast. If such a one has darker hair, more muscular build and speaks swifter, he may be from the Moonsea North, or easterly in the Cold Lands. Both kindreds roar at war and in drink, and like to sing—long rising and falling chants. They spit and growl and can speak many words with their glares.

If folk are of medium height and all manner of hues about their hair and eyes, you gaze upon Heartlanders. They're more stocky—burly, some say—in the Dales, and apt to be fine-featured and handsome in Cormyr and Tethyr, with more Southern blood (black hair, yellow or orange eyes, and dusky skin) in Waterdeep,

Amn, the Dragon Coast, and Sembia. Heartlanders are soft-spoken and careful, knowing well how easy it is to offend, with so many folk brushing blades past each other.

The folk of Turmish are dark brown in the skin and black in the hair. The Vilhon Reach and the Border Kingdoms about the Lake of Steam are crossroads where all folk mix and marry—and look it. Courtesy and fair speech are virtues in these lands, and these folk weave wondrous compliments into every greeting.

Calimshan, now, is a place of dusky skin—nut-brown to ochre—with much black body hair that the sun may bleach almost white. Shorn and shaved and oiled often, such hides turn golden. Thayans are much the same. Dark dun skins can be seen in the Old Empires, alongside red eyes and paler skins, many the hue of new parchment. The slaves there betray many bloodlines from other lands.

Proud they are, all these people, and sharp of brows and looks, with finely chiseled features.

In the lands around the Easting Reach they turn slender and shorter and agile, soft-spoken again like Heartlanders. Beyond, in Rashemen and Narfell, skins go swarthier and manners are hard as a well-made blade. It is said that no Nar can rest until he avenges the smallest slight with blood, and any Rashemi is capable of finding an insult in the most innocuous of remarks.

Why the gods make us all different, only they know.

—Ofram Faravaerr, Merchant of Mintarn



Illustration by Matt Wilson

Gold Dwarves

Unlike the shield dwarves, the gold dwarves maintained their great kingdom in the Great Rift and did not decline in terrible wars against evil humanoids. While they practiced some magic, they never acquired the hubris that caused the downfall of some human nations. Confident and secure in their remote home, the gold dwarves gained a reputation for haughtiness and pride.

Since the Thunder Blessing, many young gold dwarves have left the Great Rift and are exploring the rest of Faerûn. The folk of other lands have learned that while some gold dwarves are aloof and suspicious, for the most part they are forthright warriors and shrewd traders.

Regions: The ancestral home of the gold dwarves is the Great Rift, located in the dry plains of the Shaar. Gold dwarven outposts can also be found in the Smoking Mountains of Unther and in the Giant's Run Mountains west of the Vilhon Reach. The gold dwarf entry on Table 1–4: Character Regions describes characters raised in the Rift.

Racial Abilities: Gold dwarves have all the dwarven racial traits given in Chapter 2 of the *Player's Handbook* except as follows:

- +2 Constitution, –2 Dexterity: Gold dwarves are stout and tough, but not as quick or agile as other races.
- +1 racial bonus on attack rolls against aberrations: Gold dwarves are trained in special combat techniques against the many bizarre creatures that live in the Underdark. (This replaces the attack bonus against orcs and goblinoids.)
- Automatic Languages: Dwarven, Common, home region. Bonus Languages: Giant, Gnome, Goblin, Shaaran, Terran, Untheric.

Gray Dwarves

Long ago, mind flayers conquered the strongholds of clan Duergar of the dwarven kingdom of Shanatar. After generations of enslavement and cruel experimentation at the hands of the illithids, the duergar rose against their masters and regained their freedom. They emerged as a new subrace of dwarf with limited mental powers.

The gray dwarves are an evil and bitter race, but retain the superior skill and workmanship of dwarvenkind. They have found a niche for themselves in the Underdark, creating armor and weapons to trade with the warring races of that realm. They seem to have been denied the Thunder Blessing.

Duergar on the whole are evil, but some turn their backs on their fellows and seek a different sort of life. For some, this means abandoning the evil gods of the duergar and embracing the traditional dwarven pantheon, while for others it is a more practical betrayal, usually involving stealing from other gray dwarves. When discovered, an outcast is typically stripped of his possessions, tattooed on the face and arms to mark him as a criminal, and cast out under penalty of death. Some clans secretly aid their outcasts—or encourage them to leave before they are found out. To return is to die.

This grim fate drives most outcasts to the surface, where they struggle to survive in an unwelcoming world. The surface dwarves hate the duergar because they turned to evil, and no other surface races hold much love for the gray dwarves. Most of the gray dwarves met by surface dwellers are tattooed exiles, although a small number were lucky or smart enough to leave before being discovered.

Male and female duergar are bald, and women do not grow beards. They are much thinner than other dwarves, with severe facial expressions, gray hair, and gray skin.

faerûnian Names

Faerûn is vast. Among humans alone, its inhabitants bear literally thousands upon thousands of names. Some folk have no surnames, others have a common clan name, and others have a "son/daughter of" appellation. In Tharsult, Tashalar, and the Border Kingdoms, the word "sar" is much used. It means "of the blood of," and denotes a famous ancestor—or falsely claimed ancestor—so that a farmer might be "Baer sar Thardizar," after the famous warlord of centuries ago.

Older usages such as "of the" and the name of a trade or place (such as Ruthrar o' the Forge and Sammert o' the Hollow) are falling out of favor and are now rarely heard. Only wizards and the most haughty adventurers use personal achievements in their names, such as Dastrin of the Three Thunders or Belgaert of the Deadly Stand, and this, too, is dying out. Occupations can be seen within names, however: *Tel* is an old word for "works at" or "works with," *forar* once meant traveler or peddler, *belder* was a guard or warrior on patrol, *turnskull* was a digger, and *turnstone* a miller.

The names given here are by language, since areas sharing a common tongue tend to use the same names.

Aglarondan: *Male:* Aelthas, Courynn, Folcoerr, Gaedynn, Mourgram, Sealmyd, Yuiredd. *Female:* Blaera, Courynna, Lyneth, Maera, Mourn, Wydda. *Surnames:* Aengrilor, Dulsær, Gelbraes, Jacerryl, Telstaerr, Uthelienn.

Alzhedo: *Male:* Aseir, Bardeid, Haseid, Khemed, Mehmen, Sudeiman, Zasheir. *Female:* Atala, Ceidil, Hama, Jasmal, Meilil, Seipora, Yasheira, Zasheida. *Surnames:* Basha, Dumein, Jassan, Khalid, Mostana, Pashar, Rein.

Chessentan: *Male:* Aeron, Daelric, Eurid, Nicos, Oriseu, Pharaxes, Thersos, Xandos. *Female:* Ariadne, Cylla, Eriale, Halonya, Idriane, Mera, Numestra, Sinylla. *Surnames:* Aposos, Corynian, Heldeion, Morieth, Nathos, Sphaerideion, Zora.

Chondathan: *Male:* Darvin, Dorn, Evendur, Gorstag, Grom, Helm, Malark, Morn, Randal, Stedd. *Female:* Arveere, Esvele, Jhessail, Kerri, Lureene, Miri, Rowan, Shandri, Zessal. *Surnames:* Amblecrown, Buckman, Dndragon, Evenwood, Greycastle, Tallstag.

Chultan: *Male:* Atuar, Kwalu, Losi, Mezoar, Nsi, Osaw, Selu, Weshtek. *Female:* Azuil, Chuil, Fipya, Isi, Lorit, Mainu, Sana, Tefnek. *Surnames:* None.

Damaran: *Male:* Bor, Fodel, Glar, Grigor, Igan, Ivor, Koşef, Mival, Orel, Pavel, Sergor. *Female:* Alethra, Kara, Katernin, Mara, Natali, Olma, Tana, Zora. *Surnames:* Bersk, Chernin, Dotsk, Kulenov, Marsk, Nemetsk, Shemov, Starag.

Dambrathan: *Male:* Aethelmed, Houn, Rhivaun, Umbril, Waervyn, Xaemar, Zeltaebar. *Female:* Chourm, Glouris, Maeve, Hayaera, Sevaera, Xaemarra, Zracla. *Surnames:* Calaumystar, Lharaendo, Mristar, Talaudrym, Wyndael.

Durpari: *Male:* Charva, Duma, Hukir, Jama, Kilimut, Oskut, Pradir, Rajaput, Sikhil. *Female:* Apret, Bask, Erilet, Fanul, Hist, Mokat, Nismet, Ril, Tiket. *Surnames:* Beszrizma, Datharathi, Melpurvatta, Nalambar, Saqarastar, Tiliputakas.

Dwarven: *Male:* Barunder, Dorn, Joyin, Khondar, Roryn, Storn, Thorik, Vulgar. *Female:* Belmara, Dorna, Joylin, Kiira, Sambriil, Tace, Umil. *Surnames:* Bladebite, Crownshield, Gordrivver, Horn, Skulldark, Stoneshield.

Elven: *Male:* Aravilar, Faelar, Mourn, Nym, Orlpar, Saevel, Respen, Rhistel, Taeghen. *Female:* Amra, Hacathra, Imizael, Jastrá, Jhaumrithe, Quamara, Talindra, Vestele. *Surnames:* Amalith, Braegen, Calaudra, Eveningfall, Laelithar, Moondown, Tarnruth.

Elven (Drow): *Male:* Alak, Drizzt, Ilmryn, Merinid, Pharaun, Rizzen, Tebryn, Zaknafein. *Female:* Akordia, Chalithra, Eclavdra, Jhaelrnya, Nedylene, Qilué, SiNafay, Vlondril. *Surnames:* Abaeir, Coloara, Glannath, Illistyn, Pharn, Seerear, Vrinn, Xiltyn.

Gnome: *Male:* Burgell, Colmarr, Dorgan, Falrinn, Halbrihn, Orlamm, Rondell, Stolog. *Female:* Calanddra, Eriss, Iyiss, Jaree, Lissa, Merce, Nathee, Zelazadda. *Surnames:* Blackrock, Blimth, Greatorm, Rivenstone, Tavartarr, Uvarkk, Whitehorn.

Halfling: *Male:* Blazanar, Corkaury, Dalabrac, Halandar, Ombert, Roberc, Thiraury, Wilimac. *Female:* Aloniira, Calathra, Deldiira, Melinden, Olpara, Rosinden, Tara, Weninda. *Surnames:* Aumble, Bramblefoot, Dardragon, Hardingdale, Merryram, Starnhap.

Halruaan: *Male:* Aldym, Chand, Hostegym, Meleghost, Presmer, Sandrue, Tethost, Uregaunt. *Female:* Aithe, Alaethe, Chalan, Oloma, Phaele, Sarade, Vosthyl. *Surnames:* Avhoste, Darants, Gedreghost, Maurmeril, Stamaraster, Zorastryl.

Lantanese: *Male:* Eberc, Fodoric, Koger, Lambrac, Midoc, Norbert, Samber, Tibidoc. *Female:* Avilda, Bersace, Charissa, Mel-sany, Phaerilda, Ravace, Umbrasy. *Surnames:* Angalstrand, Decirc, Lamstrand, SeKorc, SeLangstra, SeMilderic.

Illuskan: *Male:* Ander, Blath, Bran, Frath, Geth, Lander, Luth, Malcer, Stor, Taman, Urth. *Female:* Amafrey, Betha, Cefrey, Kethra, Myara, Olga, Silifrey, Westra. *Surnames:* Brightwood, Helder, Hornraven, Lackman, Stonar, Stormwind, Windriver.

Muhoorand: *Male:* Aoth, Bareris, Ehput-Ki, Kethoth, Mumed, Ramas, So-Kehur, Thazar-De, Urhur. *Female:* Arizima, Chathi, Nephis, Nulara, Murithi, Sefris, Thola, Umara, Zolis. *Surnames:* Ankhaleb, Anskuld, Fezim, Hahpet, Nathandem, Sepret, Uthrakt.

Orc: *Male:* Besk, Durth, Fang, Gothog, Harl, Kesk, Orrusk, Tharag, Thog, Ugurth. *Female:* Betharra, Creske, Edarreske, Duvaega, Neske, Orvaega, Varra, Yeskara. *Surnames:* Dummik, Horthor, Lammar, Sormuzhik, Turnskull, Ulkrunnar, Zorgar.

Rashemi: *Male:* Borivik, Faurgar, Jandar, Kanithar, Madislak, Ralmevik, Shaumar, Vladislak. *Female:* Fyevarra, Hulmarra, Immith, Imzel, Navarra, Shevarra, Tammith, Yuldra. *Surnames:* Chergoba, Dyernina, Iltazyara, Murnyethara, Stayanoga, Ulmokina.

Sharaan: *Male:* Awar, Cohis, Damota, Gewar, Hapaw, Laskaw, Moktar, Senesaw, Tokhis. *Female:* Anet, Bes, Dahvet, Faqem, Idim, Lenet, Moqem, Neghet, Sihvet. *Surnames:* Cor Marak, Hiaw Harr, Laumee Harr, Moq Qo Harr, Taw Harr, Woraw Tarak.

Tashalan: *Male:* Angwe, Dumai, Gharbei, Indo, Masambe, Morife, Ngongwe, Sepoto. *Female:* Ayesha, Bhula, Lashla, Intingi, Mashai, Shevaya, Shesara, Ushula. *Surnames:* Damarthe, Ghomposo, Ishivin, Jalamba, Konge, Maingwe, Wasatho.

Turmic: *Male:* Anton, Diero, Marcon, Pieron, Rimardo, Romero, Salazar, Umbero. *Female:* Balama, Dona, Faila, Jalana, Luisa, Marta, Quara, Selise, Vonda. *Surnames:* Agosto, Astorio, Calabra, Domine, Falone, Marivaldi, Pisacar, Ramondo.

Uluik: *Male:* Aklar, Hilur, Liruk, Namiir, Selmik, Uknar, Tirmuk, Wariik. *Female:* Chamuk, Iirkik, Kagiik, Lelchik, Nirval, Talchuk, Valiir, Wenvik. *Surnames:* None.

Untheric: *Male:* Azzedar, Chadrezzan, Gibbur, Horat, Kassur, Numer, Samar, Ungred. *Female:* Chadra, Ilzza, Jezzara, Marune, Saldashune, Xuthra, Zeldara. *Surnames:* Seldom used, patronymics preferred.

Regions: The gray dwarven strongholds are all located in the Underdark. The gray dwarf entry on Table 1-4: Character Regions describes the traits of this kind of duergar culture.

Racial Abilities: Duergar have all the dwarven racial traits given in Chapter 2 of the *Player's Handbook* except as follows:

- +2 Constitution, -4 Charisma. Duergar are extremely withdrawn and guarded.
- Darkvision up to 120 feet.
- Immune to paralysis, phantasms, and magic or alchemical poisons (but not normal poisons). Duergar acquired immunity to some illusions and many toxic substances during their servitude to mind flayers.
- +4 racial bonus on Move Silently checks. Gray dwarves excel in stealthy movement.
- +1 racial bonus on Listen and Spot checks.
- Spell-Like Abilities: 1/day—*enlarge* and *invisibility* as a wizard twice the duergar's level (minimum 3rd level). These affect only the duergar and whatever it carries.
- Light Sensitivity: Duergar suffer a -2 circumstance penalty to attack rolls, saves, and checks in bright sunlight or within the radius of a *daylight* spell.
- Automatic Languages: Dwarven, Undercommon, home region. Bonus Languages: Common, Draconic, Giant, Goblin, Orc, Terran.
- Level Adjustment +2: Duergar are more powerful and gain levels more slowly than most of the other common races of Faerûn. See the Powerful Races sidebar for more information.

Shield Dwarves

The sculpted halls and echoing chambers of dwarven kingdoms are scattered through the Underdark like forgotten necklaces of semiprecious stones. Dwarven kingdoms such as Xonath (near Oghrann, and Gharraghaur taught the less civilized races of Faerûn what it meant to hold and wield power. Unlike the ancient human empires, the dwarves distrusted magic, so they were never seduced to the heights of magical folly. They toppled Netheril and Imaskar. Instead, the dwarves became locked in eternal wars with goblin-kind and the other dwellers in the Underdark. One by one, the dwarven empires of the north failed, leaving only scattered survivors in the mountains or unconquered sections of the Underdark.

The clans that survived these battles are the shield dwarves. For many human generations they were divided into two types: the Hidden, given to reclusion and secrecy, and the Wanderers, comfortable with other races and inclined to exploration. Since the Thunder Blessing, the older members of Hidden clans are beginning to change their hearts. Within a few decades the differences between Hidden and Wanderer may become meaningless.

Regions: Shield dwarven holds exist in Damara, Impiltur, the North, the Silver Marches, Vaasa, the Vast, and the Western Heartlands. Citadel Adbar (north and east of Silvermoon, but counted as in that region for these purposes) is the most famous shield dwarven city. Most shield dwarven characters select one of these homelands or the shield dwarf entry on Table 1-4: Character Regions as their native region.

Racial Abilities: Shield dwarves have all the dwarven racial traits given in Chapter 2 of the *Player's Handbook* except as follows:

- Automatic Languages: Dwarven, Common, home region. Bonus Languages: Chondathan, Draconic, Giant, Goblin, Illuskan, Orc.

ELVES

Faerûn is home to six major subraces of elves, which some sages believe were brought to this plane long ago by their gods. The moon elves, sun elves, and wood elves are joined in loose allegiance to the traditions and authority represented by the Elven Court, now located on the island of Evermeet, and in the person of Queen Amlaruil. Most drow elves treat other elves as despised enemies, and the wild elves usually ignore the decrees of the civilized elves of Evermeet. The sea elves are an aquatic people who rarely interact with their surface kindred.

Drow

Descended from the original dark-skinned elven subrace called the Illythiiri, the drow were cursed into their present appearance by the good elven deities for following the goddess Lolth down the path to evil and corruption. Also called dark elves, the drow have black skin that resembles polished obsidian and stark white or pale yellow hair. They commonly have very pale eyes in shades of lilac, silver, pink, and blue. They also tend to be smaller and thinner than most elves. Most drow on the surface are evil and worship Vhaeraun, but some outcasts and renegades have a more neutral attitude.

Drow have a unique language, Drow Sign Language, that allows them to communicate silently with hand gestures at distances of up to 120 feet as long as they can see each other. Drow Sign Language is a bonus language for drow; others have to spend skill points to learn it. Drow has no alphabet or written form.

Regions: Menzoberranzan, home city of the famed exile Drizzt Do'Urden, is the most famous drow realm. The drow elf entry on Table 1-4: Character Regions describes any character from Menzoberranzan or a similar Underdark city. Drow hailing from Cormanthor or the High Forest may instead choose the wood elf region and its associated feats and equipment.

Racial Abilities: Drow have all the elven racial traits listed given in Chapter 2 of the *Player's Handbook* except as follows:

- +2 Dexterity, -2 Constitution, +2 Intelligence, +2 Charisma. The drow have ruthlessly selected for agility, intelligence, and force of personality over generations.
- Spell-Like Abilities: 1/day—*dancing lights*, *darkness*, and *faerie fire*. These abilities are as the spells cast by a sorcerer of the drow's character level.
- Darkvision up to 120 feet. This replaces elven low-light vision.
- Proficient with either rapier or shortsword; proficient with hand crossbow and light crossbow. This replaces the standard elven weapon proficiencies.
- Light Blindness (Ex): Abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds a drow for 1 round. In addition, drow suffer a -1 circumstance penalty on all attack rolls, saves, and checks while operating in bright light.
- Spell resistance of 11 + character level.
- +2 racial bonus on Will saves against spells and spell-like abilities.
- Automatic Languages: Elven, Undercommon, home region. Bonus Languages: Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Drow Sign Language, Goblin, Illuskan.
- Favored Class: Wizard (male) or cleric (female).
- Level Adjustment +2: Drow are more powerful and gain levels more slowly than most of the other common races of Faerûn. See the Powerful Races sidebar for more information.

Moon Elves

Moon elves are the most common sort of elves in Faerûn. Also called silver elves, they have fair skin (sometimes tinged with blue) and hair of silver-white, black, or blue. (Humanlike colors



Illustration by Todd Lockwood

are rare, but possible.) Their eyes are blue or green, with gold flecks. They are the elven subrace most tolerant of human culture, and most half-elves are descended from moon elves.

Regions: Moon elven domains can be found in the woodlands of the Dalelands (in Cormanthor), Evermeet, the High Forest, the North, Silverymoon, and the Western Heartlands. Evereska, on the

The Retreat, and After

Among the Fair Folk there is a Calling that is a yearning to go west over the sea to Evermeet. It comes to most elves late in their lives, but some feel its tug early, and others are never touched by it at all. Some who have both elven and human blood, as I have, feel it, and others do not. I am so far unmoved by the Calling, and I am beginning to believe I never will be. Simply put, the Calling, which humans and elves alike have termed the Retreat, seems to have come to an end.

No elven council or ruler has decreed an ending to the Retreat. Weary of mortal affairs, exhausted by warfare and care, the Retreat offered elvenkind a hope of lasting peace in a land beyond mortal reach. It is enough to know that for thousands upon thousands of years, as orcs and men spread and raged across Faerûn, elves withdrew by *portal* and ship and far-faring magic westward to Evermeet. Yet now no more ships set sail, no more secret companies steal forth in the shadows never to be seen again. The Retreat is ended. All those Fair Folk who wished to leave have left.

Cormanthor, Ardeep, and other traditional holds stand largely abandoned, fading to pale echoes and shadows of their former splendor. Where once elves abode in easy mastery over unbroken forest, now humans till and rumble in their carts and wagons, and winds howl across bare lands. Elves who remain bide in the shad-

ows, and speak softly; gliding with adroit grace around and among men like silver ghosts in moonlight.

It seems to me that many Fair Folk dwelling in Faerûn today are like fine-cut, glittering gems, or warswords: fair to look upon, but tempered cold and hard of necessity. And abide they do still—ah, yes, know this: the Retreat is ended, and many elves remain. Hear you fey, faerie trumpets in the moonlight, or see impossibly graceful figures dancing in silver armor as free-flowing as any fine gown, long slender fingers curled about harp-strings and pipes and long, curving swords with equal deftness?

The elves are still here—and more than that: Some are returning. They are coming back east with ready sword and wisdom in the ways of humankind. Aye, you may cut down this tree and that, but are you then free of all trees? No, they spring up, in the teeth of your will that such a place be bare of trees. Spring up anew, and endure . . . and when your breath is forever stilled and your bones lie among their roots, the trees will be standing still, covering the ground you hewed them from once more with their shade. Patient and looking down the long years, elves are trees among men. Learn this, if you learn naught else of the Fair Folk.

—Cambrizym of Candlekeep, Sage Pursuivant