

ALMANAC

THE FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign setting is a living, vibrant world, home to countless cultures and sentient races. Kingdoms, city-states, and empires sprawl across the land, separated by large tracts of wilderness. Magic reigns supreme, affecting climate, geography, travel, communication, and production. The devastating effects of the century-old Spellplague transformed the landscape, introduced heretofore unknown regions, eliminated other areas, and left pockets of uncontrolled magic across the land.

This chapter is a summary of basic facts about the continent of Faerûn and the setting in general, the sort of information that's known by most residents (including your character).

- ◆ **Deities of Toril:** Descriptions of many of the setting's divine entities and the precepts of their faiths.
- ◆ **Lore of the Land:** What Toril and Abeir have in common, and how they differ.
- ◆ **The Calendar of Harptos:** The months, seasons, and holidays.
- ◆ **The Roll of Years:** An ancient prophet gave names to the years of Faerûn. Here's a short list pairing the names and the numbers of recent and upcoming years.
- ◆ **Languages:** Most folk speak Common and one or more of several other languages.
- ◆ **Coin and Commerce:** What currency is in use and how the market and trade system works.
- ◆ **Class and Station:** Information on economic class and social status.
- ◆ **Families:** Common attitudes about family and relationships.
- ◆ **Learning:** Most people don't have formal schooling, but they are literate.
- ◆ **Adventurers:** How the rest of the world feels about adventurers.
- ◆ **The Spellplague:** What everyone knows about the Spellplague.
- ◆ **Cosmology:** The planes of existence.





TEA

DEITIES OF TORIL

The inhabitants of Faerûn worship a large pantheon of gods, and visitors from other planes are also common.

GREATER GODS

At the top of the divine hierarchy are the greater gods, most of which reign over small groups of other divine beings, including lesser gods, exarchs, and primordials. The greater gods of Toril are described below.

AMAUNATOR The Keeper of the Yellow Sun Lawful Good Greater God

Amaunator is the god of the sun and time. His church teaches that he has died and been reborn time and again, like the turning of a great clock. He is revered by farmers, merchants, and nomads who follow the seasons and the turning of the celestial clock, as well as paladins who battle undead. His strict commands include the following:



- ◆ Obey the law and respect tradition.
- ◆ Always meet your commitments and never be late.
- ◆ Be organized in all pursuits.

ASMODEUS Supreme Master of the Nine Hells Evil Greater God

Asmodeus is the master of the Nine Hells and its legions of devils. He is served by those who have succumbed to greed and impatience. He can be a charismatic and generous god, but those who sign away their souls to Asmodeus are damned for all eternity. The pact each worshiper forges with the Master of the Nine Hells spells out the following:



- ◆ Asmodeus is your true master. Obey his commands absolutely.
- ◆ You can earn special favors by tempting new worshipers into serving Asmodeus.
- ◆ Indulge in the pleasures of life, but do not falter in word or commitment.

BANE The Black Lord Evil Greater God

Bane is the iron-fisted lord of tyranny, seeking dominion over everyone and everything. He is served by tyrants and organizations that seek to impose their will on others. The Black Lord is not content to subjugate the mortal world, and seeks to dominate all other gods as well. Bane requires the following of his devotees:



- ◆ Strive ceaselessly to dominate your environment.
- ◆ Be merciless in the execution of your duties, and show no pity to the weak.
- ◆ Respect tradition and authority.

CHAUNTEA The Great Mother Lawful Good Greater Goddess

Chauntea is the mother of Toril, and she oversees the interaction of sentient mortals with the natural world. She draws worshipers from all who depend on the land for their livelihood, including farmers and villagers (who live close to the land) and druids (who tend the wild reaches). Chauntea is a kindly goddess who nurtures and feeds the world. She calls upon her worshipers to do the following:



- ◆ Preserve the cycle of growth and harvest.
- ◆ Live on and with the land.
- ◆ Be generous in sharing the land's bounty.

CORELLON
First of the Seldarine
Good Greater God

Corellon is a skilled warrior and the father of the eladrin, who were born of the blood he shed in his epic battles with Gruumsh. Corellon is worshiped by eladrin, elves, and half-elves, as well as those who are long-lived and those who work magic. He is a benevolent protector of his followers and is focused on long-range goals. He asks the following of his worshipers:



- ◆ Protect the traditions and works of your race.
- ◆ Create great examples of magic and beauty.
- ◆ Be ever vigilant against the evil hordes.

CYRIC
Prince of Lies
Chaotic Evil Greater God

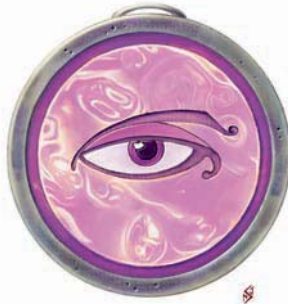
Cyric is the mad god of strife and lies. He is served by liars, the insane, and those who revel in mindless destruction. The Prince of Lies is given to wild rantings, paranoid delusions, and believing in the absolute truth of his own lies. Cyric gives different commands to every follower, but they share these common elements:



- ◆ Spread chaos, destruction, and insanity throughout the world.
- ◆ The world is mad, and everyone is out to get you.
- ◆ Slaughter anyone who stands in your way.

GHAUNADAUR
That Which Lurks
Chaotic Evil Greater God

Ghaunadaur lurks in the depths, from where he rules over the lowest forms of sentience. Although his cult once included drow and other creatures of the Underdark, Ghaunadaur is now served only by oozes, slimes, and abominations, including the denizens of the Abolethic Sovereignty. Ghaunadaur is an ancient, cowardly god tinged with madness who seeks only to consume the



world. Ghaunadaur has no use for laws or traditions, requiring only the following of his worshipers:

- ◆ Destroy in the name of That Which Lurks.
- ◆ Consume all that you destroy.
- ◆ Be patient in your hunger, for time has no meaning.

GRUUMSH
The One-Eyed God
Chaotic Evil Greater God

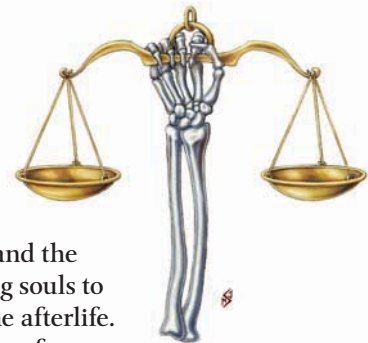
Gruumsh is the unblinking god of destruction who unleashes the savage multitudes against outposts of civilization. He is worshiped by orcs and half-orcs and has come to dominate some of the other savage humanoids as well. Gruumsh is a brutal god who loathes Corellon Larethian but denies that he lost an eye to the First of the Seldarine. Gruumsh tells his worshipers to do the following:



- ◆ Gather and breed, and your numbers shall flourish.
- ◆ Rise up in hordes and seize that which is rightfully yours.
- ◆ Raid. Kill. Conquer.

KELEMVOR
Lord of the Dead
Unaligned Greater God

Kelemvor presides over the passage from life to death, judging the faithless and the false and apportioning souls to their proper fate in the afterlife. His followers are drawn from those who find comfort in the natural transition from life to death and those who battle undead and the practitioners of necromancy, wherever they might be found. Kelemvor's absolute fairness, firm hand, and steady grace bring comfort to those who lose a loved one. The Lord of the Dead gives simple dictates to his followers:



- ◆ Do not fear death, for death is the natural stage that follows life.
- ◆ Give comfort to the bereaved.
- ◆ Destroy the undead, and oppose the use of necromancy.

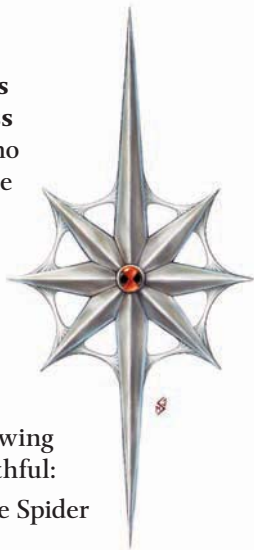


LOLTH

Queen of the Demonweb Pits Chaotic Evil Greater Goddess

Lolth is a capricious goddess who revels in betrayal and blood. The Spider Queen demands absolute obedience from the drow, presiding over their manifold schemes and betrayals, and is sovereign over all arachnids. Lolth's favor is fickle, and she regularly pits her worshipers against each other, but the following dictates hold true for all her faithful:

- ◆ Exhibit absolute loyalty to the Spider Queen and no other.
- ◆ Honor Lolth through sacrifices of blood and that which you hold dear.
- ◆ Kill no spider, for to do so is to attack Lolth herself.

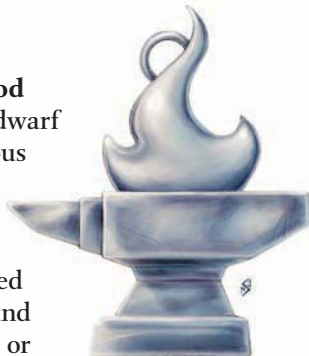


MORADIN

The Soul Forger Lawful Good Greater God

The All-Father forged the dwarf race from gems and precious metals and imbued the dwarves with souls with the strike of his mighty hammer. Moradin is revered by dwarves, blacksmiths, and those who work with gems or metals. The Soul Forger is stern, stubborn, and uncompromising, but tireless and brave in the defense of his creations. He demands the following of his worshipers:

- ◆ Respect and honor your traditions.
- ◆ Do not flinch in the face of danger.
- ◆ Seek out the riches buried in the heart of the world, and forge them into great works of art.



OGHMA

The Binder of What Is Known

Unaligned Greater God

Oghma is the lord of knowledge and thought, both the spoken and the written word. The Binder is served by all who seek knowledge, including bards, lorekeepers, sages, scribes, and wizards. Oghma thrives on new ideas, regardless of their consequences, and the communication



of knowledge in all its forms. Oghma's strictures demand the following:

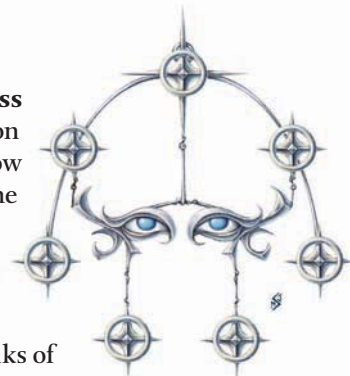
- ◆ Encourage innovation and new thoughts, wherever they might lead.
- ◆ Collect and preserve knowledge before it is lost.
- ◆ Disseminate knowledge as widely as possible so that all can benefit from its instruction.

SELÛNE

The Moonmaiden Good Greater Goddess

The goddess of the moon governs the ebb and flow of tides and comforts the world with her silvery glow in the black of night. She constantly battles the darkness of her sister Shar. The ranks of Selûne's faithful include mariners, travelers, and those who seek comfort in the night. Selûne is kind, caring, and ageless, ever waxing and waning in power. She encourages her worshipers to do the following:

- ◆ Never lose hope or faith, for every force in the world ebbs and flows.
- ◆ Bring light to the darkness, and hold back the tide of evil.
- ◆ Seek out creatures who bear the curse of lycanthropy, curing those who hope to end their affliction and destroying those who have succumbed to the beast within.



SHAR

Mistress of the Night Evil Greater Goddess

Shar is the goddess of the night and sister to Selûne. She is worshiped by souls consumed with bitterness and loss, who seek to turn sorrow into vengeance and exact suffering in kind. Shar resides in shadow, nurturing secret hatreds, unnatural desires, and a lust for revenge. She issues these commands to her followers:

- ◆ Place your trust in the Mistress of the Night, for she will lead you through the darkness.
- ◆ Never forget a slight or a loss, for those who have hurt you must suffer in kind.
- ◆ Never forget that the darkness is your friend, hiding your secrets and cloaking you from the suffering and pain of the world.



SILVANUS

The Forest Father Unaligned Greater God

The Forest Father (or Tree-father) is the lord of nature in all its wild splendor. He is worshiped by druids, rangers, hermits, and others who dwell in the wilderness. Silvanus is wild and unpredictable, given to tender acts of mercy and wild bouts of savagery. He instructs his faithful to do the following:



- ◆ Preserve the balance of life and death, birth and decay.
- ◆ Respect nature in all its savagery, and revere the world in all its natural beauty.
- ◆ Protect the wild places from the further encroachment of civilization.

SUNE

The Lady of Love Good Greater Goddess

Sune is the mistress of beauty and tender emotions. She is revered by artists, lovers, and gallants drawn from the ranks of humans, eladrin, and half-elves. Despite her flirtatious, loving nature, the Lady of Love holds herself aloof, pledging her heart only to her faithful. She teaches her worshipers the following:



- ◆ Seek beauty and love in all its forms.
- ◆ Follow your passions in love and art wherever your heart might lead you.
- ◆ Celebrate the creation of beauty, and share it so that all can revel in the joy of life.

TEMPUS

The Foehammer Unaligned Greater God

Tempus is the god of battle and patron of martial prowess. He is revered by all warriors, from the lowliest soldier to the mightiest warlord. The fearless Lord of Battle views war as a force of nature that shapes and reshapes civilization. His orders to all combatants are simple and direct:



- ◆ Be fearless.
- ◆ Never turn away from a fight.
- ◆ Obey the rules of war.

TORM

The Loyal Fury Lawful Good Greater God

The Loyal Fury is the god of law, dutifully upholding the strictures of civilization. Torm is served by paladins and other holy champions. Ever steadfast and true, he is consumed by his sense of duty. Torm requires the following:



- ◆ Respect and enforce the law, and honor your traditions.
- ◆ Demonstrate truthfulness, loyalty, and steadfast devotion to a rightful cause.
- ◆ Do not flinch in the execution of your duty, no matter what the consequence.

LESSER GODS

Just below the greater gods in the divine pecking order are the lesser gods, sometimes simply called gods. Each of these entities is subservient to a greater god and resides with that greater god on a particular plane of existence (see “Cosmology,” page 159).

Of the nineteen entities generally recognized as (lesser) gods, ten are lawful good, good, or unaligned, and thus are potential objects of worship for adventurers and others who are not disposed toward evil. Each of these ten is briefly described below.

Angharradh: This good-aligned goddess is associated with Corellon, and as such many of her worshipers are elves.

Bahamut: The great and good Platinum Dragon, revered by many of his ilk, resides in the dominion overseen by Torm.

Berronar Truesilver: The wife of Moradin, lawful good like her spouse, is a popular choice for worship among female dwarves.

Garl Glittergold: The leader among the gnome deities, Garl resides in Corellon's dominion. He is good-aligned.

Gond: This unaligned god, favored by smiths, craftsfolk, and others who create items and devices, has a place in the dominion of Oghma.

Ilmater: This good-aligned god is the embodiment of compassion and an opponent of suffering. He resides with Torm.

Mielikki: A good-aligned goddess who cares for and protects forest realms, she makes her home in the domain of Silvanus.

Sheela Peryroyl: This good-aligned goddess is prominent among the halfling deities and renowned for her beauty. She resides in Chauntea's dominion.

Tymora: Those who seek good luck or want to express thanks for having received it pay homage to this good-aligned goddess. She resides in the domain also occupied by Selûne and Sune.

Waukeen: An unaligned goddess associated with commerce and wealth, Waukeen occupies a portion of the domain of Amaunator.

EXARCHS AND PRIMORDIALS

Many other individuals of divine aspect occupy places in the world's pantheon. Most of these beings are either exarchs (mortal servants of greater gods who have been elevated to divine status) or primordial (beings of elemental origin believed to be mortal but worshiped by some nonetheless). This group of low-ranking divine entities also includes the eight archdevils of the Nine Hells who pay homage to Asmodeus even as they sometimes plot to unseat him.

LORE OF THE LAND

At the center of the universe lie the twin worlds of Abeir and Toril, slightly out of phase with each other. Both revolve around the same sun and both have a large lunar satellite, Selûne, trailed by a line of moonlets known as the Tears of Selûne.

Toril is the body that folk refer to as "the world." In the aftermath of the Spellplague, it includes pockets of Returned Abeir that have replaced pockets of the old Toril. The planet's primary and "central" continent is Faerûn. To the north of Faerûn is the arctic north, home to the polar icecap. To the west of Faerûn is the Trackless Sea, and beyond that horizon lies Returned Abeir, which completely replaced a land known as Maztica. To the south of Faerûn is the Great Sea. To the east of Faerûn are the Hordelands. Other continents exist as well, but the folk of Faerûn and Returned Abeir know little about those far-off lands.

CLIMATE AND GEOGRAPHY

The geographic regions of Faerûn range from the frigid arctic to the steamy tropics, with all types of landscapes and climates in between. Travelers can find soaring mountain ranges, vast chasms, great lakes, and a large inland sea. Some climates and geographies can be explained by natural forces, whereas others are the result of (or at least influenced by) magic.

Climate is generally a function of latitude, altitude, and precipitation, with a great deal of regional variation due to changes in altitude, the proximity of bodies of water, and magic. Generally, Faerûn can be divided into five climatic zones.

- ◆ The northwest receives a great deal of precipitation and ranges from a frozen, blighted wasteland to alpine valleys that have short, fierce summers to a verdant, temperate region capable of supporting large cities.
- ◆ The southwest generally receives plenty of precipitation and ranges from temperate to steamy to desert.
- ◆ The southeastern coast is hot with long, humid summers and short, stormy winters.
- ◆ The southeastern interior is arid with hot, dry summers and perversely cold winters.
- ◆ The northeast is arid and cold, and few forests flourish here.

The Sea of Fallen Stars makes the interior wet and temperate and a generally pleasant place to live.

THE CALENDAR OF HARPTOS

Most cultures of Faerûn follow the Calendar of Harptos, named for the long-dead wizard who invented it. The Faerûnian year is 365 days long, marked by the passage of Toril around the sun. The year is divided into twelve months of thirty days, loosely coinciding with the waxing and waning of Selûne, and five annual holidays. In lieu of weeks, each month is divided into three tendays, also known as rides. Once every four years, Shieldmeet is added to the Calendar of Harptos as a “leap day” immediately following Midsummer night.

Particular days of the ride or month have no special names. Instead, days of the ride are denoted by counting from the beginning of the tenday. For example, “one-day, two-day, three-day,” and so on. Days of the month are noted as numbers followed by the month name. For example, sages might record a date as occurring on “1 Mirtul” or “27 Uktar” or “Midsummer.”

THE CALENDAR OF HARPTOS

Month	Name	Common Name
1	Hammer (Annual holiday: Midwinter)	Deepwinter
2	Alturiak	The Claw of Winter
3	Ches	The Claw of Sunsets
4	Tarsakh (Annual holiday: Greengrass)	The Claw of the Storms
5	Mirtul	The Melting
6	Kythorn	The Time of Flowers
7	Flamerule (Annual holiday: Midsummer) (Quadrennial holiday: Shieldmeet)	Summertide
8	Eleasis	Highsun
9	Eleint (Annual holiday: Highharvestide)	The Fading
10	Marpenoth	Leaffall
11	Uktar (Annual holiday: The Feast of the Moon)	The Rotting
12	Nightal	The Drawing Down

SEASONAL FESTIVALS

Every culture across Faerûn has its own special festivals and holidays whose occurrence is governed by the passage of the sun, the moon, or some other event. Five annual festivals and one quadrennial festival are observed in almost every civilized land:

Midwinter: Although this holiday is generally known as Midwinter, it is often celebrated under different names. For example, the High Festival of Winter is a feast day used by nobles and monarchs to mark or renew alliances. For commoners in northern climes, Deadwinter Day is a somber day noted

mainly as the halfway point of winter, with hard times still to come.

Greengrass: The start of spring is traditionally a day of peace and rejoicing marked by the display of flowers (even if they need to be grown in a hothouse during the winter months) that are worn or given as sacrifices to the gods who have brought life back to the world.

Midsummer: The midpoint of summer is a time of feasting and love, marked by dalliances, betrothals, and (traditionally) good weather. Bad weather on this night is seen as a sign of ill fortune to come.

Shieldmeet: This quadrennial festival follows Midsummer night. It is traditionally a day of open council between the ruled and their rulers, and the renewal of pacts. In addition to theatrical entertainment, many tournaments are held on Shieldmeet, allowing the brave and the foolish to try to prove themselves.

Highharvestide: The autumn harvest is marked by feasting and thanks. Many folk travel in the wake of this festival before the worst of winter's bite makes the roads and waterways impassable.

The Feast of the Moon: This holiday celebrates ancestors and the honored dead. During the festival, ancestral tales are recounted, and the stories and myths that bind cultures are taught anew.

THE ROLL OF YEARS

Several kingdoms, regions, and cities throughout Faerûn have their own forms of annual reckoning. One of the most widely recognized (and the one used herein) is the Dalreckoning (DR) calendar. This calendar dates to the time, nearly 1,500 years ago, when humans were first permitted by elves to settle in the more open regions of Cormanthor—the event that led to the formation of the Dalelands.

Despite the various forms of annual reckoning used around the continent, most folk refer to births, deaths, weddings, and other events by the name of the year. For example, 1479 DR is the Year of the Ageless One. Children learn the order of the years from bards, artistic designs in temples, and their elders. Although the meanings of year names are often obscure, most years (until they arrive) are seen as mysterious portents of the time ahead.

The Roll of Years familiar to most folk was penned by Auguthra the Mad and expanded by the great sage Alaundo in the library of Candlekeep. A second Roll of Years, known as the Black Chronology, is said to



exist as well, penned in darkness by Auguthra and held in secret by the Church of Shar.

Below is a brief accounting of the recent Roll of Years and the years to come that would be known by most adventurers.

RECENT AND FUTURE YEAR NAMES

Year Number	Year Name
1477 DR	Year of the Purloined Statue
1478 DR	Year of the Dark Circle
1479 DR	Year of the Ageless One (current year)
1480 DR	Year of Deep Water Drifting
1481 DR	Year of the Thoughtless Suitor
1482 DR	Year of the Narthex Murders

LANGUAGES

The continent of Faerûn is home to many cultures and nations, and the inhabitants speak a multitude of languages and dialects. Many races speak their own languages, with regional differences in dialects, though some (such as hobgoblins and goblins) share a language, suggesting a mutual ancestry, a common history, or some other close relationship.

Modern sages recognize three primary groupings of active human languages in Faerûn. The first, Chondathan, is spoken mainly by people in the western regions. The second, Damaran, is spoken mostly by humans in the east. The third language, Untheric, is less widespread than the first two. Numerous other active languages exist on the continent, but they are even more limited geographically, sometimes to a single nation (such as the Thayan language).

THE COMMON TONGUE

Common is widely spoken across Faerûn, though sometimes with limited proficiency. It is a straightforward language best suited for trade and negotiation. Faerûn's common tongue is closely related to the human language Chondathan.

ALPHABETS

Despite the multitude of languages and dialects, only six sets of symbols are in widespread use as alphabets across Faerûn.

- ◆ Thorass is the alphabet of Common, Chondathan, and Untheric, and it has been adopted by other languages as well.
- ◆ Espruar is an eladrin moon elf alphabet adopted by gold elves, drow, and other elves and eladrin thousands of years ago. Its beautiful, weaving

LANGUAGES OF FAERÛN

Language	Region or Race	Alphabet
Abyssal	Demons, gnolls, sahuagin	Barazhad
Chondathan	Aglarond, Amn, Baldur's Gate, Cormyr, Dalelands, Dragon Coast, Elturgard, Erilkazar, Luruar, Moonshae Isles, Nelanther Isles, Sea of Fallen Stars (surface), Sembia, Tethyr, Velen, Vilhon Wilds, Waterdeep	Thorass
Common	Everywhere on the surface of Faerûn (trade language)	Thorass
Damaran	Damara, Dambrath, Great Dale, Impiltur, Moonsea Lands, Narfell, Rashemen, Thesk, Vaasa, Vesperin	Dethek
Deep Speech	High Imaskar, Underdark	Espruar
Draconic	Murghôm, Najara, Okoth, Returned Abeir, Tymnanther	Iokharic
Dwarven	East Rift	Dethek
Elven	Elfharrow, Evereska, Evermeet, Menzoberranzan, Myth Drannor, Raurin, Sea of Fallen Stars (submerged)	Espruar
Giant	Kingdom of Many-Arrows	Dethek
Goblin	Goblins, hobgoblins, bugbears	Thorass
Netherese	Halruaa, Netheril	Iokharic
Primordial	Akanûl, Calimshan, Lake of Steam	Barazhad
Shou	Nathlan	Iokharic
Supernal	Angels, devils, deities	Supernal
Thayan	Thay	Thorass
Tuigan	Hordelands	Thorass
Untheric	Beastlands, Chessenta, Chult, Durpar, Estagund, Turmish, the Shaar	Thorass

script flows over jewelry, monuments, and magic items. It is also the alphabet used to scribe Deep Speech.

- ◆ Dethek is the Dwarven runic script, usually inscribed on metal sheets or carved in stone. It is notable for its straight lines and relative lack of punctuation (other than spaces between words and slashes between sentences). Words are given emphasis by adding a red hue. Dethek is also the script used for the languages of giants, orcs, and ogres.
- ◆ Barazhad is the script of elementals, efreet, archons, demons, gnolls, and sahuagin.
- ◆ Iokharic (also known as Draconic for the most famous language it is used for) is the script of dragons, dragonborn, kobolds, and many dragonlike, reptilian, or serpentine folk.

- ◆ Supernal is the language of angels, devils, and deities. It is sometimes written dialectically (as Celestial and Infernal) when used by angels and devils, respectively.

COIN AND COMMERCE

The disparate lands of Faerûn are knit by a common web of commerce and trade, much of it initiated by the sprawling ranks of humankind. Hard work is a way of life throughout the Heartlands. A day's labor might earn a single silver piece. Days off are few and far between, with most workers getting a respite only on festival days. Some folk have begun working nine days out of ten, but life for a typical peasant is hard and short. Slavery is not unknown in Faerûn, but it is traditionally associated with southern and eastern lands (especially Calimshan and Thay) or tyrant-ruled cities around the Moonsea. Indentured servitude and serfdom are practiced as well, and these practices approach the brutality and hopelessness of slavery.

Machines more complicated than a waterwheel are largely unknown across Faerûn, and technological know-how has notably receded in the wake of the Spellplague. Crop farming is common in the Heartlands. Animal husbandry is practiced in regions too steep, arid, or dangerous to farm. Mining and metalwork are widespread and traditionally dominated by dwarven clans. Papermaking and bookbinding is the tedious work of scribes who copy volumes by hand.

Most inhabitants of Faerûn rarely or never travel far from home, but merchants, peddlers, mercenaries, drovers, and adventurers travel widely, moving goods and services from one place to another along Faerûn's trade routes. Common forms of travel include river barges that sail inland waterways, steeds or devices that carry riders through the air, ships that cross large seas and lakes, horses and similar creatures that traverse the land, and, of course, simple walking.

Most of Faerûn's roads are dusty tracks between cities and outposts, wide enough for one wagon and a horse passing each other. Major trade routes can fit three or even four wagons abreast. Paved roads are nearly unknown. Wealthy trade cities tend to have streets paved with cobblestones. Most major trade routes have campgrounds, inns, or small villages spaced about a day apart along their length.

Trade in Faerûn is dominated by great merchant companies and small trading costers. The former control trade routes and markets, buying in one locale and transporting to another for selling. Merchant companies are largely ungoverned by trade laws

and are a power unto themselves. Costers are alliances of small, independent traders who band into shared caravans for safety in travel. They frequently hire adventurers traveling in the same direction to make up for a shortfall in guards. Adventurers can earn between 1 and 20 gold pieces per day for such duty, depending on their experience and ability to negotiate.

The baseline economy of Faerûn matches the coins and prices outlined in the *Player's Handbook*. Gold and silver coins are most common, although coins made of copper and platinum are employed as well. Paper currency is almost unknown. Coins come in a variety of shapes, sizes, and materials, but most are fashioned of a common weight for a particular metal. Merchants also employ trade bars in lieu of large numbers of coins, and other, more exotic forms of coinage are not unknown.

CLASS AND STATION

Matters of economic class and station vary according to culture and race. Nevertheless, a rough divide exists within most nations of Faerûn. The peasantry consists of common farmers and simple laborers, who make up the bulk of the population. Tradesfolk and merchants occupy the next rung above the peasantry, generating wealth and prosperity for their settlement. They protect themselves with strong guilds and companies of craftsfolk. The next rung is occupied by the low nobles and the clergy. The former are usually descended from warriors who won the right to rule through force of arms. The latter gained their position through the enduring wealth and influence of Faerûn's powerful churches. High nobles are related by blood or marriage to the ruling family and are owed allegiance by low nobles. They are usually landed and command great fiefs that could be considered kingdoms in their own right.

FAMILIES

Although few adventurers start families before they settle down, the common folk of Faerûn place great stock in strong families and familial ties. Marriage is common in most societies in Faerûn, though customs vary widely according to tradition. Arranged marriages are uncommon except among the nobility. Divorce is rare. Polygamy is also rare, occurring mostly among the wealthy. Children are regarded as a blessing, and large families are common in relatively safe and prosperous regions. The blessings of the gods and the interventions of priests and clerics spare the elderly of many of the ravages of old age, so most folks work until they die. Only the wealthy can afford to retire (or to not work at all).

LEARNING

Formal schooling is the exception rather than the rule in much of Faerûn, though the south and east once had a tradition of great academies of learning. The fall of Chondath, Halruaa, Mulhorand, Unther, and Var the Golden, along with the transformation of Thay, has greatly undermined this tradition. As a result, only the children of wealthy or highborn parents receive any real education. Nevertheless, most Faerûnians are literate, taught by their parents or by teachers to read, write, and appreciate the value and potential power of the written word. True scholarly learning is mainly the preserve of sages, scribes, clerics, and wizards. The greatest citadels of learning nowadays are found in High Imaskar, Luruar, Netheril, and Waterdeep, as well as in famed libraries such as Candlekeep.

ADVENTURERS

Adventurers break the molds of their home societies in many respects. They are expected to travel the world and absorb new ideas. They can advance their status rapidly in most societies, ignoring the strictures of class and station.

Most common folk envy the freedom enjoyed by adventurers, but their fear of Faerûn's many dangers holds them back. Nobles and wealthy merchants often view adventurers with great suspicion, rightly fearing their ability to overturn the established social order with a few well-placed spells or sword thrusts. Some react by employing adventurers and

sending them off on dangerous quests in which they are likely to die—or at least not pose a threat. Others surround themselves with bodyguards or spend coins to discreetly undermine the position held by powerful adventurers in society.

An adventurer who attaches himself to a wealthy or noble patron earns a place in society commensurate with the influence and station of the patron. Those who threaten or intimidate the local power structure invite all manner of trouble—legal, financial, and violent. Adventurers who abuse their power are seen as little more than bandits, whereas those who use their power to help others are blessed as heroes.

Groups of adventurers often assemble in formal companies, pooling their resources to share treasure, responsibility, and risk. These companies stand a better chance of receiving official recognition and licenses from governments or blessings from established churches, but individual members are more limited in their chances for advancement. On the other hand, informal adventuring bands take the greatest risks and offer the greatest rewards to individual members, but these freewheeling groups are often seen as lawless mercenaries in established kingdoms such as Cormyr.

THE SPELLPLAGUE

Nearly a century ago, Faerûn was ripped apart by an unfettering of wild magic now known as the Spellplague. Although sages and clerics might argue about the origin of the Spellplague, the effect was apparent to all. Huge swaths of the landscape were rent asunder. Entire nations were drowned, and large regions collapsed into the Underdark or were thrust up as spires of stone. The land became far more magical and fantastic in appearance, with islands of rock called earthmotes floating in the sky. The Spellplague infected everything: flesh, stone, magic, space and dimensional walls, and even the cosmology.

Another effect of the Spellplague was to breach the barrier between the twin worlds of Abeir and Toril. Portions of Abeir and Toril were swapped, leaving pockets of Abeir scattered across Faerûn. To the west, the entire continent of Maztica vanished, replaced by a new continent that many call Returned Abeir.

Although the Spellplague has largely run its course, its legacy lingers. Most creatures warped by the Spellplague have since died (of old age, sickness, or violent death), but a few, known as the plaguechanged, survive. Enduring pockets of unrestrained wild magic, known as plaguelands, lie

scattered across Faerûn. Those who visit such areas and survive exhibit physical marks known as spellscars and often manifest bizarre abilities.

COSMOLOGY

Toril lies at the center of multiple planes. Two of those planes—the Feywild and the Shadowfell—form reflections of Toril, the former enchanted and (to some) intriguing, the latter dark and sinister.

Beneath Toril lies the churning substance and energy of the Elemental Chaos, which holds numerous realms within its reaches. Below the Elemental Chaos is the Abyss, home to demons.

Above Toril lies a silvery void known as the Astral Sea, in which stars part to reveal dominions—homes of the gods. The dominions include the following:

- ◆ Arvandor (home to the elven and gnome deities)
- ◆ Celestia (an enormous mountain bathed in silver light)
- ◆ The Cynosure (where the deities meet)
- ◆ The Deep Wilds (a primeval woodland)
- ◆ The Demonweb Pits (a roiling terrain of spiders)
- ◆ The Dismal Caverns (an uncultivated area of powerful monsters)
- ◆ Dwarfhome (home to the dwarven deities)
- ◆ The Fugue Plane (where the dead go to be judged)
- ◆ The Green Fields (a pastoral region)
- ◆ The House of Knowledge (a vast repository of learning)
- ◆ The Nine Hells (where devils reign)
- ◆ Nishrek (a chaotic landscape where the orc gods rule)
- ◆ The Supreme Throne (the prison of a mad god)
- ◆ The Towers of Night (where darkness reigns supreme)
- ◆ Warrior's Rest (where battle ever rages)

ABOUT THE DESIGNERS

Greg Bilsland is a game editor and contract writer at Wizards of the Coast. His writing credits include this book and several *D&D Insider*[™] articles. When he's not working, he spends much of his free time writing speculative fiction in one of Seattle's many coffee shops.

Logan Bonner traded the Great Plains of Kansas for Seattle when he landed a job at Wizards of the Coast. As a mechanical designer, he has created *Dungeon Tiles* and *D&D*[®] *Miniatures*, and worked on classes for the 4th Edition *Player's Handbook*[®].

Eric Boyd has long loved to wander the highways and byways of the FORGOTTEN REALMS[®] setting, from wyrm-filled skies to the depths of the Underdark. His recent projects include *A Grand History of the Realms*[™] and *Shadowdale: The Scouring of the Land*[™].

Rob Heinsoo led the design of the 4th Edition D&D[®] Roleplaying Game, and currently serves as Lead Designer for Wizards of the Coast Roleplaying R&D. His other game designs include *Three-Dragon Ante*[™] and *Inn Fighting*[™].

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Richard Baker is an award-winning game designer who has written scores of D&D adventures and supplements, including *Thunderspire Labyrinth*[™], *King of the Trollhaunt Warrens*[™], and *Manual of the Planes*[™]. Rich is also a bestselling author of FORGOTTEN REALMS[®] novels, including *Swordmage*, the first book in the new *Blades of the Moonsea* series.

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