

## **FORGOTTEN REALMS ALTERNATE DIMENSIONS: ISSUE III**

### **Editorial**

Welcome to issue III of the Forgotten Realms Alternate Dimensions Webzine. My intention is for this to become a home for people who wish to publish material about their own versions of the Forgotten Realms. The content presented within these pages should in no way be considered canon material and is meant to represent a glimpse of the possibilities available to people running a campaign world in the Forgotten Realms setting.

I would just like to say a brief thank you to all the scribes at Candlekeep and everyone who has worked on the Forgotten Realms for the past few decades. Thank you for inspiring me and giving me many years of enjoyment with the Forgotten Realms.

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## Deities With a Difference: Tiamat

The Dragon Queen, the Chromatic Dragon, Nemesis of the Gods, the Dark Lady, Queen of Chaos, the Undying Queen, Bane of Bahamut, the Avaricious.

Lesser Power of Baator (and Heliopolis) (LE)

**Portfolio:** Evil Dragons, Chromatic Dragons, Greed, Rebellion

Tiamat is the legendary five headed queen of evil, chromatic dragons. At the same time she is or rather was a deity of ancient Unther that arrived in Faerûn from another world.

Supposedly she is the brother of Bahamut and the origin of all chromatic dragons in Faerûn. Although other stories credit Garyx as being the first dragon to exist and he is usually depicted as being a deep red colour.

It is possible that dragons as they currently are evolved from the numerous dracoforms that crawled out of the meteorite craters that formed in the aftermath of the Tearfall. However it is much more likely, given the extreme magical nature of dragons that their current form was brought about through magic rather than a natural process. Who would create such powerful monsters and why and how does that involve Tiamat and Bahamut is another story.

### **History**

Tiamat, as the queen of dragons, is an ancient deity that came into existence sometime after the Tearfall event when dragons first emerged on Faerûn, c-31,000 DR. In this guise Tiamat shepherded the chromatic dragons in an unending war against her hated foe Bahamut and his metallic dragons.

After millennia of conflict, worship of the two draconic gods began to wane (as did all draconic worship) among the dragons. Tiamat and Bahamut wandered Faerûn as demi powers, each trying to destroy the other in an eternal game of cat and mouse while their power and worship slowly dwindled.

Then in -2489 DR there arrived on Faerûn a group of gods from another world. One among their number was a Mulan goddess called Tiamat; a powerful sorcerous being who could shape-shift into the form of a colossal three headed dragon. She styled herself as the nemesis of the gods, and for thousands of years she plagued the gods of Unther, Mulhorand, and Chessenta.

Another event in -1076 DR drove the conflict of Tiamat and Bahamut into new spheres of influence. The Orcgate was opened and spewed forth countless orc marauders into the empire of Mulhorand. During the battles that followed, the Mulan goddess Tiamat struck out at Gilgeam; one of her foes, and would have landed a fatal blow if not for the efforts of Marduk who sacrificed himself for Gilgeam.

In the last milliseconds of Marduk's life, he sought out successors for his power who would continue the fight against Tiamat and her evil. One of those successors was the dragon demigod known as Bahamut. Bahamut took over from Marduk and began answering the prayers of his worshippers. With new power from his human worshippers Bahamut took the fight to both the Tiamat's of Faerûn.

Tiamat found herself on the back foot and needed a new influx of power and worshippers. She tried several times to attract human worshippers in the same way as Bahamut now had, but each time was unsuccessful.

Then the Time of Troubles struck. During that conflict the Mulan goddess, Tiamat the Dark Lady, attacked Gilgeam and lost, her essence was dispersed into three separate vessels that she had prepared in advance for this event.

These vessels; the dragons Tchazzar, Gestaniius and Skuthosiin, were compelled to seek each other out and consume one another. Once a single vessel emerged victorious, Tchazzar transformed into Tiamat the Dark Lady once more, and the three headed dragon goddess attacked and slew the avatar of Gilgeam in Unthalass in an epic battle that levelled much of the palace district.

Once the battle on Faerûn was over, Gilgeam assaulted Tiamat the Dark Lady in her secret hiding place in Zigguraxis on the Outer Planes. The victor had only a millisecond to revel in their triumph before Tiamat the Dragon Queen marched on Zigguraxis and crushed the puny demigod between her five, massive dragon maws.

Tiamat the Dragon Queen had been watching the conflict between Gilgeam and the Mulan goddess Tiamat for some time, ever since Marduk had bequeathed some of his power to Bahamut. Tiamat desired the worshippers and power held by the Dark Lady, but could not safely destroy the upstart and take her power without exposing herself to significant risk.

The Time of Troubles solved that problem as both Gilgeam and Tiamat expended significant amounts of energy battling each other. Once Tiamat the Dark Lady and

Nemesis of the Gods was destroyed, it was a simple matter for the Dragon Queen to claim her worshippers and portfolio with few noticing the difference.

From the Mulan goddess, Tiamat gained a strong base of human worshippers and the portfolio of Rebellion, but she could not take the portfolios of anarchy and chaos because of her alignment.

The destruction of Gilgeam did much to endear Tiamat to the people of Unther and her popularity has soared, giving her more power than ever before.

A minor setback did occur in the guise of Gareth Dragonsbane of Damara who slew an aspect of Tiamat that had been guarding the Gates of Hell for some time as part of a deal with one of the Lords of Hell, but she has gained far more than she lost during the Time of Troubles.

### **Relationships**

Tiamat hates Bahamut and desires most of all to destroy the Platinum Dragon and his metallic dragon children.

As a deity of the Faerûnian and the Untheric/Mulhorandi pantheon she has relationships with several deities in both spheres.

The demigod Tchazzar, Father of Chessenta, is her vassal and serves her will, (although he secretly harbours ambitions to replace her) thanks to her sponsorship and help in his bid for deification.

With the near destruction of the Untheric pantheon and a possible merger with the Mulhorandi pantheon, it is likely that Tiamat will attempt to form a relationship with one or more gods of Mulhorand. Set and Sebek both are potential allies for Tiamat as all would be considered outcasts of such a pantheon and work against the established order.

Indeed, Set and Tiamat have already entered into a secret alliance of convenience and their cultists share resources when necessary.

Should Gilgeam ever make a reappearance then he may also be a potential ally of Tiamat (if they can both get over previous rivalries) depending upon his position in a merged Untheric/Mulhorandi pantheon. Tiamat will gladly forge an ally of convenience with anyone who is against the established order (so she can demolish it and establish a new one with her at the top).

Bane is an enemy of Tiamat primarily because one of Tiamat's aims is to bring about an end to human dominance on the planet and have the dragons rule the world as overlords. Such a reign of Tyranny is at odds with Bane who considers himself the ultimate tyrant, not Tiamat and her dragons.

### **Avatars**

Tiamat has a number of avatars. The first is The Chromatic Dragon, a gross, bloated dragon of enormous size with five heads (one for each of the chromatic dragon colours). In this form Tiamat has access to the breath weapons and abilities of all five dragon colours as well as immense reserves of physical strength. She can also propel herself about in flight (despite her wings looking far too small to achieve such motion).

Her second form is that of the Dark Lady, a human sorceress of Mulan descent that dresses in black clothing and possesses incredible spellcasting abilities in excess of her Chromatic Dragon form. The Dark Lady is also capable of transforming herself into a 3 headed dragon with red, blue and green heads at will, this ability is used frequently.

Her final avatar form is one newly developed after the Time of Troubles. Using the dead bodies of her avatar that guarded Avernus in Baator, as well as the corpse of the Dark Lady from Unthalass, Tiamat submerged these two corpses in the Pit of Many Colours that formed from the blood of the dying Gilgeam. The result was a multi-headed dracolich with all the physical and draconic abilities of The Chromatic Dragon coupled with the spellcasting abilities of the Dark Lady.

This new avatar is called the Undying Queen and spent many years residing beneath the ruins of Castle Perilous in Vaasa, where Tiamat hoped to be able to use it to wreak her vengeance upon Gareth Dragonsbane and the kingdom of Damara.

### **Relics**

While Tiamat undoubtedly has many relics dedicated to herself in both of her churches there are only three that are known with any certainty to scholars.

**The Rings of Tiamat:** Each of these three rings was forged from a scale of the Dark Lady's dragon form long ago and given to those of Tiamat's blood, these rings were most recently given to the dragons Tchazzar, Gestanius, and Skuthosiin as part of

some pact between each dragon and Tiamat; the Dark Lady, long before the Time of Troubles began.

When originally created these rings enhanced the abilities of the wearer making them stronger, faster, more vigorous and more intelligent with greater spell like and spellcasting abilities than they would otherwise have access to. At the same time the wearer of the ring acted as a vessel for a portion of the Dark Lady's divinity so that should she ever be slain then the vessels would be compelled to seek out and slay one another until only one remained who would then be reborn as the Dark Lady. Once put on the ring could never be removed except in death.

Using these relics the Dark Lady escaped death at least twice. Once during a battle with Marduk during the Orcgate Wars and again during the first battle with Gilgeam during the Time of Troubles. Her essence split between each vessel and she was reborn from the body of the victor as he consumed the other two vessels.

The unpredictability of magic during the Time of Troubles twisted the function of the ring worn by Tchazzar and this ring now holds the essence of Tchazzar instead of Tiamat. This means there are only 2 Rings of Tiamat remaining.

With the Dark Lady's death, Tiamat the Dragon Queen claimed these remaining relics for herself and altered their powers to suit her. Now these rings, as well as enhancing the wearer's abilities, slowly twist the wearer making them more evil and draconic in nature and form the longer they are worn. If the wearer is already a dragon then it merely twists them to evil and veneration of her, if the wearer is humanoid then they slowly transform into a half dragon. The rings can only be removed with a *Greater Remove Curse* spell.

Unfortunately when she sent a servant to reclaim the ring worn by Tchazzar, the servant foolishly put it on and was twisted into Tchazzar himself. As such the ring has eluded her, although Tiamat does not know how or why.

Tiamat sends these rings into the lairs of dragons hoping that unsuspecting human dragon hunters, or the dragon that dwells in the lair, don the rings and become devoted to her worship.

The rings still contain the divine spark they once did although it no longer has any function, but could be used to effect a return of the Dark Lady if someone had the power and the will to do so.

## The Church of Tiamat

The church of Tiamat exists as two separate structures. The Church of the Dragon Queen is the Faerûnian church of Tiamat and is centred upon the Cathedral, the Wings of the Queen Reborn in Vaasa. This small church is comprised of a number of humans and dragons that work to see dragons replace the established governments of all nations in Faerûn.

The Church of the Dark Lady is centred upon the Cloak of Chaos in Messemprar. From here the High Priestess, also known as Tiglath the Dark Scaly One, preaches that the church of Tiamat must bring about the destruction of the current order and sow chaos and anarchy among the cities of the Old Empires (then the dragons can take over). Its members are primarily human and the dragons are considered outside the normal structure of the church. The Church of the Dark Lady is by far the larger of the two organisations with several thousand cultists across the Old Empires, and its membership has surged recently in the south thanks to recent events in Unther.

The two churches have distinct hierarchies. In the Faerûnian church, priests are named according to the colours of dragons in order of power (metallic dragons being lower than chromatic). So these are copper, brass, bronze, silver, gold platinum, white, green, black, blue, red, and chromatic. Each title also has a suffix name that corresponds to a body part of a dragon depending upon the role of the priest, for instance warriors would be teeth or claws, preachers might be breath, etc.

The Old Empires church has no formal naming structure due to their promotion of anarchy. The only title of note is that of Scaly One for the head priest of a temple and Dark Scaly One for the High Priestess of the church which is currently Tiglath (although for how long this remains true is unknown).

As yet Tiamat has made no attempts to integrate the two churches. Their structure and resources are entirely separate and isolated from one another by large distances. In fact it is unknown if the two churches are even aware of the others existence. At some point in the future thought they may come into contact or even conflict depending upon how Tiamat's attempts to subsume the Cult of the Dragon into her church progress.

**Allies:** The churches of Tiamat have a few organisations that can be called allies. The first is an order of dragon slayers called the Knights of the Five Thorned Rose. These "Knights" masquerade as legitimate, professional dragon slayers that hire

themselves out to deal with rogue dragons. They are well equipped and well trained and have an excellent track record. They occasionally slay chromatic dragons (to keep the illusion of their legitimacy), but more often than not they slay metallic dragons that are supposedly plaguing settlements by burning crops, stealing cattle, slaying citizens, etc (actions that are often performed by the knights themselves or the church of Tiamat, and it is made to look like the dragon is the culprit). This organisation is loosely and secretly affiliated with the Faerûnian Church of the Dragon Queen.

The Serpent Guards are an order of half dragons (most chromatic) that are fiercely dedicated to Tiamat in her guise as the Dark Lady. This order acts as the military arm of the Untheric church of Tiamat and they guard her temples and deal with her enemies.

The final organisation that could be considered allied with the church of Tiamat is the Cult of the Dragon. Thanks to Alasklerbanbastos, the Church of the Dark Lady and the Cult of the Dragon in the Old Empires region have forged very strong links. They use each others resources (both monetary, and manpower) and have members in both organisations. Alasklerbanbastos heads the Cult of the Dragon cells in the south and maintains the alliance with the Church of the Dark Lady (currently headed by Tiglath).

Unfortunately this alliance has caused a schism within the Cult of the Dragon and those cells in the rest of Faerûn are now staunchly opposed to any influence from religion in general and Tiamat in particular. The schism is beginning to come to a head in the city of Hlondeth where a southern and northern cell of the Cult of the Dragon has been established and they are likely to declare war on each other any day.

## Ryan Rahuba Presents: Shifters - A Racial Description

Shifters, sometimes called "weretouched," originated from a sect of druids whose attunement with nature melded their animal affinity with their very being making it a permanent trait. These druids eventually developed into a race of their own that breeds true. Shifters no longer have the ability to manifest the features of distinct animals, instead gaining more generalized animalistic traits—which they call shifting.

**Personality:** A shifter's personality is greatly influenced by their animal nature. Many can be boorish, brash, or crude while others are quiet and solitary. Even so, most shifters have almost a pack mentality when it comes to kin and clan. Due to their nature, shifters have a predatory edge and tend to think of most activities in terms of hunting and prey. They view survival as a challenge, always striving to be self-reliant, adaptable, and resourceful.

**Physical Description:** Shifters are basically humanoid in shape, but have exceptionally lithe bodies. They often move in a cautious hunting posture and when needed are able to use their hands just as well as their feet. Their features have an animalistic cast with wider, flat noses, larger eyes sometimes with slit pupils, heavy eyebrows, and pointed ears. A thin layer of fur covers their bodies, their legs are shaped like an animal's, and their nails tend to be pointed.

**Relations:** A shifter has a very close, pack-like, bond with other shifters of the same clan and are friendly with other shifters. Their wandering lifestyle leads to few conflicts and rivalries. Though their predatory nature tends to make others subconsciously uncomfortable, for those that get past the initial aversion shifters can be life-long friends. Shifters have even been known to extend their clan bond to include close friends and a husband/wife who isn't a shifter. Among the other races shifters get along best with halflings. The opposite is also true and shifters remember even small slights for a long time and can be life-long and bitter enemies. For their part, shifters have become accustomed to the distrust from other races and do not expect otherwise. However, some shifters try to earn respect and companionship through acts and deeds.

Shifters are never friends with lycanthropes and consider them to be mortal enemies.

**Alignment:** Shifters are usually good aligned but can be either lawful or chaotic. Despite the mistrust from other races, shifters bear them no ill will and will help others if given the opportunity. However, a handful have been known to turn to evil.

These are usually from cities especially if they have known the slaver's lash. These shifters tend to give into the ferocity of their animal side and become closer to lycanthropes in demeanor

**Shifter Lands:** Shifters do not have lands of their own. After being driven from their homeland, they adopted a wandering lifestyle following game trails and seasonal routes. The majority avoid all larger settlements and many smaller ones. They stick to the wilderness where game is plentiful and only occasionally visit frontier settlements for trade. However, since coming into the wider lands of Faerûn they have attracted the attention of slavers in the more unscrupulous lands. This is especially true in Thay where noble houses consider it a mark of status to have a few shifters among their slaves. Today most large cities have small communities of shifter that no longer know anything else.

Shifters from outside the roaming clans often earn their living as trappers, hunters, fishers, trackers, guides and scouts.

**Religion:** Most shifters follow the deities of nature and animals such as Silvanus and Mielikki or follow no particular deity at all and maintain a reverence for nature itself or balance. Those that have embraced their darker nature usually turn to Malar, the Beastlord. Worshippers of other deities are rare among shifters.

**Languages:** Among the other races, shifters speak Common. However, like the dwarves, they also have their own language which they teach to no one and rarely use around others.

**Names:** Shifters have no particular naming conventions and often adopt the names common to the lands they travel through. Surnames tend to be descriptive in nature: Swiftpaw, Lightfoot, Windrunner, etc.

**Adventurers:** The leap from either a roaming life among the clans, or the life of a shifter hunter or trapper is not a large one. Only those that are not far removed from the slave markets have difficult time, but not impossible. Despite this, most shifter make that leap as a result of circumstance. Either a slave escaping a master, a hunter hired by an adventuring company, or a guide job gone south most are shoved into the adventuring life. Those that choose to be adventurers usually do so to either prove themselves beyond the stigma of their kind or to erase that stigma all together.

## Shifter Racial Traits

- Shapechanger Subtype: Shifters are humanoids with the shapechanger subtype. All armor purchased for a shifter PC costs  $1\frac{1}{2}$  times the base price. A shifter must have gear specially made to accommodate the physical changes of shifting
- +2 Dex, -2 Cha: Shifters are lithe and agile but their bestial nature makes others who are unfamiliar wary and uncomfortable
- Size: Medium
- Base Speed: 30 ft
- Minor shapechange: Shifters have more control over their animal side than lycanthropes do. As a result, while not shifting, a shifter can manifest any degree of her animal nature at anytime. He/she cannot alter the appearance of either her human or hybrid form. However they can manifest ears, claws, fur, fangs, etc. These are minor changes only and do not enhance any attributes of the PC. He/she can even appear completely human. As the shifter gets more powerful he/she gets better at these minor changes. As a result Perception check equal to  $10 +$  the shifter's ECL is needed to notice their true nature. In any stressful situation, while appearing human, a shifter must continually succeed in a Concentration check equal to  $10 +$  the shifter's ECL to continue to look human.
- Low-light vision
- +2 Racial Bonus on Acrobatics checks
- Shifting: A shifter can tap into his/her animal nature and manifest more distinct predatory features. At character creation a shifter chooses one trait from the list below. When he/she shifts they gain the bonuses described. Shifting is a move action that provokes attacks of opportunity. When shifted, the shifter automatically changes to their most bestial appearance. While shifted all Diplomacy checks increase by 5 and the attitude of any NPC who witnesses the change for the first time decreases one step.
- Automatic Languages: Common and Shifter. Bonus Languages: Elven, Gnome, Halfling, and Sylvan
- Favored Class: Ranger or Druid

## Shifter Traits

Each shifter chooses one trait at creation. Once chosen, this cannot be changed.

**Beasthide:** While shifting a beasthide shifter gains a +2 bonus to Constitution and a +2 natural armor bonus to AC.

**Wildhunt:** A wildhunt shifter gains a +2 bonus to Constitution and +2 bonus to Perception and Survival checks. The bonus to Survival lingers even while the shifter is not shifting. They also gain the scent ability. This allows the shifter to detect approaching enemies, sniff out hidden foes, and track by sense of smell. A wildhunt shifter can identify familiar odors like a human recognizes a familiar sight.

A wildhunt shifter can detect opponents within 30 feet by smell. This range doubles to 60 ft if the opponent is upwind and halves to 15 ft if the opponent is downwind. Strong scents such as smoke or rotting debris can be detected at twice these distance and overpowering scents such as skunk musk or troglodyte stench can be detected at triple the range. These stronger scents tend to block out all other smells and can be used to confuse and hinder the shifter. If such smells are present, the shifter must succeed in a DC 20 Survival check for strong scents and a DC 25 check for overpowering scents to detect any other scents.

When a scent is detected its exact location is not known, only its presence within range. The shifter can take a move action to determine the direction. If the shifter comes within 5 feet of the source he/she immediately knows the location.

While shifting the wildhunt shifter who has the Track feat can follow tracks by smell, making Survival checks to find and follow the trail. The DC for a fresh trail is 10 (regardless of surface). This increases or decreases depending on how strong the odor is, number of creature making the odor and age of the trail. For each hour the trail goes cold the DC increases by 2. This ability otherwise follows the same rules for the Track feat. Shifters tracking by scent ignore effects of surface conditions and poor visibility.

**\*Longtooth:** A longtooth shifter gains +2 bonus to Strength and grows fangs that can be used as a natural weapon dealing, upon a successful bite attack, 1d6 damage plus  $1\frac{1}{2}$  times the PC's STR modifier. This can be used as a secondary attack at a -5 penalty while wielding a weapon.

**\*Razorclaw:** A razorclaw shifter gains a +2 bonus to Strength and grows claws that can be used as natural weapons. These claws deal 1d4 plus  $1\frac{1}{2}$  times the PC's STR

modifier. The shifter can attack with one claw as a standard action or with two claws as a full round action (as a primary natural weapon). The shifter can also attack with one claw as a light off-hand weapon while wielding a weapon in her/his primary hand. This attack is made at a -2 penalty.

**Cliffwalk:** A cliffwalk shifter gains a +2 bonus to Dexterity and has a climb speed of 20 ft

**Longstride:** A longstride shifter gains a +2 bonus to Dexterity and a +10 bonus to the base speed

\*- If a feat or ability allows a shifter to have both the longtooth and razorclaw trait, the claws become the shifter's primary natural weapon while the bite becomes the secondary natural weapon.

## **Alternate Dimensions Presents: Damara - Higenzi the Witch**

Higenzi was a withered old crone of apparent Nar descent that wandered the land of Narfell before arriving in the land that would be Damara.

Up to that point in time nothing is known for certain about Higenzi the Witch. The lack of reliable written history (or any written history) among the Nar tribes makes it difficult to track down who Higenzi might have been.

Given the superstitious nature of the Nar it is unlikely they would have welcomed her within their society, and that may have contributed to her arrival in Damara.

### **Higenzi's Lair**

Between the years of 1075 DR and 1319 DR, Higenzi lived in the royal palace in Helgabal (with a brief period of absence). Her official quarters were spartan and situated in the far western wing in an isolated tower that soared high above the rest of the palace.

Higenzi was busy during the several hundred years she lived in Damara. Present at the design and construction of Bloodfeather Palace, she ensured innumerable secret passageways and hidey-holes were built into the structure (for the king's protections supposedly), a few of which are only now being discovered.

Higenzi even managed to implement the construction of an entire sub level of the castle hidden between the ground floor and the first floor (where the king and his family lived). From here, if hunched over, one could be privy to the entire goings on in the palace by using Higenzi's spy holes.

This sub level of the castle was Higenzi's primary residence and was home to many secret chambers (not all of which have been discovered). Here Higenzi tortured her victims, practised her witchcraft and kept the Bloodfeathers dynasty under her control. The only means of access to this sub-level ever located was a secret shaft hidden in her private quarters that descended all the way down to the sub level. This shaft has since been discovered and filled in by the royal family, but there may be other unknown entrances.

### **Deeds of Higenzi**

As far as history is concerned, Higenzi the Witch's life began late in 1074 DR when she wandered out of Narfell and into the settlement of Ravensburg. There she

demonstrated her power at the gates of the Bloodfeather estate and earned herself an audience with Feldrin Bloodfeathers.

Shortly after that meeting, Feldrin began using all his financial resources (acquired from what he spirited away from his Sembian holdings during his exile, and the ill-gotten gains of a pirate career on the Sea of Fallen Stars) to hire mercenaries and gain the support of nearby land holders to build an army necessary to forge himself a kingdom.

In the summer of 1075 DR, Feldrin Bloodfeathers and his army, supported by the magics of Higenzi the Witch, marched on the Nar occupied lands in the north and western areas of what would become Damara. In a two day long rout, in which the Nar tribes speak of hosts of demons and skeletal warriors marching the land, Feldrin Bloodfeathers seized the land of Damara and created a kingdom for himself and his dynasty.

His first act was to reward those that had supported him, by ennobling them and giving them lands in the new kingdom of Damara (it also ensured a steady stream of taxes and the loyalty of his new nobility). King Feldrin I then needed to secure his newly won kingdom.

Under the advice of Higenzi, Feldrin ordered the creation of a set of regalia to symbolise this new land. Also under the witch's advice he sent forth a large military expedition into the mountain pass in the Galena Mountains to secure it from the monsters. There miners discovered valuable gemstones in abundance that were named Bloodstones in honour of the king.

With the birth of Feldrin's sons and the land grants to these royal sires, the kingdom of Damara and the Bloodfeathers dynasty looked safe for the future.

Higenzi despite her already withered form and apparently advanced age managed to survive throughout the years of all the Damaran kings all the way to King Virdin I of Damara.

Ever she remained in the shadows, advising the kings and steering the destiny of Damara towards her own, unknown purposes.

Her most noted act was the rescue of King Veldrin I of Damara and its armies in the year 1171 DR when the forces of Impiltur and Damara marched upon the demon hordes of the marilith queen Vaasa in the land of Vaasa. Despite the united forces of

Impiltur and Damara, they could not stop the savagery and destruction of the demons. Slowly the forces of good began to succumb to pain and fear as the demons kept on coming.

It was in this hour of darkness that thousands of orcish slaves (predominantly half orcs) appeared behind the demon hordes and tore into the generals leading the horde. This act allowed the allied forces time to rally and the counter attack broke the demon horde lines and slew the generals (although Vaas was not seen at the end). For this aid Higenzi was allowed (reluctantly by the king) to return to court in Damara.

Higenzi's popularity among the kings waxed and waned as time passed. The early kings of Damara relied heavily on her advice, but the goodly king Veldrin I of Damara grew suspicious of her motives and exiled her from court. His death ushered in a new era of dominance for Higenzi who effectively ruled Damara through her puppet and mind-slave king Veldrin III of Damara, also known as Veldrin the Immortal who died at the impossibly ancient age of 124 years old.

After Veldrin III's death in 1319 DR, Higenzi's duplicitous nature was exposed and she fled Damara never to be heard from again.

### **Higenzi's Magic**

Higenzi was an accomplished witch, and had many powers at her disposal. Her spellcraft was integral to the formation of the kingdom of Damara as it was her magic that played on the superstitions of the Nar and forced their retreat so easily. She also contributed directly to the creation of the royal regalia of Damara.

Higenzi's preferred means of operation appeared to be in misdirection and distraction. She was excellent at creating disguises which allowed her to walk unseen among the courtiers at Bloodfeather Palace. Her knowledge of poisons was unrivalled and may have contributed directly to the death of several kings of Damara. Her design of Bloodfeather Palace also allowed her to monitor goings on inside the castle without ever casting a spell.

**Higenzi's Staff:** This obsidian staff never left Higenzi's side. Often used as a walking stick it was also the focus of Higenzi's power, and through it she worked powerful magics capable of disguising thousands of people in one go.

It was whispered that anyone touching the staff other than Higenzi would be instantly slain, or worse become enslaved to her will. However since no one other than

Higenzi has ever been witnessed touching the staff there are no accounts to corroborate this.

**The Kings Cap:** This elaborate helmet resembles an ornate helm with pointed face plate lifted straight from a suit of plate armour. It was created along with the other items of Damara's regalia at the request of Feldrin Bloodfeathers by craftsmen from Impiltur and enchanted by a mage resident in Impiltur at the time.

Unbeknownst to Feldrin, the mage that enchanted the items was slain shortly after being contracted by Feldrin for the work. Higenzi then set about enchanting the items to Feldrins requirements as well as adding a few of her own touches to the magic.

The Bloodfeather Helm grants the wearer the ability to lead and inspire his troops with much greater fervour than his personality would otherwise allow. As a special gift from Higenzi it also weakens the wearer's will and makes them more susceptible to charm spells as well as allowing Higenzi to know where the helm (and therefore the wearer) is at all times. Higenzi can even see through the visor of the helm if she should so wish.

**Bloodfeather Cup:** This gold chalice is ringed around the base and the lip with precious bloodstones. Like the other items of Damara's regalia it was enchanted and cursed by Higenzi.

In accordance with Feldrin's instructions, any liquid poured into the cup is purified of all diseases, poisons, and impurities. It also banishes all such substances and effects from the body of the imbiber should they already be suffering.

Higenzi added to the cup the ability to generate any liquid substance in the cup on command (that includes poisons). The cup instantly fills with whatever substance the speaker had in mind at the time; since this liquid is not poured into the cup it is not purified.

**Princering:** This ring is actually an earring with the first bloodstone mined in Damara mounted in it. This simple ring was enchanted to grant the recipient luck in whatever task he performed. It was typically given to the male heir of the Bloodfeathers line at an early age.

Higenzi added to this ring the ability to communicate telepathically with the wearer. Using this ring she drove at least one king of Damara insane with paranoia, and made another king completely incapable of independent thought.

### **Higenzi's Allies**

At one time Higenzi counted the entirety of Damara as her allies. Through the king of Damara she had access to, and often times controlled the entire nation.

Higenzi also had a good relationship with the half orcs of Vaasa. It was her actions that united the slaves of Vaas and allowed the armies of Impiltur and Damara to drive the demon hordes from Vaasa.

For that she was welcomed back to the court of Damara, and she earned a special place among the orc and half orc tribes of Vaasa, becoming an almost legendary figure in their oral histories.

### **Higenzi's Enemies**

Higenzi's origins and any enemies she had from that time are unknown. Her machinations in the kingdom of Damara earned her the enmity of the Bloodfeathers dynasty, and she in return likely seeks revenge on those who wronged her.

### **Higenzi's Fate**

After her evil was discovered in 1319 DR, Higenzi fled Damara and disappeared from history altogether. What happened to her is unknown; perhaps she met an ignoble and thoroughly deserved end at the hands of monsters or bandits while she made her escape. It is possible, given her unnaturally long life that Higenzi yet lives and plots her revenge upon Damara and the Bloodfeathers line.

## When is a House Rule Not a House Rule: Skills

Now that the skill system has been made a subset of the feat system the skill modifiers are much lower and should never reach scores of 300+. The skills themselves have also been altered, merging some, duplicating others, so that a character has a choice of much fewer skills but can do more with the skills he has.

Synergy modifiers are not cumulative and do not stack with other synergy modifiers. You can only receive the effect once from any skill. However you receive a +2 synergy bonus on the noted skill if you have the Skill Training feat for a skill, this synergy bonus increases to +4 if you have the Skill Specialisation feat, this synergy bonus increases to +6 if you have the Skill Mastery feat.

Therefore here is the first of the new skills: Acrobatics.

### **ACROBATICS (Dex, Armour Check Penalty)**

This skill encompasses a number of acrobatic movements including high jump, climbing, tumbling and balancing. Any action that requires or can be performed with an acrobatic flare should be included in this skill.

**Synergy** - If you are trained in Acrobatics, you receive an extra +1 dodge bonus to AC when fighting defensively.

If you are trained in Acrobatics, you receive an extra +2 dodge bonus to AC when using the total defence action.

If you are trained in Acrobatics, you receive a +2 bonus on Athletics checks.

If you are trained in Acrobatics, you receive a +2 bonus on Thievery checks.

If you are trained in Acrobatics you receive a +2 bonus on Stealth checks.

### **Balance (Dex)**

**Check:** You can move along a precarious surface with a move action. Success means you move successfully. If Trained then failure by 4 or less means you waste the move action and do not move, failure by 5 or more means you fall. If Untrained then failure means you fall off.

Each move action requires you to make another balance check so you can take a double move to walk balance across a surface but you require 2 Acrobatics checks.

Running across at 4 or 5 times your speed requires 4 or 5 checks depending upon what

multiple of your movement speed you are allowed. You may only run while Balancing if you are moving at your full speed (with the appropriate +10 DC modifier).

If you are attacked and damaged while balancing on a precarious surface then you must make another Acrobatics check against a DC equal to the damage sustained.

Narrow Surface	DC
7-12 inches wide	10
2-6 inches wide	15
1-2 inches wide	20
1 inch wide or less	30
Hair thin	40
Liquid or any other surface incapable of supporting his weight	50
Cloud	60

Narrow Surface Modifiers	DC Modifier
Lightly obstructed (scree, light rubble)	+2
Severely obstructed (natural cavern floor, dense rubble)	+5
Lightly slippery (wet floor)	+2
Severely slippery (ice sheet)	+5
Sloped or angled	+2

Movement Modifiers	DC Modifier
Move at $\frac{1}{4}$ speed	-5
Move at $\frac{1}{2}$ speed	+0

Move at full speed	+10
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**Action:** An Acrobatics check to Balance is made as part of a move action.

**Try Again:** Yes as long as you don't fall off.

**Take Ten:** Yes if not distracted or threatened.

**Special:** You are considered flat footed while balancing. If you are Trained in Acrobatics then you are not considered flat footed while balancing

### **Escape Restraint (Dex)**

**Check:** You can escape from various restraints and methods used to bind you in place.

If you succeed in your check you escape your restraints. If you are Trained and fail you may retry your escape attempt. If you are Untrained and fail you entangle yourself further increasing the DC of your next escape attempt by +2, this modifier is cumulative and in this way you can entangle yourself beyond all hope of escape if you continually fail.

Restraint Type	DC
Rope	Opposed Thievery +10
Manacles	Depending on type
Net	20
Spell	20 + spell level

Escape Modifier	DC
Escape in 5 rounds	+10
Escape in 1 round	+30

**Action:** An Acrobatics check to Escape Restraints normally takes 1 minute (10 rounds).

**Try Again:** Yes you can keep retrying every minute.

**Take Ten:** Yes if not distracted or threatened.

**Special:** You are considered Flat Footed while Escaping Restraints. Performing this action provokes attacks of opportunity.

### Resist Combat Manoeuvre (Dex)

**Check:** You can use your Acrobatics skill in place of your CMD check to resist a grapple or a trip attempt. Your Acrobatics check is opposed by your opponents CMB check.

If you succeed on your check you successfully resist being grappled or tripped and do not suffer the consequences of the action. If you are Trained and fail then you are grappled or tripped. If you are Untrained and fail then you are grappled or tripped and take 1 point of non-lethal damage as you injure yourself.

**Try Again:** No. If you fail the check you suffer the consequences of being grappled or tripped.

**Take Ten:** No

**Special:** This check can be used to escape a pin or grapple as well in which case it is opposed by the opponent's CMD check instead of CMB (since you are instigating the manoeuvre).

### Squeeze (Dex)

**Check:** You can squeeze through tight spaces up to 10ft in length (as part of one movement action) that would not normally allow you to pass. For each 10 ft of distance travelled through you must make another Acrobatics check. Failure on subsequent checks can be fatal if not enough space is available for you to normally exist in such a space. If the space is Restricted, or Tight then you suffer 1d6 damage. If the space is Extremely Tight or smaller then you suffer 10d6 damage from being crushed while within the object. If you survive such damage then you may continue to Squeeze through the gap using the Acrobatics skill.

If you succeed then you pass through the gap without issue. If you are Trained and fail then you may retry again later. If you are Untrained and fail then you suffer 1 point of non-lethal damage as you injure yourself.

You may make up to two Squeeze attempts as part of your movement (for two movement actions). If you end your movement or fail an attempt while still within a gap that is Restricted or smaller then you suffer damage as above (including the 1 point of non lethal damage if you are Untrained and fail).

If you are making Squeeze checks every round (with the +30 DC modifier) then your movement is continuous and you are not considered trapped within the gap until you fail a check. In this manner you can Squeeze through tiny gaps over great distances for as long as you make successful checks.

Space	DC
Restricted (Torso will not fit sideways into space)	20
Tight (Head only fits into space)	30
Extremely Tight (Fist only fits into space)	50
Miniscule (Finger only fits into space)	60
None (a solid wall with no visible means of entry)	80
Impermeable (a completely air tight surface like a wall of force)	100

Other Modifier	DC
Squeeze in 5 rounds	+10
Squeeze in 1 round	+30
Retain Dexterity bonus to AC and not considered Flat Footed while squeezing	+20

**Action:** An Acrobatics check to Squeeze through a tight space normally requires 1 minute of work (10 rounds).

**Try Again:** You can retry freely to squeeze through a tight space.

**Take Ten:** Yes if not distracted or threatened.

**Special:** Performing this action provokes attacks of opportunity. You are considered Flat Footed while squeezing unless stated otherwise.

## High Jump (Dex)

**Check:** You can jump up to a height determined by your Acrobatics skill check.

Your Acrobatics check is modified by your speed. If your speed is 30 feet, then no modifier based on speed applies to the check. If your speed is less than 30 feet, you take a -6 penalty for every 10 feet of speed less than 30 feet. If your speed is greater than 30 feet, you gain a +4 bonus for every 10 feet beyond 30 feet.

Most jumps require that you get a running start, requiring you to move at least 20 feet in a straight line before attempting the jump. If you do not get a running start of at least 20ft, the DC for the jump is doubled.

Distance moved by jumping is counted against your normal maximum movement in a round but you may exceed your movement speed. When performing a high jump you travel horizontally a distance equal to  $\frac{1}{4}$  the check result (the check result being the height jumped in feet). You may if you wish elect to jump straight up in which case you do not travel horizontally.

If you are trained in Acrobatics and you succeed on an Acrobatics check, you land on your feet (when appropriate). If you attempt an Acrobatics check untrained, you land prone unless you beat the DC by 5 or more.

The DC is equal to 4x the height needed to be cleared.

If you jumped up to grab something, a successful check indicates that you reached the desired height and grab onto it. You may then use the Climb action to pull yourself up.

If you are Trained and fail then you land either on the square you originated if jumping straight up, or at a distance of  $\frac{1}{4}$  your check result if travelling while jumping, when you land you land standing up. If you are Untrained and fail then you always land prone.

Obviously, the difficulty of reaching a given height varies according to the size of the character or creature. The maximum vertical reach for an average creature of a given size is shown below.

Creature Size	Vertical Reach
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Colossal	128 feet
Gargantuan	64 feet
Huge	32 feet
Large	16 feet
Medium	8 feet
Small	4 feet
Tiny	2 feet
Diminutive	1 feet
Fine	$\frac{1}{2}$ feet

Quadruped creatures don't have the same vertical reach as a bipedal creature; treat them as being one size category smaller.

**Action:** An Acrobatics check to perform a jump is part of a move action.

**Try Again:** Yes on subsequent rounds if still able.

**Take Ten:** Yes if not distracted or threatened.

**Special:** Performing this action provokes attacks of opportunity as normal for moving through an enemies threatened square. You are considered flat footed while jumping. If you are Trained in Acrobatics then you are not considered flat footed while jumping.

### Tumbling (Dex)

**Check:** You can move at half your speed as a move action without provoking attacks of opportunity from opponents. The base DC for this check is 15.

Success means you can move through an opponent's space without incurring attacks of opportunity from that opponent or opponents.

If you are Trained in Acrobatics and fail your check you can decide not to perform the action and remain in the last space you occupied before you made the tumbling

check (if your space is currently occupied because you were tumbling multiple times then return to the last unoccupied space you moved from).

If you are Untrained in Acrobatics and fail your check you must stop the move action at the point you failed the check and you incur attacks of opportunity from adjacent opponents.

Surface Modifier	DC
Lightly obstructed (scree, light rubble, shallow bog, undergrowth)	+2
Severely obstructed (natural cavern floor, dense rubble, dense undergrowth)	+5
Lightly slippery (wet floor)	+2
Severely slippery (ice sheet)	+5
Sloped or angled	+2

Other Modifier	DC
Move at full movement speed while tumbling	+10
For each opponent's threatened square you pass through	+2
Tumbling through a square occupied by an opponent	+2
Move at running (x4) speed while tumbling	+20

**Action:** An Acrobatics check to tumble through an opponents space is part of a move action.

**Try Again:** No

**Take Ten:** No

### Hop Up/Down (Dex)

**Check:** You can jump up onto or down from an object as tall as your waist; such as a table or small boulder. The base DC for this check is 10. You do not need a running

start to perform this check so the DC is not doubled if you are not running.

If you do move more than 10 ft before performing this action then you receive a +2 modifier on your check.

Performing a Hop Up/Down uses up 5ft of movement.

If you succeed on the check you successfully hop onto or off of the object.

If you are Trained and fail you can choose to fall prone on the object in question or not perform the manoeuvre at all and continue with your move action (note you may not perform another Hop Up/Down and you still use up 5ft of movement from the Hop Up/Down Action).

If you are Untrained and fail you fall prone in the square you started attempting to Hop Up/Down action and your entire movement is wasted for this turn.

**Action:** An Acrobatics check to perform a Hop Up/Down is part of a move action.

**Try Again:** No

**Special:** Performing this action provokes attacks of opportunity as normal for moving through an opponent's threatened square. You are considered flat footed while Hopping Up/Down. If you are Trained in Acrobatics then you are not considered flat footed while Hopping Up/Down.

### **Safe Fall (Dex)**

**Action:** Any time you fall you can perform an Acrobatics check during that fall to reduce the fall damage incurred.

The base DC for this check is 15 and it reduces your fall damage by 10ft. For each additional 15 points of your Acrobatics check you reduce the fall damage by a further 10ft (so a check of 30 reduces fall damage by 20ft).

If you succeed on this check then treat the fall as if it were an appropriate distance shorter.

If you are Trained and fail then you do not reduce falling damage.

If you are Untrained and fail then you land badly and increase the damage incurred from the fall by an additional +1d6 damage.

**Action:** An Acrobatics check to fall safely is a free action made as part of a fall,

alternatively if the fall was intentional as part of a jump then this action is part of the move action to jump down.

**Try Again:** No

**Take Ten:** No

### Climbing (Dex)

**Check:** You can move up, down, or across a slope, wall, or some other steep incline (including a ceiling) at  $\frac{1}{4}$  your normal speed.

A slope is classified as any incline at an angle measuring less than 60 degrees; a wall is any incline at an angle measuring 60 degrees or more.

Success on the check means you successfully move across the surface as far as your movement allowance provides for.

If you are Trained in Acrobatics then failure by 4 or less means you remain in the square you started to climb and your movement is wasted. If you are Trained in Acrobatics and fail by 5 or more then you fall from the square you began your climb in for that movement.

If you are Untrained and fail then you fall.

A creature with a climb speed can move its climb speed with a successful check.

A creature with a climb speed automatically succeeds on any climb check with a DC of 0 or less.

A creature with a climb speed can choose to take 10 on the check even if threatened or distracted.

Whilst climbing you lose your Dexterity bonus to AC and are considered flat footed.

The DC of the check depends on the conditions of the climb.

If you fail the check and fall you may attempt to catch yourself by rolling another check immediately against the Wall's base DC with a +20 modifier. If you succeed you drop 10ft and catch yourself on the surface where your move action ends.

Acrobatics DC	Surface
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0	A slope too steep to walk up, or a knotted rope with a wall to brace against
5	A rope with a wall to brace against, or a knotted rope, or a rope affected by the <i>rope trick</i> spell
10	A surface with ledges to hold on to and stand on, such as a very tough wall or a ship's rigging
15	Any surface with adequate handholds and footholds (natural or artificial), such as a very rough natural rock surface or a tree, or an unknotted rope, or pulling yourself up when dangling by your hands
20	An uneven surface with some narrow handholds and footholds, such as a typical wall in a dungeon or ruins
25	A rough surface, such as a natural rock wall or a brick wall
30	An overhang or ceiling with handholds but no footholds
40	A perfectly smooth, flat, vertical surface
50	A perfectly smooth, flat, overhang or ceiling

Other Modifier	DC
Move at $\frac{1}{2}$ movement speed	+5
Move at full movement speed	+10
Retain Dexterity bonus to AC and are not considered flat footed while climbing	+20
Catch yourself when falling	+20

**Action:** An Acrobatics check to climb a surface is made as part of a move action.

**Try Again:** Yes unless you fall off.

**Take Ten:** Yes if not distracted or threatened.

**Special:** This action provokes attacks of opportunity. Note that characters already climbing are considered flat footed (unless they succeed on the appropriate Acrobatics check) and therefore may not make attacks of opportunity. You are considered Flat Footed when Climbing unless stated otherwise.

### **Free Stand (Dex)**

**Check:** You can stand from a prone position as a free action (instead of a move action) with an Acrobatics check. The based DC is 35.

Success means you stand as a free action and can continue to take a move and standard action as normal.

If you are Trained and fail then you may not stand as a free action but you are otherwise free to take your turn as normal (including standing as a move action).

If you are Untrained and fail then you waste a move action and remain prone in your square. You may still use your remaining action (if you have any) to stand as a move action.

You may only make one Free Stand attempt per round.

<b>Other Modifier</b>	<b>DC</b>
Free stand without provoking attacks of opportunity	+20

**Action:** An Acrobatics check to perform a Free Stand as a free action is a free action.

**Try Again:** Yes on your next turn.

**Take Ten:** Yes if not distracted or threatened.

**Special:** This action provokes attacks of opportunity unless you succeed on the check to do so without provoking attacks of opportunity which makes the DC significantly more difficult. You are considered flat footed while Free Standing. If you are Trained in Acrobatics then you are not considered flat footed while Free Standing.

### **Pull Up (Dex)**

**Check:** You may as a move action pull yourself up onto anything you can grab hold of

with both your hands providing it can support your weight (such as a ledge, a branch, a roof).

The base DC is 15.

If you succeed then you pull yourself up.

If you are Trained and fail by 4 or less then you remain where you are and your move action is wasted. If you are Trained and fail by 5 or more then you fall.

If you are Untrained and fail then you fall.

**Action:** An Acrobatics check to pull yourself up is a move action.

**Try Again:** Yes unless you fail.

**Take Ten:** Yes if not distracted or threatened.

**Special:** This action provokes attacks of opportunity. You are considered flat footed while Pulling Up. If you are Trained in Acrobatics then you are not considered flat footed while Pulling Up.

### **Rappel (Dex)**

**Check:** You may as a move action travel down (and only down) any type of surface at base land speed using a rope. This action requires a base DC of 10.

Taking multiple move actions requires multiple checks at DC 10.

If you succeed then you may move up to your base land speed in any downwards direction on the surface.

If you are Trained and fail then your movement action is wasted and you remain in the square where you started your rappel.

If you are Untrained and fail by 4 or less then your movement is wasted and you remain in the square where you started your rappel. If you are Untrained and fail by 5 or more then you let go of the rope and fall.

**Action:** An Acrobatics check to rappel down a surface is part of a move action or multiple move actions.

**Try Again:** Yes unless you fail.

**Take Ten:** Yes if not distracted or threatened.

**Special:** You are considered Flat Footed while rappelling. Performing this action provokes attacks of opportunity. If you are Trained in Acrobatics then you are not considered Flat Footed while rappelling.

## Deities With a Difference: Bahamut

King of Good Dragons, Lord of the North Wind, the Platinum Dragon, Justice Maker  
Lesser Power of Celestia and Heliopolis (LG)

**Portfolio:** Good Dragons, Metallic Dragons, Wisdom, Enlightened Justice

Bahamut is the epitome of all that is good and true about dragons and the shining representation of metallic dragons. He is in all ways the very antithesis of Tiamat which may give some clue as to his origin

### **History**

Since records began, the dragons Tiamat and Bahamut have been at war for the fate of dragon-kind. At some point in antiquity these powerful beings became divine beings and the conflict turned into a holy war. However, the memories of dragons are long and they eventually tired of the continuous conflict that threatened to destroy their race. Worship of Tiamat and Bahamut dwindled, rendering both gods demi-powers and shadows of their former glory.

Bahamut received his first taste of human worship when, during a conflict known as the Orcgate Wars, a human god named Marduk of the Mulan people bequeathed part of his power to Bahamut with his last breath and bid him continue the battle against Tiamat.

The Tiamat that Marduk referred to was a Mulan goddess who often took the form of a three headed dragon, not the Tiamat that Bahamut had battled for so long. Nevertheless Bahamut kept his promise and continued the fight in Marduk's name until Gilgeam, ruler of the Untheric pantheon, gradually destroyed or drove away his worshippers in the Old Empires.

By a bizarre twist of fate, Tiamat the Dragon Queen also subsumed the power and worship of the Mulan goddess Tiamat, known as The Dark Lady, and so the Dragonfall War the two creatures began millennia ago has entered a new phase, bolstered by the worship of humans.

### **Relationships**

Bahamut is a draconic god and a member of the Faerûnian pantheon at the same time thanks to his efforts in expanding his church to accommodate a significant proportion of human members.

He is on excellent terms with both Tyr and Oghma and both have approached him in the past to consider his pledging allegiance to their cause (making one of them his superior).

Such a move would give him more allies and greater access to resources in his war with Tiamat, but at present he prefers the freedom to pursue his own goals (such as combating Tiamat and her church, wherever they exist).

### **Avatars**

Bahamut has only one avatar, that of the Platinum Dragon. This enormous dragon has the hue of a silver dragon but his body is elongated and thin like a gold dragon. His physical strength is exceeded only among dragon-kind by Tiamat herself, and his spellcasting abilities are second to none.

Bahamut always maintains an avatar on Toril, typically roaming the mountain ranges in the far north of Faerûn, accompanied by his "court"; seven gold dragons of great wyrm age. From his palace "The North Wind" (an old storm giant floating castle that he acquired long ago), Bahamut monitors the whole of Faerûn planning his battle strategy against Tiamat and her forces.

### **Relics**

Bahamut is known to have created only one relic during his deific existence.

**The Tree Gem:** This small white gem was formed from the heart of Zhengyi's wand and may indeed have been the final remains of Zhengyi's phylactery. When planted in Damara this gem quickly grew into a tall white tree that supposedly banished all evil extra planar beings from the Bloodstone Lands forever.

This information is false, and has been perpetuated deliberately by Bahamut and his church and by the rulers of Damara and their allies.

The Tree Gem acted as nothing more than an incredibly powerful banishing spell (which was all the power that Bahamut could muster). The spell effect extended outwards in a circle covering large portions of Damara and Vaasa. Almost all demons and devils (in fact, it affected all outsiders within the area of effect) were banished back to their home plane. Only the most powerful outsiders and those trapped within demon-cysts remained.

The lingering effects of the Tree Gem are purely psychological. Only the casters of strong mind can overcome their own belief that the Tree Gem will prevent their summoning of evil outsiders. Such fear causes mistakes and so the casting usually fails unless such a person can master themselves.

The Tree Gem however is not entirely useless. At least once approximately every 100 years it will produce a seed (the tree will then wither and die). This seed resembles a small white gem, and if planted will manifest in another powerful banishing effect centred on the newly sprouted tree.

### **The Church of Bahamut**

The Church of Bahamut is a loose organisation that is spread out across Faerûn. The church maintains no temples (except the Palace of the North Wind), and very little in the way of hierarchy or structure.

The High Priest of the Church of Bahamut is known by his title "The King of Justice" who lives in "The North Wind" and takes orders only from Bahamut himself, but is largely autonomous (Bahamut only intervenes in times of great peril so is used primarily as a source of knowledge and wisdom).

The King of Justice gives his orders to his vassal lords (usually metallic dragons of great age and ability) that oversee large areas within the boundaries of Faerûn and who organise their own groups of lower ranking priests and agents to carry out the orders given to them. These areas usually coincide with the territory claimed by the dragon lord (although this is not true for humans that rise to this level within the church). In this way the Church of Bahamut acts like many of the secret organisations that are so prevalent throughout Faerûn.

When not following orders the priests of Bahamut roam the lands of Faerûn (within the broad sphere of influence of their superior, which could include the entire Western Heartlands for instance) aiding the weak, recruiting new followers to Bahamut's glory, and keeping an eye out for Tiamat and her agents.

Communication between priests and the church lords varies according to the individuals, but these lords are usually ancient dragons with incredible spellcasting ability and the powers of flight and shape-shifting as well, so incognito communication is unlikely to be a significant barrier.

The Church of Bahamut is not particularly large (numbering only a few hundred members in all of Faerûn. It is split equally between dragons and humanoids (although dragons includes half dragons and dragonborn), but the dragons in Bahamut's church hold the majority of powerful positions (only 1 lord is known to be a humanoid).

During the Rage of Dragons many metallic dragons sought aid from the Church of Bahamut to protect them from the unusual, untimely and seemingly unending Dracorage. Those that did seek aid were given protection while they entered a magically induced slumber. Those that did not seek aid from the church had to find their own means to cope with the Dracorage.

Given the ancient war between Tiamat and Bahamut that was a major contribution to the dwindling number of dragons in Faerûn, it is surprising that so many metallic dragons turned to Bahamut's church for aid. In gratitude for the promise the church kept to these dragons, many of them have begun worshipping the Platinum Dragon once more.

**Allies:** The church of Bahamut has only one order affiliated with it. When situations are beyond the power of the priesthood to deal with (usually when it involves the forces of Tiamat) then the church calls upon the Talons of Justice.

The Talons of Justice are an order of paladins that also happen to be metallic dragons. Such beings of power fiercely dedicated to the cause of good are intimidating opponents and an exceptionally useful tool in the Church of Bahamut's arsenal, one that it uses sparingly for exceptional circumstances only.

## The Bloodstone Lands Adventure Path: Episode 2

After clearing out the Bloodstone Mines the party should have discovered (if they managed to open the lock) a letter revealing that someone deliberately orchestrated the attack on the mines.

Gareth Dragonsbane believes some sort of conspiracy is working against Damara and they should all try to find the source else Damara will surely fall. He requests the party accompany him to Baron Tranth in Bloodstone Village and deliver the letter into his hands so he can see for himself what transpired in the mines.

### **NPCs**

**Baron Tranth (LG hm Aristocrat 2/ Fighter 1):** The aging Baron Tranth is a member of the Bloodfeathers dynasty of Damara. Related to the brother of King Veldrin II of Damara, Baron Tranth and his children have a claim on the throne should the current King Virdin die without issue.

Baron Tranth is loyal and steadfast to the crown of Damara and would only press his claim to preserve the kingdom. He is deeply worried for the safety of his people and especially his daughter Christine. The troubles with Vaasa threaten to sweep away the Bloodstone Barony and Baron Tranth wonders if he should not send his daughter away to Impiltur for protection.

He is wearing Half Plate armour and wields a +1 longsword that has belonged to his family for generations.

**The Baron's Guard (LN hm Warrior 1):** These guards are wearing chain-mail and carrying longswords and heavy steel shields. They are loyal to their lord and would never willingly betray such a kind and honourable man.

### **Overview**

The journey from the mines back to Bloodstone Village should take half a day and be uneventful. By the time the party arrive in the town it should be approaching evening time.

**Bloodstone Village (Town, 3,000):** The settlement of Bloodstone Village has fallen on hard times. Once a thriving trade town of Damara, it used to house a population in excess of 7,000 people and almost all trade between the Moonsea region and Damara passed through it.

Since the war with Vaasa the trade has completely dried up, caravans can no longer get through Vaasa's untamed wilderness and Zhengyi's forces raid anything passing through its borders. The annual raids by the forces of the Witch King have also badly affected the town and those that didn't leave when the trade dried up soon fled the marauding orcs and worse that came each winter.

The only reason to remain in Bloodstone Village was to mine Bloodstone gems from the mines or provide services for the miners and their families. As a result the population has dwindled dramatically. Only a third of all housing in town is occupied and of that third, half are empty for 6 months of the year as the miners go to work.

The services in Bloodstone Village are almost non-existent. There are a few pubs (once empty houses that now sell moonshine), a single inn (an old warehouse now converted), and a bare minimum of trading posts (most of them will only trade rather than take cash). The residents are poor and defeatist in attitude but stubborn in their refusal to submit. They know Vaasa will conquer and kill them one day but they will stay nonetheless.

The town is surrounded by a wall of tree-trunks, sawn to the size of a man and driven into the frozen ground with a platform nailed atop it. In the centre of town is the Baron's Keep which is little more than four stone walls, a thick oak door and a stone house inside.

### **Audience with the Baron**

Obtaining an audience with Baron Tranth is not difficult. The Keep is guarded by a total of 5 guards, two men the main door, and everyone is so bored that they will gladly admit anyone that requests it just for something to do.

Upon reading the letter and listening to the party's account of events at the mine, the Baron agrees with Gareth Dragonsbane, someone or someones are conspiring against Damara. The Bloodstone gems are the last major source of revenue for Damara and are crucial to the war effort against Vaasa. The Bloodstone Mines are the only place in Damara to mine those gems. Whoever targeted the mines knew exactly what they were doing and when to strike so it would be an easy target.

Baron Tranth begins urging the party to travel to Helgabal with this information and inform the king. However he is cut off when one of his guards comes rushing into the audience chamber and announces Bloodstone Village is under attack. The dead are

walking again and pouring out of the graveyard into the streets.

The Baron requests the party aid him in rescuing the town and dealing with the undead threat directly. He and three of his guards will accompany the party and he will allow them to borrow from his armoury which contains longswords heavy wooden shields and chain-mail suits.

### **The Church**

The church grounds lie mostly inside the walls of Bloodstone Village (some of the graves from before the war lie outside the walls), the church is dedicated to Ilmater and around the church grounds are almost 300 sq ft in area with the church at the centre and the rest of the land used as a graveyard.

**The Graveyard:** The graveyard itself occupies most of the church grounds and is a mixture of old graves in the centre near the church and new graves towards the edge (the abandoned houses were knocked down and those killed during the war with Vaasa are buried inside the walls). The graveyard itself is surrounded by a small wooden fence that could barely keep rabbits out.

Every 10 rounds there is a 50% chance that 1-3 zombies and 1-3 skeletons will be encountered. They are all unarmed and unarmoured and in various states of decay.

If the encounter percentage rolled is a multiple of 10 (10, 20, 30, 40, 50) then the undead encountered claw their way out of the ground, attempting to grapple the party members as they pass over the graves. The guards are grappled first and any remaining undead will grapple the party members (chosen at random).

If a grappled target escapes the grapple then the undead creature claws its way out of the ground on the following round (full round action) and starts attacking the party as normal. Undead creatures cannot be attacked while they are under the ground.

**The Church:** The church itself resembles a real life church with a large set of sturdy wooden double doors and coloured glass windows around the outside of the building. At one end of the church is a tower with a bell and steeple.

The great double doors on the outside of the church are locked and barred from the inside (DC 20 open lock, Hardness 5, Hit Points 20, Break DC 23). Continue with the encounter percentage check for every 10 rounds the party remain outside the church building.

To gain entry the party will need to break down the door (because it is barred from the inside) but they might waste time unlocking it first. Alternatively they could shatter a window (Hardness 1, Hit Points 2, Break DC 5). Or they could try climbing the tower and gaining access through the stairs that lead to the Chancel below (Climb DC 20).

**The Nave:** Once inside the church they are greeted to the signs of mayhem that lead to the undead infestation of the church. The priest's new assistant (transferred from Helgabal) was a secret worshipper of Orcus carrying a single use magic item with a powerful animate dead spell. Once he unleashed the spell the assistant set about slaughtering the priest and the 10 worshippers that had barricaded themselves inside the church.

The benches in the aisles have been smashed and lie barricaded against the windows and doors. Body parts from the 10 worshippers are strewn about the Nave as they were shredded by the assistant in sacrifice to his god.

The hands and feet of these victims are now animated as a crawling claw swarm that attacks the party within 5 rounds of them entering the church.

**The Chancel:** This section of the church contains stair leading up to the bell tower, a door leading to the vestry, and the altar where the priest led his congregation in worship.

The altar is a simple white stone plinth with a metal bowl atop it. The altar is now desecrated with skulls placed around the edge of the altar. The priest lies sprawled backwards over the altar with his throat cut, his mouth stuffed with the flesh of his slaughtered congregation and his blood drained into the bowl beneath his head.

If no one attempts to consecrate the altar or perform holy rituals over the remains then within 5 minutes the priest will turn into a ghoul and attack any living being nearby. The priest carries 2 potions of healing and a vial of holy water on his person as well as a gold ring worth 48 gp.

**The Vestry:** Barricaded inside the Vestry is the apprentice of this church Silase Wrent; a fine upstanding young man of excellent character according to all in town. Unknown to them he was secretly a worshipper of Orcus who had been instructed to insinuate himself into the town and at the appropriate moment unleash hell.

The door to the Vestry is locked (Hardness 5, Hit Points 15, Break DC 18, Open Lock

15). Silase has the only key and it is in the room with him.

Silase is a level 1 priest with Strength 16, Wisdom 14, and he is armed with chain-mail, a bastard sword (wielded two handed) and an obsidian orb the size of a fist (worth 5 gp) that once contained a single use of an enhanced animate dead spell (but has now been cast).

Silase will fight to the death because he knows he will be welcomed to undeath by Orcus for his loyal service. If he should be captured alive then he will reveal (under torture only) that he was sent here by the leader of his cell. They used to congregate in Helgabal's graveyard wearing black masks to preserve their identities, he never saw his face.

### **The Aftermath**

Following the battle at the church, Gareth Dragonsbane sets about cleansing the site and eradicating the undead.

Baron Tranth requests the party return with him to his keep so they can discuss what should be done next. It is clear to the Baron that there is a conspiracy in Damara; the party should keep their eyes and ears out for any signs of strange activity.

When the party reach the Keep the doors are open and the two remaining guards are slaughtered. Even worse the Baron's daughter; Christine, is missing and a note is left on her bed asking for a ransom to be delivered to the old Sleeping Bear Inn on the far side of town.

The Baron implores the party to deliver the ransom and try to find out who has his daughter and if possible return her safely to him.

## **Alternate Dimensions Presents: Damara – Order of Fallen Princes**

When you commit a cardinal sin against your deity how do you atone for those sins if no one will give you a chance to redeem yourself.

This order of former divine servants (and some redeemed ones) is just such a place where the formerly favoured seek to atone for past crimes and regain that which was lost.

### **History of the Order of Fallen Princes**

In 1150 DR a paladin of Ilmater was forced to slay his own father in order to protect a nation of people from years of pain and suffering. That this paladin was a prince and his father the King of Damara is not important, what is important is that he sacrificed his honour, reputation, and virtue that others might live.

Feldrin Bloodfeathers was to be the third King of Damara and the third to bear that name. After his crime he was moved in the line of succession and his name was considered bad luck; no other Bloodfeathers king would be named Feldrin because of this.

Feldrin was exiled from Damara and ordered not to return or face the risk of execution. For many years he wandered the Bloodstone Lands helping those in need while seeking to atone for his crime.

When his paladinhood was not restored, despite many years of penance, he realised that only through an act equally virtuous and exceptional as his crime was abhorrent and evil, could he regain his honour. It was likely that such an act would mean his death.

It was in 1160 DR that with secret aid from his brother King Veldrin I of Damara that he set up an order of fallen divine servants like himself that dedicated their lives to atoning for their crimes and regaining the favour of their god.

In the Badlands of Impiltur he had constructed the headquarters of this order, called the Hall of Broken Oaths, and the ranks of the order began to steadily grow with those cast out from their former religions.

At first a secular order of knights (primarily former paladins), it soon became affiliated with numerous churches as members of the order regained their status when they atoned for their crimes (if they survived). The first test of this order

came in 1169 DR when Rilaun of Impiltur caused civil war in Impiltur by pressing his claim to the throne.

The Order of Fallen Princes by then several hundred members strong were among the first to lend their aid to Queen Ilmara, and the order was present at every major engagement against the forces of Rilaun. They suffered heavy casualties, but enough survived to rejoin their previous churches.

Then in 1171 DR, the grandmaster of the order, Feldrin the Exile, perished in battle against the marilith Queen Vaas and her 66 strong royal guard of demonic orcs. In that confrontation Feldrin was said to be surrounded by a glowing nimbus of light and every blow he struck split apart his foe with golden rays. Despite slaughtering the royal guard, Feldrin and his fellow knights could not beat Vaas, her six blades plunged into the body of the redeemed paladin tearing him asunder.

From that day onwards the Order of Fallen Princes has been primarily dedicated to Ilmater and his ideals.

### **Organisation**

The leader of the order is known as the Exiled Prince. He is served by a number of Fallen Crusaders (depending on the size of the order) who are elected by the Redeemed. The Fallen Crusaders are in charge of the rank and file of the order who may be of any class or former class as long as they are of good or neutral alignment and have at least one level in a divine class which they are barred from because of their actions.

The Redeemed are those members of the order that have regained use of their divine class by atoning for their crimes. They are no longer part of the hierarchy of the order and need not take a direct role in engagements (although most still do). Many have returned to their former lives but some remain in the Hall of Broken Oaths as advisors and mentors to other fallen. Those present in the Hall also form the Council of Redeemed which approves the propositions of the Exiled Prince and also votes for the next Exiled Prince (should the current one die or be redeemed).

**Members:** 31 as of 1363 DR (The Order of Fallen Princes suffered heavy casualties in the war with Zhengyi and Vaasa).

**Hierarchy:** Strict, militaristic

**Leader:** The Exiled Prince (Fallodric Demster, direct descendant of Feldrin the Exile)

**Religions:** Any good or neutral. Typically Tyr, Torm, Ilmater, Helm

**Alignment:** Any good, any neutral

**Secrecy:** None

**Symbol:** An upright sword impaling a red heart shape.

### **Hierarchy**

The hierarchy of the order is very strict. Advancement can only occur through appointment by your superiors (The Exiled Prince, Fallen Crusaders, or the Redeemed). All rank and file members of the order are treated exactly the same with no preference or favouritism.

**The Exiled Prince:** This title is given to the grandmaster of the Order of Fallen Princes. He oversees the running of the Hall of Broken Oaths and is the order's representative to the outside world.

While he does not approve the individual missions of the knights of the order, he is consulted on particularly dangerous missions, and it is only the Exiled Prince who can call all members to war (or a similar mission that requires all members to be involved), although even this action must be approved by the Council of Redeemed.

Fallodric Demster (LG hm Pal 7): The current Exiled Prince has held the post since 1357 DR when the last holder was slain in battle at the Ford of Goliad. Fallodric is a direct descendant from Feldrin the Exile himself.

Fallodric is also the only member to have stood on the Council of Redeemed before becoming the Exiled Prince. Fallodric is an infected werewolf and is seeking atonement a second time for his latest crimes (which resulted in the death of an entire hamlet while he was in werewolf form).

He longs for a cause that is worthy enough and that will require his death so that he may be freed from the curse of lycanthropy and atone for his sins.

However he recognises the order is in dire need of rebuilding following the war with Zhengyi and needs a stable leadership for many years to guide it through the next few years. As such he has resigned himself to the fact that his redeeming act may never come and he will die serving the order without atonement.

## **Motivation and Goals**

Every knight of the order wishes to redeem themselves in the eyes of their former god. They listen far and wide for news of righteous causes that they can embark upon, many wait in the Hall of Broken Oaths for people arriving requesting the aid of a number of knights of the order.

The rest of the time is spent in training and meditation as they seek to better their skills and understand their crimes and punishment.

## **Recruiting**

Anyone arriving at the Hall of Broken Oaths may request entry into the order. Such applicants are reviewed by the Council of Redeemed who assess whether they are of pure heart and if they truly seek atonement for their crimes (usually such assessment is performed with magical aid).

If their application is successful then they are given a room at the Hall and full access to the facilities (training room, armoury, kitchen, etc).

## **Equipment**

The Hall of Broken Oaths has its own armoury and treasury, usually filled with the equipment and gold of former members that died seeking redemption.

Any member of the order can apply to access such equipment. Any application must be approved by a Fallen Crusader or a member of the Council (or more rarely the Exiled Prince himself).

The equipment is given for free and for life but typically it is returned when the knight no longer has need of it and or has finished his quest.

All knights are required to engrave the emblem of the order onto their armour, helmet, or shield.

**The Sword of Sacrifice:** This sword is the blade that plunged into the heart of Feldrin II on the steps of Bloodfeather Palace in Damara. In that moment the grief of Feldrin the Exile forged a bond between himself and the sword that manifested itself in the ability it now possesses.

It was left at the steps by Feldrin and remained behind when he went into exile. When he returned at the head of Impiltur's armies to fight the demon hordes of Queen Vaas, King Veldrin I of Damara returned the sword to his brother. Since

Feldrin's death it has remained in the vaults of the Hall of Broken Oaths waiting for a quest worthy of it.

It is a +2 longsword that can use the wielders own hit points to increase the amount of damage dealt to its foes. Such extra damage is non lethal to the target (unless the target is evil in which case it is lethal damage and the extra damage is doubled).

## Laerakond: The Barrier Mountains

Back in the mists of time when Abeir-Toril was one world, the Barrier Mountains served as a barrier between the lands of the primordials and the lands of the gods (and their children).

The primordials were the first to exist on the planet and they were all powerful. These super beings were spewed from the womb of the planet for unknown reasons and they wandered the land as rulers of all.

The first of these beings were simple in form composed of single elements and although incredibly powerful, their intelligence was little better than the animals of today for they were driven by instinct and a need to procreate.

From these titans of the dawning of the world there came other primordial beings, children if they can be called that, who were the mingled forms and powers of their parents. In this way the planet gradually became more and more populated by more complex beings that gradually evolved some form of intelligence.

It was these complex beings that created the first lesser races. The process of this creation is not known but the outcome was a number of mortal creatures that resembled their creators. These creator races quickly spread across the face of Abeir-Toril, for their size meant they were largely ignored by the primordials.

Shortly after the birth of the Creator Races came the first gods. Primordials elevated to another level of existence by the awe and worship of the beings they created. Among the very first of the gods were the primordials Selûne and Shar, who continued their never ending war over the nature of existence in the heavens above.

This war quickly expanded to encompass the Creator Races on one side and the primordials on the other. And so the battle lines were drawn and most of the primordials withdrew behind the Barrier Mountains to Laerakond, leaving the lesser races and their gods to hold Faerûn.

Rumours spread among the lesser races that behind the mountains at the edge of the world exists a land where the gods walk, and to enter it was to become a god yourself. Of course with the separation of Abeir and Toril most people nowadays assume this land exists beyond the Spine of the World Mountains.

It was the Batrachi that first sought to take power from the primordials. Their empire had grown so great and their gods so powerful that they thought they were all

powerful. They crossed the Barrier Mountains and there stumbled upon one of the first, a Dawn Titan named Omo. The titanic being of fire and earth crushed the impudent emperor beneath his gigantic foot without even noticing he was there, and so sparked a war that nearly destroyed the planet.

This war culminated in the Batrachi using their magic to coerce one of the greatest beings ever known to aid their cause. In the darkness around Abeir-Toril they lived a gigantic dragon (although dragons were unknown at that time) named Asgorth. The Batrachi ordered him to destroy the primordials that were marching over their empire.

Asgorth was angered but obeyed his masters by attempting to destroy the primordials and the impudent mortals that commanded him in one fell swoop. Taking a huge ice moon nearby he blasted it at Abeir-Toril with his mighty breath in order to devastate the planet and everything on it. Only Ao's intervention saved Abeir and Toril.

When the Tearfall occurred, the continents of Laerakond and Faerûn were separated into different planet in different dimensions for eons. The Barrier Mountains on the far eastern edge of Laerakond, became the home of the orcs that had escaped the rule of the Dragon Overlords of Laerakond and took refuge in one of the few places gigantic flying reptiles could not enter; underground.

Here the orcs delved deep and created vast networks of subterranean caves, a whole society of their own away from the dragons that dominated the surface. That is until they discovered the slumbering form of a primordial so dangerous that his kin had long ago thrust him deep into the earth to trap him. This being the orcs called Kraal, after the orc word for disease.

Foolishly, using rituals designed to draw power from others; the orcs channelled Kraal and suffered the consequences. At first nothing untoward appeared to happen, the orcs gained the benefits of new powers from binding Kraal such as increased strength and size when invoked.

Over time the bodies of these orcs began to experience abnormal growths that quickly spread throughout the body, mutating them into unrecognisable masses of tissue. The other orcs quickly killed their "infected" brethren only to discover that the growths spread by touch and many of them were infected in the combat. Within a

year almost the entire population of orcs were mutated and the survivors were forced to collapse their caverns atop the ever expanding blob of tissue.

Those few that remained fled back to the surface where they established a small village; Choedd on the northern coast of the Barrier Mountains, here they eke out a living as fishermen and they are careful never to mine the rocks for fear of what they may uncover.

**The Kraaleckt:** Kraaleckt is the word given by the orcs to those infected with Kraal's growths. Anyone touching a Kraaleckt must make a DC 15 Fortitude save or become infected themselves.

The first stage of infection manifests in a +2 bonus to Strength and Constitution, but a -2 penalty to Wisdom and Charisma. These bonuses and penalties increase by 2 every month until the infected being runs out of Charisma and or Wisdom.

As the infection progresses growths begin to appear on the surface of the body, small lumps and strangely coloured tissues at first. In the later stages additional; but malformed, limbs or heads protrude from odd places.

Once the Charisma or Wisdom score reaches zero then the Kraaleckt is now an extension of Kraal and seeks only to spread himself to others (attacking and infecting anything it can find).

If the Kraaleckt is unable to find any living organism to infect for 10 days then it folds itself into a foetal position (as best as its mutated form is able) and exudes a substance that hardens into an outer shell so that it no resembles a gigantic nauseatingly multi coloured onion. In this form it can withstand substantial forces of heat, cold, pressure, and physical damage (DR and ER 20).

If multiple Kraaleckts are in proximity they can meld their forms together to create a grotesque mass of misshapen bodies. Each creature melding together increases the Strength and Constitution of the base creature by +2. Every four Kraaleckts of the same size melding together increases the size of the base creature by 1 category.

When the orcs collapsed their home beneath the Barrier Mountains thousands of these "pods" survived the crushing rocks, or were safe in the central settlement. They now remain there waiting for foolish beings to wander nearby and awaken them.

It is rumoured that Kraaleckts have been spotted the size of giants but the orcs do not write of such things (if they write at all).

## Rulesword: Trimming 3rd Edition One Step at a Time

Step three of simplifying 3rd edition is inspired by the Star Wars roleplaying game (by West End Games). Multiple attacks in any edition is always problematic and 3rd edition in particular takes this mechanic to a new level of problems. A 10th level rogue with 2 weapons and numerous feats in multi weapon fighting is difficult enough, but a marilith with the multi weapon fighting feat and a few class levels requires a PHD graduate in order to accurately determine what the attack modifier should be.

So the third suggestion is:

**3. Multiple Attacks (Without a super computer):** Every additional attack after the first incurs a cumulative -2 penalty.

Now if you have been following previous suggestions you will find that attack bonuses are now at a premium. A character is unlikely to have an attack bonus beyond +12 even with a +5 sword and 20 Strength unless he devotes a number of feats to melee attacks.

Performing a second attack as part of a full round action would take a high level character with a +12 attack bonus to a +10 attack bonus on both rolls. For a first level character who is unlikely to have an attack bonus above +4 will almost never want to make an extra attack unless he is fighting an anaemic, unarmoured opponent.

All these extra attacks are with your primary weapon. Having multiple weapons only allows one extra attack with that weapon and still incurs the cumulative -2 penalty (feats of course allow multiple attacks with off hand weapons and they also incur the cumulative -2 penalty). In this way having multiple weapons is more of a flavour option than a special add-on to the mechanic.

The only limit on the number of additional attacks being made is an assessment of the likelihood you will hit. You are sacrificing accuracy for increased number of attacks and depending upon your opponent(s) depends on whether it is efficient to have multiple attacks and how many to have.

**House Rule 1:** One issue with this mechanic comes when encountering monsters with natural attacks. Natural attacks are typical unenchanted and to force a lion to incur a -2 penalty on 2 claw attacks is excessive. Therefore by allowing the penalty to only be incurred from a natural attack when different attack methods are used, it evens the

imbalance caused. For instance a creature with 2 claws and a bite incurs no cumulative penalty by making 2 claw attacks as part of a full attack action (the claws are one attack method), but if it were to make 2 claws and a bite attack then all three attack rolls would suffer a -2 penalty because it is using 2 attack methods (claw and bite).

**House Rule 2:** Consider allowing magic users the same functionality as melee and ranged attacks by using a full attack action. If a spell has a casting time of 1 standard action and the magic user has the same spell memorised or available multiple times, then using a full attack action the caster can cast the same spell multiple times but incurring a cumulative -2 penalty on all attack rolls. Of course this house rule assumes you followed suggestion number 2 "Attack, Attack, Attack".

**House Rule 3:** Assuming you followed Suggestion number 2 and everything is now an attack, consider allowing spells to function as an off hand weapon for dual/multi weapon fighting. Since spells are now similar to melee attacks and require only one free hand to cast, if a spell has a casting time of 1 standard action then there is no reason why it cannot be used as an off hand attack in the same way as a second weapon.

Of course such a feat of skill would require special training and if you are using the pathfinder classes then such an ability is already available to the Magus class in the form of the spell combat ability. By making this ability a feat, any magic user could wield a spell and a weapon at the same time, the Magus class would of course gain the feat for free at the appropriate level.

If you use House Rule 2 from this article then you could in theory make the spell attack the main weapon and the melee weapon could be the off hand attack.

Of course casting a spell still provokes opportunity attacks and so any spell wielder wishing to use this ability will open themselves to significant danger.

In the next article I will address the unnecessary bloat of AC bonuses now that we have removed the level based progression of attack and save bonuses.

## Alternate Dimensions Presents: Damara - The Bloodfeathers Lineage

**Feldrin I (N hm Expert 5/Rogue 3):** Born ?. Died 1096 DR. Ruled 1175 - 1096 DR.

This third son of the Bloodfeathers noble house of Sembia spent much of his young life sailing the Sea of Fallen Stars as captain of a pirate ship.

His exposure in Sembia meant he had to flee into exile and he took with him a large portion of the family's treasury as well as his own ill gotten gains from years of piracy. A wealthy man even in exile, he fled to ancient family holdings in the far north east, in a land that was just emerging from millennia of being covered by the Great Glacier.

In this frontier land he set himself up as a petty king; the ruler of several settlements from his family estate in Ravensburg; which he purchased outright from the previous Bloodfeathers owner. He would have been content to live his life in exile as Lord Bloodfeathers, but fate and a persuasive old Nar witch had other ideas.

Higenzi the Witch arrived at the Bloodfeathers estate in 1074 DR and whispered in Feldrin's ear of power, and wealth, and kingship. Following her advice he forged the kingdom of Damara and proclaimed himself king.

Feldrin ruled with a careful hand, making sure to keep his nobles in check and secure his throne for future generations. Upon his death in 1095 DR against the hobgoblin hordes of Naratyr, the throne passed to his son Feldrin II.

**Feldrin II (N hm Fighter 4):** Born 1180 DR. Died 1150 DR. Ruled 1096 - 1150 DR.

Feldrin II was a warrior king and a true leader of men. When he spoke everyone listened, and he had the full support of his nobles. Unfortunately he was not as careful with his kingdom as his father was and he rewarded his nobles too much for their efforts.

He personally led many expeditions into Vaasa against the creatures that lurked therein, a tradition that continued for many generations, he did much to protect Bloodstone Pass by dealing with the monster population in the surrounding lands.

As he grew older he acquired injuries from his expeditions that left him bound to Bloodfeather Palace. Isolated from the hobbies he once enjoyed and bored with courtly life, he became bitter, paranoid, and stubborn.

When Impiltur began amassing forces on Damara's borders, Feldrin II would listen to no one and became certain that they were preparing for war against him (despite repeated Impilturan ambassadors attempting to convince him otherwise).

Feldrin II went so far as to completely sever all contact with Impiltur (despite the objections of his children) and the rest of the world, convinced everyone was against him, he isolated himself in the palace with only Higenzi to advise him.

When an elderly and obviously insane Feldrin II marshalled the armies of Damara to invade Impiltur in 1150 DR, it fell to his children to deal with the monarch. The paladin son Feldrin took it upon himself to end the war before it began and so he marched up the steps of Bloodfeather Palace, fought off the Royal Guard single handed and lovingly embraced his father before stabbing him through the heart.

**Feldrin the Exile (LG hm Paladin 9/ Knight 4):** Born 1108 DR. Died 1171 DR.

Whilst Feldrin, son of Feldrin II, was never crowned king of Damara, he is not excluded from the lineage of Bloodfeathers because of his actions and holds a proud place in the family history.

In 1150 DR his elderly and insane father attempted to declare war on Impiltur. Feldrin and his brother agreed that to save the people of Damara and Impiltur from much suffering their father had to die. Feldrin had no desire to be king and was the more physically capable of the two brothers so he volunteered for the task.

Marching up the steps of Bloodfeather Palace, he reluctantly fought and disabled no less than ten members of the Royal Guard before he embraced his wild eyed father. Then taking his sword he thrust it through the king's heart and held him as he passed on.

His younger brother Veldrin I was crowned king and Feldrin was exiled, but Feldrin remained in line to the throne should Veldrin die without issue; such was the gratitude that Damara felt towards its exiled prince.

A paladin of Ilmater who modelled himself after the Heltharn dynasty of Impiltur, Feldrin wandered the lands seeking atonement for his crimes. He created the Order of Fallen Princes; a knightly order containing only those divine servants who had fallen from grace and sought atonement for their actions through the order (typically by sacrificing themselves for the greater good).

He spent much of his later life in Impiltur, attempting to repair the damage done to relations between Impiltur and Damara by his father. He also did his best to help his younger brother King Veldrin I, even though they would not meet again until his death.

He was a personal advisor of Queen Ilmara for many years, and was instrumental in helping her retain Impiltur for her son as well as persuading Ilmara to aid Damara against the marilith Vaas.

In 1171 DR, after the civil war in Impiltur had ended, Feldrin led the armies of Impiltur into Vaasa alongside his brother Veldrin. There they fought against Vaas and her demon hordes. Feldrin regained his honour and his paladinhood that day before he was slain in personal combat against Vaas and her guard.

**Veldrin I (LG hm Aristocrat 6):** Born 1113 DR. Died 1175 DR. Ruled 1150 -1175 DR.

Veldrin was a true and noble person like his elder brother Feldrin, but unlike his brother, Veldrin was not blessed with a good physique or health and so he devoted his life to doing good by using his power wisely.

As a young man he and his brother spent many a year roaming Vaasa and slaying monsters (although Feldrin did most of the slaying). Both brothers never trusted Higenzi, the court advisor to the king, and deliberately made themselves absent from court whenever they could.

When the brothers were forced to slay Feldrin II, Veldrin's first act as king (after reluctantly exiling his brother) was to remove Higenzi from court and bar her entry to the palace although it was whispered she still managed to bypass this ban. Higenzi disappeared from Damara for many years.

Unfortunately Veldrin's reign was marked by some of the worst troubles to strike Damara in its history (with the exception of Zhengyi). First there came orc raiders from Vaasa through the Bloodstone Pass that pillaged much of northern Damara. Had Veldrin been gifted with the power of prophesy he might have realised this was a sign of things to come for the orcs were merely fleeing a greater enemy that was conquering Vaasa and enslaving the orcs.

In an effort to counter the orcs, Veldrin claimed Vaasa and declared it open to settlement by any that could hold the land (a claim Damara still maintains to this day). Thousands of settlers flocked to Vaasa, eager to claim land and become rich. This

scheme appeared to work, settlements were quickly formed and the monsters appeared to lessen in that frontier land.

Then one month in 1154 DR, the entire population of Vaasa disappeared and were never heard from again. Subsequent scouting expeditions into Vaasa revealed nothing until demonic ambassadors from Queen Vaas delivered the heads of the scouts (all 100 of them) to the court of Damara on giant platters, and declared Vaasa off limits to everyone.

Annual raids by twisted creatures from Vaasa plagued King Veldrin I's lands and gradually weakened Damara. Desperate for allies he begged Impiltur for help and asked his brother Feldrin to aid him in gaining the trust of Queen Ilmara. For many years servants of holy orders from Impiltur operated out of Damara to aid the beleaguered land.

Victory finally came in 1171 DR, when Impiltur sent the bulk of its army (with Feldrin as the commanding general) to Damara's aid, and together (with the pivotal arrival of reinforcements from orcish slaves organised by Higenzi) the forces of good triumphed.

Higenzi earned her place in Damaran society once again during her actions against Queen Vaas. The orcish slaves she emancipated from Vaas' lands were pivotal in breaking the back of the demon hordes and allowing the forces of good to gain victory that day. All the nobles of Damara wanted her back in the palace (for many felt that it was the absence of her guiding hand that led to the troubles in the first place). King Veldrin I was not in as strong position as previous kings had been (thanks to his father) and so had to obey the will of his vassals or risk rebellion.

Higenzi returned to Damara, and Veldrin took to wandering his lands again. On one such foray he encountered a severely wounded gold dragon in its lair. He ordered his knights to guard the creature until it was recovered and he personally tended to its wounds. For his actions the dragon rewarded him with the Boon of Bahamut that would guard his blood against the taint of evil.

However Veldrin's health soon declined and he died after falling from a horse while crossing a stream during one of his wilderness expeditions.

**Veldrin II (LG hm Paladin 2):** Born 1135 DR. Died 1175 DR. Ruled 1175 DR.

Veldrin II ruled Damara for only two days after the death of his father when he suddenly choked to death in a tragic accident (supposedly).

His life was unexceptional, as was his death, but he was undoubtedly a man of pure heart and true deeds.

His marriage to the great grand niece of Imphras the great produced one son who would rule longer than any other king of Damara.

**Veldrin III "The Immortal" (LG hm):** Born 1172 DR. Died 1319 DR. Ruled 1175 -1319 DR.

Veldrin III, known as Veldrin the Immortal because of his incredibly long life, was essentially a blank slate.

Those conversing with the king noted an ever-blank expression and an almost complete lack of independence. Every action, every decision, every word was dictated to him by his advisor and regent Higenzi the Witch. Some at court considered him shy, others incapable.

Despite this, Veldrin III's rule of Damara was wise and just. The land and people prospered, and Vaasa was tamed and settled.

After more than a century of life in 1281 DR, the still young looking Veldrin III took a wife (a commoner from Helgabal) and sired a son Beldrinar. This would be his and Higenzi's undoing, for Beldrinar grew up to be a jealous and spoiled individual who coveted his father's title.

Thus in 1319 DR, Beldrinar and a cabal of 20 mages blanketed Bloodfeather Palace with a series of overlapping anti-magic zones. The king withered to dust in an instant and a scream echoed throughout the palace from places unknown.

A thorough search revealed an entrance to a hidden sublevel of the palace where the screaming form of Higenzi was discovered. As Beldrinar tried to slay her she regained her senses and fled the palace and was never heard from again.

Beldrinar for his troubles was convicted of treason by the nobles of Damara and sentenced to death by exile in northern Vaasa; naked and unarmed. It is not known if he survived and his son Viridin I became king of Damara.

**Viridin I:** Born 1309 DR. Died 1357 DR. Ruled 1319 - 1357 DR.

King Viridin the first was the last Bloodfeather king of Damara, slain by Zhengyi the Witch King's forces at the ford of Goliad.

This plunged the country of Damara into anarchy for well over a decade as the nobles of Damara sought to conquer or side with Zhengyi and decide who would be the new king of Damara.

## The Knights Below: Adventure Path - Episode 3

**Overview:** The party are now several days travel inside the borders of the High Forest, with all the dangers that go with it.

They have already encountered a band of orcs and will soon learn why people avoid this forest.

**The Environment:** As a forest, every square counts as difficult terrain and grants concealed because of the undergrowth. Perception distance is limited to 140 ft and any line of effect (including melee) that passes through part of a tree grants cover to the defending character.

Combat starts from 140 ft away, since that is the maximum visible range in this area of the forest. The orcs and each party member should make Perception checks (the orcs are actively using stealth related skills since they are hunting food so the PC Perception related checks are opposed by the orc's Stealth related check) until one group spots the other.

Whichever group spotted the other first may act in the surprise round when combat begins.

**The Enemy:** At a random point during their journey, the party will encounter a hunting party of orcs from the Axebiter clan. The group is 6 strong and is composed of typical Mountain Orcs (use average stats for a Mountain Orc) with 1 level of fighter. They are wearing leather armour and armed with a battleaxe and 5 throwing axes.

All the weapons and armour are crudely made or poorly maintained items stolen from other races, and they have the fragile property.

The orcs are not expecting, nor prepared for a fight and so will begin combat by hurling throwing axes as they close to melee range. Once two orcs are slain the rest will withdraw from combat and run away as fast as they can.

**Aftermath:** There are a number of possible outcomes for this combat, the worst ending in the death of the party. If any orc survives the combat and is not captured or slain while he retreats then he makes his way back to his encampment (5 hours away) and a larger hunting party are dispatched (with 2 more orcs than there are party members - including NPCs).

If any orcs escape, Hawkeye suggests the party travel as fast as they are able because the orcs will be hunting them now.

The orcs are led by an orc versed in tracking and wilderness lore and have been boosted by the shaman with spells such as expeditious retreat and bull's endurance which enable them to reach the party's last known position within 8 hours of the combat.

The orcs are able to walk at 3 miles/hour and will force march for as long as they are able (DC 10 + 2 per extra hour marched over 8 hours or incur 1d6 non lethal damage and become fatigued). Should the orcs catch the PCs then combat will begin as normal.

All orcs carry only 1d3 copper pieces.

After 2 days travel the party arrive at the elven settlement Hawkeye is travelling to. If Hawkeye dies then the party must spend 3 days travelling (the extra day is spent wandering around in the general direction before an elf finds them).

## The Knights Below: Campaign Journal

*We were not more than 4 hours from the tree tomb when we decided to spend our first night sleeping under the boughs of the High Forest.*

*Hawkeye demanded we set up a watch rota with 2 people on guard at all times. We were all warned to keep our eyes and ears open, "for many foul beasts made their home in this once great forest".*

*Thankfully the first night sleeping was uneventful; except for the thundering noises coming from Crag at irregular intervals. After a light breakfast, with Chadwick talking to Hawkeye about his people and why he left and now returned, we set off in a south-easterly direction.*

*Barely an hour passed before Hawkeye motioned for us all to remain still and silent. Unfortunately Crag didn't appear to get the message and when he loudly enquired "What the hells for?" the answer was given by a number of throwing axes whizzing past our heads, hurled by the orc hunting party we had stumbled across.*

*The brief battle began with the fighters charging towards the orcs and dodging more axes while Hawkeye, Wystan and Tallyn hurled spells and missile weapons back. After four of the orcs fell to the ground within a few seconds the remaining two fled in opposing directions into the forest.*

*Crag went sprinting after one while Hawkeye ordered Wystan, and Mikhail and Markus to shoot the other and make sure none survived or they would bring many more to hunt us.*

*When Crag finally wandered back to the group with blood all over his sword and a huge grin on his face we knew we were safe, from the orcs at least.*

*Another 8 hours travel and we were at the elf clan holding, although it didn't look any different from the rest of the forest, until you looked up.*

## Credits

Deities With a Difference: Tiamat	G.Dallison
Ryan Rahuba Presents: Shifters - A Racial Description	R.Rahuba
Alternate Dimensions Presents: Damara - Higenzi the Witch	G.Dallison
When is a House Rule Not a House Rule: Skills	G.Dallison
Deities With a Difference: Bahamut	G.Dallison
The Bloodstone Lands: Adventure Path: Episode 2	G.Dallison
Alternate Dimensions Presents: Damara - Order of Fallen Princes	G.Dallison
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The Knights Below: Adventure Path - Episode 3	G.Dallison
The Knights Below: Campaign Journal	G.Dallison
Special thanks to Sam Evans, Kenneth Fabacher, and Ryan Rahuba for proof reading and idea development.	

## **Final Word**

Just to note that this is in no way to be considered canon material; it is a fan-made representation of different versions of the Forgotten Realms. It uses some canon information as a base but may remove some pieces of the Realms, alter others, and add many homebrew ideas to develop it further.