So saith Ed

Responses to questions and Realmslore requests
By Ed Greenwood on the Candlekeep Forums

Part 23

Jul - Sep 2009

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On 1 July, 2009 THO said:- Hi, all.
Menelvagor, that's one of Troy's passages. Ed was facing heart surgery at the time that book was being written, so in case he "went" early, he wrote the death of Azoun scene first, then worked his way backwards through the book (he and Troy having divided up the chapters). In general, if you have Tanalasta onstage, or Vangerdahast onstage outside of Suzail, you're in Troy's hands.
Back at the time just post-publication of the book, we went through in detail "who'd written what." (Each collaboration Ed has done has happened in a different way, because Ed wants to try every sort of method, and so always wants his collaborator - - Jeff Grubb or Rob King or Troy or Elaine Cunningham - - to "do" the collaboration the way they're most comfortable, and Ed will go along with whatever they prefer, so they're happiest and we get the best resulting writing, and so Ed has the fun of potentially doing it differently every time.
love,
THO

[...]

Hi, all.
Menelvagor, Ed was in total agreement with Troy (they did each read each other's chapters, and Troy asked Ed to do a "light overwrite" to catch anything that didn't "sound like the Realms" [meaning dialogue or detail that was just wrong; as I recall, Ed didn't find anything that he felt was "wrong enough" to justify monkeying with another writer's storytelling]).
The agreement was hardly surprising; Troy and Ed were, after all, both game designers who worked a lot on and with D&D (Troy on staff, Ed as freelancer), and the DM misuse and player abuse of wishes was one of the "hot problems" of the game at the time. For one thing, any novel writer, faced with a book in which a beloved monarch dies or a kingdom is faced by a great monstrous foe, has to dispose of the "so why doesn't someone solve/prevent the whole thing with a properly-worded wish spell?" (and leave us with no book full of derring-do) conundrum.
love,
THO

[...]

Acck! I turn my back to do some Canada Day security work, only to see "litter-ah-choo-er" discussions breaking out behind me.
"Ed Greenwood: Guilty of Literature?"
Reminds me of Terry's face, when someone started reading out his (real) version of that (spun from Terry's by me) book title while interviewing him: a little pleased, a little amused, and a little despairing.
Oh, nooooo! (And so forth.)
Just let Ed write the next dozen Realms things first, okay? Don't distract him with this; look at all the unanswered lore questions we have here at the Keep for him to dig through!
love,
THO

*****

On 2 July, 2009 THO said:- Hi again, all.
Blueblade, Ed has just responded to your latest question, which I sent him moments after you posted it; here's his reply:

Hi! What you term "overview literary criticism" has a relatively narrow readership in the Realms; it IS primarily read by sages, Oghmanite and Deneiran clergy, printers and book collectors. The sole exception is colorful ranting, which is sometimes read by a wider audience for the sheer

entertainment value of the insults, invective, and sarcasm (which can be adopted by local minstrels, actors, and wits). So in Waterdeep and other large cities, "rant chapbooks" are popular (on all sorts of topics, not just literary crit). In market stalls and city bookshops, secondhand crit chapbooks and slim tomes can often be found (Athkatla, Silverymoon, Neverwinter, Waterdeep, and Selgaunt are known to have particularly good selections on offer, at any time; many wealthy patrons buy books, read them, have hired scribes write out their own copies of the juicy passages they'll want to re-read often, then resell the books to recoup as much as possible of the scribe's fee and the initial purchase price of the book), but peddlers seldom have them unless they've "struck rich" by buying the entire library of a deceased hermit or villager for a song, and are now selling it all off, item by item, as they travel on.

So saith Ed. Who is hard at work writing yet more "official" Realmslore for us all.
love,
THO

*****

On 3 July, 2009 THO said:- Hi again, all.
Aysen and Zandilar, Ed hath responded to your Scarlet Mummers queries:

Hi. Well, if you're looking at the Realms on or after the Year of the Ageless One, I think the Scarlet Mummers might still exist as a sort of self-interested secret society/violent power group, but NOT as a "holy arm" of any faith. There would still be temple guards, yes, and they might even cling to the name ("We are the TRUE Scarlet Mummers!"), but the Scarlet Mummers as depicted in published Realmslore thus far . . . no. I can't see them NOT getting out of hand over a century, because they already were out of hand in many ways in the 1370s DR.
Deities can always take action in the Realms, but I see them all, in the wake of the "we all got scorched" events of the Spellplague and the deity shenanagins that precipitated it, as being far more cautious. As in: primarily working through mortal pawns, both clergy and "right outside the faith" individuals whom they can use to do things clergy dare not do (lead raids, do murders and arson, et al) without losing public support and good regard. Now, when I write those words, I don't want to leave the impression that all deities are busily scheming their ways through a constant campaign of "dirty tricks" - - mortals just don't know what most deities spend their primary attention and time on, and some of them seem very "remote" from priestly pleas, or send the same dream-visions to many supplicants who pray to them (i.e. "here's your nightly broadcast" rather than, "Hello, particular mortal. Here is YOUR message from me").
It may be trite to restate that "Gods move in mysterious ways," but they do.
So in my Realms campaign, if it ever reaches the 1470s, the Scarlet Mummers will at "best" (if that's the right word) be a name appropriated by various independent power groups, not servants controlled by a goddess to work her will.

So saith Ed. Who's now turning back to writing . . . oh, sorry. I can't say more, so I'll just remind everyone that the important paperback anthology GAMER FANTASTIC (which contains tales by Steven Schend, Richard Lee Byers, Don Bingle (longtime "lead" RPGA player), Bill Fawcett (designer of much of the original D&D druid in early DRAGON articles), Jim Hines (writer of the delightful Goblin trilogy and an even more interesting series now unfolding from DAW), Jody Lynn Nye, Kristine Kathryn Rusch, Brian Thomsen's last published story [which Realms fans will find

MOST interesting], and others - - not to mention Ed, who contributed both a fun-new-look-at-fantasy-gaming-conventions [and elves, Dagnirion!] story and a tribute to Gary Gygax) will be released July 7, 2009! Essential reading, folks; buy it!!!
love to all,
THO

*****

On 4 July, 2009 THO said:- Hi again, all.
I bring you olnce more the words of Ed, this time in response to this, from Blueblade: "Dear Ed and Lady THO, I met a 50-ish gamer in a shop in Toronto today who said he once attended an sf convention where you and Roger Zelazny were lying on a ROOF at night, looking up at the stars and discussing sf, fantasy and gaming. He heard the two of you discussing Cthulhu and Amber and MESSENGER OF ZHUVASTOU by Andy Offut and a lot of other things besides, including a possible future collaboration. !!!!
Can you tell us anything about that collaboration? Obviously it was never published, but how far along did it get?
I believe this guy, and I know about "A Secret of Amber" and told him what I'd read about it, and he said it wasn't about Amber at all.
So . . . I'm, like, EXCITED. Tell tell tell!
BB"
Ed replies:

Hi, Blueblade. Yes, the gamer you met wasn't telling any fibs. Roger liked to lie on roofs and talk. And we did have a chat or two up on roofs (where for one thing, if there was any sort of breeze, he could chain-smoke to his heart's content without asphyxiating the rest of us), including the one you mention. Which I remember well. :}
The short way of answering you is: no, the planned collaboration was nothing at all to do with Amber, and in the end never happened, because Roger died.
The slightly longer version is: I wrote up about four paragraphs of "development" after talking with Roger, and later read them to him, and we were going to get together at the GenCon where he was to be GoH, in 2005, and expand things and really get going. Of course, Roger didn't live long enough to attend that GenCon. I haven't used that material in anything else, and probably won't, though I've learned never to say never . . .
It's really too fragmentary to be anything more than notions, and was to be picaresque, using the familiar smart-mouthed first-person Zelazny narrator, an Anthony Villiers (Panshin) or Hub (Schmitz) -style intergalactic empire, and magic that works (on a personal, short-range level, not a world-shaking or militaristic level) spreading throughout that empire from a single planet that the empire "conquers" but ignores (a la THE THURB REVOLUTION) as an undeveloped backwater.
So many things were lost (sigh) when Roger died . . .

So saith Ed. Who still mourns Roger, as you can see. Pity we all lost that series; it sounds as if it would have been a good one. I know Ed has other irons in his creative fire, such as an entire NEW game/novel setting (not the Realms, not Castlemourn, and not Embersea) that he'll unfurl when the time is right. Right now, however, he's writing hard in the Realms.
love to all,
THO

*****

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On 6 July, 2009 THO said:- Hi, Jakk. I hope you were able to eat the blackened bits. I always found they went down easier if I pretended I was at camp, and cooking over a fire.
As for the Cormyr lineage, attempts were being made to post that (for free, and in the free area) of the Wizards website, but somewhere along the line someone at WotC shifted it into the hands of the D&D Insider people, who treated it as a regular submission - - and of course it's WAY too long, and not specifically 4e, and so on, for their purposes. So it got stalled again.
Ed has already resolved to try again in person, at GenCon, to talk to some of the Wizards brass to get it onto the free part of the website, or failing that to get permission to post it here at Candlekeep or somewhere else on the Net . . . so he's preceding very cautiously, trying not to mishandle things and get the attempt quashed for good.
The lineage is massive, and represents a lot of effort by a lot of people, including Grant Christie, Bryon Wischstadt, Tom Costa, Eric Boyd, Steven Schend, George Krashos, Ed himself of course [the "root document" was his, and he's stepped in to augment and edit several times], and most recently, in a steller rewrite and expansion, by Brian Cortijo. I hope I'm not missing anyone out. Truly, it's a piece of lore to rival the Grand History Brian James assembled, and it SHOULD be published, somewhere and somehow, for interested Realms fans. So, stay tuned . . .
Ed is trying to claw some time free in every day to at least try to concoct more Realmslore replies for us here at the Keep. However, the man DOES have to try to earn a living, and is usually juggling a lot more projects than most of us ever face. So again, stay tuned, and I'll rush you and every scribe his replies without delay, whenever I can.
love,
THO

[...]

Hi, Arivia. Your question has been sent on to Ed (I e-mail all the relevant postings from this thread to him, as his Net connection remains primitive indeed).
I know that part of his response to you (the methods of non-magical divination) were covered in a long-ago DRAGON article by another of Ed's original "home Realms campaign" players, Andrew Dewar (who has for many years now been the head of a university library in Japan). I'm blanking on the title of the article (the DRAGON editors always made up those terrible titles anyway; they almost never used the titles that writers submitted the articles with), but it was an NPC class for the early D&D game, a diviner. Andrew listed twenty or so traditional real-world methods of divining, from goat entrails to tea leaves, and their real-world names; you can assume that almost all of them are in use in Waterdeep and other Sword Coast and Heartland cities.
Ed will, of course, provide a proper answer in the fullness of time.
Er, whenever that may prove to be.
love,
THO

[...]

Kajehase, at the risk of jumping in on Ed's eventual reply, I'm going to make two points by way of reply:

1. It depends (on the nature and character of the deity, of course, as you correctly pointed out).

2. Many deities operate (or do so from time to time) on the principle of "all publicity is good publicity." Of course, every one has limits, which when crossed make them decide that suddenly this particular publicity is NOT good publicity.

I'll leave it at that, and await Ed's sage response.

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On 7 July, 2009 THO said:- Hi, all.
BEAST, Ed and Bob have always worked matters in the Realms out thus: they talk things over. Happily, as two friends. That very much includes using each other's characters, or (far more often) just keeping them out of each others' way. I sent your post to Ed, and he responded thus:

Years back we agreed that Emlyn and Elminster would both have known of each other, and that they are friendly with each other and don't step on each other's toes. (Matters MUST be that way, to allow Bob's plots to unfold as they do without a certain annoying Old Mage showing up to meddle. Which those who've read the books know he hasn't.)
So, yes, they know each other, are friendly, don't see each other often, and as mages whose actions have far-reaching consequences, take care to keep out of tangling in each others' work. If the world wasn't such a dangerous place that didn't keep them so busy, and they could relax and visit more often, they'd probably wind up as very close friends, hanging out together of evenings and lazy afternoons.
Like Bob and me. :}

So saith Ed, and there you have it.
love,
THO

[...]

Heh. Markustay, yes to El checking out mages in disguise, and yes to some of them tumbling to it and him knowing they know and so on, and YES to Mystra having Chosen outside Faerun.
About which I'll see just how much I can wheedle Ed into saying...
love,
THO

*****

On 8 July, 2009 THO said:- Oh, and while I'm being naughty, Wooly: I used to look really hot dressed as a school girl (that is, the sort that wears glasses and a school uniform). Now, I'm sufficiently matured/decayed that I look like a school teacher - - or perhaps like an aging porn star dressed up a school girl. Not so much hot as . . . lewd.
Which is (ahem) so out of character for me, and for this thread, that I think we'd better say no more about it.
So to bring this back to Realmslore, and to tease Baleful Avatar a little more, here's a sentence of Realmslore from Ed's pre-1986, never published notes (not covered by TSR/WotC's copyright, because it was never submitted to them, after they expressly said 'don't send any more, that's more than enough"), a sentence that should also be of great interest to Markustay and others interested in the Chosen:

Among the most seldom-seen of the Chosen were the sorceresses Taerele and Jalathleena, the first because she dwelt far to the east of Faerun and had little to do with humankind or other civilizations, being primarily concerned with repairing the Weave and learning to master its manipulation, and the second because she loved walking the multiverse, and pleaded with Mystra to take on the role of Mystra's 'procurer,' bringing back items, magic, enchanted items, plants, and even sentient creatures from myriad planes to Faerun and the lands around it.

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So saith Ed. I'm thinking these notes date from around 1982, judging by what they're written in and Ed's handwriting (which deteriorated over his years of schooling, as he was forced to take notes faster and faster by various teachers who filled blackboards full of notes before class, all around the classroom, and slid them aside to reveal a second layer of note-filled blackboards, then started erasing the earliest boards in the sequence and continuing the notes . . . and their classes, writing hard and cramping as they did so, silently cursed. And sometimes not so silently, too.)
I've never shared this before because I thought it was too Tolkien-like (shades of the "blue" Istari who went east and right out of the story, never to be heard from again). Once TSR got hold of the Chosen and started treating them as comic book superheroes, I think Ed wanted to keep very quiet about various "other Chosen," too, to put the brakes on what was fast becoming an arms race - - but that's just my take on it; we've never actually discussed this, he and I.
So enjoy, scribes!
love to all,
THO

[...]

Hi again, all.
Menelvagor, re. this: "Or is it that some (Elminster) know and others don't?"
Yes. That's it, exactly. As Ed put it to me:

Most Chosen know most of the other Chosen, but usually only work with a few of them, or work alone. Some Chosen aren't aware of certain other Chosen at all.

I'm thinking Ed will give us a few more hints about these Chosen, in the days ahead.
love,
THO

*****

On 10 July, 2009 THO said:- Ahem.
Some of which are what you were thinking about, yes, but more importantly (as Ed revealed in play with the Knights, long ago) because The Shadowsil had a natural "wild talent" to pluck energy from the Weave and use it to briefly (as, in, one or two spells a day, tops) "boost" her spells (not give her extra spells, but increase the power of the spells she was casting). So Elminster didn't want her wandering the world without training . . . and Manshoon wanted to exploit her powers. She in turn wanted power, importance, and respect, so she went to one wizard after the other to get it.
With ultimately tragic results, as you know...
Ed has built thousands of little "life tales" like that into the Realms.
love,
THO

*****

On 11 July, 2009 THO said:- Hi again, all.
Well, this from Ed just popped up lightning-swift in my inbox. A response to Zandilar's questions:
"Question the first: A centaur arrives in Neverwinter in the company of a pair of adventurers. Where would said centaur find accommodation, and what form would it take? How would she be received by the watch and by the townsfolk?

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Question two: The centaur wishes to be trained by an itinerant priestess of Sharess who is currently residing in the city. One of the adventurers is this priestess's protege. The church doesn't have a formal presence in the city, nor a building of its own (which is why the centaur needs to find her own accommodations) - but I suspect that the protege is planning to establish one at some point when she has enough money to do so. What hoops would the protege (who is well regarded by some amongst the powers that be, and has a small amount of fame in the city itself for spoiling a plot by Aurilites to bring winter to Neverwinter) have to jump through in order to gain permission to set up a temple to Sharess within the city limits? What part of the city would the temple be permitted to be built and/or set up in?"
Ed replies:

Hi, Zandilar. I have always seen and depicted Neverwinter as the tolerant counterbalance to Luskan. Loose, gentle government, a lot more "keeping of the peace" by neighbours standing and acting together than by jackbooted authority. A lot more "live and let live" attitude, so long as that's not exploited to "I get to punch your face because I feel like it" extremes.
Neverwinter has both inns and rental lodgings that cater to shapeshifters, centaurs, wemics, and other four-footed, intelligent speaking guests. So a centaur would be calmly received by the Watch and most inhabitants. Some shops will simply be too crowded for a centaur to navigate through, but a good two-thirds of the proprietors of such places will be eager, not just grudging, at fetching selections of wares and bringing them out to where a centaur can look them over and purchase (or not).
As for Sharess: no problem at all. I'd say Neverwinter already has shrines to Sharess and most other non-evil deities, so establishing a temple is a simple manner of applying to the "city courtiers" so they can tax said temple. Presto: end of hoops. :}
Most of the rental lodgings mentioned above, and the best temple sites, are in the lightly-wooded inland or northeastern parts of Neverwinter; the near-the-shore "downtown" is already crowded and built up - - but then, it's also the least hospitable local terrain for hooved creatures and those who want room to do things in (like worship, dance or flirt or more to the greater glory of Sharess, and so on). Neverwinter and Everlund are the only large centers in the northern Sword Coast region that have substantial "forested park" -like conditions within their dwelling and patrolled areas, and those very conditions would be enticing to both a temple to Sharess and any centaur who doesn't mind sharing with other sylvan folk.
Now, that's not to say that Neverwinter doesn't have some inwardly-unfriendly-to-Sharess folk who will take advantage of the open, tolerant nature of the city to come and spy on who worships at the temple and what they get up to (and even some non-Sharess-haters who are just looking for an orgy to enjoy).
Neverwinter is yet ANOTHER of the too-neglected cities I wish we could have done a lot more with, in the published Realms. It can make for a great campaign setting, and I regret that the scenes set in it in SILVERFALL are such a brief glimpse of the place.

So saith Ed. Who will return with more Realmslore in the fullness of time, folks. Yes, he's still in the saddle; he's just very busy right now, particularly at his library day job, which has shifted to full-time this week so some of his co-workers can take some well-deserved holidays.
One Ed, amongst so many weary women; now THERE'S a vision to conjure with . . .
love to all,
THO

[...]

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Jakk, no to both of your questions: the identity of the Cormyrean author hasn't been revealed (correctly guessed) by anyone yet, and no, the Big Announcement hasn't been made. I'll nudge Ed to see if he can find out anything about the second one . . . and the first one is of course up to the guesses of the scribes of Candlekeep.
love,
THO

[...]

Oh, and a reply to Wooly:
I can recall off the top of my head at least one innate talent a NPC demonstrated in the Realms (quite an otherwise normal, young, non-adventuring, low-ranking, "ordinary" mundane boy of a NPC, too): deadly accurate mimicry of someone he'd just heard speak. I mean, DEAD ON, extending their voice, including singing voice and/or sound of breathing or wheezing, to a full vocabulary even if he'd only heard a few words. He got hired by lots of shady characters to work small, short-lived impersonations to deceive various people.

Ed will of course provide more, when he gets around to that query in the huge and ever-growing heap of queries.
love,
THO

*****

On 11 July, 2009 THO said:- Hi again, all.
Yes, Ed is busier than the wind and the tides at the moment, and I'm sorry, sfdragon, Imaskar and everything about it is NDA right now (but look on the bright side: that means SOMEONE is at work on SOMETHING involving it).
Jakk, Ed is acutely aware that he's left the very patient and polite Daviot hanging, waiting far too long for the Sorndrake lore. He'll get to it, he promises.
Ascore is another "partially NDA'd" matter; Ed will have to check to see what he's allowed to reveal, if anything. I'm suspecting "nothing" will be the reply he gets, but we'll see . . .
Unfortunately, Jakk, Ed doesn't have any spare DRAGONS, any more; he gave some of them to friends replenishing a damaged-in-fire (actually by the firemens' water hoses) collection, signed a few more for charity give-aways, and is down to the bare bones.
Apropos of Ed's reply to Zandilar about Neverwinter, I unearthed this from my Ed campaign notes about the city:

To the north and east, the city becomes a series of irregular "blocks" formed by wandering streets that abandon any semblance of a grid pattern. This is largely due to the prevalence of small rills (brooks or tiny streams) that rise as springs in this area, and then tumble and meander gently down into pools and even a larger pond or two. As a result, there's a light forest covering much of the area, and mansions with gardens, walled and otherwise, have been built in plenty. Sinkholes and the many thirsty roots have prevented open bogs or swampland for the most part, creating an entire third or so of the city that looks more like forest than built-up area. Small arch bridges are common, only a few lanterns provide any lighting on the roads at night, and well-trained guardian dogs (and other creatures, including panthers and golems) guard some estates against brigands and raiding bands (of orcs, half-orcs, and sometimes hobgoblins, gnolls, and flind) from the surrounding wilderlands (miles of wooded, gently-rolling hills). The custom in Neverwinter is to have SILENT guardians, not barking, howling alarm-raisers, and to pin or surround or drive out intruders rather than savage them, but monsters of decidedly non-human form are generally

exceptions to this; their presence will evoke alarm-raising and battle.

So saith Ed, with another tidbit of Neverwinter lore from the past (I believe he wrote that lore from which my notes are derived during or before 1988).
love to all,
THO

*****

On 11 July, 2009 THO said:- Hi again, all.
A pleasure, Zandilar.
That's right, Neverwinter doesn't have a city wall.
It does, of course, have many walled "compounds" around caravan coster bases (paddocks plus wagon repair sheds, warehouses, and bunkhouses), walls around various mansions and gardens, and a small walled area at the older, southern end of the docks (from the days when goblinkin raids on the dockside warehouses were a nightly problem).
Yet no city wall, no.
Of course, from the beginning TSR latched on to Neverwinter as a place to license for a computer games BECAUSE it had a prohibition on published city maps to hamper raiders (TSR figured that gave any computer company who picked up the license "free reign" to develop the city as they pleased).
"Neverwinter Nights" itself was originally the name of the local Neverwinter city newpaper (Ed actually published some issues of it, just for fun for his players), until the name was "given" to BioWare. So Ed named the game before it was a game - - and before there was a BioWare, too!
love,
THO

*****

On 12 July, 2009 THO said:- Yes, Ed's Neverwinter Nights predates the gold box game, too. I'd forgotten about that one. I do remember Ed showing us POOL OF RADIANCE and EYE OF THE BEHOLDER (games were, well, a little primitive at the time; for a lark I wrote up a Realms equivalent for LEATHR GODDESSES OF PHOBOS, for our own private amusement; I used teleports to "loop" you back out of various hilarious perdicaments in Waterdeep, to the "main action sequence," which ended in Kitten's bed. With Laeral shooting beholders out of the sky like fireworks. Ed loved it.
Ah, nostalgia . . .
love to all,
THO

*****

On 14 July, 2009 THO said:- Hi again, all. Well said, Sage of Stars.
I bring a brief Realmslore reply from Ed, in response to this, from Drizztsmanchild (back on page 61 of this thread): "Ok, Since we are are discussing...ahem odd things. On another post there is a discussion on El's undergarments. For arguements sake and for lore what exactly are the magical properties of said undergarments? Thank you :)"
Ed replies:

The only consistent enchantment on El's smalls is the same magic that empowers panties of feather falling. Sometimes, however, he has added wards, or ironguard, or "trigger teleports" (teleports wearer away to pre-selected spot, or overriden by willed destination, at the contact of certain sorts of magic).

So saith Ed. One wonders about the enchantments on lingerie . . .
love to all,
THO

*****

On 18 July, 2009 THO said:- Hi again, all.
As promised, lore from Ed, this time in reply to a query from Raelan back in early March of this year: "Hi, Ed. I've been wondering a few things regarding the Mad Mage of Undermountain for some time. He's always been a rather enigmatic figure in the Realms, and I'd like to know a bit more, both for my own edification and for the purposes of using some of his ongoing works when running a game.
Would you be willing to offer a conjecture as to what Halaster would've been doing with with his post-Elminster in Hell life had he not died and the Spellplague never happened? What would his goals have been; what type of plots would he have been engaged in; how would his interactions with his apprentices, associates, and people in general have changed; and would he descend into madness once again as a result of the influence of the enchantments of Undermountain? Did he have machinations in motion at the time of his canonical death that you could go into and extrapolate upon as if he hadn't been killed?
Any and all info would be appreciated. :)"
Ed replies:

Halkaster's problem was madness induced and exacerbated by Weave overload; he was trying to maintain too many wards and "hanging" spells (waiting to be triggered) and scrying ports and gates/portals - - at the same time as he suffered spell backlashes and mind damage from spell-duels. For a time he was just paranoid, then he was "wild-mad," and for a time thereafter he was sane inside Undermountain (i.e. within all his wards), but mad outside Undermountain. Then it became vice-versa.
In ELMINSTER IN HELL, Mystra didn't "cure" his insanity; she increased his Weave-handling ability by a LOT. Allowing him to recover control of himself.
So, Halaster would still be as whimsical/unpredictable to most humans as, say, Elminster is . . . but quite lucid and farsighted and cunning. He would still be paranoid - - and now able to travel freely and function freely wherever he was. Meaning he'd set out to see to "unfinished business" (like getting even with the Twisted Rune, and resuming all of his long-neglected projects outside Undermountain - - which include mending fences with some of his apprentices, moving to influence the rule of certain city-states and countries where he desires to operate, such as Amn and Tethyr, and take a few revenges on others besides the Rune).

So saith Ed. Being as general as possible in his reply, I see. Quite possibly due to not wanting to hamper some developments in the "home" Realms campaign [[insert chords of doom here]]
love to all,
THO

*****

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On 19 July, 2009 THO said:- Hi again, all.
Wooly, that's a GREAT shorthand explanation of what Mystra did to Halaster.
As Ed explained it to me, Mystra can aid mortal spellcasters in a variety of ways:
[I'm quoting Ed, now]

* show them how to cast something or create something or prepare or find something (implant a "movie" of a process or route plus landmarks or a performance [e.g. precise casting of a spell] in their minds)
* give them a spell or spells permanently ("impress" it on their minds; this can extend to a new "ability" [feat], but that just means Mystra's handed the mortal a combination of magic not yet mastered as individual spells by mortals)
* give them a spell or spells temporarily ("implant" it in their minds; once cast, it's gone)
* charge or "enstar" them with power (pour Weave energy into them, to be released in the form of touch-fire, spat-out fire [temporary, use-it-and-gone spellfire], or to "pay for" multiples of spells they have memorized in their minds at the time (cast spell, but it's not forgotten and gone, because you filled the mold with Weave energy and let fly, keeping the "charged" original in your mind; this boon is potentially very harmful to minds if the mortal tries to hold onto the energy too long, or if it's a mind not used to wielding the Art or not competent at using the Art)
* make them a Chosen or servitor by imparting some of her divine power into them in a long, complex, and exacting process that transforms them
* augment their ability to handle the Art by using a different long, complex, and exacting process to cleanse their minds, reorganize their minds, "grow" the numbers of (and repair and expand) brain cells to handle more: that's what she did to Halaster, with a big boost, and it's also what she does to each and every spellcaster who increases a level in spellcasting ability, albeit more slowly and to a lesser extent, as they sleep in between sessions of being tutored or trained, or practising the Art on their own; she does the expanding, and the training or use crafts new neural pathways to enable the mind to comprehend and control its expanding power
* cast spells on the mortal (e.g. shape change), with or without permanency

. . . .and So saith Ed. Essential Realmslore to clip and save; enjoy!
love to all,
THO

[...]

Hi again, all.
Aysen, Ed is temporarily incommunicado in some ways; see my earlier reply to Wooly (Ed can sneak out onto the Net using his wife's account; he apparently just can't "see" recent messages in his own account, right now), but in the meantime I can make a tiny partial answer to your underwater siege engine query: we Knights once saw a large contraption in a museum/trophy hall in Athkatla that was billed as a "merfolk-cooker" used in siege battles: it used magically-heated metal spheres spun around in a bottle-like cauldron to heat up water, which was then jetted out of the bottle at apertures in undersea caverns and structures, to boil creatures inside.
Torm, of courtse, couldn't resist a tasteless "boiled crabman" remark. Right up there with his: "Children. Heh. They're all the same - - on a platter, with an apple in their mouths."
[I don't defend the character, I merely report]
love,
THO

*****

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On 20 July, 2009 THO said:- Hi again, all.
Markustay, I can tell you "for certain" that Ed has never rolled on a random table for a "wild talent." He creates the NPCs and waits for us to stumble upon them, sometimes years later (no, he doesn't "pick up prepared encounters and move them to plonk them in our way," he keeps track of what all these NPCs are doing with THEIR lives, and lets players direct their characters freely; it's up to us what lane we come stumbling down or shop we walk into; Ed had plenty of interesting stuff everywhere for us to browse amongst).
That's one reason gal gamers like playing with Ed so much: it's like one huge shopping spree, where we pick stuff over and choose what we like. Or just what we rouse and disturb into choosing US.
Ed has told me that he sometimes rolls to see if an event, situation, or contact with magic will trigger a hitherto-quiescent innate ability in someone (PC or NPC), though. When it does, THOSE are the jaw-dropping play sessions.

love,
THO

[...]

Hi again.
althen artren, dearest, I hate to have to answer you this way, but: no more Hesperdan stories yet. Until something gets published. Then Ed will happily tell you more. You'll see, but the wait will be some months, I'm afraid.
Also, his response to you about where Elminster dwelt or dwells or would choose to will have to wait a little longer, until something ELSE gets published.
Again, you'll see (we'll all see).
I wish I could say more, but I've already said too much. Spank me, please . . .
love,
THO

[...]

. . . and it's me, AGAIN.
althen, I just spotted your Hesperdan musings thread. I've promised not to say too much about Hesperdan, so let me say just this much: Hesperdan may have been more than one role (of the sorts of roles/explanations/identities you postulate for discussion, and others) over the passage of time. Though I make, of course, no promises. Nor will Ed be issuing any confirmations at this time, nor for some time to come. The sun will, however, likely continue to rise and set, and Elminster to weep from time to time.
There. That ought to make things as clear as mud.
love,
THO

*****

On 22 July, 2009 THO said:- Hello again, all. Ed thanks everyone for their birthday wishes (he's had a very full day :}), and passes on two replies to the scribes perusing this thread:

First, to Drizztsmanchild:

Thank you for the birthday wishes. I don't feel a day over 70. Ahem. No, it's not Elminster's birthday (his actual birthday is - - surprise! - - NDA, but I feel confident that admitting it's not the same day as mine, and leaving MORE than 364 other days in the Realmsian year for it to be,

instead, isn't breaking that NDA, quite). Elminster and I are - - thank the gods! - - very different people, not the same guy. I just play him at conventions. As Shatner said (I'm paraphrasing here), "I'm NOT a starship captain, I just play one on TV. So please don't ask me to fix things or tell you about astronomy."

Second, to Jakk:

Markustay is right. The one is Realmsplay history, and the other is what became published Realms canon. Yes, I wrote both.
I have the "home" Realms campaign, but I have also run over twenty short, set-number-of-sessions "library mini-campaigns" down the years, usually centered on a fledgling adventuring company trying to fulfill the conditions of its charter, but some of them have also roleplayed "key moments in Realms history" that THEY (the gamers, all Realms fans and experienced roleplayers) wanted to "be present at." Encounters with Dornal as the Watcher have featured in three of those.
I wrote the published version the way I did to satisfy an editor AND stay as close as possible to what happened in play; you can see how much I succeeded, but you can also see that the published version can be taken to apply to his life before it ended, and his time as Watcher that followed thereafter (after he was raised, obviously) can end up being steered very close to the longer, "play" version I described here at the Keep.
What "happened" in your campaign is, of course, up to you. In both of them Dornal can be still around as the Watcher, if you want him to be.

So saith Ed. Who is happily at work on more Realmslore for us all.
love,
THO

[...]

Hi again, all. Thank your the the birthday wishes for Ed, who is a busy boy right now. All of your queries have been forwarded to him (Wooly, he tells me he thinks his e-mail account is "fixed," and will be reading back to examine certain messages), and I can make a start on answering Eldacar on my own, from Realmsplay experience with Ed as DM: the "hear your name" ability extends only as far as the Weave (so, NOT onto other planes), very few people outside the Chosen know of it or even suspect it (Sammaster of course is the major sort of exception, but I know he was keeping that knowledge secret so he'd have a "leg up" on his rivals), and one of the "listen all the time" Chosen was Khelben. The Simbul and Elminster also listened often, and Dove almost never.
So (and here we pass from certainty to my opinion) it wouldn't have been used to spread msinformation (again, with only Sammaster as a possible exception), and I believe it is a separate Weave attunement thing.
Ed, of course, can be far more certain and specific than I can, so we'll wait and see. And speaking of waiting and seeing, I hope Wizards remembers to post the Spin A Yarn tale on the website. Ed sent it in months ago now, so it would be up in plenty of time for GenCon, but . . . Unless, of course, I've missed seeing it, and it's faded into view somewhere on the website that I haven't seen. Intrepid scribes, anyone want to have a go at exploring and peering?
Either regarding me or the website . . .
love to all,
THO

*****

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On 24 July, 2009 THO said:- Hi again, all. Ed was incommunicado yesterday visiting family (driving through absolute INSANE blinding rain in the middle of the night, with so much water on the road that all the cars were hydroplaning constantly), and will be catching up on hammering out the novel today, but I can START to make a stab at some answers to all of these speculations about the Chosen hearing their names.
I know, from previous conversations with Ed, that a Chosen can "pick" one name at a time to listen for (so, Elminster or this or that pseudonym, but NOT a name of someone they have impersonated - - e.g. Halaster - - but the wider Realms doesn't know they are or were or pretended to be).
Also, a Chosen can control the physical range (spherically, outwards from themselves) they are listening within. This makes it useful to listen in a dungeon, or castle, or a forest. However, the Chosen CANNOT, except by physically moving themselves, "pick" some within-range speakers to listen to and ignore others (e.g. listen to nobles plotting in the tower, but not soldiers grumbling out on the walls).
I also know that the Chosen tend not to use this power very much, because of the overwhelming "noise" of so many mentions of their names.
More details will of course have to wait for Ed.
love to all,
THO

*****

On 25 July, 2009 THO said:- Hi again, all.
panics, Ed's still incommunicado, so here is my informed but possibly not up to date "take" on your question:
The Realms belongs to TSR (WotC), unless or until they cease to publish an original novel-length Ed Greenwood book in any calendar year (except when he agrees to an exception, and game sourcebooks "count" as books, not just fiction.
When Ed dies, that doesn't just "go away." So IF that ever came to pass, the rights to the Realms would revert to his estate (heirs). It would be up to them, and whatever agreements they then made with Wizards or another company.
However, in the real world, Ed's heirs would have to vigorously want to helm the Realms and be willing to put time and money (lawyers) into doing so. And at the same time, it would be in the interest of Wizards to go on publishing hitherto-unseen Ed Greenwood material just as long as they could dredge some up. Which, given the amount of stuff Ed's given them over the years that hasn't seen print (as opposed to on the website), could be a decade or more. The detailed city of Teziir, for example, or uncollected short stories, or the small truckload of lore Ed has written as "bibles" for series (Sembia, Eddie Presents Waterdeep, the Realmslore package of oaths and undergarments notes and suchlike, and many more tidbits).
Perhaps (my estimate, not Ed's) twenty percent of what Ed's handed TSR and Wizards over the years remains unpublished, and all that Ed has given them, from 1979 to date, is perhaps (again, my estimate) a quarter of what he's designed for the Realms that could be made into publishable material of general interest (as opposed to of interest just to we "home" players). Could be made into, note, not necessarily is in publishable form right now.
I can tell you that I doubt Ed has any interest at all in fighting with Wizards over the Realms. At least when asked about it, he tends to stick to this view: that "any disputes that arise hurt the hobby, and the Realms, and Realms fans" and are therefore best avoided. If he's talked to his family/heirs about that, they'll probably respect his wishes, and that attitude will continue. Which will allow, in a future time when Ed is gone, Wizards or a successor publisher to let the Realms be forgotten, or revamp it freely as they see fit.
The published Realms, that is.
YOUR Realms is yours to do anything you want with (except publish it :}). Mine lives in my heart, in all the memories of play sessions and discussing lore and reading Ed's superb fiction and the

laughter. And I can't imagine any of it without Ed.
love,
THO

*****

On 26 July, 2009 THO said:- Hi again, all.
Jorun, your question is one I can answer, from Realmsplay (i.e. the answer comes from Ed as my DM). The answer is: "He looks a bit half-shorn."
Remember, in the Realms far fewer men and women remove facial hair (women tend to do so by plucking, but these would usually be strikingly-dark chin and cheek hairs, not a mustache). So there's no stigma whatsoever to being hairy, or stubbled, or "fuzzy." There ARE situations where such conditions are frowned upon or not tolerated - - when one is invited to sup when it's known when soup or stew is to be served, in Cormyr and the Dales, for instance. Nobles in many places (Waterdeep included) of course use specific habits or fashions to set themselves apart from non-nobles, and from time to time being clean-shaven or stubbled goes in or out of fashion, and therefore in and out of tolerance.

So saith Ed, filtered through me.
love,
THO

*****

On 27 July, 2009 THO said:- Hi again, all.
Markustay, Ed has indeed traveled extensively on both sides of the border in the Ontario/New York vicinity during his fifty years (have to say that, it sounds so grandly ominous for a guy I've known since his teens - - and, ahem, mine), and lives about a mile from the north shore of Lake Ontario, about halfway between Toronto (third largest city in North America, so it should be on most maps ;}) and Kingston, both of which are also on Ontario's north shore. So if you were on the shore of Lake Erie, near Lily Dale, you were waving at a part of Ontario Ed has visited about a dozen times. If you were standing on a Lake Ontario shore, you were waving at a part of Canada Ed knows very well. If you were near Rochester, New York, you were pretty much straight across the lake from Ed. And no, that's not silly at all. Hold to your dreams and enthusiasms, celebrate them, and be guided by them. That and good friends are what makes life worth living.

I actually have a brief, spanking-new (ummm, one of my favorite expressions; wonder why?) Realmslore reply from Ed, this time to Joran Nobleheart's query: "Another question, if I may. Joran is from Cormyr... are noblemen more apt to wear a beard in Cormyr, especially the landed gentry?"
Ed replies:

Yes, indeed. Noblemen almost all have mustaches, long sideburns (though they may be very thin, mere "lines along the angle of the jaw" in many cases), and beards. However, LONG or shaggy facial hair is very rare among the nobility; the whole point of the fashion is to show off your wealth and idleness (i.e. I'm rich enough to have a personal barber, and idle enough that I can sit down TWICE A DAY to be trimmed and shaved). So a nobleman will ALWAYS (except when "roughing it" with Alusair or during emergencies) have clean-shaven throats, cheeks, and other areas (no untidy regions of "stubble or hairs that become a beard as one moves across the visage"), and will usually have a very close-cropped, trimmed beard and mustache. Mustaches may have long ends (either side of the mouth), but are usually like thin lines along the upper lip

above the mouth; below the mouth, the chin may well be entirely covered with hair, but a noble's beard is seldom longer than about two inches below the point of the chin, and almost always takes the form of a neat, uniform "jaw-fringe" from this point all along the edges of the jaw, continuously to merge with "daggerboard" sideburns in front of the ear.
Young nobles, very fair-haired nobles, and anyone who for whatever reason can't grow (or can't have at the moment) a tidy, continuous beard, will be clean-shaven - - but even then, pencil-line-thin (or bushier) mustaches and sideburns will be maintained if at all possible. Dying of facial hair to keep it dark is sometimes done, but only utter fops dye their hair any hue other than a color that attempts to match its natural hue, and scenting facial hair is a fashion that comes and goes (mostly goes) with the passing years.
Interestingly, the upland landed gentry have always clung to a habit of "going shaggy" for a tenday or so, here and there, usually when hunting or at lambing or horsebreeding time. This is a signal to all that I'm "not at home" in my persona as Lord So-and-so right now; I'm on vacation, so to speak, and can be dealt with as an equal by anyone, but am temporarily not interested in the obligations and frippery courtesies of being a noble. (It does not of course actually release practitioners from the obligations of being noble, though the ruling Obarskyrs tend to respect it except during emergencies; if a king should awaken at the royal hunting lodge and see a few "shaggy" nobles at the morningfeast table, it means they want to share time with him as a plain-speaking friend and fellow hunter, not bring their heralds and trade factors and other servants along, and speak with formal dignity. It's the sort of occasion when it was perfectly all right to, say, address oneself to King Azoun IV with the unadorned words, "Hoyeh! Pass yon butter, Longshanks!" and he might either pass it, or belch and reply, "Hook a finger into it yourself, Bentnose!" . . . and when Filfaeril might come to the table with her hair all wild from slumber, clad in old hunting breeches, and be addressed as "Fee" or perhaps "Crownlass" by everyone at the table. (Of course, it was NOT free license to be as rude as possible to royalty, or anyone else; folk didn't entirely forget or ignore what was said at such occasions. It WAS a male noble's best chance to, say, tell Filfaeril a dirty joke without half a hundred courtiers overhearing and promptly spreading gossip about it.)
Now, as those of us who have beards and mustaches and sideburns know, it's possible with the air of a sharp razor or scissors, mirrors, and good lightning to keep oneself in fair trim when it comes to mustaches, beards, and even sideburns and neck and cheek shaving, so not all nobles actually have personal barbers, or use their services twice a day; that's merely the look being striven for.

So saith Ed, reigning expert on Cormyrean facial fashion (ask him sometime about the Calishite and Tashlutan fashion for setting cabochon-cut polished gems into the cheeks of wealthy females).
He hopes to be back to regular Realmslore replies very soon. gomez, I'll PM you about our play-related matter (done!) very soon, too.
love to all,
THO

[...]

Joran, more lore coming your way when I can (got your message). I would stress that your PC can be clean-shaven if he wants to, because of course many nobles LIKE to be mavericks, or set fashions rather than follow them, or yes, rebel against parents or kin. :}
Which lets you do just what you'd prefer, either way.
love,
THO

*****

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On 30 July, 2009 THO said:- Hi, Blueblade.
I can think of one, off the top of my head, from campaign play: the Narnantheirs. Formerly a powerhouse in weaving and import and export of bulk textiles, the Narnantheir ("Nar-NAN-theer") family is now scattered and poor, with some of the sons living in Suzail's shady districts, living hand-to-mouth.
love,
THO

*****

On 31 July, 2009 THO said:- Hi again, all.
Aysen, Ed chuckled at your post, but he did indeed mean the cheeks that are part of the face (sorry). So, in answer to this, from Zandilar: "That sounds very painful! Consider him asked. How do they do it? Is it just in the skin, or are they set in the bone of the cheek (given that's where the skin/flesh is thinnest)? Is it just a single gem, or a pattern of multiple gems? It is totally a fashion thing, or is there some other cultural significance/meaning to it (and if so, what is it)? And is there something equivalent that the men do?"
Ed replies:

It is just a fashion thing, originally a "rebellious younger generation" fad that has become an "adornment for many." It is painful. A slit is made in the skin of the cheek, NOT all the way through, and a thumbnail-sized flat chip of stone that's been rounded to remove all sharp edges is put in it. Then GENTLE flame is applied to the stone to cauterize without heating up the stone too much or burning the flesh. When cool, alcohol is used to disinfect (yes, THAT's painful), and then flat-backed, cabochon-rounded gem chips can be slipped into the slit in place of the stone, of hues to match cosmetics, clothing, and other jewelry. SOME women of course went for multiple gems in a pattern, but it never caught on. No, there's no male equivalent. Yet. :}

So saith Ed. Who has just handed WotC artists a cool gift for their use in future illustrations, methinks . . .
love,
THO

[...]

Hi again, all. Just got a note from Ed which included this, for Menelvagor:

Sorry, no peyot in the Realms. I have always tried to avoid specific real-world elements, and that particular one is strongly associated in the minds of many with Orthodox Judaism, so I avoided putting them into the Realms. That's not to say that there aren't many folk in the Realms who don't have long locks, or curly hair, or wear their hair in various ways for religious or cultural reasons - - just not that specific feature. For the same reason, I'd not put a "punk Mohawk" hairdo, or a Jeep, or a Coke can, into the Realms: the reason being the real-world association (it would jolt many encountering it out of "thinking Realms" into "thinking about the real world"). That's not to say they can't appear in YOUR Realms, of course.

So saith Ed. Who will probably be a VERY busy boy at this year's GenCon, and who has his

latest novel (probably a Realms book, folks) more than half way done in first draft, and is having much fun with it. I pressed him for some details, but all he would do is grin and say, "So many nobles are dastardly, aren't they?"
Hmmmm...
love to all,
THO

*****

On 1 August, 2009 THO said:- Hi again, all.
Harquebus, you're in luck. Ed and I happened to be back-and-forthing via e-mail when your post came my way, so I handed it along, and got this swift reply:

I do indeed still feel this way, and here's why: in "my" Realms, pre-adoption as a game setting, men could hug or kiss men and women could hug or kiss women without any sexual meaning behind it.
These were expressions of love, familial or friendship or kin or gratitude and expressions of great joy in a success shared, yes, but "confirmations" of overall sexual orientation, no. There were also flirts and effeminate characters, particularly among decadent nobles, and many bisexual characters (please remember, we're speaking of my original fictional Realms, not the published GAME setting).
All of which means to "confirm" a sexual orientation, protracted sex scenes are necessary. Anything less doesn't "confirm" anything IN THE REALMS. Certain readers might view a guy kissing another guy as meaning they're both gay, but I'm not that sort of reader. They could be grandfather and grandson, and it could be deep affectionate love, NOT sexual at all. Others will view grandfather/grandson kissing as evidence of some sort of sexual deviance or exploitation, but it simply isn't so in Realms culture (just as it isn't in, say, Italian real-world culture, though older generations kiss more than younger).
I was, back in 2004, simply making the point that TSR/WotC-published Realms books are never going to be primarily about, or filled with, sex, and that therefore (barring bald statements by a narrator or character about sexual orientation) there isn't going to be enough on their pages for readers to be SURE about a given character's orientation. A writer can hint or signal, and a particular reader can interpret as they please (and often do), but in a fantasy world in which hugging and kissing and even lovemaking may not confirm a sole sexual orientation, certainty is either established by definite statements or overwhelming evidence - - neither of which is going to be editorially welcome in the Realms novel lines.
Or to put it more colloquially, we aren't writing those sort of books. :}
I can readily conceive of a plot where sex, sexual orientation, and the complications of sexual choices will be vital, major elements - - but I doubt Hasbro would want one of their subsidiaries publishing such a book.
If I just show you, say, the Shadowsil tossing her clothes aside and waltzing into Manshoon's bedroom, you can be fairly certain that she wants sex to take place. You CAN'T be fairly certain that she's married to Manshoon, or has or hasn't a spouse or other lovers, or even that she prefers guys in bed. You can choose your preferred interpretation, or even go to great lengths to read over all the published Realmslore to arrive at "the best possible" interpretation, but you can't be SURE.
I know you can't, because I can tell you flatly, outside of published Realmslore, that the Shadowsil was a passionate, troubled voyager through life who bedded men, women, half-elves and elves and drow of both genders, both male and female dwarves, and a female halfling. As well as one powerful shapechanging mage whose true race and nature she was never sure of.
THAT'S my point; in such a complicated setting and with truly three-dimensional characters, certainties are hard to come by, if we can't "show it all." And the stories we're trying to tell, and being allowed to tell, aren't about "showing it all." That is, of course, editorially deliberate: no

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publisher WANTS to offend some readers by leading them to conclusions they may find unpalatable. Better to leave room for ambiguity, and a reader to make their own choices.
Some publishers go much farther than drawing the line on explicit sex. Some don't want the writer to specify hair or eye color for heroes/heroines, so a reader can more easily identify themselves with the characters.

So saith Ed. Just trying to clear things up - - by leaving things ambiguous.
love to all,
THO

[...]

Hi again, all.
I come bearing two things: a question for the scribes, and a very short reply from Ed to The Sage re. the Spin A Yarn.
First, the question: anyone have a ticket yet for the Spin A Yarn? Do we know what room it's going to be held in, precisely? Or the "D&D World of the Forgotten Realms" seminar? I probably won't be able to make it to GenCon at all, this year, but if there's a chance, I'd LOVE to be able to give Ed a grin from a doorway . . .
And now, heeeeeeeeeere's Ed:

I'm not sure there's much else I can tell you about this Spin A Yarn tale, other than to reiterate that I incorporated EVERY LAST suggested story element that the long-suffering Shelly Mazzanoble typed into her Mac that didn't break the rules (can't be too X-rated, can't involve Drizzt or any other toys belonging to other writers, and can't use real-world names, trademarks, items, and too-overt references), PLUS those suggestions Kuje sent me from the Keep.
I believe someone else will be my Spin A Yarn "scribe" this upcoming GenCon, as Shelly works on other duties.
Oh, other than to say this story takes place in Waterdeep, post-Spellplague, and that (obviously) Volo is a major protagonist. It's the longest Spin A Yarn tale thus far, it DOES have a plot, and I - - as usual - - had a blast doing it. Though (hint hint) it would be nice, just once, if the Spin A Yarn audience gave me more to work with than the utterly lewd (I'm not offended, you understand, I just can't "go far enough" when writing to handle utterly lewd elements properly, so they end up as watered-down or one-line throwaways or twisted into something remotely politically correct. Don't be shy if you want to give me "pulp" elements like dooms and villains and dastardly plots, as well as all the banana-peel, dropped-drawers humor, okay?

So saith Ed. Whom I will drop my drawers for, AND wave a banana peel at, I promise. Perhaps in the same deft movement . . .
love to all,
THO

*****

On 1 August, 2009 THO said:- Bingo, Zandilar. After the rage, at the end of your post (ETA2), you "got it."
Ed wasn't speaking of the Realms as he wants it to be, or the published Realms as he wants it to

be, but of the realities of publishing. Note that when speaking of the sex scenes, he used the word "protracted," NOT "explicit." Ed makes his living by writing, and chooses his words carefully: he meant not long, detailed sex scenes, but the ability to show a reader repeated sex scenes to underscore a sexual inclination (because, just as you say in the example you gave of the bisexual male making love with another guy, a single sexual encounter can be so readily misinterpreted).
To reiterate for all: in that 2004 comment, so recently elucidated upon here, Ed was trying to make it clear that the Realms is not a simple series of black-and-white situations or characters, so a hint or a glimpse of a possibly sexual act (a hug or a kiss) DOESN'T CONFIRM anything. It's just that: a hint, that can be interpeted in various ways. And that most modern publishers, in this day and age, prefer hints and ambiguities to flat, bald, definite statements, if they're not publishing explicit sex novels (and Realms books aren't explicit sex novels).
Zandilar's strong reaction is a perfect illustration of WHY hints and ambiguities are preferred: publishers are interested in sales, not losing sales. Ed was merely underscoring that because Realms books aren't primarily about sex, making flat statements (either as the author playing narrator, or out of the mouths of characters) about sexual orientation is out of place, and seeing a sex act or possible sex act doesn't "confirm" anything about characters.
To most Realms novel plots, the sexual orientations of characters don't matter all that much (relationships do, kinship does, and legal unions can), because those aren't the sort of stories that the publisher is interested in publishing.
So what Ed was saying isn't far at all from what you're saying, Zandilar. He's just pointing out that within the existing publishing limitations, it's very hard to specify sexual orientation, and warning all readers that you can assume things about characters from what is written, but concluding definite things about those characters can be very tricky.
For one thing, well-written characters grow and develop (read: CHANGE) over time.
Ed happens to agree with you entirely, Zandilar, about how character relationships should be portrayed in fiction (when you post: "Simply allow them to be involved in a romantic (not necessarily erotic) relationship (with a person of the same gender), or have them mention their attraction to someone of the same gender in passing . . . it is inclusion and it makes it clear they're not heterosexual and that no one sees anything overly wrong with it in the Realms . . . Romantic relationships on the page don't always have to incorporate explicit sex").
Ed does just that, when editors let him get away with it. He was simply warning all readers that, saying, having two guys (or gals) kiss doesn't NECESSARILY mean they're gay or lesbian, and that it's unlikely a reader will ever get "certainty" within the restrictions existing re. published Realms fiction.
Ed is not saying anyone has to, or would want to, "confirm" sexual orientation for a character. He's merely underscoring that it is difficult to do so, in print, for Realms characters, because that's not the (forgive me) "thrust" of what publishing Realms fiction is about.
The problem with topics like this is that people interpret the way they want to interpret, or that their own experience leads them to interpret. Reading Ed's posts, I think Zandilar misinterpreted Ed completely, and was enraged at him for something he actually didn't say. I can tell, you, from years of being involved in North American publishing, that sexual matters and their portrayal is ALWAYS a concern for publishers, and generally for the same basic reason: pleasing the maximum number of buying patrons, and displeasing the minimum number. It works both ways, from the sort of Christian publisher who doesn't even want kissing before marriage (and doesn't want to even acknowledge the existence of anything besides male-female relationships) to the porn publisher who worries that a book isn't "juicy explicit" enough, and that buyers might feel "ripped off" that they didn't get the "real goods." (Yes, those are actual quotes from an editorial comment I once read, of a porn manuscript - - and NO, it wasn't Ed's).

Ed's argument here really boils down to:
My world and the characters who form the core of it aren't simple and one-dimensional, so assume whatever you like about them, but concluding definite things about them can be very mistaken. When it comes to sexual orientation, the limits on Realms publication make "definites"

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hard to convey, so be warned, and view characters accordingly.

That's not something I see reasonable people disagreeing much with. Unfortunately, because sex happens to be involved, people tend to react to what they think is said. Which is one of the reasons Ed tends to avoid most such discussions; he just doesn't want to upset anyone - - so let people believe what they want to believe, for their own version of the Realms, and leave what need not be made explicit unsaid. Ed is NOT advocating lots of explicit sex scenes (though like all writers, he'd like the maximum freedom possible, so he could do one if he thought it would improve the story - - ask him some time about the farce he wrote involving two prominent Realms characters and a quite explicit sexual encounter between them that gets comically interrupted every few panting breaths by the arrival of someone [else] with a pressing problem).

Zandilar, you'll probably be interested to know that Ed has derived wry, resigned amusement over the years from such things as TSR changing character genders because "Well, he wrote that these two live and sleep together, not just work together, so one of them HAS to be female. Guys don't sleep with guys." and the female vice versa, too. I know that as a player in Ed's campaign, I've been amused more than once at character portrayals in the published Realms, and turned to Ed and asked, "Umm, do they know that X is really gentle, effeminate, and bisexual? Because what I'm reading is Macho City, here!"
After initial head-butts with various editors, Ed retreated early on to just shaking his head and "letting it go." Because of, yes, those same publishing realities you allude to in your ETA2 addendum.

So saith me. Because I've done more publishing work than Ed has. (He, of course, has done a lot more writing and design work than me.)
love,
THO

*****

On 3 August, 2009 THO said:- Hi again, all. I bring this reply from Ed, to Zandilar's post above:

Then I don't think we have any disagreement here at all.
I'm sorry if my words upset you, Zandilar. I DO agree we need representation, and lots of it - - so that it becomes "matter of fact" calmly accepted as part of the setting.

My reply was specifically about confirmation, and the inability to do that under the limitations placed on me (before and during 2004, not so much now) in Realms fiction - - unless I limited myself to one-dimensional characters. And to one-dimensional behaviors (i.e. that kissing and hugging are always a prelude to sex or a signal that the characters involved are in a sexual relationship).

I could not have gleeful dwarves hug each other (because, according to one editor, that meant they were in a sexual relationship [to which I could only reply, "Huh?]). I could NOT have anyone clearly and baldly say they were "lovers" with anyone else (I know - - I tried!), though I could sneak close to such a statement by having an angry noble accuse someone of being so-and-so's "lover," or have some known-to-be-rude-and-crude character like Torm or Mirt allude to such status, and even have "known crazies" like Elminster or The Simbul (yes, "known crazies" was how one editor described them) utter "lovers" or "they're together" or some such - - but I couldn't have either a narrator or an "average polite" character say any such thing. The old (TSR days) Code of Ethics even specifically prohibited mention or inference of homosexuality.

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The limitations have changed over time, yes, but so have the sort of stories I'm telling, so I stand by my reply re. my opinion about confirmation.
Please note that I never said that confirmation was necessary or desirable; I happen, as a writer, to always want the "elbow room" that ambiguities leave for later plot twists.
And as you know, I can signal like crazy. The ongoing problem has been the tendency for editorial hands, especially in the older days, to take happy, ongoing female-female pairings and male-male pairings and change the genders of some of the participants to shift them to male-female.
And as my Realms writing is work-for-hire and as "we're not in the business of telling Realms stories that are ABOUT sex" (to quote a long-gone editor), fights over those changes were lost causes.

Too-deep adult content (such as those very "protracted sex scenes" I mentioned) are still "off the table" these days, because those are still not the sort of stories Realms novels are supposed to be concerned with. Yet the Knights trilogy in particular allowed me to hint and calmly state and show more than ever before (except in the "hothouse" books SILVERFALL and ELMINSTER IN HELL). Those who've read my fantasy novels set outside the Realms know that I can and do get more specific, when the tale heads in that direction.

So the reply of mine that you reacted to was not a "call for more sex scenes" or my opinion about my own inability to describe sexual inclination in any other way than repeated same-gender or opposite-gender sex scenes - - it was my opinion that within the "window of opportunity" that Realms writing allowed me, readers could only be sure of a character's inclination if I limited myself to very clear-cut, simplified characters.

I did not and do not think that a reader should necessarily be "sure" of anything in a Realms novel, so long as they don't feel cheated by a writer who makes belief-shattering changes and plot twists that repeatedly rob scenes the reader has enjoyed of the meaning the reader though they had. (No one likes being tricked.)

So I think we're on the same page. If the way in which I wrote that reply upset you, I'm sorry about that, because I'm not in the business of upsetting people, in life, unless it really can't be avoided. And this CAN be avoided.

You're always welcome at my table, Zandilar. (Tea?)
Hugs,
Ed

So saith Ed. Who is a kindly and understanding man, one of life's "nice guys." Really.
love to all,
THO

[...]

Hi again, all.
gomez, Ed is currently wrestling with a truly hairy GenCon schedule, but if he can, he'll be happy to chat over a beer with you.
And he sent me a Realmslore reply, too, this one to Aysen, re. this: "Early on in the book, a Cormyrean country noble and heir to his family's name dies and is cremated. They take his ashes and put them in a bowl, tie it to the saddle of his horse, and let the horse run free, thus scattering his ashes out amongst the countryside.

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Is this a common practice amongst country nobles in Cormyr and elsewhere? Is there a specific term for such a ritual, like "last-ride"? Did the noble's status as family heir or the fact that he had military training factor in? What about the fact that the family patronized Chauntea (a Chauntean officiated the cremation and burial)?"
Ed replies:

This is an old "upland" (rural) Cormyrean practice, also seen in the Dales and Sembia in elder days (not so much in the 1300s), known as a "grave ride" or "last ride." His nobility was a factor, yes, because the only families who did this were those who owned large tracts of land (enough for a "scattering from the saddle" to be worthwhile), but not the fact that he specifically was the heir, nor his military service or rank. Last rides were generally only done by families who felt close ties to the land (farmers [there's the Chauntea connection, in this specific case], hunters, foresters, and strong worshippers of nature gods like Silvanus and Eldath), and wanted their lost ones "returned to the land."
[[Remember, in the Realms everyone "believes in" and worships ALL of the gods, though most people feel "closest" to a handful of deities. Only clergy and a relatively few "devout lay worshippers" devote themselves primarily to a single deity.]]
In Cormyr, everyone knows what a "grave ride" or "last ride" is, and everyone sees it as "doing right by the dead" and "pleasing to the gods." That doesn't mean it's a frequent custom among most citizens, not even among nobles (who tend to prefer the family crypt with intact bodies laid to rest in it).

So saith Ed, who will get to your other questions posed in the same post later on, Aysen. He's really busy right now (the first draft of the book is on Chapter 18, I believe, but of course Ed can't let anyone see it, or say too much about it), but will send me Realmslore replies to post as he can.
love to all,
THO

[...]

Hi again, all.
Ashe, the names and faces of the individuals holding those Candlekeep ranks have of course changed over time. That's one of the reasons Ed's Candlekeep piece (written for the site) keeps vague about the office-holders, as opposed to the offices. The other reaon is that Ed wanted to give DMs maximum freedom in their own campaigns to insert, move, and tailor NPCs to best fit the unfolding action in THEIR Realms.
As anyone who's read Ed's early - - and still unpublished - - Realms short story "The Endless Chants of Alaundo" can tell you, those office holders sometimes change quickly.
Wooly, I believe Ed got that particular phrase into the published SPELLFIRE because Jim Lowder protected it, in the editing process (while vetoing some of the more tortured Ed medievalisms like "think ye me a codloose winker?" [[translation: Do you take me for a flirt who really does sleep around?]]).
gomez, I agree that, yes, "pretty sad" describes it. Wooly's right about the state of thinking that prevailed from time to time, and khorne, what changed was the personnel at the company, over time, AND the general attitude of American society, over time, and therefore the approach taken to Realms novels.
BTW, for Zandilar and everyone: Ed wasn't saying that you need repeated sex scenes to confirm orientation in a character OUTSIDE Realms fiction writing, ever.

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He was saying that back then, in Realms writing, that would pretty much have been the only way to make orientation clear, being as you weren't allowed to explicitly state anything about sexual matters, and being as the only hints he would have been able to sneak into print (kissing and hugging and occasional not-detailed glimpses of nudity) prove nothing at all about sexual orientation.
Ed has family visiting (again!) but is still charging along in the novel: into Chapter 19, and over halfway in total allowed wordcount, and still (he tells me) having a LOT of fun!
love to all,
THO

*****

On 4 August, 2009 THO said:- Hi, all.
gomez, Ed tells me the tale is post-Spellplague, the story briefly alludes to how Volo "made it" over that missing century (and why he's a bit "out of the loop"), but as for Mirt, Ed tells me he can't reveal the fate of everyone's favorite fat brawling moneylender yet.
Note that "yet."
And if you think it's silly so far, just wait . . .
love,
THO

*****

On 5 August, 2009 THO said:- ". . . a little too risqué for Candlekeep"?
Sage, IS there such a thing?
We may, of course, have to readily resort to euphemisms for certain pungent and commonly-known words, good old Anglo-Saxon and otherwise, but I'm sure the question itself can be posed and discussed.
The Realms is, after all, an imaginary world, and therefore anything said about is by definition theoretical in nature.
We can even use perfectly innocent (well, to a computer, if not to our minds with their well-developed imaginations) words, like "Peter" for the male naughty bit, "Bubbles" for feminine upperworks, "Velvet" for feminine lowerworks, "Warmcoin" for prostitution, and so on. See? Easy? I'll be happy to provide any demonstrations deemed necessary, and . . .
Just turn off the smoke alarms before we begin, will you? THERE'S a good boy.
Oooh, and THERE'S a good boy, too, I see.
See? Easy!
love,
THO

[...]

Hello again, all.
Zandilar, I bring you Ed's response, to specific (quoted) passages from your most recent post:

"That makes absolutely no sense whatsoever, because despite that policy, relationships of a sexual nature (only ever heterosexual, of course) still managed to make it onto the page, unless I am completely misremembering things. One of the very first Realms novel I ever read had a prominent relationship between two characters front and centre, and there was a couple of not-so-very subtle hints that Narm and Shandril had sex at some point (always of a fade to black nature, of course, but the hints of what they got up to behind that black curtain were there and very clear to me as an older teen (I might have been 18 or 19 at the time))."

Hints made it onto the page, but as I was saying: for a reader to think they “knew for sure” a character’s orientation from such hints would be a mistake. Yes, the heterosexual was toned down and kept, and the homosexual wiped away (for Code of Ethics reasons; one must remember that in certain states of the United States homosexuality was itself still illegal at this time, and references to it in fiction were by definition “obscene” in the criminally punishable sense - - as a Canadian, that made no sense to me, because if you can’t even mention something it can never be discussed and therefore dealt with in any way). My one sex scene with Narm and Shandril consisted of a single sentence, AFTER a long, long period (cut from the book) of the two of them concluding they’re entombed alive and will die there. It was this sentence (also edited out of the book): “They twisted and arched fiercely in the darkness.”
(A lot more than vague, but a lot less than detailed, yes?)

“So what you're saying is that you couldn't show any PDAs, but the Simbul sitting, half clad, on Elminster's lap telling him how lonely she was, was perfectly A-okay?”

Yep.

“I am not sure what to say, because the way I see it the status quo has been kept for the most part. I don't see much difference in between the way (heterosexual-seeming) relationships were portrayed in Spellfire to the ones portrayed in Blackstaff (just to give an early and lateish examples of Realms novels).
I think I must be missing something here.”

In the beginning, everything I wrote was toned down. Later on (STORMLIGHT and especially SILVERFALL) I was actually asked to “sex things up a bit. Just a BIT, now . . . but a bit.”

“Examples please! Enquiring minds want to know. (That is, of course, if you're allowed to say.)”

I’m not, yet. If times and places when and where permission arises, I will give examples.

“Sex is caught up with a lot of baggage (mostly rubbish) in our society. America in particular seems to hate it fiercely and yet can never get enough.
Still, we really don't need Realms porn (though that could be fun). You can have homosexual people represented in fiction, though, without it being porn or even tasteful erotica.”

True, True, True (and true), and true. You’re preaching to the perverted. ;}

“I may well have to go back and read the Knights trilogy again, but I do recall plenty of heterosexual activity and umm... nothing much on the other front. Maybe I missed something - I

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hate saying that, because as a writer myself I'm supposed to be a little more observant - and back in my high school days, I'd never have missed such hints. I guess part of it is just sheer disillusionment, never seeing what I'd like to see, and just... not looking for it anymore.
I have tried to read a non-Realms series of yours before, but I couldn't get into it for some reason. I'll have to give it another try because I go through phases in my reading. At the moment I'm reading quite a bit (I've been reading David Webber's Honor Harrington series, which have been quite good reads for anyone interested in military science fiction or strong female characters (or universes where the gender ratio seems to be close to 1:1))."

Yes, there was nothing much on the other front, except a few hints about Pennae. Over the years, one self-censors to give the publisher more of what they want with fewer battles. When I wrote about being able to hint and show more than ever before, I meant that I pretty much had free reign to shape my own tale, so that I could tell the story of Florin's sojourn with a certain spoiled lady noble when in the past it would have been vetoed flatly EVEN IF MADE CLEAR HE DIDN'T "TOUCH" HER, on the grounds that "readers and their parents will ASSUME that's what was happening, so we just can't 'go there.'"
My non-Realms fantasies aren't greatly concerned with matters sexual, but try (via a public library, to save your coins unless you really do like them) my Falconfar trilogy from Solaris or Niflheim books from Tor. Those two series begin with DARK LORD and DARK WARRIOR RISING, respectively. The first is the story of a real-world fantasy writer plunged into a fantasy world he THOUGHT he created, and the second is a dark elf story (not the spider-goddess-worshipping drow of D&D, but how I would have handled evil subterranean dark elves if Gary Gygax had never developed the drow the way he did). Only two books in each series have been published thus far, and it's made fairly clear that an entire race has a lesbian culture in the Falconfar setting, whereas among the dark elves, homosexual norms depend on one's faith and profession (priestesses of a certain deity, "nobles" of a certain status), and it's individual preferences outside those groups. Weber writes superb militaristic sf, and not work-for-hire where editorial decisions are binding.

"I didn't think you were calling for more sex scenes. To be honest, that wouldn't bother me at all (and I'd be quite happy to see more, but I know the audience that the novels are aimed at, and understand why it would be inappropriate). What I am bothered by is the implication that homosexual relationships are only defined by the sex that occurs within them (and that usually means only anal intercourse, because obviously lesbians are about as real as the Easter Bunny). You might not have meant it, but it is there. It's actually a common assertion by the anti-gay lobby, which is why the unfortunate implication touched a nerve.
I am also rather puzzled by the last bit there - you could only show their inclinations by turning them into shallower characters? How does that work? (Keeping in mind that I've never asked for confirmation, simply representation (not caring if the character is homosexual, bisexual, heteroflexible, transgender, or intersex).)"

I was saying those who object to depictions of homosexuals at all only define homosexuals by sex acts (not by affection, stable family or romantic relationships), but include kissing and hugging and even tender speech as "sex acts" (as opposed to demonstrations of affection, love, or friendship), so they can't see two guys hugging as anything BUT two gay males. I remember once hugging my (male) childhood best friend, whom I hadn't seen for two decades but literally bumped into at an airport, and having a Customs official snap, "Oh! Go get a ROOM, guys!" because she somehow couldn't conceive of two guys hugging because they were FRIENDS. If I give in to such thinking, inevitably I dumb my characters down to that level. :{
In my 2004 post, which was in reply to queries posed by someone else, I wasn't speaking of representation, only of confirmation - - and how it just wasn't possible under the limitations (if

you’re not allowed to “tell,” you must “show,” and if every character is multidimensional and may well have sexual relationships with other characters of both genders, then a repeated “showing” of sex acts with only one gender would be the only way left for confirmation).

“Tricked? *takes a deep breath and thinks things through this time*
Well, we are never sure about people's sexuality, why should we expect to be sure in a novel. On the other hand, Dumbledore was gay. We only found out because J K Rowlings said so after all the novels had been published. We had some hints given, but they only made sense in hindsight (much like the subtext about the relationship between Yanseldara and Vaerana in The Veiled Dragon only became apparent after the publication of the FRCS for 3rd Ed). Most people just assume "heterosexual until proven otherwise", which is why this is so very tricky.
For example, you've told us Myrmeen Lhal is bisexual. But if we were to go only from her appearances in novels and short stories, we would certainly conclude that she was heterosexual. While the fact that she is bisexual means we have representation, it's representation in the closet. No one who doesn't post to this forum and/or read your replies on this very subject would know, they would assume (and reasonably so) that she was straight.
There really has to be a better way, don't you think?”

Yes, I VERY MUCH agree that there has to be a better way.
I also agree re. Myrmeen Lhal, though in my “When Shadows Come Seeking A Throne” short story I hinted very strongly (it got toned down). So, yes, it is representation in the closet. Which is preferable to most publishers because they can get maximum sales by NOT offending the anti-gays, and still get sales from the gays who “know the truth.”
Yes, most people do indeed just assume "heterosexual until proven otherwise", but that’s the way of the world, not something any one person can change.
When I wrote “tricked,” I did NOT mean exclusively or even primarily in any sexual sense. I meant in the more general sense of avoiding deux ex machina situations and other writing creations where the writer essentially lies to the reader about story basics, and the reader is left feeling cheated when the deception is revealed (e.g. the murder mystery in which at the very end, the narrator character says, “Oh, I’m the killer. You didn’t realize that because I’ve been lying to you in what I told you of the killing, all along”). In short, fling the book across the room and cuss out the writer situations.
I know that having homosexual characters present and identified as such in the Realms, and depicted as people and not “crazy” or “freaks,” is very important to you and many other readers. For years (until he died of natural causes) I corresponded with a (male) fan who was convinced I was gay, or must be but didn’t know it yet, because of the way I wrote about male characters (in non-Realms, non-fantasy writing I did in the 1970s and 1980s). I come from a background of the Swinging Sixties, where “doing your own thing” and society accepting that was the desired goal, so most gays and lesbians, crossdressers and trannies-in-transition (the surgery was expensive and hard to arrange, so a changeover could take years) just wanted to be accepted as “neighbors and just plain folks” and did NOT want to be labeled or called out and made an example of - - and didn’t want to have to fight for rights; they wanted those rights to be freely given because they wanted society to agree with their thinking.
In short, they were hoping for a situation where sexual orientation didn’t MATTER to society in general. That’s the thinking that unconsciously guides me; to step out of that view I have to consciously think about things.
Zandilar, I hope I’ve finally explained “where I’m coming from” better.

love to EVERYONE,
Ed

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So saith Ed. Who has family visiting, but will try to get some more Realmslore replies to me before he has to drop everything and start the long drive down to GenCon.
love to all,
THO

*****

07 August 2009:-
Neither can I.
More than one part more to go, folks (I think), and I REALLY enjoyed Ed's fat elf Watch officer (cobbled together from seminar attendee suggestions, yes, but it's Ed who brings Olimbur and his Watch nemesis to life in all their back-and-forth verbal fencing).
Ahhh, just like gamers staring at the GenCon exhibit hall for their first time ever, THIS is fun to watch.

love to all,
THO

[...]

Hi again, everyone.
I forgot to mention: an interesting post-Apocalyse (near-future disaster) American sf anthology entitled GRANT'S PASS will be released at GenCon. Edited by Jennifer Brozek (who worked with Ed on CASTLEMOURN) and Amanda Pillar and released by Morrigan Books, it will be for sale at Author's Alley with Jennifer and Ed signing copies, on Saturday from 4-5 pm. Worth a look.
It's not about the disaster, it's about how people cope with the aftermath. If I remember rightly, the setup revolves around a young teen girl's Internet post about wanting to meet up with someone at Grant's Pass, if something bad happens.
So when something bad does happen, all sorts of folks who read the post remember it, and try to get to Grant's Pass, or think about doing so, or . . .
Look for it. Sounds interesting.
love to all,
THO

[...]

Hi again, all.
I just e-spoke with Ed, and he confirmed that the first three parts of "Volo Breaks A Hot Tale" posted thus far have brought us to right around the halfway mark of what he wrote.
So, Sage, lots more comedic action Realms goodness to come . . .
love,
THO

*****

09 August:-

Hi again, all.
Sage, Ed is pleased by your comments re. the campaign possibilities of the Spin A Yarn tale ("At last!" he e-mailed me. "The fringe benefits of every Yarn story, exposed for all to read!"), and also wants to say "You're very welcome" to Auzoros (who wished Ed a Happy Birthday back on page 86 of this thread).
Then Ed handed me a response to this, from The Sage (also from p86): "I've speculated

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previously, that this could indeed be the case. Since it's entirely likely that such alternate names will be referenced somewhere at some point in time -- either through song, story, or just plain Realmsian gossip for the most part.
I think the example of public knowledge regarding 'Rune of the Seven' is appropriate here -- in that, even the most common Realmsian, who has likely never heard of the Seven/Chosen or appreciated the fact that they are actually real and living beings, know this simple and old rhyme. In other words, your common Realms folk may know of or about such beings of incredible power -- either by name, reputation, or what your grandmother said she once saw. However, these are details almost entirely based on bards tales or rhymes like the 'Rune of the Seven', and they largely form the basis of most of the "public" knowledge regarding both the Seven and the Chosen. Not intimate details, and certainly nothing specific, just rumour, hearsay, and idle speculation in the local tavern on a cold and wintry night.
So while the individual names of the Chosen might change, they're names that are still connected to those touched by Mystra herself."
Ed comments:

There are even some rumors that certain "Chosen" have actually been three or four or more individuals, over time, taking turns being the same guise.
Though the truth about such rumors is for the most part unobtainable (or one can't trust the source to be telling the truth), for what it's worth, Elminster has said, more than once, that some of those rumors are true.

So saith Ed, sewing mysteries anew . . .
love to all,
THO

*****

11 August:-

Hi, all.
Nevorick, I'm away from my notes right now and so can't be certain of the Realms dating of our forays (they were brief, and spread over about a decade; it was Ed's earlier Company of Crazed Venturers who spent a lot of time in Undermountain), but I CAN tell you that the Horned Ring can teleport all over Waterdeep (everywhere inside the walls, and the harbor and its islands) AND about a stone's throw outside the walls in at least one area, due east of the southern gate into the city. How do I know this? Heh-heh; let's just say it's part of why my character is still alive . . .

love,
THO
P.S. Falling silent now as I try to fool my employer into letting me get within swooping distance of GenCon. I'll be traveling on business, at least as close as Ohio. We'll see if I can manage that last leap (probably not, but worth the proverbial old college try . . .)

*****

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19 August 2009:-

Hi again, all.
Sorry for my silence, as I went "on mission" in an attempt to once again sneak off to GenCon to see Ed and buy some games.
That try failed this year, though I did manage to chat with Ed on the phone Sunday evening. He was tired but very happy, and will be sending me some e-mails to post here soon.
Menelvagor, moonbows do indeed, as Sage has said, exist in the Realms, and are venerated in various ways by the clergy (and worshippers) of Selune, Eilistraee, Sehanine, Lurue, and others.
Hopefully I can cajole some details out of Ed for you, but it may take a while. The boy is awesomely busy.
love,
THO

[...]

Hi again, all.
I'm reading quickly down this page (93) of the thread to see what recent queries and posts have landed whilst I was running silent and deep, and herewith, some reactions:

Joran, EL AT THE MAGEFAIR has been specifically and accurately dated in lore. Isn't it in GHotR? If not, I'll try to track it down, though I'm hoping some scribe can answer it far faster than I can look it up...
And, yes, Ed has about as much unpublished HAUNTED HALLS material as what did see print; he designed it to be a campaign basis, not a short-and-tiny adventure (plans changed at TSR, without his being informed). However, most of it belongs to TSR/WotC, and so can't be reproduced here. Ed can probably paraphrase a lot of the Miior background, though . . .

Brimstone, by now you'll know from my earlier post that I didn't make it to the con this year. Ed will share what we can, as soon as he can.
One tidbit: apparently RPGA members who sign up to run tournaments will be able to get new (penned by RPGA members, and edited/checked by playtesting and by RPGA HQ/Chris Tulach) printed Realms adventures, in a "pack" of related adventures.
Bill Slaviscek also floated the idea of one-a-year printed Realms products at the seminar, and there was a roar of approval from the room.

More soon; delivery van at the door and must rush.
love to all,
THO

[...]

Hi again, all.
gomez, you're quite right re. the behaviour of the Sisters.
However, as Zandilar posits, it's not inherent in being a Chosen. Anyone with many enemies, lots of experience in dealing with bureaucracies and corrupt rulers and human sloth and organizational inertia loses patience with being patient.
However, there IS one way in which this tendency IS part of being a Chosen: loss of sanity. As they age, century after century, the Sisters either despair of their careers or become increasingly driven by their work, and this is reflected in an impatience with others who are less capable or energetic (or more cautious) or who won't see things "their way" (example: Khelben, not just the Seven).
This comes from extensive discussions with Ed, BTW, and isn't just my opinion.

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On August 2009:-

Hi again, all!
I am happy to bring you Ed's first post in a week or so, fresh from my inbox:

Jen and I are just back from my happiest GenCon ever. Yes, it beats the years of being named Dragon's Contributing Editor and winning Best Player at the AD&D Open and being presented with awards.
In part, it was because of the wedding of my dear friend Calye (Chainmail Girl to many gamers) and Phil Lacefield of GAMA fame. I had to give Calye away, and although Phil is a great guy and fast becoming a dear friend, I sure didn't want to; I wanted to keep her. Many eminent gamers attended the happy event, and I'm sure will agree with me that as radiantly beautiful brides go, Calye was stunning.
The axe she carried, Phil's short kilt, the superb ceremony conducted by Reverend Michael Webb (a great guy and longtime gamer), the dice given away, and watching all sorts of gamers dance or try to dance, all made it a memorable "you HAD to be there, your loss if not" event.
However, for me, that was the lesser part of this GenCon's happiness. The greater part, by far, was the surprise just-a-little-late 50th birthday party thrown for me by our very own Garen Thal (Brian Cortijo), who worked on it for the greater part of a year. He quizzed THO for the recipe of the chip dip that I inflict on my home gamers, and had me make a bowl right there and then, I was gifted with a shadow box by Jeff Thetford remembering Brian Thomsen, Brian had "it's okay . . . I'm Canadian" T-shirts made up for Jen and moi, and scored me a signed copy of the new Pathfinder core rulebook, and best of all, Brian assembled, edited, and had printed and bound a one-of-a-kind book of remembrances, FIFTY RINGS ROUND WOODED GREEN, that is now my most treasured possession.
It's full of stories, memories, and friendly joshing and jokes by many of my longtime friends, including some of my players, but also gamers and gaming luminaries such as (I'm just going to list in order of appearance, or I'll forget someone!) Jim Butler, Julia Martin, Erik Scott de Bie, Jen Brozek, our very own Wooly Rupert (and, hey, your e-mails finally came through; expect a reply the other end of this coming weekend), Jim Lowder, Paul Kemp, Thomas Reid, Steve Sullivan, Miranda Horner, Wolfgang Baur, James Davis, Mary-Liz Allen, Cam Banks, Brian Gute, Sean Reynolds, Stan!, Elaine Cunningham, Wes Schneider, George Krashos, Lester Smith, Karen Boomgaarden, Carrie Bebris, Jeff Grubb, Larry Elmore, Bob Salvatore, Jeff Thetford, Margaret Weis, The Sage (yes, our Sage, here at the Keep), Peter Archer, Brian James, Jaleigh Johnson, Richard Lee Byers, Calye, Rosemary Jones, Steven Schend . . . and of course, Brian Cortijo himself.
I can't begin to describe how touched I am by this, how honoured, and how fortunate I feel to have such a friend, and so many friends good and true. I WISH you could all read this book; it has two superb fantasy stories in it (and some old scribblings of mine, too), a number of neat game contributions, some topnotch art, and . . . lots and lots of love.
I now have a new book of essential Realmslore, and feel very loved.
Brian, take a bow. Take LOTS of bows. Let there be hugs all around. I will be thanking people properly for years, but I want every scribe and casual visitor at the Keep to know just how magnificent it feels to have such good friends, led by a peerless one.
Thank you.
THANK YOU.
Okay, time for hugs and backrubs and ticklings.
THO wants me to promise to answer Realmslore questions more often and faster, and I do. Oh, I do.
(Watch me fall short, but darn it, I do.)
love to all,
Ed

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Well done, Brian and all of you who had a hand in this. You've made the Old Mage very happy, and that puts you all in my good books.
So,
love to you all from ME, too!
(And I'm prepared to prove it! Yes, I'm well aware Ed is, too, but I'm curvier and less hairy.)
Kisses,
THO

*****

20 August:-

Hi again, all. Heh, Brimstone, I enjoyed GAMER FANTASTIC very much. Like most anthologies, some strong stories, some weaker. Some light fluff, and some . . . well, Ed's tale was a romp, Brian's swan song was a romp with razor-sharp edges, and Ed's eulogy was probably as classy as Gary will get, aside from what close family chooses to say.
Ed also wanted me to post this (and will send along a Realmslore reply soon, too!):

I also had the distinct pleasure of meeting Erin Evans in person, for the first time - - and, ahem, being shadowed by her for Wizards website purposes - - at GenCon, and found her delightful and nice (I already knew she was clever, witty, and a sensitive writer, and you will, too, when you read THE GOD CATCHER, next in the "Eddie Presents Waterdeep" series, and due out in February 2010, I believe).
I flirted outrageously, she took it all in stride, I had great fun with Shelly and Laura (another first meeting), and the fun, good-natured, and ever-stalwart Marty Durham (look for a "Book Nook" You Tube interview we did in a hotel room at the Marriott). Erin and Bruce Cordell, both typing furiously, were co-scribes at this year's Spin A Yarn, which has much to do with pudding, thanks to the inspired contributions of a certain Mr. Rowe known here at the Keep (another first meeting, and another pleasure!).

By the way, if Susan, the great and long-suffering helmslady of the Realms (and much missed at GenCon, sniff) reads this: I did no work at all on the novel during GenCon, but am hard back at it today, with another chapter rolling out under my flying fingers. Should be in early, in first draft! Revealed at GenCon, the title of this unfolding work: ELMINSTER MUST DIE!
I miss all of you I saw at the con greatly, and those who couldn't make it, I hope to see next year (if Jen's health holds out: as long as she can withstand the rigors of the trip, I intend to be at each and every GenCon; I'm attended numbers 8, 13, and 17 to date).
So next year, when you need a Realms fix that's not set in Waterdeep or the Wilds or looking over Drizzt's shoulder: there'll be a new series of standalone but related mass market paperbacks by divers authors . . . and then there'll be ELMINSTER MUST DIE!

So saith Ed. Who is still bubblingly happy!
love to all,
THO

[...]
Hi again, all.
As promised, Ed has come through with a Realmslore comment, this one in response to

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Zandilar's response to Joran Nobleheart's "what kind of man would it take to win the Lady Bard's heart?" question.
Heeeere's Ed:

Zandilar, as always, you are dead-on accurate everywhere where you aren't darned-closed accurate. Please stick your oar in, anytime. (Sorry, haven't stopped flirting from GenCon yet. Go ahead, hit me. I like it.)

Maxer is still around (though he "goes on missions" farther and farther afield, empowered by Mystra and Azuth, at least until the Spellplague hits and probably destroys him as the Weave goes down), so, yes, it WOULD "depend on if your character felt like sharing." Maxer is completely generous about sharing, because he loves Storm - - and her den-mothering of all Harpers, and her ongoing love affairs and friendships with many, many folk (from halfling, gnome, and dwarven to the more numerous human, elven, and half-elven, all of both genders but probably about three-quarters male) are all part of the woman he loves.

Your summation of Storm's preferences is dead-on accurate, though you are correct in thinking her temper was a little overblown in SHADOWDALE, and her customary character a bit different than portrayed therein. The deceitful are her pet hate, but she makes exceptions for deceivers who are trying not to hurt and telling "little white lies" and other kind deceptions, as opposed to evil deceptions. Yes, no alpha males, and yes, she's strong but can and does love to yield and be soft (and be dominated during sex, but no "that means I can lord it over you the rest of the time" stuff, or the mate is GONE). You are also dead-on correct in this: "I expect that any potential mate would also have to settle for being with her when they can - this for two reasons, the first that she's often off "saving the world behind the scenes" and they may not be powerful enough to go along with her (ie: they would be a liability), and the second is that I don't expect anyone would get total monogamy out of her. Also, I don't think male gender would be mandatory in a mate, though I suspect the underlying preference would be in that direction (sadly enough)."
For the record, Storm has "been with" female partners for decades at a time in the past, and during her youth, as a slave, those were the only sort of willing relationships (as opposed to male captors forcing themselves on her) she had, for some time. Yet, yes, she does tend to enjoy guys. As I once had her comment, in a scene that got firmly cut by Brian Thomsen for obvious reasons (but not until after he'd chuckled over it and said, "Nicely done. We can't use it, of course - - but nicely done all the same"), "They have this funny, funny handle, that feels so good within, reaching up for the back of your throat."
Ahem.

So saith Ed. Ahem, indeed, Old Mage. Down from the GenCon high, there's a good lad.
He'll be back with more tomorrow, folks (in fact, he's here all week! Try the beans!).
love to all,
THO

[...]

Hi AGAIN, folks!
Ed just sent me another e-mail:

Kes Alandel, it was a pleasure to meet you, too. One of the delights of GenCon is actually getting to stop and talk to people we only know as names on a board or at the other end of an e-mail. So next time, instead, you'll get to hook up again with your GenCon friends you only meet at the con. :}
And shop and eat and game. My GenCon secret? I've not signed up for a single event in YEARS. For me, it's all meeting friends, stopping by booths and playing demos of new games, shopping, dining with friends (pickup gaming at such opportunities is free), stopping to enjoy the medieval performers, walking the exhibit hall and art show and seeing all that glorious art and meeting the artists, going to Author's Alley and meeting the authors there, and dropping by the Wizards seminars (if you don't have a ticket, you might have to stand, but they're sure not going to turn you away).
Come back whenever you can manage it - - I have, for years, and on the rare occasions when I pass through Indianapolis at other times than GenCon, it always feels really weird that the con isn't going on.
One hint: in a year when you can't afford GenCon, plan on attending a small local con instead, like the excellent Pentacon in Fort Wayne (early November, every year) or U-Con in Ann Arbor, or any of a dozen other good ones. Origins in Columbus in June is the closest thing in size to GenCon, and none of them are "the big show," but they're still great. Paizo held their own con in June this year in Seattle for the first time, and it sounds great, too...

Also, to Pierre-Luc: the only public (as opposed to secret, or members-only like the War Wizards' training sessions) school of magic in Cormyr or the Dales in 1479 DR that I know of, thus far, is a small academy called Arlrandur's, in Marsember (run by Arlrandur, a "renegade" War Wizard who increasingly is suspected of being an undercover War Wizard, identifying prospects and potential foes and troublemakers).
However, I'll check my notes and ask around, and see if there are any hints of others. In Sembia and Westgate, YES, there are several...

So saith Ed. Creator of the Realms and its reigning Lorelord, as always . . .
love to all,
THO

[...]

Hi again, all.
gomez, you didn't pester Ed too much; in fact, he was worried that he hadn't made enough time for you, and will try to do so next time (this was another year of Ed's schedule morphing a lot). So rest easy on that score.

Menelvagor, there's nothing in published Realmslore about the early slavery experiences of some of the Seven beyond bare mentions of Minark the Salt Torturer (who wounded slaves, then put salt into the open wounds, then bound the wounds over with leather, then watered the leather to make it tighten, grinding the salt in) and rescue from him, plus a few single-line references to Storm and some of her sisters being used to being chained, branded, whipped, marched nude for days (chained together, sleeping in the open still chained together), and so on. The Code of Ethics of TSR prohibited publication of such details; slavery was simply something to be fought against or rescued from.

Joran, I can tell you from playing with Ed as a DM and watching him DM two other groups of players through the Haunted Halls, that Miior definitely WOULD form a relationship with one or more of her rescuers, for two reasons: she always wants to be linked to a stronger male as a

protector, provider, and dupe (someone she can frame and/or steal from), and she is looking for a real mate (in other words, she will feign "falling for" a PC adventurer, strong and wealthy human male preferred, but either gender and any race if someone else seems more useful, and she's a consumate actress, BUT she can very easily genuinely fall in love with either her "chosen dupe" or someone else, and with that love will come loyalty, so she may later stand beside/support/return swindled loot to her dupe, and become his/her staunch partner).

So there you have it, from Ed to me to you...

love to all,
THO

[...]

Hi again, all.
I'm reposting this from another thread, here at the Keep. It's my summation of what's PROBABLY going to be in ELMINSTER MUST DIE!
". . . Ed tells me it was two-thirds finished in rough draft before he left for GenCon, and he's having a BLAST writing it. Here are some speculations on my part about its contents that are based on reading between the lines of some Ed comments:
Elminster appears, and so does at least one of the Seven Sisters, probably more than one.
Cormyr is involved in some way, probably as the setting for some of the book.
It's likely set in 1479 DR, though perhaps not wholly . . .
There are some nobles in the story but it's NOT primarily a story about rulers and nobles."

Not wanting to get Ed in trouble, or influence him as he's writing what is, after all, a first draft (or misinform any scribes, when the book may morph some, in the weeks ahead), I'm not going to add much to this or try to get him to add anything, until I have his say-so, and he will only give me that when he has approval from Wizards.

I can impart this much: I have the feeling that Ed is happy and pouring out his creative self as enthusiastically as ever, that he's getting better as a writer, and that the age of darned good Realms novels is FAR from over. Ed has been inspired by the quality of the "Eddie Presents" books about Waterdeep, and loves his editor.
(No, NOT the way you're thinking, you in the back wearing the leer. BAD scribe!)

love,
THO

*****

21 August:-

Hi, all.
As I understand it, since moving to Indy, GenCon has to shift around (in terms of dates) to avoid the Indianapolis 500, the Brickyard 500 (car races at the nearby Speedway, for those not North American), and other events that will snap up all the hotel rooms in the vicinity. So it won't always be over the "same weekend" in August.
It officially starts 6 am Thursday with DAWN PATROL, but in recent years so many events and registrations (and for anyone not in the continental USA, Zandilar, like you and Ed and me, "Will Call" con badge pickup, which involves lining up and presenting your passport as photo ID) have taken place on Wednesday, that the last half of Wednesday is "part of the con" (just not part of shopping the exhibit hall, which opens 10 am Thursday). I recommend staying in Indy Sunday

night, or it'll feel like you're leaving a party that's still raging.
love,
THO

[...]

Oh, and Zandilar: Ed tells me that with all the food, drink, games, and suchlike he buys, plus his hotel room and parking, attending a GenCon costs him about 4 thousand US dollars. Not including airfare.
However, he also says that if you can curb your game buying (and there's parcel shipping available right outside the exhibit hall, in the convention center lobby; ask "Uncle" Wes Nicholson all about that, because he's been attending GenCon from Oz for seemingly decades; he's a Sydneysider, if I remember rightly), and aren't buying dinner for lots of folks, and avoid the pricey restaurants, and aren't parking a car, you COULD do GenCon in some style on about 1800 US dollars. Or bare-bones for about 1300.
Ed also wants you to know that if you are attending GenCon in a year in which he does (he intends to be at every one until he dies, but if his wife's health deteriorates much more, he may miss a few years), he'll buy you dinner and lunch and hand you cash to cover more meals when he can't be at your table (he has some "duty meals" with various publishers and game companies, and private munches with longtime friends, too), if that helps.
Oh, and if you bring a flogger or just make do with whatever's handy, he'll arch to meet and greet the blows.
Hmm. I think I'd like to watch.
love,
THO

*****

21 August:-

Hi again, all.
Jorkens, "Cormesta" was a tent settlement located in various spots on the edges of the great forest that contains the ruins of Myth Drannor and borders or surrounds many of the Dales.
In other words, it was moved about by the elves to avoid Zhentarim and brigand depredations, plus attempts by wealthy Sembians to dominate it. The elves established it in the late 1330s, and it appeared in various forms until around 1362 DR or so; they intended it to be a "trading fair" where humans and other races could meet and trade with elves, hopefully without blundering deeper into the forest.
It served its purpose, but wasn't a shining success - - other than as a way for the elves to learn and identify some of the Sembian and Zhent traders who were most keen to acquire elven magic and goods, by whatever means (bribery, murder, robbery, etc. as well as through trade). Luvon saw its usefulness in this regard (as in: "Brings the b***tards to one place, so we can save on time and foot-sores and arrows in taking them down," though those actual words would never, of course, be uttered by Greencloak), but did not think that its establishment was that great an idea.
For one thing, its moving about led to wild tavern-tales and expeditions to search for "lost Cormesta," and beliefs about all sorts of magic elves used to hide the place, which would of course be very useful to humans if hey could get their hands on such Art, by any means.
All the above comes from Ed's notes and discussions with him over the years.
love,
THO

[...]

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Hello again, all.
I bring you the latest Realmslore reply from Ed:

Jorkens, elves left word at the inns all across the Dales, then functioned as guides to Cormesta for interested traders.

Thaura,arth, I wish I could say more about the Nine right now, but I can't; they're under a shiny new NDA. Which should in itself tell you something. ;}

So saith Ed. A subtle hinter, as always! (As in: as subtle as brick.)
love to all,
THO

*****

23 August:-

Hi again, all.
I bring this tidbit, from Ed of the Greenwood:

Hi, Jakk. Regarding CASTLEMOURN, my honest answer is: right now, I don't know about its future. I have to chat with Jamie Chambers and Margaret Weis and see what their take on things is/are; I still have (eventual, future) plans for novels set in Castlemourn, with or without MWP involvement. I'd like to see Brian Gute and Jenn Brozek (plus three other writers who must remain secret for now, two because I haven't fully discussed this with them yet, and the other because of the uncertainty and his situation) get a chance to spread their wings and do Castlemourn fiction, probably a line of novels. However, I do want you to know that as far as I'm concerned, Castlemourn is NOT dead, and I retain rights to the setting.
And then there's Embersea . . .

So saith Ed. Who I know chatted with a Tor editor at GenCon, and of course is now working with Paizo and Herobits and Goodman Games, not to mention Open Design and of course WotC.
love to all,
THO

[...]

Hi again, all. Tidbit time again, courtesy of Ed!
Back on page 80 of this thread, The Sage asked this (as a followup to a query from Markustay about Ed telling us about any Chosen who might reside outside Faerûn): “Ed, I'd also like to hear more about any Chosen of Mystra who might reside [or, maybe, once did reside] beyond Toril itself, perhaps somewhere else out among the reaches of Realmspace?”
Ed replies:

Some of what I’d like to say is under several NDAs, but I can mention one such Chosen:

Narandor the Metal Mage. An embittered, cynical hermit (think Eeyore in the Pooh tales, for disposition), this archwizard of early Halruaa ended up on the wrong end of a spell-duel and got mangled horribly, in magics that kept him alive to feel the pain as a foe's sequence of minor acid-burst and transforming spells wracked him (envisage, if you will, spells that shield the target from system shock and unconsciousness, and shapeshift them constantly to heal and reform around budding cysts in the interior of which flesh-searing acid is developed; the cysts grow and then burst, showering the surrounding flesh of the victim with agonizing "melting" effects; the cysts have an interior coating that resists and contains the acid until the cyst ruptures).

Debilitated but unable to die, Narandor writhed in helpless pain until some of his former apprentices found him. They tried to quell the spells riding him, but managed only to isolate them in several of his limbs—which they then blasted into oblivion. Narandor lost consciousness, and they debated as to what to do for him; slay him out of mercy, transform him utterly, transfer his sentience into a beast-body, or - - their eventual choice - - replace his missing limbs with flowmetal, something many Halruaans had been working on. This is in effect "living" metal that bonds with an organic body and slowly poisons it, but in the meantime can function as replacement limbs, digits, etc. Flowmetal's poisoning has never been overcome, and its use was later abandoned as spells were developed that could "infect" it swiftly to cause death of someone bonded to it in a handful of breaths, but Narandor received a right arm and shoulder, a right leg, and a left knee, all of replacement flowmetal - - which he has to this day. He counteracted the poisoning by devising a spell that shifts the chemical balance of his remaining organic body constantly, so that it flows in shape, weeps a pus of ceaseless discharges, and can grow functional fingers, breasts, crude press-lungs, false eyes, etc. as he wills.

Narandor was already a master of skyship design, and he sailed one of his ships high into the sky and tethered it to a magically-levitated chunk of rock (all that remained of a blasted-to-dust "skycastle" fortress, that had once belonged to a Netherese archwizard until several rivals decided to destroy him whilst he was in residence).

Then Narandor used his spells to cover the rock with edible mosses, lichens, and mushrooms, and settled down in isolation to devise new spells. His experiments were long and studded with more failures than successes, but he eventually achieved two things: the ability to ensnare moisture and shield his home from the full heat of the sun, so as to keep that dampness and preserve his plants from baking on the rock - - and the ability to move his home through the skies with fair precision. Whereupon, of course, he set about traveling around collecting other aerial fragments, and "growing" his home into his own private little jungle, plus bits and pieces of several ruined skyships and aerial abodes.

Mystra imbued him with some of her silver fire (with his enthusiastic agreement) not to have him be a meddling "remake the world" Chosen, but to store some of herself where others were unlikely to come into contact with it. For his part, Narandor gained a permanent freedom from the flowmetal poisoning effect (the silver fire offsets it), Mystra's love, gratitude, and presence whenever he grows lonely and calls for it, and philosophical debates from time to time with Mystra or various of her servitors, who now act as Narandor's agents in Faerûn, to bring him back items he desires (mainly substances for spell experimentations).

Narandor is now fairly contented, though he retains his doleful manner, and lives his life making various exotic wines, researching spells, and using his magics to observe events on Faerûn far below.

This is all pre-Spellplague, of course; what befalls him when the Weave fails is up to you; I'd suspect his aerial home would be sent on a wild ride, and eventually crash to earth - - but I'd not count Narandor out as conveniently dying in the crash. I'd suspect he'd survive the Spellplague, as a disfigured, part-metal wandering wizard who keeps to himself and stays hidden as much as possible. Extremely bad news for any arrogant young warlock or wizard who encounters and misjudges him, of course. ;}

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So saith Ed. Creator of the Realms, and spinner of masterful little tidbits of additional Realmslore (like this one) whenever we can nudge him into doing so.
And I (she purred) am a nudger from way back . . .

love to all,
THO

*****

23 August:-

Hi again, all.
sfdragon, I sent your query off to Ed, and he sent back:

There are vague, nebulous, no-publisher-attached plans for a setting book, yes. However, don't expect to see one soon. The final novel in the trilogy, also called FALCONFAR, has been submitted to the publisher, accepted, and is expected to appear in February 2010.
I say "expected" because there's a complicating factor (which is also why setting book plans remain nebulous): Black Library put the Solaris imprint up for sale, and any new owner may well have different plans (and interpretations of current books and series) than Solaris has right now.
However, yes, I would very much like to do a Falconfar setting book. Even a boardgame. :}

So saith Ed. Builder of worlds upon worlds...
love,
THO

*****

24 August:-

Heh. Zandilar, you speak with the calm, reasoned voice of truth.
So at odds with early Halruaa, with all of its Netherese treachery, insanity, paranoia, backbiting, and wild reasoning.
I often wish a little more of Ed's Halruaa had been published, before we got the FR16 (it was 16, wasn't it? I'm away from my lore-library right now) and then Elaine's versions, both of which deal with the later, more tradition-bound and "ordered society" evolution of the land.
Sage, your query has been e-hurled in Ed's direction, to see what he'll cough up.
love to all,
THO

*****

26 August:-

Sorry, Jakk. The "original" Moonshaes are indeed behind the mighty NDA wall.
Some scribes have seen them when (the Ed roast at a GenCon some years back, for instance) the "master" map of the Realms has been exhibited (Ed's photocopies all taped together and marker-coloured; glimpses of it can be seen in the D&D 40th anniversary coffee table book, again from a few years back), but neither TSR nor WotC have ever officially published them anywhere.

However, who knows? Ed will try again to get them into print, somehow and somewhere, and we'll see.
One can but try.
love,
THO

*****

27 August:-

Hi again, all.
Right on, gomez and Jorkens.
You need not worry about the Realms, Zandilar. The number of burgeoning projects Ed is involved in or being consulted on or hearing about bodes very well for the Realms as a continuing published presence.
Not in the "half dozen sourcebooks and same number of novels plus comics and other extras, per year" form it used to be in - - but then, if you look across the industry, NOTHING is getting that sort of coverage these days (Warhammer comes closest, but only if you consider all the different novel lines still "one"). The era of the Net and the PDF and the online magazine and web enhancements have all hit, and wrought their changes.
Me, I'd still prefer the bookshelf of tangible books I could read, and re-read (and buy still-in-print replacements for, when they finally fell apart through heavy usage and love), but as Ed often says: "I'm not running a game company. I'd be a disaster at it if I tried."
love,
THO

*****

29 August:-

Hi again, all. I bring the latest words of Ed:

Vallon, welcome, and thank you very much for your kind words about ELMINSTER IN HELL. I'm rather proud of that one, myself. :} Right now, I'm contemplating putting old El through a rather different sort of hell, but NDAs prevent me from saying anything more useful about that.
Sage, you asked about Narandor's skyship designs. Narandor was one of the first to move past wanting to design sleek, "super sea-sailing vessel" ship shapes, into gigantic round discs with a central torus or "bulge" full of living or cargo quarters, with multiple linked-control wings, rudders, and steering vanes all over the ship. He kept refining these designs, in various sizes, most of them looking increasingly less like something meant to fly - - but they were incredibly durable because they had tripod feet, could suffer the loss of several wings and fins and vanes and still maneuver and fly with some precision, and were riddled with internal braces, buttresses, and "crumple zones" (not a term anyone in the Realms would use, of course). As a result, many of them - - more than three dozen - - still survive, crashed in mountainous regions or buried under city buildings or drowned deep in seas but serving aquatic races as abodes. Narandor even devised ships that "gave birth" to smaller gigs or launches that could be used to ferry passengers and small cargoes to and from the larger ships, or to escape them if need be.

So saith Ed. Who will return with more Realmslore late tomorrow, if possible (he has family visiting again, hence the slowdown in his Realmslore offerings).
love to all,
THO

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Edit: Oops, I dropped the last two lines Ed wrote to Vallon from Ed's post. Here they are (with apologies to Elaine, who is named in them):
I share your love of Elaine's books, too, and have done from my first glimpse of ELFSHADOW, so long ago, when I got to really revel in Waterdeep brought to life so well that throughout the entire book, there was never a jarring moment for me; it was literally my imagined city brought to life (with GREAT new characters, too!). I loved working with Elaine, much later, on CITY OF SPLENDORS, and would cheerfully write half a dozen sequels if Wizards would let us, and we could do them all together, and Elaine wanted to; I want to see more of "what happened next" to all of the surviving characters, plus the ones we had to trim for lack of wordcount.

Sorry, Ed and Elaine. Two long and important sentences almost fell into oblivion, there!
My bad. Ed, I'll expect my usual punishment. Elaine, feel free to join in if you're that way inclined, too.
love,
THO

*****

30 August:-

Hi again, all. I bring you once more the words of Ed, this time in response to Blueblade's recent query: "Dear Ed and THO, I ran into a gamer earlier today who once played in an Ed-run Realms adventure, and he told me to ask Ed to tell me "the story of the six dragons fighting in a castle, and wrecking it," apparently while he and other PC adventurers were inside. So, Ed, being as this is one I've GOT to hear . . . please?"
Ed replies:

Ah, that was back in the 1980s; a standalone 4-hour Realms adventure I ran at several conventions, usually at charity events. That one concerned a long-abandoned, ruined castle (one of the Ghost Holds in Battledale) whose upper floors had been gutted by a long-ago fire. A wounded, pursued-by-former-comrades Sembian thief had hidden loot in one of its cellars, intending to return, and been slain before he could. Monsters were now lairing in the place, and the PCs are a band of young novices out to seek their fortunes, hoping to earn a few coins from alchemists in Ordulin and Yhaunn who've promised to pay well for certain sorts of beast scales, blood, claws/talons, tails, and internal organs.
It was a low-level dungeon crawl, with more mysteries and minor encounters than really tough beasts, a few undead, no "traps" . . . and one big "teach players when the have their characters just flee like heck" moment: if a certain long-lost Netherese magic item is disturbed, it is activated, sending out images and silent "mind-calls" across most of the Sea of Fallen Stars and Moonsea North region to lure dragons. Unwitting hatchlings and immature young drakes will be drawn to it, but a few of the elder wyrms will recognize it for just what it is, and come at speed to destroy it. It can be used to compel (command, perfectly) dragons by those who know how, and some evil dragons may succumb, once close to it, to the temptation to seize and wield it against other dragons, to turn them into its slaves.
So what happens, if the PCs disturb this item, is that the elder wyrms come winging to the castle in a frantic race to get to the item first and destroy it (or if beset by other dragons, use it to force them away or to fight each other so as to leave them time enough to destroy it [or if they're evil, goad all other dragons into slaughtering each other so as to leave it with as few rivals as possible, ere they need to sleep, and "turn the item off" ere hiding it in their own hoard or elsewhere]).

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The dragons literally tear apart the upper floors of the castle searching for the item ans fighting each other; the PCs risk being buried alive, and so must come up into the midst of this battle, and become its focus. What happens then depends on their actions (throwing the item away and fleeing, trying to use the item against the dragons, trying to just flee with it, and so on). There is nothing in the adventure that tells the PCs how to use the item or what it does, so they are unlikely to "do the wisest thing" except by observation of the dragons, swift reactions, or chance. They are also extremely unlikely to be able to control the dragons well enough for a clear triumph; the item in effect causes the adventure to end in a frantic whirlwind of fleeing, fighting, and trying to figure out what to do. Several parties saw one member either foolishly or heroically die in the jaws of a dragon, item in hand, trying to control a situation where far too many dragons are coming at the PCs from far too many directions to cope with all at once.
Heh-heh.

So saith Ed. Who isn't usually this, ah, "mean" to players, but enjoyed posing this challenge to them. When he sprang it on the Knights, we hurled the item into the deepest cellar, and as the dragons swarmed after it, clawing each other and at the walls and earth around, our mages blasted the damaged ruins so as to collapse it all down on their heads - - long enough for us to take ourselves elsewhere. In a farukking hurry!
love to all,
THO

*****

3 September:-

Hi again, all.
Ed is inundated with family again (!), but reports that the book is three-quarters done (in first draft), and is still humming along.
George, one of those mighty Thayans would be a guy called "Aumoaran," about which I know only his name. We Knights saw him from afar, momentarily, once. Able to blast (most) zulkirs into nothingness without much apparent qualm, preparation, or fuss.
love,
THO

*****

5 September:-

Hi again, all.
Menelvagor, when you ask: "Ah, but what does The Simbul feel towards Aumoaran? Respect or fear? And what about Lauzoril? WHat does she feel regarding him?"
I'm awfully tempted to reply:

You'll have to ask her. She's right over yonder. Ask VERY nicely, and be sure you have an escape route ready. Me, I'll stand well back.
love,
THO
P.S. Don't worry, your post has been sent to Ed. He's inundated with family right now (yes! again!), but I'm sure he'll reply soon after he digs himself out. The book is still coming along nicely, he tells me; deep in Chapter 28, right now.

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[...]

Hi again, all. Baleful, Ed doesn't know the answers you seek. Yet.
My guess is that FALCONFAR will be delayed, because although Ed submitted a complete first draft and Solaris accepted it, negotiations were apparently well under way at that point - - so my guess is that none of the editorial work (reading the MS and requesting revisions, if any, copyediting, even perhaps procuring cover art, though THAT should have been done if the usual timetables were being followed) has taken place.
However, the book IS finished, Ed enjoyed doing it and thinks its rounds off the trilogy nicely, and we should all see it in the fullness of time.
So, stay tuned . . .
love,
THO

[...]

Hi again, all. A surprise Realmslore e-mail from Ed has just arrived, this time in response to Longtime Lurker re. this: “Dear Ed, Years back you gave a talk (at one of the GenCons you were a Guest of Honor at, but I can't recall which one) during which you mentioned a merchant character who bred small lizards for cooking-pot use in the Vast, who was traveling with caravans through Cormyr and Sembia trying to establish regular buyers for his lizards, and not encountering many takers except in Marsember.
What was that character's name, did you develop any more about him, did you use him in play (e.g. with THO and the players of the Knights), and what was his fate?
Thanks!”
Ed replies:

That was Moristro “Manycoins” Haelandram from Tantras, originally from Calaunt but fled from there to its rival city, and soon farther away from the reach of his “unfriends” in Calaunt.
The “Manycoins” nickname was a mocking one, a needling slap from more successful merchants, as Moristro was something of a bumbler who was constantly running out of funds and having to borrow or improvise. However, when he hit upon stewing or fire-roasting the lizards known as “rocktails” (abundant and fast-breeding insect and plant-eaters akin in shape and looks to the real-world lizards sometimes called “bearded dragons,” though slate-gray rather than orange/white/red-streaked in hue, and far more suited to colder, damper climes than the hot-arid-terrain bearded dragons), he had something that finally supported him. He got quite good at seasoning and preparing lizards so as to be very flavorful (think a cross between venison and good roast beef, only always moist and soft rather than tough, even when reheated for the sixth time), and by persistence built up a trade among traveling merchants and backland innkeepers, who in turn slowly “sold” their patrons on eating “tails.” Marsember was full of folk who added “tails” to their daily fare with swift enthusiasm, but over the next two decades Moristro built up a solid trade throughout Sembia, the Dales, and coastal Cormyr.
The Knights met him only once, briefly, and were busy just keeping themselves alive at the time (no interaction occurred), and Moristro was getting older and stouter but wealthier, with careful building purchases in Saerloon, Suzail, and Teziir and lumber investments in Archendale and upland Sembia, when the Spellplague hit.
His fate, after that, is unknown to me, but I’d say he was close to marrying, settling down to a successful life as a shopkeeper (almost certainly in Saerloon), and having a large family to carry on his various businesses. However, in your Realms campaign, feel free to steer him elsewhere; I’ve written nothing at all “official” about him, and probably won’t have occasion to. So, have fun!

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So saith Ed. Who still has family visiting but has just written a “fun little struggle scene” in the novel he’s working on, and is tired but happy.
love to all,
THO

*****

6 September:-

Hi, Kuje.
Ed and Calye are old, old friends (not lovers, but good friends, who e-chat and dine out at many cons). Longtime Realms fans may recall that when TSR presented Ed with an "Elminster staff" done to look like the one painted on the first Elminster hardcover, they asked Calye - - as Chainmail Girl - - to present it to him (he was in costume as "Elminster"). I believe Calye has no living male relatives, so she asked Ed to "give her away" to Phil at their wedding, and Ed was happy to oblige.
Ed tells me it was a GREAT wedding, by the way. The bride and groom are such fun people, and their core friends ditto, with lots of zany gaming pals attending, the best wedding service from the reverend Ed has ever heard (ya gotta love it when he begins, a la Peter Cook in THE PRINCESS BRIDE, with "Mahwage!")
Ed is very happy for Phil and Cal, whom he says are a great couple. The wedding was a blast, what with the gown, the axe, Phil's VERY short kilt, the garter hijinx, the wedding cake (dice), the great hotel (Pullman railway cars permanently parked INSIDE the hotel - - third floor, yet - - serving as hotel suites) . . . the works. Ed loved it, and said Calye "looked even better than when she's in chainmail."

love,
THO

[...]

Gallantly said, BB. Gallantly said.
However, I think Ed meant Calye was both regal and radiant, as only brides can be on The Day, and that her happiness and the spectacular dress made her look truly exceptional.
As opposed to merely a gamer's wet dream.
I can't say, as I (sniff) wasn't there. I didn't manage to make GenCon this year, despite my sneakiest efforts. Ed tells me he doubts he can persuade them to do the wedding again for me next year, too.
(Pout)
Ah, well, I'll just have to console myself with thoughts of the consumation.
love,
THO
P.S. Er, now where in the Realms WERE we?

*****

12 September:-

Dear Ed and THO,
Is there anything more you can tell me about the north beyond Glister, in the just-pre-Spellplague era? Are there any permanent settlements or recurring encampments that humans (among other races) use? Any ruins of a scale that humans can use for shelter?

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Thank you.
Hi, Baleful Avatar. There ARE ruins, because some of the Knights once did shelter in some, during a howling blizzard. Can't remember enough about them to tell you anything useful, so we'll have to wait for Ed to tell us all more.
love,
THO

*****

14 September:-

Hi again, all. Baleful Avatar, I found more of my notes from that long-ago play session. Three long-ruined cities, one of them of a scale to house giants or titans, all of them reduced to wind-scoured stone pillars, cellars, and heaps of collapsed rubble.

One ruin infested with gargoyles, either because the long-ago inhabitants made lots of gargoyles, or because gargoyles are attracted from elsewhere; both of these Knights' speculations are supported by what we found in that ruin (which we hurriedly fled from, thanks to all the gargyole attacks): many other stone statues of various things that animate into fearsome beasts/stone creatures. Names and more details will, of couirse, have to wait for Ed, who is deep into some short, swift writing matters right now, but WILL (probably Thursday) surface with some more Realmslore replies.
love to all,
THO

*****

16 September:-

Hi again, all. Sage, here's a tidbit from Ed re. dancing (more to come, of course):

The latest popular dance in the Heartlands and Sword Coast, at both upper-crust functions (court dances, noble balls and revels) and lower-class ("just plain folks" having fun) is a dance wherein partners (usually male and female, but not necessarily) face each other, clasp their left hands together, wrap their right hands around the rear of each other's waists, and step "forward and back." That is, one of the two dancers takes two smooth steps right "at" or "into" the dance partner they're holding, who gives way two steps in unison - - only to then take two steps forward whilst the first dancer gives way. Then the partners rotate, often waving to or speaking to other dance couples nearby on the same dance floor, and repeat. Partners are either changed not at all, or at the end of a tune (typically about two minutes or a little less).
To avoid confusion, I've not used an real-world dance terms in this reply, but we're talking music that has the tempo of a waltz (not a slow waltz).

So saith Ed. Who's racing to get caught up on some swift game design work, and will return with another lore reply tomorrow.
love,
THO

*****

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18 September:-

Hi again, all. Ed's latest e-mail to me included this snippet of Realmslore, in response to maransreth's query from just-before-mid February of this year: "What do people use for pain relief? Non-clerical specifically. I take it herbs and barks, but what exactly?"
Ed replies:

In my original Realms, I used real-world herblore. That is, both fact and fictional beliefs of what various plant substances (sap, leaves, distillates, inhaling the smoke from various combinations of leaves, barks, flowers, saps, and so on) could do as medicinal treatments. I figured this was a great basis to start from, being as none of my players were foolish enough to confuse the real world with my fantasy Realms, and I could devote my creative energies to extrapolating from this herblore (effects on humans) to how these substances would affect various other intelligent races and monsters (is something beneficial to human poisonous to orcs? or gnomes? or dragons? does something that heals dragons also heal wyverns?).
However, TSR was a little wary of this approach, I suspect (and these are just my suspicions; even a direct discussion was avoided, several times) for two reasons: the anti-drug view in the US that began with the establishment decrying recreational drugs (aside from the "establishment drugs" of tobacco and alcohol, though those have since been frowned upon) and extended into "don't treat yourself with those old folk remedies, buy our expensive pill instead" (which might well lead to the game being banned in certain jurisdictions for this as WELL as the then-very-strong "Satanist" fears) . . . and the liability of "what happens if Johnny puts X on a cut he gets, because he read about someone doing that in his Realms game book, and then Johnny dies; whither the lawsuits then?"
Now, those are fair, valid arguments for any published fantasy game setting.
So I switched to what we might call "clearly invented medicine." As in, let's use "matter from the eyeball of a beholder" and other monsters that are clearly GAME inventions and not from folklore, and plants I invent myself. Now, there's still some peril in using invented plants, because as anyone who studies anything about real-world plants knows, a single plant goes by so many different names around the world, or a "good" plant name gets applied to so many different real-world plants . . . but I persisted, and eventually came up with these "common in the Realms" ones:

Chewing the soft wood that directly underlies the bark of a felsul tree, or chewing small datherthorn roots (those of purplish hue) quells nausea and deadens all mouth, tooth, and throat pain. Note that this does NOTHING to remove the cause of the discomfort; it merely temporarily removes the discomfort to allow sleep, hearty eating, or other "normal" activity/functions. Eating a volume roughly as much as the eater's palm, as thick as the eater's hand, will "work" (deaden) for a day and night (24 hours) or so.

Drinking the liquid derived from boiling down equal parts of the thorns snapped off harl-thorn (a common Heartlands thorny wild shrub) bushes with leaves of the very common weed known as hoof-leaf (because its flat, on-the-ground leaves look like the print of a cloven-hoofed herd animal; these leaves need not be fresh, which is why many households keep a crock of various dried leaves, wrapped in scrap cloth, for use in winter) calms delirium, rage, and grief, and soothes skin itches, allowing for rest or sleep.

Eating small flakes of tatterskyre bark (the tatterskyre is a gnarled shrub that tends to form "loops" or drooping arcs like wild raspberry canes, re-rooting when it touches the ground only to throw up fresh stems; it grows all over the Heartlands and the North, smaller in colder climes, and its bark is very "flaky" as easily brushed off; its foliage sprouts as "bursts" of needle-like flat leaves all up

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and down its stems) slows bleeding (both internal and external) and thickens the blood, soothing and making agitated folk drowsy. This can aid the healing of many sorts of internal wounds. Orcs and all goblinkin (goblins, hobgoblins, et al) are especially susceptible to the effects of tatterskyre bark, and typically fall asleep if given as much to eat as would cover their palms. As this is a sleep typically filled with pleasant dreams, many orcs gather and carry the bark, and eat it regularly.

The tiny petals of the common white ground-flower known as “dathlil” work to neutralize poisons for some who consume them (typically washed down with water or even alcohol, or drunk as a tea). The effects vary widely with the individual and the poison being fought against, and even vary unpredictably for the same individual, over time, but do apply to all known creatures, mammalian, avian, and reptilian, and are sometimes (not often) absolute (as in, one petal banishes all poison effects). Dathlil can work on contact, ingested, and insinuative poisons - - but of course sometimes does nothing at all. For most individuals, it usually slows poison and lessens its eventual damage.

Tonandurr bark, bound against open wounds, inhibits bleeding and infection, and helps skin and flesh to expand and knit together (heal). This works on humans, halflings, dwarves, and gnomes only; to elves, it helps not at all, and it actually harms goblinkin, making wounds fester. (Tonandurr is a tall, spindly “weed tree” of the Heartlands and more southerly forests; it’s not hardy enough to survive winters much north of Waterdeep, though some few specimens are kept alive in indoor gardens in Silverymoon and Neverwinter.

Again, I’d like to reiterate that the above examples do NOT apply to any real-world plant matter, even if someone somewhere happens to have given a plant the same or a similar name as the invented ones in my examples, okay?

So saith Ed. Growing more cautious (socially responsible) in his old age.
love to all,
THO

[...]

Kyrene, Ed says:

Well spotted, and thank you! I forgot to write that in: it is indeed two steps, then a "flourish" for a beat (the time it would take to make one step; the "flourish is instead both dancers remaining stationary below the waists, but flinging their arms up and bending backwards a bit at the waists from each other), then the two steps back.
Well caught; thank you!

So saith Ed. Who's obviously not as good at the dance as Kyrene is! Well caught, indeed!
love,
THO

*****

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19 September:-

Hi again, all.
Some quick partial replies from me (waiting on Ed, who should be along late today or tomorrow):
As far as I know, all three of those Crazed Venturers you mention, Icelander, ARE still alive as of 1373 DR (albeit Moriath and Tzarrakyn after several resurrections back in the 1350s-1360s). Published canon Realmslore definitely says nothing about demises for any of them.
Randal, Ed designed the Realms first as a fictional setting, semi-detailed around the travels of Mirt, who was moving in a southerly direction along the Sword Coast from port to port, one step ahead of creditors, trade rivals, and out-and-out "kill ye when I catch ye" enemies.
However, later on, when he was making it also a game setting, I know he designed from the "home base" of the adventurers (Waterdeep, or Shadowdale, or Eveningstar; he had three) outwards. In other words, where they'd live or stay first, the neighbourhood NPCs and all the rumors, news, and subplots going on locally that might lure them into alliances, feuds, and adventures, then any "dungeons" or ruins or monster lairs or fortresses-in-use where they might "go adventuring," and then the wider world around, starting with the immediate roads and trade routes, then the flows of trade, then the "larger" legal authority (and enforcement) of whatever ruler held sway over the starting spot, and then outwards from there (i.e. if Waterdeep's at peace rather than at war or preparing for it, that tells you something about Waterdeep's neighbours and region, and becomes part of the wider socio-political design).
Ah, well, enough "here's the process" blathering from me; Ed will give us more hard and fast lore and replies as soon as he can.
love to all,
THO

[...]

Hi again, all.
A swift public service bulletin for gamers interested in meeting Ed, getting autographs, hearing him speak, and possibly getting in a game with him as DM:
Ed will be attending the Phantasm gaming convention as usual next weekend (September 26the and 27th) in Peterborough, Ontario at the Peterborough Public Library (main downtown branch on Aylmer Street, in the basement). Ed will be there Saturday evening to give his annual "state of gaming/answer queries" talk, and at least the first half of Sunday. This is a small, cozy local con that's been running for, if I remember rightly, over 20 years (and has in the past had such distinguished Guests of Honour as Richard and Lily Garfield, senior designers from TSR and FASA, and of course Ed). The con has a website, for those interested.
love to all,
THO

*****

23 September:-

Hi again, all. Great questions re. both the Crazed Venturers and the Knights, but I'm not going to reply to them until I've checked with Ed (there ARE some NDAs buzzing around some characters, and I want to be VERY sure what's "allowed" and what's not, when I start typing).
This time, Ed tackles this recent query, from Blueblade: "How quickly does news and rumor usually travel from inland Tethyr to Murann? And vice versa? And how often/how badly does it usually get distorted, in the process? Thanks!"
Ed replies:

Just before the Spellplague, I'd say coastal stuff, nobles' scandals and deaths, massacres and

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major news OR rumors of the "dragon flying in to devour herds or attack a town" or "brigand massacre in X!" sort would take two tendays or less to reach Murann. Big news from either of the "next along the coastal road" communities, 2 days or so. Minor stuff (three black cows born where none known before) might take a month, or five tendays at most. Interestingly, in Tethyr, the distortions tend to get wild when the news travels fast, rather than being twisted along the way when it travels slowly (the reverse of what happens in most of the rest of the Realms). Yes, some manglings are severe - - but in Tethyr, since the Black Days, the populace has learned to be wary and suspicious, and corrections/debunkings soon follow, and tend to be believed (even when themselves wrong). In short, almost all Tethyrian coastal port dwellers are cynical and worldly-wise . . . or like to think of themselves as so.

So saith Ed, creator of Tethyr, Murann, and most of the Realms around them.
love to all,
THO

*****

24 September:-

Hello again, all. I've just had an e-mail from Ed, back home from a late meeting inspecting a library renovation (he's chair of his local library board, and a heritage library is being "fixed"), in response to the last two queries in this thread.
Heeeere's Ed!

Marek, I'm afraid mortals (i.e. all characters in the Realms) don't know how Mystril reached godhood, or precisely how any of those who were Mystra became Mystra. Even Midnight, the "last" Mystra, isn't quite sure HOW she became Mystra, because her mind was overwhelmed by the process.
I and some former TSR designers know - - or at least, we know what was agreed-upon, back in the late 1980s, behind the scenes; current WotC designers may well have different views - - re. this, but NDAs prevent any of us from telling you. Such is one of the hurdles of playing in a shared world.

Kilvan, althen artren is indeed correct on what Manshoon was doing. As to "how" AND "why" - - I'm sorry, those are both ALSO under NDA right now. All I can say is you certainly should eventually discover something of the "why," in something obviously not yet published. I'm afraid I can't yet be more specific. Sorry (and I really am; I KNOW the ache of wanting to know, and am feeling the ache of wanting to spill the beans, right now - - but I can't).

So saith Ed. I, too, know (from long-ago events in the home Realms campaign, not from familiarity with whatever not-yet-published lore Ed is speaking of, above). However, I've signed my share of NDAs, and also know how horrible it is when someone ruins a surprise, so . . . I'm afraid you'll just have to wait on this one.
love,
THO

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25 September:-

Hi, Zan! Ed had to go for his annual heart stress echo, EKG, and the works today, and has a full day of library work tomorrow and then a convention on the weekend, so his chances to make Realmslore replies look a lit slim for the next few days.
However, I can START on a reply for you by saying it IS a crime, and the crime is something like (I probably have the formal title of it wrong, here) "stealing from the Crown."
NOT in the sense that the dryad or her tree belong to the King (though trees that aren't sentient and don't have dryads but are in a royal forest ARE Crown property), but in the sense that at the heart of Cormyrean law is the concept that the Crown IS the land and the bounty of the land, including living things of the land and bound to the land, so rare flowers and the stags of the King's Forest and dryads are all "of the Crown." So they're stealing from the Crown.
Speculating - - and I stress this is my speculation, not Ed giving us a definitive reply - - on the basis of having Ed as my DM play the parts of many Cormyrean lawkeepers, courtiers, and Obarskyrs over the years, I'd say that they would face a light sentence (fines and a prohibition on ever doing it again, or else THIS) if the dryad freely consented to this, or initiated the transactions and the wounding (wanting to sell her sap, for some strange reason). Otherwise, oh yes, they're in trouble.
Which is where I stop pontificating and hand it to Ed.
love,
THO

*****

29 September:-

Depends on the players. If inexperienced, I'd start them as restless teenagers in a Sword Coast North hamlet near, say, Everlund or Neverwinter, and let them discover the "civilized" Realms at their own pace, after some necessary monster-hunting out in the wilderlands just to get anywhere.
If experienced (and somewhat-Realms-knowledgeable), I'd start them in Highmoon or Daerlun if I wanted a Sea of Fallen Stars campaign, in upland Tethyr or the Velen Peninsula if I wanted a Sword Coast campaign, or in South Ward, in Waterdeep, of poor working-class parentage. (In all cases, I'm talking pre-Spellplague. If I was thinking post-Spellplague, I'd start in Returned Abeir and let them hit mainland Faerun when they felt ready, or keep to that sandbox if they preferred.)
love,
THO

*****

30 September:-

Hi, Zandilar. It has been asked before, and I can't remember which of the several terms Ed answered with then, but the two I noted during play, over the years, were the polite terms used in Amn and Waterdeep ("brawn") and in Cormyr and the Dales, for warriors only, though it meant militia, adventurers, and uniformed soldiers ("boots").
One of the less polite terms (common in Sembia, Amn, Tethyr, and the Heartlands caravan routes) is "emptyheads."
Sage? Wooly? Ed DID mention another term somewhere here at the Keep in the past, didn't he? Or am I growing forgetful as I sink into my still-curvaceous dotage?
love,

[...]

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Hello again, all. I bring new Realmslore from the ever-busy Ed of the Greenwood, this one in response to Zandilar's query: "The situation is this - three men are caught red handed forcing a Dryad (they had a way of avoiding her usual charms, perhaps rings of mind shielding - and had something to use against her to coerce her out of her tree and into cooperation) in the King's Forest (in Cormyr) to give up her "sap" - by way of cutting her and harvesting her blood without killing her, they didn't want their source to dry up, so to speak. Said blood was to be then sold to a merchant specializing in rare/unusual spell components (the three men had already done this a few times).
What penalties could these men face for their crimes? What penalty could the merchant face (the PC is going after him as well)? Is what they were doing a crime at all? (I'd be surprised if it wasn't!) Also, what status in Cormyr would the Dryad have? Would she be considered a citizen at all?"
(I haven't repeated my half-reply and Zandilar's subsequent response to that.) Ed replies:

Hi, and hugs right back to you! I'm fine; this is my annual checkup (but has slowed down to every-two-years), and the doctor said he wanted to swap hearts with me, so I guess that part of my anatomy is dandy.
THO is quite right in saying that things would get complicated if the dryad had consented or initiated this arrangement (so much so, that it would really be a case-by-case judgement, more than applying the relevant laws in any set manner), but because they've coerced her, they would be fined and banned from entering any royal forest for ten summers, and also prohibited from selling any dryad larlyn (that's the local term for dryad or treant blood or "sap") anywhere in Cormyr, forever (upon pain of four summers of imprisonment followed by forty summers of exile). The charges would be "theft from the heart of Cormyr, and unlawful sale of the property of the Crown."
The second charge would apply even if the dryad had consented (but would probably, in those circumstances, earn them only a small fine and the lifelong prohibition on selling larlyn), but the first charge speaks to the status of the dryad (and also applies to treants, unicorns, and other native life of Cormyr considered to be royal property or under royal protection [so, NOT the dragons or elves dwelling in the realm, but royal stags, flowers, protected woods, rare birds, and so on that have been proclaimed as "under the royal hand," a term meaning only members of the ruling family, or regents, can harvest them or direct others to harvest them or make use of them [including gifting them freely]). In short, such life is "of the heart of Cormyr" and can demand royal protection, but is not considered to have the responsibilities and obligations of a full citizen. (So a dryad has the RIGHTS of a citizen, but not the responsibilities.) A severely handicapped or insane royal ward, incapable of living without care, would have the same "heart" status in recognition of their inability to undertake and carry out the responsibilities of a citizen.

So saith Ed. Who is hard at work on more Realmslore for us all.
love,
THO

[...]

Thanks for looking, Sage. It may well have been; I'll ask Ed.
Who also sent me this, for Bahgtru:

The Hartsvale origins were added to Madeiron just a few years back, and not by me, but that lore is just fine with me. Madeiron was always from somewhere far from Waterdeep, had giant blood

in his ancestry, and was an adventurer of accomplishments ("always" meaning in my earliest lore). He was somewhat NDA back when you asked because certain staffers were toying with notions of writing about him (as a supporting character in fiction primarily concerned with other characters). They may still do so, wherefore the NDAs remain and so does my lack of lore about him posted here at Candlekeep.

However, the information Icelander reminded us of is just fine, and accepted by me at the time as "canon" without any cavils or misgivings.

Exactly how Madeiron became Piergeiron's Champion is part of that NDA, but the two men trust, respect, and like each other and have faced hostile foes together.

I'd also say that Wooly has put it pretty well: Madeiron is a street-smart veteran adventurer and wise in the ways of human nature and Realms lore, and reacts very swiftly in battle, but he prefers to mull over new concepts, notions, and views for quite some time before making decisions, fully grasping them, and so on; he won't be the man to think up any sly new ways of making money or solutions to a thorny problem. He's more the stolid, calm, trusting sort who will carry a solution out that's been proposed by someone he trusts.

I caution all scribes not to over-emphasize this; Madeiron is not a slow-speaking, dim as a a post, easily tricked man-mountain. He's alert, can act quickly, habitually anticipates trouble or "surprise" attacks, and is aware he's not the sharpest-witted person around, and that he prefers to take his time making decisions (if faced with a situation where there's little or no time to decide something, he'll ask someone else to decide and support them fully, not stand hemming and hawing or stubbornly disagreeing with anyone).

So saith Ed. Creator of Madeiron, Piergeiron - - and Waterdeep, too!
love to all,
THO

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