

So saith Ed

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

Part 24

Oct - Dec 2009

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1 October:-

Hello again, all. Back in mid-July, Blueblade asked this: "Are there any "mass" makers of nails, spikes, or other metal fasteners (screws? bolts? Do they exist in the Realms at this time?) circa the 1370s, in Cormyr?

Some sort of foundry/factory, I mean, as opposed to every smith hand-making what he needs "plus a few extra" for sale. I didn't mean hinges or hook and eye catches, but now that I'm asking, I might as well include them, too . . . Thanks!"

and Malcolm chimed in: "I'd like to ride the coat tails of Blueblade's request: if there are such foundries or factories, is there one or more in Suzail? Can we know something about them (name, location, reputation, do they sell through other shops?). Please? Thank you!"

Ed now replies:

Everything I say here is a generalization, with many local exceptions that DMs should feel free to invent as enthusiastically as they see fit, okay?

In the 1370s, in Faerûn, screws and threaded bolts are "holy secrets of Gond," and pretty much limited to temples and to furniture and special devices built, guarded, and used only by priests of that god.

Bolts ARE known to dwarf and gnome smiths, and human smiths up and down the Sword Coast and around the shores of the Shining Sea, but they're of the (lacking threads) "rod pierced by hole that's filled with a wedge or pin [['cotter pin' in modern North American real-world parlance]]" sort, where the rod is run through a hole in a timber or stone block, and the pin applied to the hole on its far side to keep the rod from being pulled back through, shim-wedges being used if necessary to make the fastening secure and rigid rather than loose and with 'play' in it.

"Strap" hinges with simple, single pivot pins are known and widely used, right across the known Realms, as are rigid angle-braces of the same design (lacking a hinge, but having instead a bent right angle of metal) used to protect and strengthen the corners and sides of carry-chests and strongchests. Hook-and-eye catches are known but not so widely used, being mainly restricted to small-sized, interior uses (seasonal freezing problems make larger and exterior usages rare in the North). Nails, spikes, and wedges (wooden, metal, and stone) are known everywhere, though only dwarves and gnomes make and work with stone ones, and wooden ones are less and less popular due to weathering/short-life problems). Delicate work such as needles and wire tend to be rare and expensive, more known-of in Calimshan and the Tashalar than elsewhere.

You're correct in surmising that the majority of mongery production among humans is smiths hand-making what is pressingly needed "plus a few extra for sale." Apprentices are often kept busy making nails and spikes, so successful smiths tend to build up a fairly impressive inventory of nails and spikes of all sizes, as well as hooks and "eye" spikes (spikes made for driving into tree-trunks or wooden walls, with a long shaft made for then fashioning into a ring suitable for fastening ropes to).

However, there ARE mass makers of such mongery, including surface human foundries in Waterdeep, Amn (several), Tethyr, Sembia, Turmish, Calimshan (many), and the Tashalar (many). In Cormyr, there are five very busy local smiths but no mongery-only foundries.

However, there is one in Arabel, that sells much of its wares either in Suzail, and to the wider Realms through the docks of Suzail (a smaller flow goes the other way, through the Dales to the Moonsea). It's known as Garthen's Hammer (after the now-aging smith Askarl Garthen, a human whose family came from Everlund; his own numerous sons and grandchildren work and run it), and (if you have access to the detailed maps of Arabel) is the complex of connected buildings on the north side of the street that runs right through the city, JUST inside The High Horn Gate (south of the row of House of Thond rental warehouses). It was formerly across the street, due south of its current location, but expanded into the premises of a decaying old inn, and Garthen then sold his former location to a wealthy and ambitious Suzailan merchant, one Handren Tharmaklor, who tore down the old smithy and built on its site a mixed-shops complex that he

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rents out, himself inhabiting the uppermost three floors of "Tharspire," the tower that rises from the northwesternmost building of Tharmarklor's Doors (the complex). Garthen more or less permanently rents the southernmost House of Thond warehouse for his inventory of nails, spikes, axe-heads, hooks, eye-spikes, door-plates (both kickplates and lockplates), and strap hinges, from which traders' wagons run constantly to Suzail and elsewhere (Garthen himself takes no part in marketing his wares, restricting himself to selling from his premises in Arabel).

So saith Ed. New Cormyr lore, if someone's still maintaining that thread here at the Keep. Ed will, of course, return with more lore, probably tomorrow.
love to all,
THO

2 October:-

Hi again, all. Ed astonished me with a snap-right-back reply to Penknight's post, right after I sent it his way.
So, heeere's Ed:

Mithrilskin is a 9th level spell, and its effects could even be replicated by certain natural shapechangers who are also spellcasters as an 8th level spell (if they hit upon the right casting process through experimentation, of course). Its possible benefits are many, depending on the creativity of players whose characters employ it (everything from bodysurfing/luging ice chutes to doing smithy work with less protection and more dexterity than is usually possible) and the leeway a DM allows.
And yes, the Lady of Moonlight still survives in the Realms, even post-Spellplague (at least, she does in mine!), and there are some not-yet-revealed reasons for this (as in, that she can be expected to be on the scene, if not destroyed by deliberate attack).

So saith Ed. Who by the tone of his last sentence, is dancing deftly along the edge of NDA chasms in this reply. Hmmm . . .
love to all,
THO

3 October:-

Hi again, all.
Bahgru, re. this: "Ed and THO, One more question on Madeiron if that is ok? Is the respect shared between Piergeiron and Madeiron also shared between Madeiron and Khelben, Laeral, Danilo, Mirt, Durnan, and the other prominent members of Waterdeep politics, commerce, etc.? Thanks."
I can reply from experience as a player in Ed's home campaign that all of the specific characters you name respect Madeiron and know his true 'character,' and Mirt, Durnan, and Laeral can be said to be among his fast friends (Khelben keeps aloof from most, and Danilo and Madeiron just haven't had much contact with each other, thus far). As for the "other prominent members" you mention, no; most heads of noble houses, guildmasters, and successful wealthy independent merchants think of Madeiron as a stone-headedly loyal warrior, if they think of him at all. I know of

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almost a dozen instances where such people underestimating, discounting, or just plain ignoring Madieron has come back to haunt them - - hard.

love,
THO

5 October:-

Hi again, all.

Sandro, I'm sure Ed will have to check with Wizards to see how much he can say about Larloch; how much of a delay that will cause, of course, remains to be seen.

To Ruben The Dark One, Ed replies:

Hi, Damon. Margaret and I are good friends and chat from time to time about all sorts of projects. Wizards of the Coast controls what Elminster and Raistlin do, and especially how much their fantasy settings link up or overlap, and their policies (and those of their predecessor TSR) have changed from time to time. For instance, I started writing "The Wizards Three" articles in DRAGON at editorial request, to link up Greyhawk, Dragonlance, and the Realms - - and soon had to do a delicate tapdance around the representative from Krynn because of editorial uncertainty over Raistlin's fate. Later, company policy shifted to keep the settings separate, rather than linked - - and that's where things stand as of right now, so far as I know. Meaning characters from two settings "shouldn't" meet, making the team-up you're interested in seeing impossible. However, policy has changed before, and may change again.

Personally, I'd probably have a blast working with Margaret on that sort of a collaborative epic, but . . . we'll just have to see.

So saith Ed. Who is probably thinking it's highly unlikely to ever happen - - just as I do. Not that any of us should stop mulling over possibilities, mind you . . .

love,
THO

[...]

Hi again, all. Ed tells me that he's NDA-bound not to answer Pamela's question (brought to this thread by Gomez, and second/thirded by Zandilar), but says it's all right from me to reveal what my character learned during play - - which admittedly isn't all that much.

At certain times, "when the stars are right" (about once a year, or once every two years, or so; we Knights were never able to learn precisely how often these certain times happened, though there ARE celestial "signs" linked to them) the ruins of the Keep become the place of release of magical energy and memories from elsewhere (I'm guessing from beings who have died on other planes or parallel "Prime Material Planes," but that's just my guess, and various deities, powerful divine servitors, and long-lived individuals (Larloch, Elminster, etc.) come to the ruins to acquire the energy/feed off of it/revel in being in its presence (hence the dancing).

Formerly many creatures came to the ruins at these special times, including nagas, illithids, and other psionically-gifted creatures, but over the years Garagos and other rapacious attendees have slain so many arrivals that very few come to the ruins (or still survive, to come to the ruins), that it's down to those three deities and a few other lurking creatures who hide from the deities (for some reason not known to us, because Ed hasn't so much as hinted why, only those three deities were ever drawn to the ruins). Apparently the energies can be used for healing, recharging magic items, and restoring/fixing magics, by those who know how (and written procedures for

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doing so are hidden at Candlekeep, somewhere in a library controlled by the Zhentarim, somewhere in a tome possessed by a noble family of Waterdeep, somewhere "ditto" in Halruaa, and somewhere "ditto" in Thay).

So the three deities aren't meeting up out of friendship, or in some sort of pact, or as lovers; they're each there independently, "after the same thing."

Hope that helps!

love to all,
THO

6 October:-

Hi again, all.

Zandilar, Wooly, and Sage: I really can't say more.

Other than to rephrase for clarity: anyone can gain memories just by being there, and those who know how (that's where the written procedures come in) can gain power...hence the presence of the illithids and others...

love to all,
THO

7 October:-

Hi again, all. Wooly has it quite right: random single memories flood into the minds of creatures in the ruins at the right times: "wisps of remembrance" is how Ed described it.

So NO, Bakra, no one can gain any sort of "set" of memories - - nor would experiencing someone else's memories ever confer a class skill (they could help someone who can already cast the spell control or cast it more precisely, and/or impart valuable pointers/warnings of what can go wrong).

They can impart a "knack" (throw the weighted rope PAST someone, not at them, to make it more likely they can grab it).

The written procedures are personal accounts written by various long-dead individuals of just when to go to the ruins and just what to do to gain the memories or powers; written "treasure maps" if you will (remember the "stagger stagger crawl crawl" scene from YELLOWBEARD?). So a Red Wizard might learn the exact spot where a long-ago Red Wizard went to gain some memories or power.

Ed has never revealed whose memories these are, or where they come from, but they DO seem to be from Toril or a similar world, and largely concern humans (or rememberers whose thoughts "feel" human, and who saw and interacted with other humans, as seen in the memories).

So it's a series of random boons, not "count on it" character boosts.

love to all,
THO

[...]

Heh. Off to Ed that question goes, BA, but I can tell you that although Suzail DOES have sewers, it definitely has "honey wagons" (in that part of the Realms, they're known as "nightsoil carts") that take the chamberpot-emptyings of the less wealthy neighbourhoods out of the city to middens.

We Knights have had several adventuresome encounters with various of those wagons and their drovers.

love,

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8 October:-

Hi again, all. I've passed the latest posts on to Ed as usual, but because Bahgtru's most recent question is very close to queries Ed answered for a TSR designer "back in the day" and I have a copy of Ed's words, I can provide the beginnings of an answer, using Ed's own words:

Tyr is the god of justice: that is, the even-handed application of laws, rules, and codes (the three things being differentiated by the sorts of penalties imposed for breaking them) within a society. In a polytheistic setting such as the Realms, it is important to "stand back" from real-life Judeo-Christian views of "absolute good" and "one correct way to behave and all others are shades of sin or human failing or succumbing to temptation," and think of things as intelligent beings OF THE REALMS do.

That is: paladins of Tyr who are part of the government of Waterdeep see the continuance of a cosmopolitan, tolerant, prosperous port city as good in itself, and see their role as twofold: continually seeing that the laws/rules are the "best" possible to keep Waterdeep thriving and a "good" place to live (that is, a place people WANT to reside in, and see themselves benefitting by doing so, to the point of being loyal to Waterdeep and willing to obey its rules and pay its taxes), and seeing that those laws are administered fairly and impartially.

Or to take a step closer in detail: the laws have to be continually adjusted and refined so as to serve the populace (not just its most wealthy and powerful) as best they can, and if there are instances where treating citizens differently from each other is desirable for making Waterdeep better, that's fine IF THE LAWS ARE WRITTEN OR REWRITTEN to allow that difference of treatment, or leeway. In other words, "absolute" or "blind" justice is bad and not to be championed, but a continually-evolving, ever-more flexible/farsighted (of consequences down the road) system of laws and their administration is what paladins of Tyr (and others in civic government, and those who run guilds) should be busy doing. This is why Texter and Piergeiron both support having "shady" lords like Mirt involved in government, and in having agents who covertly and continually investigate the City Guard and City Watch, to mitigate against human nature and slow or stifle corruption. They KNOW corruption will happen, and that some Watch officers will be lazy, stupid, and play favourites from time to time; it's their business as those in charge to try to arrange the Watch policies and procedures and training, and the structure of civic justice, to work against that. It's desirable to understand criminals and watch their plots, rather than always wade in, the moment wrongdoing is detected or suspected, because Waterdeep benefits in the long run by those in government knowing what's going on, how the city "works," and to be as tolerant as possible. The laws treat nobles differently than other citizens, and that's part of Waterdeep's history, not something to be automatically struck down without thinking. Yet nobles who misuse their wealth or high station must be resisted . . . it's all a huge balancing act, with ever-changing obstacles and "sweet spots" where the balance will be right.

Or to put it far more simply, a paladin of Tyr wants laws to be applied properly. If the law contains discrimination in the law, that's okay - - unless the paladin sees bad consequences to this discrimination. Then it is the HOLY DUTY of the paladin to try to get the law changed, refined/augmented, or struck down. Laws are seen as imperfect, and always capable of improvement, NEVER something to be blindly applied.

So said Ed, all those years ago. Bahgtru, Ed's more up-to-date (and directly relevant to your follow-up questions) replies will no doubt follow in time to come, when he has time.

In the meantime, hope these words of his help!

love,
THO

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9 October:-

Hmmm. Your last sentence poses an either/or choice, Sandro, that would seem to hold true for a real-life person considering questions of ethics, laws, and social order . . . but my reading of Ed's words leads me to strongly suspect that he would reject that either/or as applying to paladins of Tyr.

Ed does, after all, repeatedly state that in the view of the faith of Tyr, justice is served by applying existing laws fairly but also through continually examining and modifying laws to make them more just.

I can tell, from my roleplaying experiences with Ed as DM, that he portrayed Piergeiron (Texter was only encountered briefly, and as more of a "going it alone" paladin outside of Waterdeep's jurisdiction) as seeking safety and fairness for citizens of all "standings" (social class) in Waterdeep, but accepting the competitive strivings and clashing interests of guilds and independent merchants and viewpoints as being part of the essential nature of Waterdeep, not something to be trammled by a social order imposed by ever more laws. I also recall Ed portraying Piergeiron as being practical over all else, so that illithids were banned from being citizens or owning property in the city to prevent others from fleeing Waterdeep out of fear, or attacking illithids on sight (so, yes, Piergeiron was advocating discrimination on a racial basis out of practicality). However, the Lords of Waterdeep KNEW there were illithids operating down in Skullport, yet did nothing about it, because they saw Skullport as the necessary "relief valve" for trade outside the laws and legal reach of the city proper.

Again, everyone reading this should remember that ALL intelligent beings of the Realms who don't also happen to be fanatics view ALL deities as real and worthy of some sort of worship, so even paladins of Tyr would not think that Tyr's faith and decrees should necessarily reach everywhere (or be made to do so) or override conflicting beliefs of other faiths. A paladin of Tyr would not try to force a priest of Chauntea to alter the way plants grow to conform to a law passed by someone ignorant of plant growth, just to promote the law. Nor would a paladin of Tyr expect or seek to force all combatants in a war to follow a specific set of rules (unless everyone fighting was dedicated "first to Tyr, before all others"), because they recognize that Tempus (and other gods) hold sway over battlefields.

Ed is busy with family matters (in Canada, Thanksgiving is this weekend), but will weigh in on this when he can.

love to all,
THO

[...]

My pleasure. Really.

I love doing this, and of course darned near dragooned Ed into it, back in 2004, after Elaine Cunningham suggested these Sages threads. Ed loves providing the lore, too, obviously, and I'd imagine that what he's imparted here for free over the years could well have been spun into half-a-dozen or so good, meaty Realms sourcebooks, if everything was collated, organized, and only slightly expanded.

So keep the questions coming, everyone, and Ed WILL keep on answering them. He has a very busy publishing career atop a normal working life, so there are times when his answers slow down or grow sporadic, but he never loses interest or desire to find or restate Realmslore, or create it anew.

So ask us anything. As you know, I'm a little less than bashful - -so you may well get some interesting answers!

love to you all,
THO

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10 October:-

Hi again, all! Recently, Broken Helm asked this: "Years (?) back, in this thread, Ed was asked about what he'd been reading during that week, or some short, recent time period. I've just had to move for job reasons, and am looking to buy a shelf-load of books for my reading pleasure, not to mention looking ahead to Christmas and the inevitable family presents (I like to give books).

So, Ed and THO, could you oblige with some recent titles you've enjoyed?

I don't need an exhaustive "here's everything I read" list, nor do the books have to be new (I buy plenty of secondhand books for me), but I'm hoping I'll discover some new interesting reads. Anything from cookbooks to politics, please, not just fantasy and sf. Though I know Ed just judged the Sunbursts, and eyeballed a LOT of fantasy and sf..."

Ed replies:

Well, in this last week, I've read several things I can't talk about for legal reasons (forthcoming, that is, not "bad legal matters"), plus these:

EARTH TO TABLE: Seasonal Recipes From An Organic Farm by Jeff Crump and Bettina Schormann

NIGHT WATCH by Terry Pratchett (a re-read, purely for fun)

THE UNSEEN ACADEMICALS by Terry Pratchett (the latest Discworld novel)

THE MERMAID'S MADNESS by Jim Hines (good friend and a superb writer of "fun" fantasy)

206 BONES by Kathy Reich

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY AND SEA MONSTERS by Jane Austen and Ben H. Winters

THE WOMEN OF NELL GWYNNE'S by Kaje Baker (FINALLY I could get to this)

THE IMPROBABLE ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES edited by John Joseph Adams

... and that's it. More next week!

So saith Ed.

love to all,
THO

11 October:-

Hi again, all. A swift start to a reply for althen artren: only the very early D&D gaming products paid royalties, and fiction products only pay royalties when they're still in print. New editions using old lore rewritten and repackaged are considered "new products" and don't pay royalties even if the "old lore" did, in its earlier publication. Moreover, royalties are only paid when any advances are earned out, and some foreign publishers deduct expenses from royalties (sometimes admitting they're doing so, more often just doing it without admitting so). And Ed isn't a hard negotiator, though his current agent is - - and even that agent has experienced many instances of publishers just ignoring details of contracts and having to be firmly reminded of them.

So Ed makes a living, but is by no means rich. In fact, he's like many folks: heavily in debt re. his home expenses, generous to his family and charities whenever he can be, and happy to have enough money to support his hobbies (in Ed's case, buying books and games).

love,
THO

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12 October:-

Hah, * I * can answer this one for Ed, because I've already asked him about it, as it happens. He was asked to suggest a good "first fantasy book read, ever" for the husband of a friend, who is a cop, and thought of NIGHT WATCH because of its subject matter. He glanced through it to make sure he was right, then sat down to enjoy the whole tale again.

So there you are. Coincidence, or psychic link, or whatever.

love,
THO

14 October:-

Hi again, all. Just received this from Ed:

Thanks for all the nice Thanksgiving wishes. I had to work at the library and so miss a big family get-together, but another arm of the family descended on me for the rest of the weekend and we did all the autumn things (gigantic turkey, picking apples at the local "Appleyard," getting winter tires put on family chariots, walking in the leaves . . .). I am now RECOVERING from all of this. :} To VonRaventheDaring, you're very welcome. I have lots of fun teasing my gaming friends, because, hey, I only see most of them once a year and I'm delighted to see them! We're all just "somewhat normal" gamers underneath, no matter how famous or infamous we become, you know . . .

As for Golarion: the only design work I should really talk about yet is the elves: I "developed" them from a few paragraphs to a lot more than would fit into the needed wordcount. Of course. :} I have done a lot more design for Golarion that the wider world hasn't seen yet, so I'll keep mum about it until the right time. Yet no, not a word of it is doing something I couldn't do in the Realms. I approach each world as a completely different playground, and this one isn't mine to even start to try to control, so like a good guest I play with the toys I'm given and ask "how far" I can go with them, and obey the boundaries. None of it is a reaction to Wizards or the published Realms. Really.

So saith Ed. Who is telling the truth at the end, there. Ed really does believe what the Beatles sang about "life is very short, and there's no time for fussing and fighting" He avoids fights and feuds, as much as he can - - and this is NOT a weakness or a character flaw, believe me.

(Believe me; much of MY daily work consists of dealing with unsavoury people who enjoy fighting and feuding . . . and sometimes go armed and make use of that artillery and sharp edges!)

love to all,
THO

[...]

Hi again, all.

Deusex2, Anchorome was never a "joke dungeon," nor intended to be. It is the center of a web of myths and sailors' tall tales to mainland Faerunians, yes.

Some other designers than Ed created a continent north of Maztica and called it Anchorome, but that could well have been a "mainlander Faerunian" mistake or even deliberate misinformation put forward by elves of Evermeet or merchant shipcaptains of Baldur's Gate or others, to paint a

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false picture of "what was over the waves" for those back in Faerun.
When it comes to the Realms, I'd trust Ed over all other sources. It is, after all, his creation, predating the Dungeons and Dragons game and all of its publishers, competitors, editions, and incarnations.

love,
THO

15 October:-

Hi again, all.

Bahgtru recently asked: "Dear Ed and THO, Is Duke Eltan's success as leader of the Flaming Fist equal parts based on his physical prowess as a warrior and administrative and tactical abilities? Did he become a ruling Duke of Baldur's Gate independently of his success with the Flaming Fist or did one drive the other? As he and Piergeiron are both warriors cast into administrators of vibrant cities, how would you compare and contrast their leadership styles and how they are viewed by the citizens of their respective cities? How is Duke Eltan viewed by other rulers in the Lord's Alliance? Does he ever use the Flaming Fist in a non-for profit scenario, i.e aiding another city in the Lord's Alliance? Thank you in advance and Happy Thanksgiving!"

You're welcome, Bahgtru, and thanks for the festive good wishes. Drawing on Ed's notes, I can tell you that Duke Eltan's success is rooted in the fact that he's both a capable, VERY-quick-witted battlefield leader and a shrewd, far-sighted scholar of human nature and successful political manipulation. His success with the Flaming Fist, and his ability to use them to keep order in the city at critical times, definitely drove his rise to rulership. Eltan is viewed as far colder and more ruthless (and less tolerant of dissent) than Piergeiron, but they are both respected as fair, smart rulers and capable warriors, personally free from corruption and disliking it in others. The Flaming Fist has been used in not-for-profit ways in the past, yes; I'll leave longer and more detailed replies to Ed.

love, THO

[...]

Hi again, all! BA, such magazines do indeed exist; off your queries go to Ed for his replies. arry, I'll catch up with you later.

Kyrene, you sure did. And the wall hasn't budged an inch.

And Zandilar, you've spotted a WotC shift in how they viewed song dragons (the former "weredragons" of Ed-lore): initially (MoF) female-only, later seen as both genders with males VERY rare, for the very "how does the species reproduce, then?" reasons you bring up. Ed explained this discrepancy away by saying they all have the ability to take human female form, and are cross-fertile with humans when operating as females, but some of them use spells to APPEAR as human males for certain times, either out of preference or for business or personal mission reasons. So the male human is actually a magically-disguised human female who is really a song dragon in its only "natural" human form.

Myself, I share Ed's preference: that they'd stuck with weredragons all along, by all means revamping them for 3e if they wanted to do so, but thinking through such basics as species reproduction before writing up "official" rules. Sigh.

love to all,

THO

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19 October:-

As far as I can remember, Asgetrion, cobbled streets are restricted to the cities of Cormyr, High Horn, and the "main drags" of larger places like Wheloon. Everywhere else is hard-packed fine gravel atop dirt, with stones and moss on the flanks to slow washouts (and repaired constantly; the Purple Dragon road-patrols inspect and report constantly). With logs under the dirt in swampy spots.

Of course, I'll pass your query on to Ed, in case anything's changed.

love,
THO

23 October:-

Hi, all. gomez, The Sage is right; K was Carl's creation (Ed created Eilistraee and Vhaeraun). Asgetrion, Ed pre-ordered that collection, read it and enjoyed it very much. No, he wasn't asked to contribute, and I agree with you that he could have written a superb story. Heck, he can echo Jack Vance's own style very well, if called upon; he once did so for a local "stage a mystery" dinner party theatre event, wherein a coded message had to be hidden in a story (Ed faked a Dying Earth fragment to be found in the "corpse's" hand, purporting to be torn from a library book, the damaged library book that was used as a prop being TALES OF THE DYING EARTH). Ed has written an appreciation of Vance's Dying Earth, for an issue (6? I can't recall the precise issue number) of THE EXCELLENT PRISMATIC SPRAY, the magazine put out by Pelgrane Press as part of its Dying Earth roleplaying game line (the superb game itself being the work of Ed's fellow Canadian and famous game designer Robin Laws).

love,
THO

24 October:-

Hi again, all. Some little time back, Blueblade asked this: "Dear Ed and THO, Today's Realmslore question from moi concerns street lighting in Suzail at night: oil lamps? Candle lamps?

A few stationary high-up ones, or mounted on pulleys and chains, or taken away every morning, filled up, and brought back and lit at dusk (or when?) and hung up, as needed?

If so, how good is the overall lighting? Just along the Promenade and the wealthy/nobles' neighborhoods, or - - ?

Does the port "work" at night?

And who does this? The Purple Dragons? Crown servants/special lamplighters? Or - - ?"

Ed replies:

Both. And some "lit candles floating in oil" hybrids, too. All of them in metal "cages" looking rather like the "coach lamps" of the fogbound London of Sherlock Holmes, Jack the Ripper, et al. These tend to be mounted on black cast iron brackets that thrust out from the streetside walls of stone buildings, are very good along the Promenade and in the area north of the Promenade and west of the Palace complex (i.e. the nobles' and wealthiest Suzailans' neighbourhood, where these lamps are almost all on freestanding metal poles ("posts"), fairly good down the east wall of the city (the barracks areas) and along the docks (so, yes, the port can and does work at night, when trade warrants, which is most of the time), sparse in the central heart of the city (where taverns and clubs tend to have door-lamps, and some major streetmoots [[we would say intersections]]

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are lit, and there's not much else), and darned near non-existent in the western part of the city (the slums and poor neighbourhoods, sometimes called "Darkstreets" as a result). Businesses fuel and light their own lamps (i.e. many of those I mentioned in the heart of the city), and these lamps may be of any sort and mounted any way; most are on pulleys and chains, and "drawn in" to a window with a long metal hook mounted on a wooden reaching pole, for filling (they must be GENTLY let go again, not left to fall and swing, or they tend to smash against the building wall on the backswing; local laws prohibit mounting lamps on wooden walls), but some are unhooked and "reached down" via hooked poles; VERY few are let down to the ground on pulleys and chains, because of recurring vandalism/pranksters/lamp thieves in the past. The inner wall lamps, Promenade lighting, nobles' district lamps, and port and barracks lamps are lit by hired lamplighters overseen by Crown officials (minor courtiers; there are enough of these to form lighting crews if the hirelings quit or are too scared to light particular lamps or all fall ill). These lamps are all of the "reached down" with hooked poles sorts, and are secured with safety-chains so they can't blow down from the hooks they hang from; the chains can also be unhooked by the poles from the ground, but are situated in opposition to each other, to keep the lamps from crashing down in even gale-force gusts. However, these Crown-overseen lamps (and the Crown pays for the fuel, lamp repairs and replacements, by the way; the hired lighters are paid for the lighting work only) are in daily practise almost always filled directly, by hand, by workers standing on platforms built atop tall wagons; to prevent thieves employing these wagons at night, these wagons MUST be locked away in sheds when not in use (and can, if permits are obtained, be used for roofing repairs, hanging signs, and other non-lamplighting tasks).

So saith Ed. There you go; covered exhaustively. Oh, save for one thing; Ed neglected to mention something he's often said in play to us: that a lot of private residences have "lamps in the window" (that is, on the sill inside), sometimes as signals (i.e. prostitutes signalling they're home and open for business, or family members telling each other dinner is ready or whatever).
love to all,
THO

[...]

Hi again, all.

I bring this very short reply from Ed to Wooly's followup question: "Would those prostitutes use any special kind of lighting (such as the proverbial red lights from the real world), or is it more a thing of "If the southeast window of 'Lady Malara's' home is lit, then she's willing to entertain clients"?"

Ed replies:

The latter. No "red lights" that announce to all what the light is for, but a myriad of private codes/messages intended for established clients. Visiting sailors and caravan merchants can get directions to "warm and willing arms" in all the inns and taverns of the city, from low to high, so advertising to visitors isn't crucial.

So saith Ed. Damian, good to hear from you! Your queries have gone off to Ed, but I can tell you from play experience that there are no launching fees, and I THINK the Crown owns all shorelines (cliffs, beaches, the lot).
love,
THO

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27 October:-

Hi, all.

Well, I would choose Storm Silverhand. She needs a LOT more love.

Ed agrees, and would do her second; he wants to do Alustriel first, before "the chance is completely gone."

So saith Ed. And me.

love,
THO

31 October:-

Hi again, all! The glitch Blueblade refers to was apparently in my keyboard, not the Keep end, and it seems Ed's thread is working again! Huzzah! (And thanks to Sage, Wooly, and whoever else my have hand a hand in fixing it!)

I even bring another Ed-reply, this time to Baleful Avatar: "Having just read the end of THE GHOST KING (don't worry, no spoilers!), I'd just like to ask Ed: how do you PREFER to end series books? Cliffhanger? Revelation? Big battle? Or does it depend on the story? Thanks!"

Ed replies:

It very much depends on the story. I like any and all of cliffhangers, revelations, and big battles, but NOT contrived ones. They have to be part of the story; throughout the reading experience, I want the reader to feel as if I'm reporting the unfolding history of what actually happens in the Realms, never "constructing a plot."

Bob and I have discussed what's going on at the end of GHOST KING, and why, and I fully agree with him. LOVE his poignant last line, too!

So saith Ed. Who will return with more Realmslore as soon as he can.

love to all - - and thanks, Blueblade, for the prompt assist!

THO

[...]

Hi again, all.

Blueblade, unless a different Blue Unicorn I've never heard of is meant, the Blue Unicorn in the Realms is two linked things:

1. A famous Waterdhavian-noble-born lady of pleasure who worked in Suzail, masked to conceal her identity, and:

2. The brothel/"club" she founded, owned, and ran, in Suzail (it's still going, but she died of old age/natural causes in the 1340s, though I THINK one of her "girls" took over the title and mask). It's very upper-crust; that is, a quiet, luxuriously-furnished, discreet "grand house" in which members can relax, read, play board or card games, chat, dine on meals prepared in the club for them, and so on, with lots of well-behaved servants/bouncers to keep things private. It is NOT haughty, or reserved for the nobility, though a lot of them frequent it, and it's become a sort of "neutral ground" for them, a place where feuds and so on are temporarily set aside, and nobles mingle with wannabes they'll "cut dead" outside, on the street.

Ed can, of course, say more - - such as whether or not a THIRD "Blue Unicorn" (search me . . . please!) is meant.

love,
THO

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3 November:-

Oh, Jakk, believe me: once he saw the stellar expanding and polishing job our Garen Thal did on the Cormyr lineage, Ed started moving heaven and earth to get it published, somewhere and somehow.

Even though that was a metaphorical heaven and earth, moving it was still a hard and heavy task, and isn't finished yet.

Believe me, we all want to see the Lineage published. Brian Cortijo did the superb job of rounding out the work of Ed, Eric, George, Grant, Tom, Bryon, and several others!

love,
THO

4 November:-

Well said, Ashe.

Kajehase, the Falconfar trilogy (Rebellion will publish the third book, FALCONFAR, as soon as they can; Simon & Shuster now have it slated for March 2010 in North America; Ed finished it long ago) is centered on a fish-out-of-water protagonist.

And although many of the supporting characters in Ed's Niflheim books are capable and heroic, they are also fishes out of water, operating outside the environments they grew up in and understand (surface world vs. underground, city-dwellers in the subterranean world out in the wild tunnels, clergy out in the secular world, etc.)

love,
THO

P.S. MANY of Ed's short stories, outside the Realms, and some set in the Realms (e.g. The Place Where Guards Snore At Their Posts) feature unlikely, "unqualified" heroes.

5 November:-

Hi, all.

Menelvagor, we're just trying not to be one-note predictable. We certainly haven't stopped being, ah, filthy-minded. Believe me.

Iceland, I'm almost certain you haven't missed anything that's in the book. As I recall, a LOT had to be left out of that book, being as the RPGA notes Ed was handed to do that project from amounted to a little over 4 million words. John Rateliff was the editor on RB, but I think Ed was "editing down" before he handed anything in, to keep the book manageable (it was a balancing act between including enough to please long-time Living City participants, and giving a newcomer - - a non-RPGA member, for instance - - something readily useful in basing a campaign in "the Bluff"). So there's probably lots in Ed's notes. I recall gnome painters and rope, cord, and "finethread" (embroidery thread) makers, myself, from the Knights' adventures in Scardale, investigating ship cargoes brought from the Bluff.

I've handed your query on to ed, of course, to see what he turns up.

althen artren, I'd say the redeemed drow run the gamut of world-views and attitudes, from a few wild-dwelling brigands and a few urban "mystics" (turned to mumbo-jumbo cult-like mock ceremonies, divinations, and drug use to induce visions to use for guidance) on the two extremes, to everything in between from wanting to function as a dark-skinned human among humans, in a

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city, to wanting to establish elf-only realms in which they occupy positions of importance (among other "breeds" of elves). However, that's just my reading of the probable situation; Ed's will probably be different, and I hope he'll provide it in the fullness of time.

And that's all from me for now. Life is getting busy again...

love to all,
THO

[...]

Oh, where are my MANNERS?

I'm SORRY, AlorinDawn! Welcome back; Ed and I have been getting steadily older (the days pass . . . and I just can't stop them!) and weary from time to time with the various loads of life, but in general we're both busy, optimistic, happy people who want our glasses more than half full, and keep right on refilling them, whenever we can.

We haven't abandoned the Realms, we won't abandon the Realms, and we're constantly striding ahead into new stories and new fun. Promise.

Why, just last night I had some new fun involving a feather boa, some stretchy rubber tie-downs, and a few dog toys that I put to uses that would have astonished some dogs I know...

love,
THO

6 November:-

That's exactly right, Blueblade. Sorry, Marco Volo. Damian (crazedventurers) did a great job addressing your other queries, and both your questions and Damian's replies have gone off to Ed, in hopes that he'll reveal more - - especially about Mellomir.

love,
THO

P.S. Sage, you're a VERY good guesser. Except about Ed's basement. So good, in fact, that if ever you make it to Ontario, Canada, you and I may just have to meet, and take turns tying knots and plying the whip, if you take my meaning. Worry not; I don't scar easily.

love,
THO

7 November:-

Hi again, all.

Sage, of COURSE Lady K must be a full participant in any, er, hanky-panky that may ensue. 'Twouldn't be illicit, otherwise. As for stamina . . . there's no need to RUSH. We'll have lots of time for tea and chat and, ah, recovery. I know some tricks involving my fingertips that are likely to be timely . . .

(There, Menelvagor; explicitly steamy enough for you?)

Ahem. I DO have a Realmslore reason for posting, now, too. To wit, Ed's response to this earlier query, from Blueblade: "Dear Ed and THO, I remember Ed once mentioning a minor noble of

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Cormyr who secretly, while abroad, hired tutors and became enough of an accomplished wizard to face down and surprise a War Wizard at a confrontation.

Who was that noble, and what was the confrontation about? (I remember it happened at the noble's family country mansion or castle.) Thanks! BB"

Ed replies:

You remember matters well, Blueblade! The noble is Lord Erephrand Downshield (the Earl of Downshield), the son of Roryn Downshield, who was ennobled by Azoun IV very early in Azoun's reign for personal loyalty to the king (read: defeating an assassination attempt and taking wounds in the process). Erephrand is a mild-mannered, middle-aged, single man who rode with Alusair and has his own fierce personal loyalty to her. He's not a rebel or any sort of foe of Cormyr, he simply dislikes the meddling of the Wizards of War, whom he regarded as the REAL traitors to the realm, under Vangerdahast. When young and vigorous and busy making many trips to, and later extended stays in, Suzail on his father's business (enriching the family through shrewd trading deals and investments in the prosperous, ever-expanding Sembian economy of the time), he discovered that he had a natural, hitherto hidden talent for the Art, and decided to hire tutors and take some training so as to be able to hold his own against passing hedge-wizards, overbearing minor priests, and, yes, overly officious War Wizards (of lesser magical accomplishments; he never intended nor expected to be a match for a group of wizards or a senior War Wizard). Again, let me stress that Erephrand Downshield is NOT a rebel. He simply wanted the confidence of knowing his own abilities, and of being able to control them, to hold his own in defending his household and his family interests - - rather than having the War Wizards clamp down on him the moment his facility for magic was discovered.

The confrontation was just that: upon ascending to the lordship (earldom, that is, but I've used the customary colloquial Cormyrean term of "lordship"), on the death of his father, Erephrand politely but very firmly disagreed with the War Wizard who had been serving as his father's "house wizard" on how family business should be conducted. The particular low-level wizard was a rather sneering, superior sort, and Erephrand took some delight in publicly astonishing - - and besting - - him in a minor trading of warning (as in "shot across your bows") magics. Which earned him a swift visit from Vangerdahast, and a quite amicable understanding being reached, involving the installation of a new house wizard. :}

The confrontation took place in the hall (great room or feasting hall, but Downshield Keep has just the one large room, so it's simply called "the hall") of the family seat, which is a three-storey walled stone manor house that boasts a lone crenellated stone tower, located on a lane running north off The Way of the Manticore, about a day's easy ride east of the Wyvernflow (or of Wheloon, if you prefer), about a sixth of a day's ride up that lane, in the heart of the rolling farm and ranch countryside of eastern Cormyr.

Erephrand hasn't yet (just pre-Spellplague) married, and has outlived his father, mother, and one sister, so he might well be the second and last Earl of Downshield - - or he might sire a large next generation of Downshields; we just don't know yet. (However, we do know that he's very fond of Alusair and that he enjoys the company of women.)

So saith Ed. Font of the true, original, and best Realmslore, as ever.

love to all,

THO

[...]

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Hi again, all.

Elfinblade, your great query goes off to Ed, of course, for a proper reply, but from my own notes (given to me years back by Ed, as a result of queries during play) I can tell you:

The Akanamere supports local fisheries in crabs, eels, and the druth or "brown flatfish" (which resembles nothing so much as the detached sole of a leather moccasin or slipper). The eels and flatfish are sun-dried for transport and sale; when soaked in water or shredded into a soup or stew they readily reconstitute, the eels having an odd "nutty" taste and the flatfish having a hearty "smoked bacon"-like flavour but a leathery, hard-chewing consistency.

The crabs are often called "stone crabs" for their usual human-palm size, mottled gray color, and rounded shape, are VERY tasty steamed, boiled, fried, or fire-seared (boiled treats them the worst, and fried the best). They are usually tossed alive into layers of salt in barrels for transport elsewhere, which kills them and preserves them; when bought out of the barrel, soak them for a day to get rid of the salt, or boil them very briefly with kurlath leaves (the broad green leaves of a wild, shady-loving ground plant otherwise useful only for wrapping things in; kurlath sap "cuts" salts of all sorts) to drive out the salt, and then prepare the crabs however you prefer. Stone crabs, when eaten raw, have a taste somewhat like real-world tinned smoked oysters [though they're not at all oily]. They readily "awaken" when cooked with herbs and spices, becoming stronger and more crab-like [[that's a direct quote from Ed, so you'll have to ask him what "more crab-like" really means]].

There. Lightning-fast Realmslore, courtesy of the sheer coincidence of my having found and re-read those particular campaign lore notes yesterday! Enjoy!

love,
THO

[...]

Hi again, all.

Hoondatha, regarding these queries: "So I take it, THO, you're a fan of Jacqueline Carey's, uh, genre?"

And to bring this back around, I have what is hopefully an easy question: how the heck do you pronounce Eaelann? Up til now I've been pronouncing it as "AIR-eh-lann," but I realized the other day that that's not at all how it's spelled. I have no idea how to pronounce "eae," and so for years I've been subconsciously moving letters around, pronouncing it as though it was spelled Aaelann. Which isn't how it's spelled. I was hoping the great wordsmyth might help a poor, tongue-tied player with the proper pronunciation. Thanks!"

I can step forward to reply, Ed being hard at work at his library job right now. Some of Ms. Carey's writing works for me, and some has pacing problems, but the sex is just fine. I like it outdoors, I like it bondage or not, spanking or whipping or not, and so on (in other words, I could go on being far more explicit than some scribes might prefer, just to say I like it in all sorts of ways). So, on to Eaelann . . .

From hearing Ed (who created the place and coined its name [pre-TSR, I'd say, looking at his old pencil maps]) use its name for years, I can tell you definitively that it's pronounced "AIR-hh-lann" (the "hh" being little more than an audible indrawing of breath, softer than an "uh" . . . and the voice lingering on the "an" at the end, in a "go down and hold it, flat" intonation.

And yes, the Elvish "Eae" is usually pronounced "air" (the exceptions being modifying consonants following the "eae" in a name or word; "v" and "y" and "z" all cause the "E" to be sounded in "Eae" so that, for example, Eaeve is pronounced "EE-vh" (again, "vh" being a shorter, softer variant of

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"vuh"). [[Or to put it far more simply, "Eaeve" would be pronounced by a real-world North American speaker as "Eve."]]

There you go. So saith me.
Call me any time, Hoondatha. [[purrrr]]
love,
THO

[...]

Malcolm, in answer to your first: YES.
In answer to your second: Yes they do, from time to time. I'm actually surprised it's taken this long for someone to think along these lines and ask. I'm not sure how much Ed will want or be willing to reveal at this time, so off your query goes to him, and we'll all see...
love,
THO

8 November:-

Menelvagor, from years of conversations with Ed, I'd say that if EI and the Seven can ever be said to have a single common desire, it is this (from about the 1350s onwards): to have successors they can trust to take over safeguarding the Realms, so they can retire and die. Literally "rest in peace."
Of course, this is MY guess. Off to Ed for confirmation/comment...
love,
THO

[...]

Hi again, all. I'm back with more Realmslore and a clarification. That clarification first: I was astonished to learn that one of my work colleagues is a Realms fan, and has been quietly reading this thread for years. She put a question to me whose answer I will share with you all, regarding the Earl of Downshield: he only had one sister, and has outlived her, and so (as of the situation and time as Ed described it to us, in his reply to Blueblade) is the "last of his line." He is the only living Downshield noble.

Right. Now the Realmslore. Marco Volo, Damian (crazedventurers) posted in response to your Haunted Halls questions: "I have always assumed this was in a secret hard to find and beholder guarded sub-level rather than part of the second level, similar to how Whispers Crypt is?" and Ed replies:

Yes, indeed, Damian. Spot on. There is a room on the second level that several other rooms open out of. One of these entrance is a huge, tall, grand-looking pair of tall metal doors that are a trap: they aren't attached to their frames at all, which are overlapping lips on the inside, that prevent them being pushed inwards. If pulled (by their visible pull-rings) outward to open them, they topple onto the pullers, filling all of the floor space except those facing the areas of wall on either side of their frames.

Those frames are set into a stone wall that's six feet thick, and one of the frames is itself a secret, hidden door opening into a passage inside the thickness of that six-foot-thick wall, that leads down a flight of stone steps into the very beholder-guarded sub-level you speak of (there are other ways in and out, too).

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I'd love to just hand over the keyed map and let you all enjoy, but I'm treading VERY carefully here to stay legal and avoid trouble for myself and Candlekeep. I'll reveal more when and if I get permission to do so.

So saith Ed. Who's back hard at work on the Realms.
love to all,
THO

9 November:-

A pleasure, Elfinblade!
Jakk, I know that Draxius was someone else's brilliant idea (not Ed's), but that he wasn't handled the way he was because of published lore conflicts...it was just that the idea was too good NOT to use.
I'll leave it to Ed to say more, if he can.
love,
THO

12 November:-

Hi again, all. Another raft of posts off to Ed, who is tearingly busy right now but loves the questions, so keep 'em coming. Regarding your Arabel harp request, Broken Helm, I know there's more than one place/person you can go to, but the only one I remember right now is in the southwestern part of the city, in a modest upper-floor living quarters/workshop, and is an aging, gnarled human woman named Harsratha Taree.

So saith me (from Ed, of course; this comes from playing in Ed's campaign).
love,
THO

13 November:-

Hi again, all. It's my proud task to bring some new Realmslore replies from Ed of the Greenwood, this time in response to Baleful Avatar, who asked (back on page 105 of this thread): "Is anyone in Waterdeep allowed to be a member of multiple guilds? If so, are there any restrictions on their voting/rights/activities?"
Ed replies:

Usually a particular individual can't be a member of multiple guilds, but I say "usually" because the truth is that all guilds have their own rules, that differ in specifics from other guilds. It is VERY rare for someone to be allowed to simultaneously be a full voting member of more than one guild; more often someone who has dual or multiple memberships would only be allowed to vote or hold "full" (as opposed to "apprentice") membership in one guild. There have been, of course, a rare

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handful of individuals who have managed to belong to more than one guild by establishing several identities (attaining multiple memberships through deception). So, yes, there would be all sorts of restrictions in the rare instances of membership in more than one guild being held.

. . . And more recently (on page 111) Baleful Avatar asked: "Are there any half-orcs known and tolerated as members of the royal household (servants, courtiers) in Cormyr? Are there any half-orcs known and tolerated as long-established inhabitants of Suzail? Thanks! P.S. As of just pre-Spellplague. Sorry, should have specified."

Ed replies:

In the royal household, just pre-Spellplague: not to my knowledge. Of course, half-orcs who don't LOOK like half-orcs might be servants, courtiers, or guards in the royal household - - and of course, by all means create some if you'd like to, for your campaign. Yes, there are about sixty half-orc longtime Suzailans, mainly dockhands (ship loaders and unloaders and warehouse "cargo handlers") who dwell in the poorer western regions of the city. They mainly adopt an amiable "surly but placid" persona so as to fit in, and have earned tolerance among their neighbours, though not always from visitors to the city or the more xenophobic nobles.

So saith Ed. Spinning Realmslore day after day, year after year, decade after decade, for us all. Regarding matters large and small.

More soon, he promises.

love to all,

THO

[...]

Hi again, all. Ed promised more Realmslore, and here it is. Just a smidgen, but it's lore nonetheless. Back on page 106 of this thread, Kyrene posted: "Ed and/or THO and/or others, Running through my notes on notable NPCs in Neverwinter, I came across this little throwaway comment concerning Alasturan Malatheer:

"Elminster refuses to do more than smilingly muse about what a formidable foe a song dragon wizard who retained his magecraft in gold dragon form would be—and then adds enigmatically that Mystra would almost have to take a personal interest in such an individual."

Is/was he a Chosen of Mystra, or have I just run into an NDA wall at high speed?"

I warned Kyrene that there was indeed an NDA wall, and that it hadn't "budded an inch," to which Kyrene responded: "I'll take that as a "Yes, maybe" rather than a "No, definitely not" then. Is there anything Ed can tell us about Alasturan Malatheer that has not already been published and would not be behind that wall? Yes, I'm keeping it purposely vague, and so can be whatever Ed can reply with. A single word of lore is still 'more lore' after all."

Ed now replies:

No, Alasturan isn't a Chosen, but Mystra has many other (lesser) allies and servants (see SECRETS OF THE MAGISTER for some "types" of these). Hint, hint.

As for other lore about Alasturan, my notes contain these tidbits:

Alasturan has amassed a collection of maps and charts (apparently as a hobby, enjoying examining them even when he knows their details are fanciful, incorrect, or outdated), plays

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chess and some other complex board games (for fun, and often alone, not to gamble over or "smash opponents"), has done extensive experimentation and development of new spells involving runes and glyphs . . . and loves going out onto coastal headlands in fierce storms and enjoying the lashing weather firsthand.
Not much, but more facets of character. Have fun!

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

14 November:-

Hi again, all! Back in mid-October (page 107), Blueblade asked: "Dear Ed and THO, A campaign question: on the main trade roads through Cormyr, there must be many bridges carrying those roads over all the streams that wander in and out of the King's Forest, through it, and so on. Are those bridges large and high enough to hide a large armed band under? Take shelter under, in a blizzard or torrential downpour?

And do Purple Dragon patrols habitually check under them, at every pass, to see if fugitives or monsters or anyone else, or contraband or other items, are there?

Thanks!" and Asgetrion then posted: "Ooh, I'm definitely seconding this one! Let me also add a quick additional question: which of the "major" roads in Cormyr (i.e. those depicted on the maps) are actually cobbled?"

whereupon I responded: "As far as I can remember, Asgetrion, cobbled streets are restricted to the cities of Cormyr, High Horn, and the "main drags" of larger places like Wheloon. Everywhere else is hard-packed fine gravel atop dirt, with stones and moss on the flanks to slow washouts (and repaired constantly; the Purple Dragon road-patrols inspect and report constantly). With logs under the dirt in swampy spots.

Of course, I'll pass your query on to Ed, in case anything's changed."

Ed now replies:

THO is entirely correct about the cobbles, except that cobbles are also found on every bridge that isn't a small, simple "flat planks covered with gravel affair," and on some stretches of the main coastal trade-road linking Cormyr with Sembia (where on-its-way-down-to-the-sea drainage dictates that cobbles are better than more-readily-washed-away fine gravel).

The main trade roads tend to have tile culverts (filled in all around with VERY broad stone-rubble shoulders) for some forty or so small rivulets and drainage ditches, but wherever a watercourse is larger and "running" year-round, they do have large and robust bridges that, indeed, a "large armed band" could hide under or take shelter under." And yes, Purple Dragon patrols do have standing orders to check under them at every pass, by the following method: shuttered lanterns lowered on poles so their illumination shines only on one side (toward the underside of the bridge and away from the Dragon observers "behind" the lanterns), while Dragons from the patrol armed with ready crossbows peer in under the bridge from some distance away "behind" the lanterns. Or to explain it more clearly: patrolmen get bows wound and ready, then go to prepared vantage-points thirty yards or more away from the bridge on either side, then signal their readiness. Lit lanterns are then lowered, with their dark sides kept towards the observers and their light-emitting sides toward the underside of the bridge. A third and fourth lanterns are already lit and ready, but kept completely shuttered. If there's nothing under the bridge, the observers return. If this is occurring in dark or dim conditions, all four lanterns are aimed at the surroundings while other

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Dragons (that is, not the returning observers) watch. The patrol reforms, the crossbows are unloaded and uncocked, the patrol crosses the bridge, the lanterns are extinguished, and the patrol moves on. Those third and fourth lanterns can serve as replacements for the two lowered lanterns if they are broken, but a fifth and sixth will then be lit to replace THEM. This procedure sounds more cumbersome than it is, because it's all smooth habit to the patrols.

So saith Ed. Founding Creator of Cormyr and of course the Realms around it.
love,
THO

[...]

An explanatory followup from Ed, just received: he meant to say that:

The small, simple "flat planks covered with gravel affair" (uncobbled) bridges would only be those over the small tile culverts. In other words, such a bridge is twelve feet long or less, and largely covered by gravel (i.e. not necessarily recognizable as a bridge to travellers on the road), the buried planks being a means to stop heavy wagons crushing the tile culvert, which will almost always be a single "pipe" of about a foot across - - but in rare instances two or even three parallel pipes. Newer culverts are cylindrical sections of fired clay, and older ones are a flat plate of fired clay with an upside-down "U" of fired clay resting atop it.

So saith Ed. Seeing to even the smallest details.
love,
THO

16 November:-

Hi again, all.

Knight of the Gate, Ed and I are also interested in wines. The Realms has liqueurs, sherries, and "winter wines" (wherein wines are poured out in pans at below freezing winter temperatures, the ice skimmed off, and therefore the alcohol content of the remainder is increased) that are meant to last for years, in stoppered bottles suitably wax-sealed, but I'd say a little more than 80 percent of wines in the Realms are designed to be drunk right away, and kept for no more than three seasons at most (usually less). They are little more than a way of "trusting the drinking water" or achieving pleasant tastes, or both, for some.

There ARE connoisseurs, especially among nobility and wealthy wannabe-nobles in Waterdeep, Cormyr, Amn, and elsewhere, who champion and enjoy the remaining 20 percent or so of wines, which usually can be aged 10 to 12 years at most before they start to fade (vinegar in about 20, give or take 2 years each way).

Elves make wines, and halflings beer, and dwarves and gnomes fortified spirits, that last MUCH longer, however (but these rarely reach human markets or attention. Some human-city-dwelling demihumans use them as "bases" for various medicines that they sell to humans.

And those are the basics. Ed has extensive notes on this topic, but I'm not sure how much is NDA and how much he's free to share.

love,
THO

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18 November:-

Hi again, all. Ozzalum, I found another general term for infections in my Ed-campaign-play notes: infected battle wounds were often referred to as having "swordtaint" (or being "swordtainted").
love,
THO

20 November:-

Hi, all. Baleful Avatar, Ed ran at least one "library campaign" (a 13-week, one-four-hour-play-session-a-week adventure) set in Cormyr, years ago, using the PCs as Highknights to do NCIS/BONES/CSI investigations (long, long before any of those television programs was thought of, of course) within the realm.

Ed's REALMS OF MYSTERY short story, "The Grinning Ghost of Taverton Hall," echoes what that campaign was like (I didn't play in it, but I dropped by briefly to watch short stretches of two of the play sessions). There were plots and subplots galore, of course, but some of them centered around wayward nobles murdering rivals and upstart wannabe nobles whom they had trade dealings with, that went sour, and other nobles who were plotting treason and killing anyone who got even a whiff of their plans, all complicated by husband-hunting young noblewomen, some enterprising blackmailers (commoners seeking to pry money out of indiscreet nobles), various ambitious lone courtiers trying to manipulate noble families, a band of merchant thieves just trying to rob anyone and frame everyone else for everything they did . . . oh, it was a happy traffic jam, believe me, with the PCs (low-level, starting-their-careers Highknights, all of them) caught in the middle. A GREAT setup for a campaign...or for that matter for a short story anthology that I think Ed should suggest to the Books Department folks.

Unless, of course, they still covertly read this thread. Folks?

22 November:-

Hi again, all. I bring Ed's swift response to Sandstorm's query about novel writing:

Hi, Sandstorm. What follows is my opinion more than anything else, and please bear in mind that it's a snapshot of an always-changing position (i.e. the marketplace, and all details of publishers' aims, wants, intent, and so on, alter constantly). Also, please don't be offended if I speak simply and bluntly here; you may already know or suspect much of what I say here, but as I don't know "what you know," I'm starting from the basics.

First off, yes, any future Realms novel published by anyone except Bob Salvatore or me is going to have to be set post-Spellplague. Rare and fleeting flashbacks MAY be permitted to "set up" a tale, but the current Realms book editors tend to frown on flashbacks, and the line is really concentrating on stories wholly set in the "now" (post-Spellplague) Realms.

Secondly, you've been told correctly about the slim to nonexistent likelihood of getting an unsolicited Realms novel published. It's not primarily that you're a first-time writer; it's that you're crashing head-on into a policy adopted by the publisher of the Realms (and to get published, one must always "fit in" with a publisher's current plans, so trying to break or get made an exception to their policy is usually doomed). This policy, which can be found in their writers' guidelines on the WotC website, states flat-out that the publisher doesn't currently accept ANY novels set in any of the D&D "worlds" (the Realms, Eberron, etc.) except novels they ask specific writers to write for

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them.

In other words, Wizards contacts Writer X, asks for a novel on (I'm inventing here) flying stone statues, the writer prepares an outline that gets accepted (usually after being tinkered with), a contract is signed, and the writer sits down and writes the book. There aren't many "novel slots" open right now, and Wizards tend to contact writers they are already familiar with (such as those who've written books for them before, or who have written short stories Wizards have published in one of their anthologies before - - which is a way of demonstrating the writer can write good stuff, deliver it on time, and work cordially with the editors).

If you send your own (as in, "plot invented on your own") Realms novel to Wizards, it will be rejected without even being read.

It's my guess [[please note that word "guess"]] that this admittedly-disappointing policy is the company legally protecting itself against lawsuits from Writer A, who is angry that they submitted a novel featuring (I'm inventing again) Calimshan being conquered by a band of adventurers and a new kingdom being founded there by those same adventurers, when Wizards soon after publishes a book that features the very same plot, by someone else (Writer B). This published book would be an honest coincidence, founded in the fact that all fans of the Realms know it in some detail, and could very well come up with similar ideas independently of each other. The policy allows the publisher to argue in court that they didn't copy Writer A's book because they didn't even read it, and point to their policy; subpoenaed staff members need only swear under oath that they followed the policy and didn't read Writer A's book, and the case is dismissed.

Again, this is just my reading of the situation.

Yes, it costs all of us some potentially great Realms stories that we don't even know about, but It Is The Way It Is. The time when I, the creator of the Realms, could call up the publisher of the Realms and ask to write a novel about whatever I felt like writing about, without telling them what that topic would be and getting permission, is over twenty years and one publisher ago.

All of which brings us to what you should do instead of submitting your Realms book and having it get shredded unread. Yes, keep it (print it out as well as keeping it on computer or diskette or flash drive, but show it to NO ONE, because doing so is technically "publishing" it). Perhaps, one day, after you're a bestselling fantasy author, Wizards will enthusiastically agree to look at your long-hidden Realms novel.

In the meantime, you should indeed start writing stories that are all your own, set in a setting NOT owned or previously published by anyone else. Adult-level (yes, I know you don't mean porn, you mean not aimed at kids) fantasy is a very popular genre these days, yet publishing in general is under intense economic pressure in these current hard times.

My general advice is: keep telling the story as the most important thing, with detailing the setting (and sharing those details with the reader) secondary. No one cares who married so-and-so or tamed a dragon three centuries back or who the fifth king of yonder fallen kingdom was, if the story doesn't grab them. Read fantasy, LOTS of fantasy, and read other genres, too (thrillers and mystery and horror). See how writers pace their tales, how they "grab" the reader, how they describe without over-describing and getting bogged down (or to put it another way, how much they leave to the reader's imagination to fill in), how they avoid making the storytelling seem too modern or mundane or hitting the wrong tone, and so on.

Some writers find that doing short stories first is the best way to get comfy with their new world and telling stories in it. Very, very few people can make even a paltry living just writing short stories these days, but it does give practice in meeting deadlines, dealing with editors, handling someone else wanting your story heavily rewritten, and so on, without it taking you years because you're having to revamp a full-length novel. The best markets right now are probably REALMS OF FANTASY and THE MAGAZINE OF FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION; both have websites and can be bought on newsstands (or try a large public library). Don't try to write for a magazine

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without reading a few issues to get an idea of length and tone the editor wants, and what topics (sort of stories) have just been told. In a wider sense, looking into a library interloan for a recent copy of the SFWA (Science Fiction & Fantasy Writers of America) BULLETIN and looking at the "markets" column to see what editors ask for, in magazines and anthologies of original stories, is a good idea to try to get a grasp of the market. So is perusing recent issues of LOCUS (it has a website, too: www.locusmag.com), which show you what's being published (the actual magazine, as opposed to the website, also tells you what's been bought by publishers, that will appear in a year or two, and gives copious reviews of current books).

That "learning your market" advice goes for writing novels, too: it's simply idiotic to try to send your book to a publisher who's not interested in publishing whatever you've written. That includes, by the way, checking to see if a publisher accepts "unsolicited" submissions at all (meaning, in this case, books or queries about books sent to them by writers, rather than by literary agents acting for writers - - and for many writers, finding an agent who will represent them, so they can get their book even LOOKED AT by a publisher, is another hurdle they have to find a way over even before getting a publisher to accept a book; there are simply too many hopeful wannabe writers, and already-published writers, out there for most publishers to read the avalanche of stuff sent to them, so they use agents to whittle down the flood, in the same way that some companies demand job applicants have university degrees that aren't really necessary for the jobs they need filled, just to cut down on the number of people they'll have to interview). So you may end up doing this: 1. Write Book. 2. Find An Agent Willing To Represent it. 3. Wait for a Publisher to "Bite" on your Book after Agent sends it to them. 4. Agent Fights With Publisher to get a Contract for your Book. 5. Start the Editing and Rewriting Process.

Yes, my hair went gray and is now going white. Writers need lots of PATIENCE.

To start your deciding on possible publishers, what follows is a very abbreviated and simplified overview of North American publishing companies (I mean American, really; Canadian publishers - - and I speak as a Canadian who's been making a living from my writing for about thirty years now - - just don't have the money to offer you decent payment for a fantasy novel, or to promote it enough so that it will sell well). I've left out gaming publishers because almost universally fiction written for them is "work for hire" (they own it, and you don't, so you've just given them your fantasy setting, usually for not much money).

If your fantasy book is primarily feminist or dominated by female (human or close-to-human) characters, DAW might be interested in your fantasy novel. If your book is militaristic in tone and content, Baen Books might be the best place to send it. If it's primarily a romance (a fantasy or sf romance), Luna Books (an imprint of Harlequin) might be the best place to send it. Otherwise, there are the "big New York publishers," and then the smaller ones (that is, both smaller publishers and big publishers that only have small fantasy "lines"). First of the "big" is Tor Books, because they publish the most titles every year, and try to cater to every sort of fantasy and sf reader, publishing almost every "flavour" of book (so you have the biggest chance). Then there's Del Rey, then Bantam (Bantam Spectra), Eos, Ace, and then things start to get smaller, with Harper, Simon & Schuster, Warner Books, Night Shade Books and so on; again, finding an "annual survey" issue of LOCUS that counts all the titles published in a year by various publishers, and then checking out the websites of those publishers and what's said about them in LOCUS and the BULLETIN, will give you some grasp of who's out there that you should be aiming to get your book published with.

I could go on gabbing for pages and pages and not be much more helpful to you, because everything I say is subjective and will soon become dated (editors die or retire or get fired, publishers merge imprints or shut them down or get out of publishing fantasy, and so on and on), and what worked for me might not work for you, and so on.

So I'll stop now, and await your inevitable followup questions.

Hear me loud and clear: I feel your pain about not getting your Realms book done and then just

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getting it published. There are DOZENS of Realms novels I would have liked to have written and got into print before the Spellplague, and there are still dozens more Realms books I want to do before I die (hopefully many years from now). Yet you will be a better writer if you do your own original work, not relying on the setting you obviously love. And if you get famous and bestselling enough on your own, that's the very best way to maybe, just maybe, getting that Realms book published, somewhere down the road.

Let's talk. :}

So saith Ed. Who has written or co-written almost 180 books since he started, hit the New York Times bestsellers lists, won a shelf-full of awards, and of course created the Realms. I'm a freelance editor these days (not very active, thanks to my mysterious day job), but I can add little details here and there to what Ed says, Sandstorm. However, so we don't blather on and on, it's best if you follow Ed's lead: ask specific things you want to know more about, and we'll try to answer. One tip: type "Predators and editors" into the exact phrase box of a Google advanced search to see what's what with some good and bad literary agents. It's a jungle out there (yes, writing the book is the EASY part).

love,
THO

[...]

Oh, and Sage, in answer to your query about what terms Ed uses for the inhabitants of Candlekeep, he sent this:

In the Realms:
scribes, monks, scholars, seekers (as in "seekers after knowledge"), lorekeepers, loremasters

In our real world, about this site:
scribes, good folks, true Realms fans, loreseekers, loremasters, my friends

So saith Ed. That made me feel warm and welcome, inside.
love to all,
THO

[...]

Hi again, all.
Sandstorm, I call myself "The Hooded One" here at Candlekeep because I'm keeping my identity secret, for real-world work-related reasons (nothing sinister, it's just that my current employer has a policy whereby every single posting I make here would have to be pre-approved by superiors who know nothing about roleplaying games or the Realms, and have a natural tendency to deny communications and keep secrets; imagine a 6-month delay in every reply I made to you, and you can see why I prefer to be anonymous, instead).

As an editor active in publishing, I can handle your followup questions. It's true that some editors at publishing houses have friendships (or hatreds) for specific agents, and vice versa, but in general it's the story they're putting before the publisher for consideration that determines whether or not a deal gets made.

In other words, so long as you avoid the scam or "problem" agencies I mentioned identifying through Predators and Editors, your choice of literary agent should be whoever agrees to

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represent you that you feel most comfortable with. Large, long-established agencies have more clout with publishers, but also have large client lists, which mean you may be far down their priority list, as a new, first-time client...whereas a small agency (or lone agent), just starting out, may have a lot of time to devote to you but little influence with publishers.

So, no, don't try to pick an agency to be the best match for the publisher you'd like to have publish you.

Again, check out the websites of Baen and Eos, see if it says anything about writers' guidelines, and if some are offered, FOLLOW THEM (it's like a school test; if you ignore instructions, you lose marks in their eyes). They should say if the publisher "doesn't accept unsolicited manuscripts" or "isn't accepting X or Y at this time."

You are quite right to devote almost all of your time and attention to the story you're now working on. If it's great, getting the right agent and publisher will be relatively easy. If it's mediocre, every step along the publishing road is harder.

Good luck!

love,
THO

23 November:-

Well, Candlekeep IS all about uncovering lore-secrets. So before I groan and confirm that Malcolm is on to something, let me just ask any interested scribes: what do YOU think the origins and true nature of ioun stones are?

(In the Realms, I mean; Ed and I are both well aware that they come from Jack Vance's Dying Earth tales.)

love to all,
THO

25 November:-

Hi again, all. BadCatMan, I've sent your queries to Ed, but I can tell you off the top that there's no set-aside "holy day" in the Realms; everyone believes in just about every deity (that their race venerates), and worships them energetically or marginally, depending (if you're a farmer, you'd pray a lot to Chauntea, but if you had to send your grain or hogs by ship to market, or ever had to make an ocean voyage yourself, you'd sure worship Umberlee and Talos energetically, to try to make that passage safe), all the time. Yes, there are particular important festival days and holy days for each faith, but there's no once-a-tenday "day of rest" (that's a real-world Christian feature). Which would argue that the weekend as a time off routine work doesn't exist, either (we Knights have never encountered a commonly-observed "every-tenday-hiatus" that would correspond to a weekend in the real world, to be sure) - - but I'll leave it to Ed to explain more fully.

love,
THO

[...]

Oooh, and an astonishingly swift reply from Ed just landed in my inbox! Brimstone, re. ELMINSTER MUST DIE!, Ed shares this with us all:

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Well, Wizards of the Coast has the perfect right to spill whatever teasing beans they want to about ELMINSTER MUST DIE! (and in a pre-order catalogue is the sensible and time-honoured way of doing such spilling), but I'm contractually bound NOT to. So I can't say anything at all, beyond explaining I haven't seen the cover you mention, and if things work the way they usually do, I wouldn't know if I was seeing a prototype or a final anyway, and couldn't confirm anything. As for your last question, re. Masters of Evil: No.

Regarding sharing: Sorry, but I legally can't. Other than to comment that what you paraphrase of the teaser blurb certainly isn't inaccurate, but of course teasers usually can only hint at a small part of what's in a book.

And * I * can't wait for August to get here, either! By then, I hope to have the first draft of my NEXT Realms novel done!

I will blurt out this much, because I don't think it offends against what I've agreed to say and not say: Susan Morris, my editor (editrix, if you prefer) on this book, loves the Realms and is a GREAT and enthusiastic editor. I very much look forward to working on a lot more books with her!

So saith Ed. Who tells me he's loving all the work he's doing on ELMINSTER MUST DIE! Now I'll tell you all something: true Realms fans, DO NOT MISS this book!

love to all,
THO

[...]

Hi again, all!

This time I bring yet ANOTHER lightning-swift Ed Realmslore reply, this time to Blueblade and Brimstone:

Suzail has dozens of importers who sell cloaks made in Sembia and Amn, and will alter them or add trim at a local shopkeeper's (or walk-in client's) request, or more often on their own, to try to create a stylish new look to differentiate their wares from everyone else's. Many, many seamstresses toil in the poorer parts of the city altering and recycling (cutting down into other garments) clothing of all sorts, and there are at least four clothing shops on the Promenade and central-city streets immediately south of the Promenade that routinely dye and adorn all manner of clothes to make them flashier, to stimulate sales.

However, Suzail has only one "known" high-class cloakmaker: Antheava Maeroara, who has an extensive second-floor shop above the premises of Harlithas Oamurburl, a custom boot maker, in Pendle Street (the two floors above Maeroara's shop and workshop are the living quarters of rental tenants, mostly workers in the two shops).

Antheava is a tireless, eager-to-please, seemingly ageless thin and supple woman who for decades has been a custom cloak designer and maker to the nobility and to all others with coin enough to pay outrageous prices for their cloaks (four times what a fine cloak costs elsewhere, and more). At all hours of the day or night she'll respond to their entreaties for emergency repairs, cleaning, or alterations; scores of noblewoman adore her and consider her a "quiet" (close-mouthed keeper-of-confidences) friend.

There has never been a breath of scandal associated with her; she's known to prefer the company of women, and to gently but firmly dissuade all advances from clients or other nobles of either gender.

Many Suzailan designers of other items of clothing or accoutrements have been touched by scandal, however, and the majority of these seem to deliberately behave outrageously (indulging in many excesses) to repeatedly gain attention and so gain notoriety. The undergarment-maker

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Haelaera Immermoon is perhaps the most currently (just pre-Spellplague) infamous of these. A sexually voracious lover of seemingly-endless fondlings and orgies with anyone and everyone (both genders, and many races and species, from snakes to orcs to drow), who seems to enjoy feeling pain and having some means of healing herself from even grievous wounds, she delights in all manner of salacious behaviour that usually begins with the "personal fittings" she demands all of her clients take part in. Most Suzailans either avoid her entirely or can't afford her wares, or enjoy dealing with her but find her "exhausting, simply exhausting - - and you MUST hear what she made me do!" Haelaera is a young-looking, thin-to-bony, blonde human Aglarondan woman who seems never to sleep, or need to do so.

So saith Ed, tireless revealer of all manner of sidelines and oddities of the Realms.
love to all,
THO

28 November:-

Hi again, all. A quick Ed-reply to Kajehase's question: ". . .what is the ratio of land-owning farmers to farmers paying someone (probably a noble or religious organisation, I'm guessing) for the privilege of working their homesteads in Cormyr, the Vast, and the Waterdeep uplands respectively?"

Ed replies:

The owners versus tenants ratio is about 85 percent owners to 15 percent tenants in Cormyr (with almost all tenant farmers in the southeast; if you expand the definition of "tenants" to include the household staff of nobility working the nobles' farmland, AND include farmers who farm their own land but also farm a field or two owned by absentee landlords [[usually city folk or nearby nobles]], the ratio shifts to about 70 percent land-owning farmers versus 30 percent renting farmers).

In the Vast, it's 75 owners to 15 tenants, but if you use the expanded tenant definition above, matters shift to about 67 percent owners to 33 percent tenants.

In the Waterdeep uplands (Goldenfields and similar temple-farms farmed by the resident clergy specifically excluded), the ratio is 82 percent owners to 18 percent tenants, but if you use the expanded definition, things shift only slightly (to 79 owners vs. 21 percent tenants).

So saith Ed. Who adds that Amn is the land where tenants widely outnumber owners, except in the hilly and mountainous borderlands.

love to all,
THO

29 November:-

Heh. Seamstresses as something more sexual is far, far older than Terry (he's looking back some centuries at our real world).

Kajehase, Ed tells us:

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Tenants have all three of those options open to them in Cormyr, and usually choose the third (but sometimes the second). This is the norm across the Realms, wherever tenant farmers exist. In Amn, however, only coin is accepted by the landlord, so the farmers have to sell their crops or labour as dearly as they can, to get coin enough to pay (or be forced into a period of unpaid labour, in lieu).

So saith Ed. Who is busy busy busy with Realms writing, these last few days.
love to all,
THO

[...]

Hi again, all!
Some quick housekeeping, as we wait for more Ed Realmslore...

Aysen, Aurora and her band weren't Ed creations, but I've sent your queries to him, of course, to see if any of the band were drawn from Ed's NPCs (he created batches of them for the use of others at TSR, back in the day), and to see if he incorporated them into "his" ongoing Realms and created ongoing histories for them.

As for your second question (or series of same), I can tell you that Mystra DEFINITELY responded more because of Tammert's sacrifice than because Khelben was involved; I can speak this emphatically because Ed and I discussed this, in the past, and I remember that much of his reply, right off the top of my head. And yes, for those mages who venerate Mystra more deeply than, say, Azuth or other deities, offering a memorized spell as a sacrifice IS a common practice.

Menelvagor, Ed tells me he will have more to say about Haelaera, for you.

Sage, Ed also tells me that there have been many cases where Amnian landlords have accepted other payment than coin. Here are his words:

Some Amnian landlords find it more advantageous to have a debt or "favour" forgotten, or something that was witnessed formally but secretly repudiated, in a document the landlord keeps hidden until (if ever) it becomes needful. Some landlords even prefer taking payment in the form of taking over one end of a business deal, or accepting part ownership in something (or even, in the case of some of the more venal landlords, carnal access to a tenant's wife or daughter), or taking a prized horse or just the right to breed that animal (and keep the resulting offspring). In short, there have been many exceptions, down the years, but Amnian law doesn't formally speak of them, most Amnians don't publicly discuss them (they fall under the heading of "accommodations," meaning not places to stay but things yielded in private, in business negotiations), and non-Amnians would think them very rare and unlikely. Like a real-world statement beginning with "The government always - -" it's one of those cases where there are always exceptions . . . but don't count on being one. :}

So saith Ed. Who is hard at work in the Realms as I post this.
love to all,
THO

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3 December:-

Hi, all.

Hmm, I seem to recall all sorts of messages: plain unencrypted written, coded messages in which "shorthand" words (like the "Hawkfield" example you cite) were placed within lines of communication purporting to be something else, messages that unleashed another, spoken message when touched and the right command word spoken, and verbal message memorized by the messenger, who also carries a "dummy" (and deliberately misleading) plain unencrypted written message.

However, Ed will certainly be able to say more, so off to him it goes...

love,
THO

[...]

Heh. Ed's going to be a busy boy this weekend, I'm thinking . . .

Hello again, fellow scribes. I know this is last-minute, but scribes who happen to be in the vicinity of Port Hope, Ontario, Canada tomorrow (Friday, Dec. 4th) might want to drop by the Port Hope Library for their annual Christmas Open House. All day long there are the usual carol singings and visits with Santa, appearances by childrens' authors, and so on. Every year Ed Greenwood writes a new Christmas story (usually not fantasy, but sometimes there's magic involved) and gives a public reading of it during this Open House; this year he'll be upstairs at 2 pm doing so, followed at 3 pm by Shane Peacock, author of some "young Sherlock Holmes" novels for teens, and at 4:30 pm by Farley Mowat, the famous Canadian author. Admission is free, and Ed usually hangs around for a while after his reading to sign books, chat with fans, and generally just "hang out." So if you'd rather not travel to GenCon (or another convention) to see Ed, here's one more chance.

Also, Ed has just confirmed that he plans to attend Ad Astra (one of Canada's oldest annual sf conventions) this year, as a panelist (April 9-11th, 2010, at the Toronto Don Valley Hotel and Suites). This is a small, relaxed con where fans have easy access to lots of Canadian and northern U.S. sf, fantasy, and horror writers (and editors, too!).

Right. Enough public service announcements. Back to the Realmslore! Bring on those questions, folks! Ed LOVES answering them, whenever he can find the time!

love to all,
THO

4 December:-

ZandroAmanodel,

off the top of my head I can tell you that many brothels and herbalists offer inexpensive "herbed bath" or "herb steambath" services, which always include a "rubdown" (deep hand massage). Many, many travelers and street-dwelling poor use these services regularly to get clean, get their clothes washed, get warm, and have aches and pains seen to; for some, it's what makes their lives (of having little, and being in contact with folk who have so much more) bearable. So that part of what chiropractors do (the application of heat, and massage) is in part covered by these relatively inexpensive services (usually 1 cp for a bath or a massage, and 2 cp for both with washing and "ovenboard" drying thrown in; "ovenboard" drying is laying wet clothing out flat on boards heated by proximity to an oven or hearth or chimney, to rapidly dry, the clothes being moved to new dry hot surfaces several times to speed the process).

This comes from my Realmslore notes imparted by Ed during play. I will of course relay your

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query to him to see if any "medical" chiropractor equivalents are present in the Realms, or anyone (besides the obvious trained monks) who knows and uses application of precise amounts of pressure in specific places, to loosen muscles and treat pain.

love,
THO

8 December:-

Hi again, all.
This, from Ed:

I'm afraid I can't say anything at all about ELMINSTER MUST DIE! without clearing it first with Wizards. Sorry.

I might let slip that before editing, the book did have a "ye" or two in it.
But then again, I might not. :}

So saith Ed. Who is hard at work on something Realms-ian that he can't (of course) tell me about. Which is frustrating but bodes well for us all in the long run . . .

love to all,
THO

10 December:-

Hi again, all.

Another raft of excellent questions . . . and off they all go to Ed.

sfdragon, I doubt Ed is legally allowed to reveal what future columns will cover. I do know he's done ten or twelve of them already, so if Myth Drannor isn't among them, it may well be a year before Ed would get a chance to do it.

"If," I emphasize.

Right now, Ed is out ploughing (or plowing, if you prefer) icy snow, so he won't spend a THIRD day housebound. Not that he hasn't got a lot of juicy writing accomplished...

love to all,
THO

13 December:-

Hi again, all.

I bring a brief Ed reply to Baleful Avatar re. AVATAR:

No, I haven't seen it yet. Way too busy with work and holiday family stuff to try to finagle my way into a press preview. The concept is, as you say, hardly new (hey, neither was TITANIC, being as we all knew going in that the ship sinks), but the execution, based on the "long trailer" I've seen so far, looks superb. So does what little I've glimpsed of the computer game (animation a cut above the standard thus far). I really can't tell you about the story or my overall impressions/judgement until I see it, of course, but I WILL be going to see it. Eagerly.

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So saith Ed. Who lives in a rural area, and so has more limited opportunities to take in a particular movie on big screens than he did when he lived in "the Big Smoke" (Toronto - - and for the Americans on this forum, Toronto is the third-largest North American city; it's smaller than New York or LA but bigger than Chicago, and has more of the "feel" of the Windy City than the other two cities).

love to all,
THO

[...]

Hi again, all!

Earlier this year (I'm sorry, but I'm away from both my computer and proper display access to the Forum right now; I hope Sage or Wooly or someone can "fill in the gap" as to just when; I know it was revisited on page 92 of this year's thread, but that wasn't when it was first asked), Menelvagor asked Ed, in part, this: "Rereading Elminster In Hell, I noticed this: On page 30, El has a memory where he bows over an elven woman who's deathly wounded. Silver Fire springs around her. What is interesting, however, is that it comes from her, not El. Who is this elf?" (BTW, the page number Menelvagor cites is from the paperback edition of EL IN HELL, not the hardcover.) I consulted with Ed and provided this reply: "Menelvagor, Ed tells me that the dying elf woman in question is, to borrow your words, "someone else entirely." Unfortunately, she's also NDA. So we have a battlefield (in the past, Ed hints at least a few centuries, and we have a dying elf female known to El and dear to him, and yes, she certainly seems to be a Chosen . . . Ed wishes very much he could say more."

Well, now he can. So, scribes, NDAs DO fall. Once in a proverbial blue moon. Heeeeeere's Ed!

The battlefield in that brief memory fragment was somewhere in the upper Delimbiyr valley (on the eastern bank of the river, a little south of halfway between The Shining Falls and Hellgate Keep). The date was 882 DR, the Year of the Curse. The strife was the battle of Blades Afire (so named for a mighty high magic elven spell that made magical fire leap from sword to sword wielded by the elves, enabling them to do greater damage to the demons from Ascalhorn they fought), wherein elves of Eaerlann defeated a demon army.

It was a Pyrrhic victory; the elves won the day, but their heavy losses left them unable to properly defend their realm against future attacks, whereas the demon force they exterminated was but a part of Ascalhorn's strength - - so after Blades Afire, Eaerlann was doomed.

The dying moon elf in Elminster's arms, who spent her strength in several great magics during the fray, ensuring the elven victory but sacrificing herself in the doing (she left herself unprotected against demonic counter-attacks), was Duethaea Lauraunfeir (pronounced "Doo-eth-AY-ah Lore-AWN-fear"), a Chosen of Mystra whom Elminster had recruited and trained. She was young, vigorous, and strong in Art and will, but driven by her emotions, described as "spirited" and even "difficult" by her own family.

Duethaea and El were close friends but never lovers, El regarded her as a daughter, and he thought her foolish to sacrifice herself for her land, though he understood why she made that decision ("Tis unusual, indeed, for an elf to take the shorter view, and not cleave to the longer") and later came to respect her for it. Duethaea was tall, "rapier-thin," and preferred to go about in a battered old leather human warriors' greatcoat, that came down to her ankles.

She fashioned several multi-function magical bracers that enabled her to fly and hurl an array of battle spells, she had a "hard-bitten" face rather than great beauty, and far more than other moon elves of that time and place, she loved to drink ale and stronger beverages, befriend and spend time with halflings and dwarves, and keep close watch over ever-expanding human settlements and activities in the Sword Coast North, trying to see the wisest future for her realm and her people (and increasingly coming to the view that living with humans was better than fighting them and seeking to keep them out of the High Forest).

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So saith Ed. And there you have it, bright new (or rather, long-hidden) Realmslore!
Ed tells me there are still more as-yet-unrevealed or -detailed Chosen, but VERY few of them were still alive by the 1350s (in other words, don't expect to learn of many "secret hidden Chosen dwelling among us" during the decades extensively detailed in published pre-4th Edition Realmslore).

love to all,
THO

15 December:-

Hi again, all.

Bruce, you pose some very good questions, all of which have been asked before and that the answer to are NDA, I'm afraid.

So let me just say this:

It SEEMS to me, from the responses I've had from Ed and from various Wizards staffers I've asked at cons, that there won't be a novel or series of novels describing Mystra's demise/destruction. It appears that WotC has decided to "jump over" the cause of the Spellplague, the cataclysm itself, and its immediate aftermath, and move on into a later era in the Realms when it comes to storytelling.

I also have a more than sneaking suspicion that although we may never learn all the details of the whys and hows and Mystra's plans or safeguards or forethought or lack of same, that this story isn't quite finished yet...

love,
THO

16 December:-

Hi again, all. I'm away from home and Realmslore notes at the moment, but I clearly recall Tulrun as being part of Ed's original (pre-TSR) Realms. Tulrun's Tent is on his original pencil maps, that I snuck peeks at, way back in the early 1980s...

And I know he has unpublished, never sent in, Tulrun lore, too.

love to all,
THO

18 December:-

Hi, all. Malcolm, I know that some do, but only Ed will be able to give us specifics or even a good idea of how much (Sembia, thanks to the rich trade and commerce, is the most popular locale for "outland holdings" of Cormyrean nobles; after that comes the city of Waterdeep).

However, we'll see . . .

love,
THO

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19 December:-

Hi again, all.

Bruce, I'm afraid Ed can't comment on Laeral yet; There Are Plans. Which will involve Steven Schend far more than they will Ed. And before you rush off to put those same questions to Steven: HE can't answer you without seriously harming the chances of said Plans ever happening. Sometimes we must all just be patient and see what comes into print, I'm afraid.

love,
THO

[...]

Hmmm. Ed neglected to mention that's the "classical" symbol of Eaerlann, back in the days of its greatness.

In the time since, some elves have used a silver-blue, unsheathed and VERY slightly curving longsword, horizontal with the point to the viewer's left, to denote Eaerlann (and those who'd like to restore its greatness).

(I draw this from Ed's notes to me, BTW. I suspect Ed knew the questioner at loremaster was interested in the realm at its height.)

love,
THO

20 December:-

Oooh, shrewdly asked, Blueblade.

So much so that I'm thinking NDAs will prevent Ed from answering you. I strongly suspect that one of the magical things you mentioned has been used as a means of "cheating the timejump" for at least one Realms character, though none of us will know for sure for a while yet.

Oh, and more than that: that another possibility you mentioned has served ANOTHER Realms character in achieving the same ends.

However, I more than strongly suspect that neither Ed nor I can say more (in his case thanks to NDAs, in mine because I just don't know, and if I asked Ed his NDAs would prevent him from telling me - - and if I guessed and asked him to confirm my guess, he'd instead ask me as a longtime close friend to accept "nothing" by way of an answer, and not to speak publicly about THAT, and I of course would agree).

Which means we'll all just have to wait and see.

Ah, for the good old freewheeling days when Ed and other designers just couldn't wait to share the next tidbit or facet of the unfolding Realms with us all . . .

love,
THO

21 December:-

Hi, all.

Well, I asked Ed about Jergal and paladins, and he said:

Sure, there can be paladins of Jergal. However, they'll be VERY rare, and will be self-sufficient loners, "doom-swords" who stalk the world without much benefit of established churches, a helpful clergy, etc.

(Think of Karl Edward Wagner's Kane character.)

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Jergal will speak to them personally, in dreams and waking "talking in their heads," and will guide them to aid and hidden treasure caches (usually in tombs) when they have need of such things. His paladins are "my little aimed arrows," as he once referred to them. Please note that Jergal's aims (and what he has his paladins do) may seem rather confusing to many mortals.

So saith Ed. More Realmslore, as we approach Yuletide, and Ed busily wraps and wraps and wraps presents . . .

(Having just finished and sent off some new Realms writing for Wizards, last night.)

love to all,

THO

Bruce, it's almost certainly a reprint, though I'm checking with my sources in the industry (and if I come up empty, I'll get Ed to check with Troy!).

love,

THO

[...]

Hi again, all. I have a surprise smidgin of Realmslore to share with you all, in response to Christopher Rowe's query about twins (originally posted on page 47 of this thread): "Okay, how about this. Have there been any/many famous sets of identical twins in the Realms? I know that the Thunder Blessing brought about increased twin births among the dwarves--but are twins counted rare or (relatively) common among elves and halflings? Are twins thought to be good or bad luck in any cultures?"

Ed now adds:

Aha. Just came across those elusive identical halfling twins in my 1981 Realms notes: the male hin Amandar and Melver Minstrelwish, both handsome, agile, and tall and thin (for halflings) sorts who were scourges of both halfling and human lasses in their youths (spent errand-running, swift-package-delivering, and spying [often from rooftops, by night, on "embarrassing bedchamber moments" for the patrons who hired them to blackmail with] in Waterdeep). They were born in the summer of 1349 DR, and both left Waterdeep hurriedly (a running stride or so ahead of slayers hired by furious nobles whose wives [Milver] or daughters [Amandar] they had seduced, Amandar fleeing in the spring of 1367 DR and Melver in the fall of that year. Amandar hid out in Tethyr's Velen region for some years, and Melver ended up in Sembia . . . where he got into the same sort of trouble. As a result, he fled to Deepingdale, where Amandar, working with a caravan as a scribe, limner, and forger, happened across him by chance and settled down with him in Melver's sylvan "hidehold" (that he shared with a female half-elf lover, Jarantha Moonfall, a onetime "nightskirts" of Highmoon). The hidehold became a Harper safehouse stopover, and the three settled down into living quietly in the woods and making a good living falsifying documents for Harper agents, and writing steamy romance chapbooks and "wildsword" adventure chapbooks (short, lurid pulp adventure tales, often involving murder mysteries and hidden treasure, and ALWAYS involving lots of swordfights).

The fates of the three are unknown, because they maintained very low public profiles, using passing Harpers to send out their work and receive payments. They could have died or moved without the wider Realms being aware of it, if Harpers didn't talk...and most Harpers don't talk about such things, Spellplague or no Spellplague.

Thus far, that's all I have.

Wow! So saith Ed. Imparting another fascinating little tidbit of Realmslore. The place is real and alive, I tell thee!

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22 December:-

Yes. That's what we know thus far (and remember: unreliable narrators, always; the major facts are certainly right, but the details may be wrong or slanted).

Sandstorm, as it happens - - YES, by coincidence - - I just got Ed's answer to your question ("How do the mages in the city detect the use of arcane use?"), and here it is:

By use of a large web of wards covering much of the city, of course (a patchwork equivalent of a mythal). Though this webwork is constantly failing, here and there (and having to be repaired by the Cowled Wizards doing new castings), it holds up pretty well except when deliberately magically attacked, because all it does is detect, scry, and provide "anchor points" ('perfect' destinations) for Cowled Wizards teleports. All Cowled Wizards use a phrase or gesture in their castings that identifies them as Cowled Wizards to these wards; all other castings within or entering or exiting the wards trigger an alarm (so it's a detect magic modification thing). Shows precise location and extent of spell effects, but nothing else...so patrols of warriors, with wizards as "undercover" backup, are sent scurrying to the spot.

So saith Ed. More Realmslore, served up piping fresh!
love to all,
THO

[...]

Hi, Bruce. It was directly in response to your post, right above mine. As in: yes, that's what Grand History says...but we don't know details, or if it's been stated slightly skewed (after all, from whom does this data come? what all-knowing mortal? If a god, well, all the gods lie or exaggerate or...). Just saying.

love,
THO

[...]

Hi, all.
Yes, Icelander, they are...but not closely.

The Minstrelwish clan is HUGE and many-branched, not to mention scattered across darned near all of Faerun. With its own internal feuds and "standoffish" facets, too, though in general all Minstrelwishes give shelter and aid to all others, who appear and are in need.

(The paragraph I've set apart, above, comes straight from Ed's notes.)

love,
THO

27 December:-

Hi again, all! Ed and I both want to wish you all happy holidays - - and to a brighter, happier-than-

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2009 New Year of 2010 for everyone!

May we all greet the end of 2010 in a better wise than we stand here now. With the Realms rich and vibrant around us, as well as the real world.

love to all of you,

THO

Hi again.

Brimstone, Ed was indeed part of that secret Realms summit held in certain "back of the Marriott ground floor" at a GenCon some years ago.

However, the Spellplague had no name then, and there were no details of divine deaths (or anything more than the floating of a "prune the large pantheons" idea). That meeting featured much fierce (but not unfriendly) debate, because everyone taking part cared passionately about the Realms.

NDA's still cover details of what was (as opposed to what was not) discussed and decided, but Ed tells me he won't get into answering "Well, if this wasn't said, was that said?" queries designed to winnow it information by elimination. He'd much rather put the time into writing new Realmslore and Realms novels rather than playing nudge-and-wink duck and dodge NDA's games.

To which I responded: Awwwwwww...

love,

THO

[...]

Hmmm. Speaking of which: Ed is well aware of the unfinished four sample Cormyrean noble families, Thunderstone lore, and all the other queries, from 2004 through until today, he still needs to get around to answering.

However, he's interested in knowing what topics of Realmslore (specific things, not "all about Cormyr" or "everything that happened from the end of Grand History to the start date of the 4e guide") scribes would most like to see covered, somewhere and somehow, in 2010. Ed's Eye on the Realms column in D&D Insider (Dungeon Magazine) is written in advance for almost an entire year's-worth, and he can't put Realmslore into Kobold Quarterly or other non-Wizards sources (except here and tangentially at loremaster), but he CAN steer writing he is doing to touch on, give hints about, and somewhat address some things, if he knows you're burning to know more about something specific (regulation War Wizards undergarments, for example).

So, right here and right now, let us know, okay?

love,

THO

[...]

Hi again, all! A tiny snippet of Realmslore just arrived from Ed, this one in partial response to this query, from Broken Helm (page 116 of this thread): " Dear Ed and THO, Having just bought some boxes of frozen "appetizers" (hors d'oeuvres, party "finger foods," call them what you will) for Christmas, I'm moved to ask: are there mass-produced, buy-from-a-shop "finger foods" for revels, feasts, and celebrations? If so, what are they called and what are they? (I'm looking for what can be bought in human cities, not undersea or underground.) Thanks!" Ed replies:

Still assembling a proper reply, but the short answer is: yes, as of just before the Spellplague. One appetizer popular in Sword Coast ports and now in Suzail and Westgate (creeping into Sembian cities) is the "talyth," which is a cracker the size of a small human palm, onto which has been placed a thin slice of sausage, with various sorts of herbs, spices, and mush-down-flat

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foodstuffs in between, everything being lightly baked to "glue" it together. These are usually savory, and can include anything from snails and oysters and spiced worms right up through diced eggs and mixed cheeses. Sugars are often added, and they are wrapped in pig's bladders, heated on metal plates over fires to drive out moisture, tied shut, then "painted" all over with "tansel," which is an egg-and-certain-plant-pastes glue mixture that can provide an airtight seal, and packed in little pitch-sealed tins full of edible plant oils to guard against spoilage. Caravan companies ship these tins to shops, and you buy individual bladders of half a dozen or a dozen talyth for your meal or feast or revel.

Of course, these are just premade versions of talyths that have been "made fresh" in Waterdeep, Neverwinter, Luskan, Mirabar, Elturel, Everlund, Silverymoon, and Scornubel for decades. In winter, these can be premade and packed on ice, for later heating or reheating, to be served immediately.

So saith Ed. Thinking of our tummies again at this festive season; how thoughtful.
love to all,
THO

[...]

A postscript: yes, Ed is well aware that "talyth" is already a name for something else in the Realms. He's deliberately introducing another of the sort of realistic confusions (as found in our real world, and as deliberately removed by TSR and later Wizards down the years, for greater clarity, in the published Realms) that are found in the original Realms, such as a demon AND a devil sharing the name "Ashtaroth" (among many other examples).

love,
THO

29 December:-

Hi again, all. Menelvagor, Blueblade is right re. the dating of the trilogy. Quite specific. (Though I can't be, I'm afraid, because I'm away from my books, too.)
I bring Ed's response to Blueblade about another matter: the fate of the Knights, post-Spellplague (or more specifically, the nigh-century-timejump that brings us to the date of the 4e Realms Guide). Ed responds thus:

I'm afraid the fates of the Knights and many other Realms characters are NDA'd right now. Obviously, you can draw conclusions from that published Wizards catalogue writeup of ELMINSTER MUST DIE, and I can add that the text of that novel will (largely in passing, whilst telling another tale) shed light on the fates of some other Realms characters, when it's published in August 2010. Who, and what those fates are, are just going to have to remain mysterious until then. Sorry.

So saith Ed. Who doesn't fault you for trying, at all (he expects it).
love to all,
THO

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