

# DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

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## Imroad Gaskulyn

### Gnome Locketmaker

By Ed Greenwood

*How and where and when did the **Forgotten Realms** start? What's at the heart of Ed Greenwood's creation, and how does the Grand Master of the Realms use his own world when he runs **D&D** adventures for the players in his campaign? "Forging the Forgotten Realms" is a weekly feature wherein Ed answers all those questions and more.*

Gnomes in the Realms have often been called "the Forgotten Folk," thanks to the low public profile (in human regard) they've managed to achieve, despite dwelling in almost every human city of the Heartlands.

In Waterdeep, Baldur's Gate, Athkatla, and almost everywhere else where humans dwell in numbers, gnomes make themselves useful as local plumbers and all manner of "fine" craftworkers. They often establish themselves as the low-priced, word-of-mouth alternative to guilds, and they avoid competition with dwarves. (Gnomes are often roofers and stonemasons—but not in locales where dwarves have established themselves as builders and stonecutters.)

Many gnomes are gem cutters and jewelers, specializing in fine chains of the sort used in jewelry. Some work specifically with the gnome-devised "double locks," where one key opens an outer layer, and a second and smaller key, affixed to a chain to prevent it falling and being lost "inside the workings," must be passed through the outer-layer keyhole to unlock a second, inner keyhole.

One such craftmaster is Imroad Gaskulyn of Saerlooon. Known locally as a maker of finely chased, intricate lockets on chains, he has a sideline business that nets him far more money: He's a counterfeiter, covertly making copies of keys and altering one sort of coin or medallion into another on a strictly secret basis.

Gaskulyn's wife Maerla, and their four daughters (Tassala, Belbaera, Calathla, and Faenroara) are all gifted in the Art. They long ago devised spells that they cast on him regularly, in the presence of masked customers after work has been done and payment has been made, that make him forget what work he did for the specific person standing in front of them. (They loan each customer a mask for a few breaths, until the spell has taken effect.) As a result, Gaskulyn honestly doesn't know what he's done for this or that individual, and so he can't betray them, even under magically assisted interrogation.

"Go see the locketmaker" has entered everyday Saerloonian speech. It's the best local way to acquire "sensitive" metal items one needs, from the aforementioned coins and keys to duplicates of lost earrings, rings, and other precious love tokens (so as not to upset or offend the giver or owner).

Gaskulyn doesn't make copies of documents of any sort, just small metal items. Although he's an expert at making things look old (concocting pastes of various gravels, seaweeds, and wines or vinegars that impart patina, tarnish, and wear), he will hasten to inform clients that although he can duplicate the "look" of armor perfectly, his armor won't have the strength of the real thing. He knows how to temper blades, but he isn't an accomplished weaponsmith, either.

In some ways, Gaskulyn is a veteran, accomplished practitioner typical of many gnomes all across the Realms, but his activities have made him more important—and useful—to adventuring bands than many of his counterparts elsewhere.

It was Imroad Gaskulyn who devised the double-thickness gorget (armored throat protector) that conceals a thin storage compartment between its two layers. These are sold to clients, and they contain sheets of soft copper and (as slide-able out of the rounded rim of the gorget that "closes off" the storage niche) a hard metal stylus that can be used to write messages or scribe crude maps on the copper sheets.

It was Gaskulyn who established a complicated system of "secret storage" in rooftop compartments, atop various buildings all over the city where other Saerloonian gnomes had done roof work. Upon payment of a storage fee, a client receives a "half-key" that looks like a finger- or toe-splint, and they usually take to wearing these on their own body. This half-key will work only if mated with a second piece, held by Gaskulyn's family; snapped together, the two form a whole key that will unlock the hiding place.

Gaskulyn or the gnome who first conducts the client to the hiding place promptly "forgets" it with the Gaskulyn family spell, so only the client knows which of the many hiding places across the rooftops of the city is his or hers. Only the client has a half of the key, but it's useless without the matching piece. Both parts bear a code that only the female Gaskulyns know, and it tells them which of the many half-keys they store goes with one that's presented to them. These "several steps of security" inhibit potential treachery within a group of clients (such as an adventuring or smuggling band) and they cut down on attempts to coerce or steal from the Gaskulyns, because they honestly don't know which hiding place is which, and they have only half the means of opening any of them.

It was also Imroad Gaskulyn who hit upon the idea of "advancing" adventurers monetary loans, or covertly loaning or renting grapnels, long stout ropes, collapsible armor mesh carrybags, and wagons with mules or oxen.

As many city-dwelling gnomes do, the Gaskulyns also hide and shelter all manner of fugitives for short periods, using their illusion spells to disguise the identities of their "guests" (usually to look like visiting gnome relatives from afar). Like many other gnomes, the Gaskulyns fence sensitive items (such as crowns and other recognizable loot from local robberies), and change currencies (and gems into coins or tradebars, or vice versa), no questions asked.

And last but by no means least, it was Imroad Gaskulyn who hit upon the idea of taking the slip-on metal "talon" fingerpicks used by many minstrels and bards and equipping them with sealed metal capsules of herbal preparations that offer temporary sleep, pain-deadening, paralysis, or "wild visions" (hallucinations). The user merely tips the talon with the concoction and scratches someone. Such "silent-scratch talons" are often used by charlatans trying to impart "signs from the gods" to the gullible, and by sneak-thieves wanting to put those they find in a building to sleep so as to more easily steal from them or kidnap them. These talons have also been used by those who feel intimidated when going to seedy taverns or clubs late at night, or when they are endangered by aggressive dogs or other neighbors' guardians.

Some of Gaskulyn's most successful concoctions include the following.

**Ambeluth** (from the gnome words "ambel" meaning slumber, and "uluth" which means "bringer of"): a secret mixture of tisanes made from the leaves of the herbs chulthim, keltalast, and ombreth with powdered pumice and a pinch of powdered copper. Ambeluth can cause swift, heavy sleep lasting just over ten minutes at most, and usually about half that, but fails to affect many creatures other than giving them a very brief drowsy reeling condition.

**Corlusk** (from the gnome words "corr" meaning pain, and "olorlusk" meaning protected against or delivered from): a well-known (among gnomes) mixture of powdered white chalk, charcoal, distillate of sea eel, and tisanes of the leaves of the herbs chulthim, rarbross, and velintha. Corlusk is very likely to cause complete loss of sensation (and thus, pain) in most creatures, but only for brief periods (eight minutes at most, usually two-thirds of that, or a trifle less).

**Lonslur** (from the gnome words "lonse" meaning still, and "esslur" which means done to someone or the means of forcing someone): a mixture of the powdered dry flowers of the wild lael, the impree jungle blossom, and a tisane of the boiled leaves of mature (going yellow at the tips) marshwort-grass. Lonslur is widely known among gnomes (but which very few gnomes know how to make, so it is rare and expensive) for inducing instant paralysis in most mammals, and it lasts very briefly (six minutes at most, and the paralysis is usually ended by any sharp blow or impact). Doesn't affect undead.

**Maermot** (from the gnome words "maerym" for dream or mind-scene, and "aeramot," which means flood or charge or out of control): this tisane of the petals of four herbs boiled together (the detha-quill, the laratch flower, the norlthorn, and the zoask bush) affects most creatures by causing one or two brief but vivid memories to come to mind (blotting out normal vision for the affected creature), for four minutes at most. A few creatures exposed to maermot are overwhelmed with a flood of many brief but very vivid moving visions, accompanied by sounds that only the affected creature can hear, for a period of twelve minutes or even more. Giving a particular creature more maermot increases the likelihood of a flood of visions occurring and lasting longer.

All of these talon treatments act by being induced into the bloodstream of creatures by a scratch or puncture (and all of them use fictitious Realms herbs corresponding to no real-world plants).

So what is this innovative locketmaker like, in person? A calm, quiet gnome who hums from time to time and who is amiable or at least polite. His wife and daughters are polite, soft-spoken, and shy. In private, however, they have a sly humor and are devastating mimics (something they use to advantage when pretending to be someone else).

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### **About the Author**

**Ed Greenwood** is the man who unleashed the *Forgotten Realms* setting on an unsuspecting world. He works in libraries, and he writes fantasy, science fiction, horror, mystery, and romance stories (sometimes all in the same novel), but he is happiest when churning out Realmslore, Realmslore, and more Realmslore. He still has a few rooms in his house in which he has space left to pile up papers.

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