

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

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Quelzard, Patron of Adventurers

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.*

any heroic adventurers of the Realms have had their tales told, one way or another, including both player characters and famous NPCs. Alongside these personages have always been sidekicks and henchmen and hangers-on who stand in the shadows of such greatness, and get overlooked.

One of these unsung figures is one of a type—that type being a quite numerous sort of "patron of adventurers" overlooked thus far in published Realmslore, though his sort has been around in my world since before the Dungeons & Dragons® game existed.

Once I got my hands on the **D&D** rules, "his sort" became associated with a specific monster: the doppelganger; or, in later versions of the rules, the greater doppelganger. Yet that classification and placement in official riledom lay far in the future when I first met him. Back then, he was simply Quelzard.

The "Fred" of doppelgangers, if you will. An ordinary joe, doing what was ordinary for doppelgangers dwelling in Waterdeep. That is, waiting for the right adventuring band to come along, attracted to the bright lights, bustle, and abundant coin of the big city, so they could make their fortunes—and his.

Doppelgangers have been living in human shape in the City of Splendors since it was a small, rough frontier harbor port built of wet sand and wood. They have temporarily impersonated (and sometimes murdered and thus permanently impersonated) humans in order to eke out precarious livings among the "stinking ones" (as Sword Coast doppelgangers often impolitely refer to humans, who have much stronger body odors than "we Shallar," as they call themselves). Sometimes a young doppelganger is destined for the sort of future a young human might have waiting: perhaps rising in a family-run business or being apprenticed to and then taking over the position of an aging relative or a neighbor or a family friend. More often, however, young doppelgangers are expected to "patronize" suitable adventurers (or thieves, or entrepreneurs) who arrive in the city or, more rarely, arise within it.

Quelzard's parents expected him to patronize adventurers, and he did. The Company of Crazy Venturers, my first PC adventuring band, never even knew he existed . . . though they came to suspect his presence, once or twice.

Doppelgangers who patronize adventurers lurk near them, eavesdropping and sometimes more boldly spying, using their shapeshifting abilities to pose as servants and passersby and temporary hirelings, from the stable boys who take charge of horses to servers in Waterdhavian clubs. They listen without seeming to, using the doppelganger trait of focusing their hearing on one individual (or one small group of individuals, who have their heads together). Then they act on what they hear, striving for deftness and a light, far from greedy touch, so as not to alert the adventurers to their existence.

When a group of adventurers decides to attack a thieves' den, their patron is the one who suffocates a key guard into unconsciousness or intercepts and takes down a thief who overheard their planning. The patron wants them to succeed, because the patron is lurking in the shadows to take a few fallen weapons here and a few hidden coins there, while the adventurers are still fighting the last of the thieves to claim the lion's share of the loot.

When a group of adventurers is busy battling evil wizards in their tower at one end of the city, their patron is busy pilfering their third-best swords, or that little box of coins they hid on a nearby rooftop for a rainy day—taking just a little, never enough to evoke a hue and cry that will bring the adventurers into a full-fledged search

for whoever stole too much.

When a group of adventurers is brawling in a tavern, their patron is peering through the skylights to see who's been taken down in the fray, to know which horses can be safely claimed on false pretenses from the nearby stables, or who is too drunk or too locked up by the Watch to make it home to premises that can be robbed in their absence.

When a group of adventurers is walking into a trap—or is caught and in desperate need of aid, perhaps to get out of securely locked and guarded cells deep in the dungeons of Waterdeep Castle—it's their patron who sees to it that they get aid enough to escape. After all, they are the geese that regularly lay golden eggs for the patron, and so must be preserved (even abetted) in that role.

Hence all the handy saddled horses outside windows when things turn desperate, or diversions caused by sudden fires or windows being broken or suits of displayed armor being toppled. Such events are not prompted by a kindly DM arranging for improbable events to help PCs who are in over their heads—these are the acts of their patron looking after their health and success. Guardian angels, some faiths might term them, and there are such things, but far more often, if you're an adventurer, such fortuitous circumstances are the work of your unseen patron. (Or even your Unseen patron, to tell an aging Waterdhavian joke known only among the Shallar.)

Quelzard was a very attentive patron of the Crazy Adventurers. It was he who, posing as a lord's seneschal, dashed past them in a back passage of a mansion panting, "The back doors! The back doors must be guarded!" when the noble's bodyguards were thundering about the grand house seeking intruding adventurers who had just unintentionally killed the lord's favorite son. So the Adventurers were able follow him to those back doors and make their escape before the guards got there—guards who were delayed by having to break down two sets of doors that Quelzard had just locked, using the keys of the seneschal whom Quelzard had just brained.

It was Quelzard who posed as a wealthy visiting merchant and gossiped about the "astonishingly capable, considerate" Crazy Adventurers, lauding them because "they consider the wider consequences before they draw steel to seize things. Any king wise enough to snap them up as unofficial agents before they get themselves killed will accomplish great things." These assertions were spoken where several anonymous Lords of Waterdeep and guildmasters could overhear.

It was Quelzard, masquerading as a courtier, who breathlessly reported to Piergeiron that certain wizards were gathering, right now, in the uppermost level of Undermountain to work a magic that would "shatter much of Castle Ward from below," and so got him to rush a sizable force of the City Guard, reinforced by no less than seven Watchful Order Magists, down into the dungeon, to hurry to the very area where the Crazy Adventurers had been cornered by two rival wizard-led adventuring bands.

And it was Quelzard who spirited away an incriminating document that would have landed certain members of the Adventurers in serious legal trouble, because a guildmaster had betrayed them. The disappearance of the document left his accusations unsupported, and the adventurers' reputations intact. Quelzard substituted in its place a document he had prepared much earlier, that made him landlord of the building that became the Adventurers' home in the semi-retirement of their later years, and thereby gained himself a steady income.

These are just a few of the many, many deeds Quelzard worked from the shadows to benefit "his" adventurers, and so provide himself with a good living. He took justifiable pride in his patronage of the Company of Crazy Adventurers—and when certain players now read these words, they can as well.

To those players I add that it takes nothing away from your accomplishments to now learn that Quelzard had your back all that time. It was your own prowess earned you his attention to begin with.

You were still the ones that had to swing those swords and face those dragons.

A patron, after all, is only as worthy as the adventurers to whom that patron becomes attached. Quelzard is always quick to remind young Shallar of that fact.

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.