

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®

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The Eyes of the Dragon, Part 3

Forgotten Realms

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.

Here's the third part of our glimpse of some of the current spies working for the Cult of the Dragon in various Sword Coast settlements. These are the "small fish"—the watchers at the bottom of the cult ranks. Adventurers are warned that the cult members who contact these watchers to impart instructions and to receive reports are more secretive, more mobile—and apt to be more dangerous.

Silverymoon

This bustling, cosmopolitan city is once more rising in wealth, population, and sophistication, becoming a favored destination and place to live. The cult moves agents in and out of "the Moon" frequently, but it has at least two long-term, skilled spies who are very much part of the city's social fabric.

Dlaarvos Fyredram is a handsome, slender, but rather short (and sensitive about it) half-elf, who works as a repairer. In the first half of every day he sits in the front room of his small, untidy, crammed-to-the-rafters (with bits and oddments he can cannibalize for fixing things brought to him) home, working on repairs—fixing the loose grip of a tool or kitchen knife, for example, or sharpening blades—and waiting for folk to bring him new repairs. In the latter half of the day, he travels the city delivering repaired items (and often being hailed with fresh repairs as he trundles his handcart along the streets). His usual terms are "pay half fee up front, the other half upon delivery." He is pleasant, sometimes jovial, handsome, and generally well-liked, but he would have to subsist on tea and the occasional root vegetable fallen from someone else's cart if repair fees were the only source of his income; thankfully, the cult sees his lifestyle as an ideal cover for seeing specific places and people in the city, and giving anyone—very much including undercover cult contacts—an excuse to go and see him. Dlaarvos ("Duh-LARR-voh-ss") is content with his life, because his Cult work gives him excitement and an inner sense of personal importance; he generally avoids violence, but isn't above swift thievery if he comes across a drunkard and thinks he's unobserved. He has several mistresses among older and lonely human and half-elf female crafters and shopkeepers in the dingier streets of the Moon.

Jethra Helcandle is a free-spirited "revel lass" (the local Realmsian equivalent of our real-world term "party girl") who has been in and out of the arms and beds of literally hundreds of citizens of Silverymoon and visitors alike. She is tall for a half-elf, and she has huge, arresting emerald-green eyes and a liquid grace that led a Harper to once describe her as "purring sensuality gliding past."

Jethra is genuinely kind by nature, enjoys the embraces of almost all genders and races, and can mother or be



a competent, discreet maid or trade factor to anyone. She has no interest in doing violence to anyone (she will go as far as covertly slipping sleep-inducing drugs to a person, but became very upset on the one occasion that a cult contact deceived her by substituting a fatal substance for what Jethra believed was just a sleep potion). She frankly enjoys flirtation and seduction, including roleplaying, costumes, and “intrigues in the streets or on the rooftops by night,” and the cult often asks her to serve as a guide or contact for adventurers, sometimes to dupe or mislead them into situations where they can be framed for cult activities.

Jethra has a nigh-perfect memory, and she can read or view maps or symbols very briefly and then even days later perfectly recall what she saw; this has made her especially valuable as a spy and message-carrier. She is slowly and deftly building her own contacts ever more widely among those who hold political and administrative power in Silvermoon, which makes her more valuable to the cult but also increases her prospects for marriage and a prosperous retirement.

Triboar

Yreskan Ammulk is a half-orc who (aside from two tusks that he often conceals behind a false bandage that covers the lower half of his face) can pass for a large-featured, burly man—except when he comes into contact with magic, whereupon a curse laid upon him years ago causes him to momentarily look like a towering, horned, black-haired yak man—and then flicker back to his real appearance again (often the two images will ripple and trade places several times). This is a powerful magical illusion, not a change in shape; Yreskan (“RESK-ann”) is always himself throughout, and his mobility, speech, and senses remain unaltered.

Yreskan runs a general hardware, secondhand goods, and outfitting shop in Triboar he calls “The Missing Wheel” because it began as a source of replacement cart and wagon wheels, for merchants who suffered breakdowns nearby on the bad roads of the Sword Coast North. The shop then expanded into selling rope, blankets, canvas tents, and tools.

Although he can be what locals call “growly,” Yreskan is well respected locally because he’s useful, anticipates needs, he orders in what will be most needed to deal with these needs, and has a watering-pond whose services he offers for free to all passersby (for the use of their beasts of burden or livestock).

A stout wooden palisade surrounds Yreskan’s establishment, and his office is on the top floor of his three-story ramshackle (former stone keep) shop-and-residence. From that vantage point, he overlooks his own stockade walls and sees all traffic passing through Triboar, since the main roads meet right underneath his view. He offers the shelter of his stockade yard to travelers in need (peddlers and lone-wagon merchants in particular), and this provides great cover for cult contact visits.

Yreskan has no close friends, has brawled with locals who’ve crossed him, and hires female companionship when he wants it. He trusts no one, but he has assembled a small staff he feels he can work with. His weakness is strong spirits—and cult members keep him well supplied.

Waterdeep

Still the largest, wealthiest, and busiest crossroads city in the Sword Coast North, as well as “the” destination for traders hoping to exploit current fashion or start new ones, the City of Splendors is home to many cult spies, including three well-placed veterans whom the cult relies upon, and who therefore wield more influence and respect than any of the other eyes and ears described here.

Maelra Harzund is a novice wizard of very modest accomplishments in the Art, who ceased training when the elderly master she was apprenticed to died suddenly of winterchill. Ever since, she has made a living making and selling spell scrolls, fake but impressive-looking spell scrolls, and wands that glow with faerie fire upon command. The latter resist catching fire and are “suitable for greater enchantments” (that is, they do nothing else). She also has vials of “wizard’s blood,” drawing on a large stock of beautiful little perfume vials she bought when a warehouse was torn down, and filling them with the blood of the live chickens she buys for her own meals, mixed with ichor from boiled-down worms she collects by day in the City of the Dead, to alter the smell and look of the poultry gore.

Maelra dwells in dingy third-floor rooms in a ramshackle rooming house, Laethra’s Highhaven, that stands on the west side of Caravan Court in Trades Ward. She is a soft-spoken, rather timid woman of almost white blonde hair, shy speech and manners, and a romantic dreamer. Working for the cult carries a spice of danger she loves, and it makes her feel important and as if her life is going somewhere rather than just drifting along

from day to day surviving—but she dreams of real romance and real importance, and may soon do something reckless if moved by either of those triggers.

Zathant Drorn is a young half-elf wizard of low mastery who discovered he could make more money drawing small and intricately detailed maps of Waterdhavian neighborhoods and interior layouts of particular buildings than by working magic on the sly (because his talents weren't strong enough to manage the spells those too desperate or poor to go to the Watchful Order tend to need). However, the miscreants he was selling maps to recently disappeared (to feed the harbor fishes or to grace Castle Waterdeep's dungeons), and the Watch seem far too interested in someone who draws such things for Drorn's comfort.

Like many Waterdhavians aspiring to more wealth than they possess (and in the meantime pretending to have already attained that wealth and the lifestyle that goes with it), Drorn shares in the rental of a good third-floor suite of rooms in Castle Ward (in Stonegate House, westfront Snail Street nine doors north of Shesstra's Street) with six others. The seven men uneasily share the rooms for bathing and wardrobe storage, and they use the kitchen, dining area, sitting room, and bedchamber for assignations and to entertain their various upscale clients and contacts. As far as Drorn knows, none of his six partners are cult spies or agents, and he never involves them or his Castle Ward premises in cult activities.

Drorn's real abode is a damp, roof-leaking-when-it-rains fourth floor attic room in a rundown rooming house on westfront Bitter Alley in Dock Ward. From this dismal residence, he daily descends the outdoor stairs to hire on as a daily laborer, loading or unloading small shipments to or from various Waterdhavian businesses and homes and Dock Ward warehouses. In other words, he's hired brawn—but his looks and behavior (pleasant mien and track record for honesty—that is, refraining from pilferage) have made him trusted enough to visit addresses in all but Sea Ward and North Ward. Drorn sees and overhears much and lets the cult know everything he deems important. He dreams of being hired on by a well-to-do household in Sea, North, or Castle Wards as a servant, even if it's just being a doorjack. Drorn is handy at a variety of manual work, usually making swift and serviceable repairs.

Inneth Hulmshar dwells in Mistshore, but works on staff in the glittering Mermaid and Stars gambling house on eastfront Copper Street (three doors north of Sulmor Street) in North Ward. He's a raven-haired, thin, handsome man of impeccable manners, being both urbane and alert, who fools most folk he meets into thinking he comes from a wealthy background and high breeding. Inneth rents rooms at various rooming houses, seldom staying in one place for more than a month at a time. He owns very few belongings, and he enjoys a lifestyle of attending many revels (often as the escort of ugly and disagreeable noblewomen) and dining and drinking well at such events—as well as, of course, seeing and overhearing all he can that is useful to him personally and to the cult. His cult contacts see him as “our man we can worm into meetings of nobles,” and pay him well for what he can learn and report back to them (particularly about the investments of noble families, and the timing and specifics of their caravan and waterborne shipments). Inneth is quietly banking his takings with certain guilds, with an eye to slowly and behind the scenes buying up city properties until he becomes a wealthy landlord. He won't say no to marrying one of those ugly and disagreeable noblewomen if any of them happen to become rich widows, either.

Yartar

Irdred Jahamalankh is a half-orc of fearsomely scarred appearance, broad shoulders and bulging thews, who is Yartar's best wagon wheel maker, where he cuts wooden pieces, steams and bends them, forges and fits metal rims around them, and makes the grease, cotter pins, and even replacement axles for the wheels to be fitted to. He does a brisk trade, and he seldom leaves his cluttered work yard except when cutting wood or buying metal for his rims—but he sees and hears far more than he pretends to, when dealing with clients, and he reports all to the cult.

Cult agents operating in the area find Irdred's yard and sheds (heaped with drying wood, rusting metal, broken old wagons, and fuel for his forge) to be a useful place to hide things, amid all the clutter. Irdred loves the payments the cult makes to him, and he will loyally lie for them and conceal anything they want hidden. Several cult agents have covertly tested him to see if he'll steal from numerous stores of obvious valuables (such as gold coins or gems), and Irdred has passed all such tests; he's not interested in jeopardizing this steady source of income, which allows him to do what he loves: make an endless stream of good, sturdy wagon wheels (and roast and devour the occasional ox, boar, or rothé).

The Cult of the Dragon is constantly seeking to recruit new watchers, to eliminate disloyal ones, and to relocate valuable but compromised spies, so those listed here may well have nearby understudies or rivals unknown to

them.

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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