

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

Forging the Realms Archive | 11/19/2013



The Four Quests of Radiance

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.

he priesthoods of Faerûn are constantly renewing themselves, as with passing time the attitudes and portfolios of deities change, their influence over mortals waxes or wanes, and the secular power and interests of their churches shifts.

Yet thus far, down the years of the published Realms, the behind-the-cloistered-curtain doings and debates of clergy—when avatars of the deities themselves aren't onstage, schisms aren't erupting, and the world is not shaking or hanging in the balance—have been somewhat neglected.

So here's one example of something that is occurring almost constantly in various guises across the organized faiths of the Realms. I've chosen the Church of Tymora because it is of interest to all adventurers (who are, after all, the majority of PCs), and because the dynamic nature of a goddess of good fortune leads to the doings of her church being important to mortals of many races, walks of life, and aims.

Here, then, is an introduction to something that began as a secret, internal matter within the Church of Tymora—and is still influencing the faith (and all who seek the favor of Lady Luck) in Faerûn to this day.

A Night of Visions

On an unspecified night in 1358 DR, with the Spellplague about to erupt, the sleeping archpriest Baerleglas Thontal, Mantled Supplicant (abbot) of Tymora at the Fair Chancehouse abbey of Tymora in the countryside northwest of Crimmor, received an extremely vivid vision in his dreams.

He saw a dancing sword that trailed long, sweeping silver hair in which coins constantly flash, gleam, and disappear—a favorite manifestation of the goddess—in a moonlit wood. One edge of the wood was afflicted with a strange malady wherein the trees twisted into nightmare shapes, like bulging, billowing fungal growths, shedding their leaves and rending themselves in the process, some of them drooping and dying and others desiccating into dust that collapsed and blew away. This blight was spreading with horrifying rapidity, and the sword responded by racing into the wood, its path disintegrating trees in instants as it went. Four times it plunged into the wood, described a great curve, and departed again, cutting four great arcs out of the forest. Then it hovered, flashing, and the trees within those arcs began to move, tearing their roots up out of the ground in a roiling of earth and marching toward the sword, which led the trees away from the forest, toward a distant bare hill. Behind the marching trees, the rest of the forest was claimed by the blight, and horribly disfigured and ruined. On the hill, the trees stopped as the sword that was Tymora flew in a great oval around them, winked with blinding brightness, and vanished in the heart of that flash. It left behind a new forest flooded with moonlight, tall and vigorous and soaring . . . as the abandoned, blighted trees far behind turned to Tymoran priests Thontal knew personally, their gaping, staring dead faces tumbled together as they lay heaped and fallen, one upon the other.



There the vision ended, with Thontal driven into an icy sweat of wakefulness. He rose, perturbed, threw on a robe, and sought out his Prefectress (second in command of the abbey, and its treasurer), the earnest,

conscientious Laurauna Belmantur. He found her awake and in a similar state of awe and consternation, for she had just received her own vision: Of herself running barefooted across a severe and thorny wilderness, monsters harrying her on all sides, desperately seeking something that became apparent to her were other lone, running clergy of Tymora, the light of the goddess in their faces. When they saw her, they came to run alongside her, a band of priests gathering in this manner and running on, on for weary panting miles until they came at last to a glade where a shaft of moonlight fell upon a vertically hovering, point-down longsword the size of a seven-foot-tall human, made all of shifting, constantly-moving coins: Tymora herself. Laurauna felt an almost ecstatic urge to leap up and embrace the sword, and did so, its edges slicing her but bringing bliss amid divine fire that healed her. Her head, as she fell back and the clergy with her made their own leaps, was full of a certainty that this was right, and needful, and she must do this.

As Thontal and Belmantur spoke together, they were burst in upon by Preceptress Amanthra Doaloke (head of worship, the choir, and security at the abbey), Lady "Mother" Calathnae Zandarn (head of instruction and discipline) and the Lady Cellarer and Sacristan Imdarra Halarnhand (head of secular matters: food, supplies, and repairs), all greatly upset, for they had all received visions akin to that of the Prefectress.

Doaloke's vision had been seeking the shining but buried sword that was Tymora in a lightless cellar full of rusting blades raining down from a collapsing armory above; Zandarn's was of solemnly assembled robed clergy of Tymora all facing an altar from which the dancing light of Tymora flowed, touching them and turning all of them to horrific monsters save herself, the light armoring her and goading her forth into the surrounding wilderness to seek new and pure worshipers; and Halarnhand's was of tumbling dice and coins bouncing upon a tabletop of white marble, these dice and coins darkening and shattering, some of them transforming into spitting snakes and small globes that were all clashing jaws, a great anxious need arising within her to pluck out particular dice and coins from the flow, not missing a single one of those that struck her eye as "true," to be rescued from this fate—a task at which she was too slow, and soon overwhelmed by how many she'd missed.

These five senior clerics of the abbey conferred in solemn conclave until dawn, and it was agreed among them that they would depart the abbey and go together to a holy spot in the wilderness where they knew Tymora had once personally healed a mortal, and there fast and pray for guidance. This was done, and the first night of their sleeping there, all of them received the same vision, which set them upon the course of the four Quests of Radiance.

The First Quest

This quest was given to Laurauna Belmantur. The goddess directed her to wander the countryside of the Heartlands and recruit "innocents" (beings who'd never visited a full-fledged temple of any faith, or pledged foremost to any deity), and find suitable individuals who could "cleave to Tymora" (become members of her clergy). The goddess would send dream visions to her of which of her choices was truly suitable, and Laurauna was charged to train and spiritually guide these suitable persons. Her work thereafter would be to aid and support these new "Rising Ones" as they recruited others to the clergy and established small shrines, hermitages, and eventually monasteries to Tymora across the rural Heartlands. These creations are to be the "new backbone of the faith" if the established urban temples to the goddess were ruined or plunged into decadence during "the tumult now upon us" (the Spellplague).

Laurauna worked long and diligently at her charge until her death of a fever in the cold depths of the winter that began 1387 DR, and she built scores of small, simple shrines across the Heartlands. She founded a monastery some days northeast of Berdusk in 1362, but it was destroyed by fire and sword in a hobgoblin raid a decade later, and her "backbone of the faith," by the 1480s, was no more than sixty luckbringers and underpriests, scattered across the Heartlands.

The Second Quest

This quest was given to Amanthra Doaloke. The goddess charged her to continually recruit and train (visions sent by the goddess would confirm the truly suitable, and weed out the weak and the false) Champions of Tymora; charismatic adventurer-leaders who were to promote the faith and to do deeds that would be lauded and talked of, to spur the general populace to greater reverence of Lady Luck. As such Champions would spend perilous and bold lives gambling with their safety, the body count would be high, and Amanthra's recruitments ongoing.

Though this quest met with initial success, recruiting such adventuring priestesses as Valantra "Flamesword" Dreth, and Ilvalarra Wyndsun, most of Amanthra's recruits perished spectacularly and soon, and her growing remorse at the mounting losses caused her to lose her faith in 1366 and take up baking in Sandrivvur, a small hamlet southwest of Priapurl. She died in her bakery in a lightning-caused fire that destroyed most of Sandrivvur in 1369 DR.

The Third Quest

This quest was given to Calathnae Zandarn. Tymora bade her recruit, train, and lead (dream visions sent by the goddess selecting the truly worthy and weeding out the rest) a handful of "True of Tymora." These dedicated individuals would safeguard the tenets, lore, and rituals of the faith in secret, dwelling in remote fastnesses and disguising themselves in various intelligent beast shapes, to preserve the Church of Tymora in case all else was swept away.

In her old age, Calathnae disagreed with and defied the goddess by leading some of the youngest and most restless True in raids to openly aid beleaguered regular clergy of Tymora, and perished (transfixed by six brigand arrows) in one such raid in the winter of 1391 DR. Most of the "activist" True died in various misadventures, and it's not known how many survive of those who kept themselves hidden; though Tymoran priests tend to believe that only a few True are still alive, their identities, locations, real strength and inclinations are known only to themselves and the goddess.

The Fourth Quest

This quest was given to Imdrarra Halarnhand. The goddess told her to recruit and assist various bands of adventurers to become "the Smiting Arm of the Lady," hurling down and thwarting or destroying foes of the Church of Tymora (and Tymorans in general), leading or even rescuing them when necessary, to weaken foes of the goddess and to make all others think twice about striking out against the Church of Tymora or belittling her power.

Imdrarra's efforts met with much initial success, as many adventuring bands rose to temporary prominence and publicly venerated Tymora. These included Anglam's Rovers, the Brightbarred Shield, the Seven Shattered Swords of Waterdeep, and the Boar's Tusks of Memnon.

Though the thin, dark, intense Imdrarra is thought to have been murdered in 1372 DR, Tymorans say the goddess raised her to service as a wraithlike whispering spirit who brings the words of the goddess, and "small aid" (healing, magical escape from prisons and manacles, guidance in unfamiliar and treacherous terrain) to devout Tymorans.

Over time, many adventuring bands worked for their own advancement and enrichment first, and their prayers to Tymora became hollow, but in 1480 DR, such young and rising adventurers as the Shield Aflame of Scornubel and the Boldfarers of Berdusk still work with clergy of Tymora and publicly praise the goddess.

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.