

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

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The Haunted Armor of Lornalar

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.*

Realmslore is full of oddities—strange happenings or tales with no morals nor set endings, or that have dozens of competing morals or meanings hung upon them. Mysteries unsolved, eerie reports of macabre or sinister apparitions and events none can explain.

One such is "The Haunted Armor," known to sages and some older Faerûnians as the Haunted Armor of Lornalar, though just who Lornalar was is a matter of some debate.

A long-dead hero, most hazard, though a few insist he was the smith who made the suit of armor that bears his name. Others hold that he was the mage who enchanted it, or even a half-elf warrior it was made for, who on his deathbed gifted it to a king (just which king is again a matter of argument).

Elminster cannot settle such disputes, or claims to be unable to, insisting that he does not know the truth. He will go as far as to say the armor was known to his father and grandsire, back before 200 DR in the now-vanished realm of Athalantar, and that the name "Lornalar" was attached to it then—and that the Magelords who wrested rule of Athalantar from the Aumars coveted the armor and feared that it could be used against them.

Elminster can truthfully report that many a ruler since has had the same reaction.

The Haunted Armor is a human-sized suit of full coat-of-plate armor, complete with armored boots, gauntlets, and a closed-visored helm of the armet sort, that appears and disappears "by itself" (teleporting, upright and empty). It always appears beside those who might be in need of it, such as wounded heroes on battlefields, kings or queens under attack, even wizards and priests—of all faiths and alignments, though it seems to choose those who are facing violence and who have striven hard for cause or country.

The Haunted Armor magically alters to fit the person it appears beside, and "opens itself" so it can be easily stepped into, the armor plates both unfastening and bending to yawn wide, then flexing closed again and fastening themselves around the body of each new wearer. The suit of armor is large enough to encase a fully-clothed wearer and whatever weapons, staves, backpacks, or bulky cloaks they may be carrying or wearing—and as the armor doesn't hang from the wearer and put its weight upon the wearer, they can freely move about inside it and manipulate items (in other words, they can drink potions, draw weapons, unlock coffers, and so on).

It does not pursue or engulf beings who ignore it or retreat from it, and silently fades away, vanishing to "somewhere else," if no one enters it within a five or six minutes of its appearance—but it will tarry for longer if someone is trying to get inside it (such as a sorely wounded, crawling person). On several occasions the suit of armor has been seen to shift its position to aid an injured or hampered individual in entering it.

The Haunted Armor supports itself and its wearer by levitation (so someone with a broken or missing leg could "stand upright" in it), hovering above water, quicksand, ice, blazing coals, or other treacherous surfaces, and shortly after girding itself about a wearer—usually within mere moments of doing so—it teleports itself away to a random destination elsewhere in the Realms (sometimes far indeed from where it found its new wearer), before "fading away" from around its wearer (that is, the armor slowly becomes insubstantial and invisible at the same time, until it is gone, vanishing in another teleport that leaves the wearer simply without it).

After the armor is gone, the former wearer is stranded in their new locale (but of course has been delivered from the situation in which they were in danger).

While a wearer is clad in the Haunted Armor, something cryptic (but in his or her language) is whispered inside the wearer's head. (These brief utterances are what has earned the armor its "haunted" status. They consist of a single line of dialogue, and it never answers to the wearer's questions or will.)

These cryptic sayings have included:

- The sixth door is safe.
- The man missing a hand did it.
- The stone finger points at the first of three emeralds in a line.
- The traitor lurks in the lone castle.
- The third choice is the right one.
- Seek the maroon sail.
- No sword can prevail against it.
- Look behind the dragon.
- The axe has a match; beware its bearer.
- Six sunsets ere the reckoning.
- The burnt house holds both treasure and answers.
- One of the falcons is false.

Most of these whispered messages remain mysteries to those who hear them. Many individuals never share with others what the Haunted Armor has told them, but from the sayings that have been recorded, it seems that the suit of armor never repeats itself, and that its missives have some relevance to the wearer hearing them.

The sage Andragrask of Alaghôn, writing in 1366 DR, advanced the belief (from his studies to that time) that the armor could not foresee destinies, but could "see"—or rather, the sentience behind its utterances could discern—lost and hidden items, possibilities ahead, and even likelihoods.

The bard Torsimur of Iriaebor (1324 DR-1372 DR, best known as the traveling bard killed in the wilderlands west of Tunland when a tree fell on him) believed that the god Jergal was the whisperer within the Haunted Armor, but could provide no more proof for this contention than a vivid dream in which that god said as much to him.

There is no known way to summon or magically influence the armor. Spells and magical effects (such as those unleashed from magic items) sent at it are reflected back entirely at the source, and spells cast so as to include the armor and its wearer within their area of effect function normally—but the armor and anyone inside it are unaffected, the armor seemingly surrounding itself with a form-fitting magical barrier.

So as far as Realmslore widely known in Faerûn is concerned, no one knows who created the armor, or for what purpose. There is no discernable pattern among, or link between, the individuals it has appeared to (who are of both genders, and many races—from kenku to loxo, and giants to halflings—though all seem to be sentient bipedal mammals, living and not undead), other than that they are facing or have recently faced violence, and are striving to achieve something beyond the norms of daily commerce and survival.

Obviously, the Haunted Armor has prevented certain deaths by whisking beings away from cornered or vastly outnumbered doom, although some wearers have likely been harmed or imperiled by being taken to distant and unfamiliar locales where they have no friends, kin, home, nor coins.

Certain individuals who've worn the Haunted Armor have reported experiencing a brief flood of old memories rising to mind while they were inside it, suggesting the armor or its magic or the sentience many believe is associated with the armor (due to its utterances) is searching the memories of its wearers for something—but for what, and why, remain matters of utter speculation. Some suggest it reads memories, and others insist it steals certain memories (it gains them and the wearer forgets them forever), but not everyone who's experienced the armor admits to losing memories—which may just mean the armor doesn't always take remembrances from wearers.

Some notable individuals who've briefly worn the Haunted Armor include Durnan, the proprietor of the Yawning *Portal* in Waterdeep in the mid-1300s DR; the royal-blood noble Thomdor Ammaeth of Cormyr; the adventurer-dwarf Harthem "Biting Axe" Morokh of Mirabar; Florin Falconhand of the Knights of Myth Drannor; and the bard Mintiper Moonsilver.

On at least two occasions the Haunted Armor appeared in the depths of Undermountain, and whisked away a wounded, outnumbered adventurer from a potentially fatal monster peril. It is also known to have offered a young noble lass of the City of Splendors, Emuelle Roaringhorn, an escape from an ardent suitor on the path that traverses the snowy upper slopes of Mount Waterdeep. It has also provided escape from a bandit ambush in the Rat Hills, a dragon night attack on a mansion in Everlund, and a brawl between poisoned-blade-wielding rival smuggling gangs on the moonlit wharves and canals of Marsember.

It took Emuelle Roaringhorn to the northernwestern edge of the Wealdath, transported a startled Thomdor from

the heart of a bloody monster fight in the Stonelands to Secomber, and whisked Florin from a burning temple in Voonlar to the wooded back streets of Neverwinter.

Despite being known of in the Realms for at least 1,300 years, the origins and purpose of the Haunted Armor remain mysteries. Beliefs and suggestions are many, from the sage who insisted the armor is a unique form of undead that steals tiny amounts of life force from every wearer to sustain itself, to the cult in Tharsult who worship the "Living Armor of Lornalar" as a deity—but the truth remains hidden.

For now.

(As Elminster slyly suggests, adventurers who are bold, enterprising, and valiant enough should be able to enlighten us all, in the fullness of time.)

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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